



THIRD COMMITTEE

69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

HASHTAG ACTIVISM: THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS:
ELABORATING THE CONVENTION ON AGING



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST
69TH SESSION



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

69TH ANNUAL SESSION

OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF
THE UN CHARTER

THE MAIN COMMITTEES OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDER AGENDA ITEMS REFERRED TO THEM BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND PREPARE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DRAFT RESOLUTIONS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY. THE COMMITTEES CORRESPOND WITH THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S MAJOR FIELDS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S THIRD COMMITTEE FOCUSES ON TOPICS OF A SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN, AND CULTURAL NATURE.
(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69TH SESSION
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK
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Whether it was Pope Urban II calling on all Christians to wage war against Muslims, or King Louis XIV persecuting the French Huguenots, religion, and the intolerance of it, has always had a hand in shaping human history. Despite this, protections for religious freedom on an international scale has been minimal, or non-existent for most of this time. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community, haunted by the cruelty it experienced, came together to ratify the United Nations Charter. The United Nations charter was one of the first international documents that really addressed the importance of protecting human rights for everyone, no matter their race, sex, language, or religion. This was considered one of the greatest victories for human rights, but as time passed, it became evident that there had to be a resolution that specifically addresses religious rights.

Passed in 1981, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief was one of the first resolutions that really addressed religion on a large scale. It recognizes religion as “One of the fundamental elements in [a person’s] conception of life”¹ and lays down some basic principles that are vital for securing religious freedom, such as the freedom:

- To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;

¹ "A/RES/36/55. DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF" 25 NOV. 1981, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/DOCUMENTS/GA/RES/36/A36R055.HTM](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

- To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
- To make, acquire and is to an adequate extent the necessary articles and martials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;

to realize the goals of the Declaration, the United Nations also passed a series of resolutions, the most important one being the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance, as it led to the creation of the role of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Initially recognized as the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is the premier figure on religious issues in the United Nations. Appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur is mandated:

- To promote the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- - to identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present recommendations on ways and means to overcome such obstacles;
- To continue her/his/their efforts to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and to recommend remedial measures as appropriate;
- To continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and in recommendations.

The Special Rapporteur fulfills the mandate mainly through annual reports to the Human Rights Council. These annual reports have been known to cover a wide variety of topics, from freedom of religion or belief of persons belonging to religious minorities, to the situation of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. In addition to these annual reports, the Special Rapporteur also conducts in-depth country visits. During these visits, the Special Rapporteur will meet with relevant representatives to fully understand the circumstances surrounding a country and provide constructive feedback.

DEFAMATION OF RELIGION

Like most issues, freedom of religion can look very different based on countries and their development status, especially when it comes to defamation of religion. While Islamophobia has existed since almost the start of the religion itself, there was a very drastic change in tone among much of the developed world after the tragic attack on September 11, 2001. Governments started to report a troubling rise in hate crimes against Muslim populations, a trend that has only gotten worse in recent years. In a period from around 2001 to 2010, the Islamic bloc, along with many developing nations, proposed several non-binding resolutions that strongly condemned “discriminatory measures [that] will fuel discrimination, extremism, and misperception leading to polarization and fragmentation with dangerous unintended and unforeseen consequences.”².

These resolutions were celebrated by the Islamic bloc and many developing states as a way of combating the global increase in discrimination, but Western democracies, along with human right advocacy groups, argued that these defamation of religion resolutions were used by certain countries to justify anti-blasphemy laws. Furthermore, they argued that countries were

² "GENERAL ASSEMBLY - OHCHR." 11 MAR. 2010, [HTTP://AP.OHCHR.ORG/DOCUMENTS/E/HRC/D_RES_DEC/A_HRC_13_L_1.PDF](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/e/hrc/d_res_dec/a_hrc_13_l_1.pdf). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

using their anti-blasphemy laws to target journalists and political rivals, seriously infringing on people's right to free speech.

UZBEKISTAN

Like other nations that were a part of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan experienced the policy of state atheism from 1924 until 1991, when they declared independence. After declaring independence, the resurgence of religion slowly took hold in the country. New mosques were starting to be built, religious schools started to re-open, and many started to adopt Islamic practices. Fearing that this new wave of religion could create a political opposition, authorities started to conduct a campaign against "unofficial" Islam. Authorities would start to censor religious materials and harass or even detain men with beards, which was seen as a symbol of religious devotion.

While freedom of religion is guaranteed by their constitution, Uzbekistan has a series of legislation that limit this right, including the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, the Criminal Code, and the code of Administrative Offences. These laws come together to tightly constrain the freedom of believers. Some of these constraints include:

- barring of political parties formed based on religious grounds;
- criminalizing of any unregistered religious activity;
- censorship of the content, production, and distribution of religious publications;
- prohibiting most missionary activities
- requiring registration of all religious organizations

The list of ways citizens of Uzbekistan are constrained religiously can go on for countless pages, and part of the reason is because the laws mentioned above are extremely broad and open to interpretation, all in the name of national security.

The Special Rapporteur notes that while the constitution guarantees freedom of religion for citizens of Uzbekistan, the excessive regulation practiced by the government is more along the lines of religious toleration, and that the basic rights to religious freedom are not actually guaranteed. But these rights can not be realized if Uzbekistan does not recognize the other rights that are intrinsically tied to religious freedom as well, rights such as the freedom of expression, or the freedom of peaceful assembly.

DENMARK

In a stark contrast to Uzbekistan, religious freedom in Denmark is highly valued and respected by all members of the community. People are free to express and practice their religion without fearing persecution. However, Denmark does face a very different set of challenges, many of which could be attributed to an increase in religious diversity.

Until fairly recently, Denmark was one of the most religiously homogeneous societies in Europe. Known as “The People’s Church”, the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Denmark enjoys a very high attendance rate and is considered a big part of the Danish identity, to there point where it is even entrenched in the constitution. But as immigration becomes more of a common theme around the world, the question of cultural identity always comes into play. For Denmark, waves of immigration has brought Islam into the spotlight. For a country that has always been Evangelical, seeing headscarves, hijabs, and new mosques, have caused feelings of anxiety and unease, especially after the killings at the Krudttonden Cultural Centre, and in front of the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015.

While all the Muslims that the Special Rapporteur met with noted that they all could generally practice their religion freely and more that people have gotten accustomed to seeing headscarves, there has been growing unrest between Muslims and Danes. Many feel that Islamic

and Danish culture do not fit well together, if at all. And while integration is necessary for a healthy society, many feel that the cries for more integration are racially charged. Even young Muslims, who grew up in Denmark and spoke Danish as their first language, face these demands for more integration. These constant demands for have led to feelings of alienation and frustration among much of the younger generations.

To combat this new wave of social anxiety and foster strong relationships between different social groups, Denmark has started a radical new model where all parts of a municipality work together in a cross-sectoral approach to build sustainable trust. What this means is that professional support, such as counselling and mentoring are always available, even for those who come in conflict with the law. Diversity also plays a huge role in the program as well. Local Lutheran churches have started to host interreligious dialogues between different denominations, and the city of Vollsrose even made national headline for hiring a Muslim woman who wears the hijab for the police force. This was a radical move for a country that did not always accept its Muslim population or obvious symbols of Islam, like the hijab. This program was so successful that there was a considerable decrease in the number of young people traveling to Syria to fight for the Islamic State, showing that a more explicit and proactive approach that addresses the individual can really make a difference.

As with most countries, Denmark also has provisions in its constitution to protect the freedom of religion. Article 67 of its' constitution states that "citizens shall be at liberty to form congregations for the worship of God in a manner which is in accordance with their convictions, provided that nothing contrary to good morals or public order shall be taught or done."³ Compared to the rest of the European Union, who enjoy a broad definition of religious freedom where everyone is free to practice their theistic or non-theistic beliefs, this definition of religious

³ "STATSMINISTERIET - THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACT OF DENMARK." [HTTP://WWW.STM.DK/_P_10992.HTML](http://www.stm.dk/_P_10992.html). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

freedom is limited to “the worship of God” and gives the state a very broad interpretation for imposing limitations. While the government of Denmark has always complied with the international standard for religious freedom, it is important to note that older, narrower laws like these can be used to justify the persecution of religious minorities that do not partake in the worship of God.

CONCERNING TRENDS

The Special Rapporteur identifies some global trends that are especially concerning in his “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief”. Firstly, some member states still have legislation that unduly restrict the rights of religious minorities. This statutes criminalize activities such as blasphemy, apostasy, and atheism, and only lead to more division among religious groups. Another point of concern for the Special Rapporteur is the failure of States to provide asylum for those who fear persecution based on religious beliefs, he states that forcibly turning away refugees “goes against both the spirit and the letter of the right to freedom of religion or belief.⁴”. Furthermore, there is also the concern about the rise of religious violence from non-state actors like terrorist groups, such as Islamic State and Boko Haram, who have been responsible for some of the most egregious human rights violations.

CONCLUSIONS

As immigration becomes more prevalent, the need for a strong legislative foundation will be more important than ever for protecting religious freedom. Immigration will bring more religious diversity to all areas, especially for countries who have historically been religiously homogeneous. This is why creating the legislative foundation for religious freedom is important

⁴ "DOCUMENTS - REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION ..." 17 JAN. 2017, [HTTP://WWW.HUMANRIGHTSVOICES.ORG/SITE/DOCUMENTS/?D=17204&ID=20473](http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/site/documents/?D=17204&ID=20473). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

now, before a precedent of legal religious persecution takes even more of a hold. It is also vital that governments all over the world stand against the new wave of religious intolerance. Not only should world leaders denounce the violent acts committed by both state and non-state actors in the name of religion, but also promote more unity and dialogue among the different religious groups.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does your country have a history of religious conflicts? What actions has your government taken to resolve these conflicts?
2. Does your country have a strong legislative base for protecting religious minorities?
3. Has your country experienced an increase in religious diversity? If so, how has that diversity changed behavior in your country?
4. Has your country experienced an increase in religious hate crime? If so, how has your country dealt with this issue?
5. What can the international community do further protect religious rights on all levels.

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HASHTAG ACTIVISM: EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69TH SESSION
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK
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Social media platforms having become increasingly pervasive in everyday life and as a result, are having a larger impact on the conversations surrounding issues around the world. Many social movements have used social media as a tool to crowdsource with diverse stakeholders as well as spread their message to diverse communities and nations¹. One area that social media activism has seen a boom in has been feminism and the empowerment of women and girls. UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 is “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require more vigorous efforts, including legal frameworks, to counter deeply rooted gender-based discrimination that often results from patriarchal attitudes and related social norms” by 2030². In order to achieve this goal, there must be immediate action taken to eliminate the root causes of gender disparity. Based on data from 87 countries, 1 in 5 women and girls under the age of 50 will have experienced physical and/or sexual assault by an intimate partner within the last 12 months and women do 2.6 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men which leads to lower earnings and less time to engage in non-work activities³. These disparities make reaching SDG 5 vital. With the rising prevalence of hashtags like #MeToo and #TimesUp, there has been an enormous amount importance and

¹ DHIRAJ MURTHY, “INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA, ACTIVISM, AND ORGANIZATIONS.” *SOCIAL MEDIA SOCIETY*, VOL. 4, NO. 1, 1 FEB 2018.

² “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS” SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM. [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/SDG5](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5)

³ “SDG 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.” UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED: AUGUST 1, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UNWOMEN.ORG/EN/NEWS/IN-FOCUS/WOMEN-AND-THE-SDGS/SDG-5-GENDER-EQUALITY](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality)

attention placed on the issues of discrimination and violence in the workforce globally within the past year.

#METOO

On October 15, 2017, in response to sexual misconduct allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano posted a tweet urging victims of sexual assault or harassment to respond to her tweet with the words ‘me too’ in order to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.”⁴ This marked the beginning of the contemporary #MeToo movement, with over 30,000 people having responded to Milano’s tweet the following day. By early November 2017, #MeToo had been tweeted 2.3 million times from 85 countries and more than 24 million people had participated in the movement by posting, reacting and commenting over 77 million times.⁵ Women from various backgrounds who have participated in the #MeToo movement were named TIME magazine’s 2017 Person of the Year, accelerating the attention placed on the movement.

The movement has spread rapidly, having widespread impacts within the United States and around the world. In France, the hashtag #BalanceTonPorc, which translates to “snitch out your pic” was started by journalist Sandra Muller; Italians have taken to Twitter with the hashtag #QuellaVoltaChe, which translates to “that time when”; Spain trended #YoTambien which is #MeToo in Spanish, and direct translations of #MeToo in Arabic have spread throughout the Middle East and Africa regions. Data from early November 2017 showed that users in the United States, United Kingdom, India, France and Canada used #MeToo most heavily.⁶

⁴ @ALYSSA_MILANO. “IF YOU’VE BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED OR ASSAULTED WRITE ‘ME TOO’ AS A REPLY TO THIS TWEET.” TWITTER, 15 OCT. 2017, 1:21 P.M., [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/ALYSSA_MILANO/STATUS/919659438700670976](https://twitter.com/alyssa_milano/status/919659438700670976)

⁵ KARA FOX, “#METOO’S GLOBAL MOVEMENT: THE ANATOMY OF A VIRAL CAMPAIGN.” CNN, LAST MODIFIED: 9 NOV. 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.CNN.COM/2017/11/09/WORLD/METOO-HASHTAG-GLOBAL-MOVEMENT/INDEX.HTML](https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/09/world/metoo-hashtag-global-movement/index.html)

⁶ CATHERINE POWELL, “#METOO GOES GLOBAL AND CROSSES MULTIPLE BOUNDARIES ” COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, PUBLISHED: 14 DEC. 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.CFR.ORG/BLOG/METOO-GOES-GLOBAL-AND-CROSSES-MULTIPLE-BOUNDARIES](https://www.cfr.org/blog/metoo-goes-global-and-crosses-multiple-boundaries)

#TIMESUP

This movement was started on January 1, 2017 when 300 leading women in Hollywood published an open letter in the New York Times and La Opinión regarding gender parity in the workplace⁷. The Time's Up movement is a women's empowerment movement similar to #MeToo, but with more specific goals. The aim of the Time's Up organization is to create concrete change through the passage of legislation and large policy changes that will lead to safety and equity in the workplace, such as equal pay and equal work environments as well as increased opportunities for women in low wage industries and women of color⁸. They have also created the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund to provide legal and financial support for those who want to fight sexual misconduct through the legal system.

The movement, however, is not entirely centralized and consists of loosely aligned working groups, from farm workers to actresses, working on achieving different part of the broader issue. The movement initially made headlines during the Golden Globe Awards, when they called on attendees to wear all black in support of the movement's mission⁹. The movement expanded out of the United States when it spread to the United Kingdom with a call to wear all black to the BAFTAs.¹⁰

GLOBAL RESPONSE

In response to the #MeToo and #TimesUp allegations regarding legal protections against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, the International Labor Conference held its

⁷ ALIX LANGONE, "#METOO AND TIME'S UP FOUNDERS EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 2 MOVEMENTS — AND HOW THEY'RE ALIKE," TIME MAGAZINE, LAST MODIFIED: 22 MARCH 2016. [HTTP://TIME.COM/5189945/WHATS-THE-DIFFERENCE-BETWEEN-THE-METOO-AND-TIMES-UP-MOVEMENTS/](http://time.com/5189945/whats-the-difference-between-the-metoo-and-times-up-movements/)

⁸ ALIX LANGONE, 2018

⁹ ALIX LANGONE, 2018

¹⁰ "SISTERS, THIS IS OUR MOMENT TO SAY TIME'S UP," HUFFINGTON POST, PUBLISHED: 17 FEB 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/WORLD/2018/FEB/18/SISTERS-THIS-IS-OUR-MOMENT-TO-SAY-TIMES-UP](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/18/sisters-this-is-our-moment-to-say-times-up)

first discussion on the International Labor Organization's standard setting process on violence and harassment in early July 2018 in order to eradicate all forms of violence and harassment in the workplace. As a result of the discussion, no comprehensive resolution was passed but the Committee did adopt the draft resolution to place the item entitled "Violence and Harassment in the World of Work" on the agenda of the next ordinary session for the second discussion with a view to the adoption of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation. Much discussion was had regarding the actual Convention and it was determined that the Convention should not be one which is too prescriptive to where it becomes non-ratifiable but also should not be so weak or narrow in scope to where it is ineffective. There was also some concern given the method through which the Committee decided to take action as recent technical Conventions have had low levels of ratification. However, this represents a large step in the move forward towards achieving equality in the workplace along with decreasing violence and harassment women must face in the workplace at a global level¹¹.

Globally, there have been some developments as a result of the use of hashtag activism by women. Many prominent men in the United States, from those in politics to those in media, have lost their jobs and tarnished their reputations as a result of sexual harassment allegations by use of these hashtags. Britain has also seen the resignation of Defense Secretary Michael Fallon as a result of the use of these hashtags and also discontinued their mens-only charity gala following a Financial Times investigation stating that many of the waitresses were required to sexualize themselves and were groped by the men in attendance¹². In response to allegations in Sweden, the Swedish government has proposed tightening its rape law to stipulate that explicit

¹¹ "REPORTS OF THE STANDARD-SETTING COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS." *INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE*, 107TH SESSION, 6 JULY 2018.

¹² DAVID CRARY, "FOR #METOO MOVEMENT, A MIXED RECEPTION IN NATIONS OUTSIDE US," *FINANCIAL POST*, PUBLISHED: 6 MARCH 2018. [HTTPS://BUSINESS.FINANCIALPOST.COM/PMN/BUSINESS-PMN/FOR-METOO-MOVEMENT-A-MIXED-RECEPTION-IN-NATIONS-OUTSIDE-US](https://business.financialpost.com/pmN/business-pmN/for-metoo-movement-a-mixed-reception-in-nations-outside-us)

consent is required before any sexual contact. India has also seen a movement past hashtags and towards potential change with the arrest of Mahesh Murthy, the co-founder of Seedfund¹³.

Divisions can be seen in France where President Emmanuel Macron has strongly encouraged policies to promote gender equality but has been met by opposition of older French feminists who argue that #MeToo runs contrary to the sexual revolution's message to de-censor sexual desire¹⁴.

There has also been fallout and backlash against women who speak out as well as divisions created within groups regarding the use of hashtags like #MeToo. Japanese culture is such that people are expected to "bear one's hardship" which has deterred the reporting of sexual assault in the workplace. This culture has led to the fact that there has been no change of company policies, with 78% of Japanese companies announcing that they had not strengthened sexual harassment policies and 77% stating that they had no intention of doing so¹⁵. This trend has also been seen in Italy where Italian born actress and director Asia Argento was among the first to report Harvey Weinstein sexually assaulted her but, in Italy, she was met by heavy criticism for coming out with such accusations as well as a lack of change in government policies.¹⁶

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the use of the #MeToo hashtag has not been as prevalent but that does not mean that there has been an absence of activism through social media. In Lebanon, Lebanese feminist group KAFA advocated for the enforcement of a

¹³ "IS INDIA'S METOO GOING BEYOND HASHTAGS?" TIMES OF INDIA, LAST MODIFIED: 10 FEB 2018. [HTTPS://TIMESOFINDIA.INDIATIMES.COM/INDIA/IS-INDIAS-METOO-GOING-BEYOND-HASHTAGS/ARTICLESHOW/62857917.CMS](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/INDIA/IS-INDIAS-METOO-GOING-BEYOND-HASHTAGS/ARTICLESHOW/62857917.cms)

¹⁴ ERIKA COLLINS, "THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE #METOO MOVEMENT (PART 1)," NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, PUBLISHED: 10 JULY 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.LAW.COM/NEWYORKLAWJOURNAL/2018/07/10/THE-GLOBAL-IMPACT-OF-THE-METOO-MOVEMENT-PART-1/](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/07/10/the-global-impact-of-the-metoo-movement-part-1/)

¹⁵ ERIKA COLLINS, "THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE #METOO MOVEMENT (PART 2)," NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, PUBLISHED: 12 JULY 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.LAW.COM/NEWYORKLAWJOURNAL/2018/07/12/THE-GLOBAL-IMPACT-OF-THE-METOO-MOVEMENT-PART-2/?SLRETURN=20180715191043](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/07/12/the-global-impact-of-the-metoo-movement-part-2/?SLRETURN=20180715191043)

¹⁶ ERIKA COLLINS, 2018

domestic violence law that was passed in Beirut in 2014¹⁷. In Tunisia, human rights activists hailed the passage of a law that made it easier for sexual harassment crimes to be prosecuted and reported.¹⁸ However, this activism is not indicative of the entire region, as more conservative countries have seen a lack of reporting largely due to cultural norms that treat the issue as a taboo.¹⁹

CURRENT SHORTFALLS

The World Bank's "Women, Business, and the Law 2018" report found that only 59 out of 189 countries whose economies were studied had no specific legal provisions covering sexual harassment in employment²⁰. These legal gaps affect women in all countries and amongst all income levels which leaves approximately 424 million working age women, 235 million of which are in the workforce, with no legal recourse in the event they experience harassment or assault in their work environment²¹. In addition, there is no current international legal standard that addresses violence and harassment in the workplace.

Decreasing the gender parity in the workforce could also have large global economic impacts. McKinsey and Company released a report which quantifies the impact of equality in the workforce as women make up half of the working-age population. The report concludes that if the gender parity in the workforce is non-existent, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent could be added to global annual GDP by 2025²². These goals will not be fulfilled if every country in the

¹⁷ DINA BERLINER, "'#METOO' MOVEMENT STRUGGLES TO RESONATE IN ARAB COUNTRIES," THE MEDIA LINE, PUBLISHED: 17 JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.THEMEDIALINE.ORG/STUDENT-JOURNALISTS/METOO-MOVEMENT-STRUGGLES-RESONATE-ARAB-COUNTRIES/](http://www.themedialine.org/student-journalists/metoo-movement-struggles-resonate-arab-countries/)

¹⁸ DINA BERLINER, 2018

¹⁹ DINA BERLINER, 2018

²⁰ "WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2018," THE WORLD BANK, PUBLISHED: 2018

²¹ JODY HEYMAN, "COMMENTARY: WHEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS LEGAL," FORTUNE MAGAZINE, PUBLISHED: 17 NOVEMBER 2017. [HTTP://FORTUNE.COM/2017/11/17/SEXUAL-HARASSMENT-LEGAL-GAPS/](http://fortune.com/2017/11/17/sexual-harassment-legal-gaps/)

²² JONATHAN WOETZEL, "HOW ADVANCING WOMEN'S EQUALITY CAN ADD \$12 TRILLION TO GLOBAL GROWTH," MCKINSEY&COMPANY, PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 2015. [HTTPS://WWW.MCKINSEY.COM/FEATURED-INSIGHTS/EMPLOYMENT-AND-GROWTH/HOW-ADVANCING-WOMENS-EQUALITY-CAN-ADD-12-TRILLION-TO-GLOBAL-GROWTH](https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth)

world does not create laws and provide the legal tools for men and women to address the issues of gender parity and harassment and assault in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

With the rising importance and prevalence of social media in society, it is being used to insight meaningful change and spread experiences globally. Gender inequality and parity is one of the most important issues facing the global community and must be addressed. By addressing the root causes of such parity: inequalities in education, sexual misconduct and harassment, and equal opportunity for work, the United Nations may be able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality. With the rise of hashtags such as #MeToo, #TimesUp and many more, the global feminist community is conducting a rallying call. However, in order for such hashtag activism to be effective, the international community must first create an international legal standard that addresses violence and harassment in the workplace. Also, countries must pass stricter legislation regarding harassment in the workplace and must then enforce that legislation effectively. By providing the legal tools to effectively fight the barriers currently facing women in their responses to barriers in the workplace and their development, countries, and the global community, will see a much brighter future.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What hashtags have been created and/or used by your nation?
2. How has your nation responded to the use of such hashtags?
3. Has your nation censored or blocked hashtags from being used?
4. What laws does your nation currently have in place as protections for women in the workforce, or in the community?
5. In what ways is your nation's legislation lacking in the field of women empowerment?

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STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS: ELABORATING ON THE CONVENTION OF AGING

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69TH SESSION
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK
JOHN SPEVACEK – ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

When one considers vulnerable populations and minority groups globally, many images come to mind, however, the elderly are rarely among those images. It is the role of the Third Committee to look over reports of human rights and ensure that no group is forgotten on the path to ensuring equal rights for all. These responsibilities are designated in Article I of the United Nations Charter which encourages equal rights and self determination for all. The Third Committee outlines plans and create guidelines to ensure the safety and security of older persons in the face of potential abuses all around the world. The third committee must provide a universal set of guidelines for countries to follow that ensures the protection of the rights of the elderly as the world's population is increasingly comprised of those over the age of 65. These guidelines must outline workable strategies that utilize governments, the private sector, and the global community to address economic, social, and health needs that are predicted to arise as the world's population ages.

SOURCES OF HUMAN LONGEVITY

The average life expectancy of humans has drastically risen in the past 200 years. In 1800, global life expectancy was around 32 years of age, while in 2012 the global life expectancy was 70 years of age¹. There are many factors that contribute to this increase. Decline

¹ MAX ROSER. "LIFE EXPECTANCY," OUR WORLD IN DATA, ACCESSED JULY 30, 2018. [HTTPS://OURWORLDINDATA.ORG/LIFE-EXPECTANCY](https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy)

in infant mortality, better understanding of nutrition and, most importantly, the advancement of modern medicine have all lead to better living conditions around the world. The first vaccination was performed in 1796 by Edward Jenner who used cowpox to inoculate an eight year old boy to small pox. While what Jenner did was common practice in many rural areas, his usage of the scientific method during his testing of inoculations put the smallpox vaccination into the mainstream scientific community. Louis Pasteur expanded on this with the development of his rabies antitoxin in 1885. Despite early successes, vaccines and immunizations would require more government support and global outreach to achieve their full potential².

In the United States and many European countries, immunizations became a requirement for children entering public schools. As more immunizations were discovered, more were required by these governments. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) then worked to bring immunizations worldwide following their creations. The WHO launched several vaccination and immunization campaigns such as the campaign to eradicate smallpox between 1966 and 1977. The campaign was largely successful with smallpox being effectively eradicated, however the WHO remains ready to deal with any potential resurgences³. Since then, the WHO has continued its crusade with the Global Vaccine Action Plan which aims to expand vaccinations in developing countries to the point where 90% of target populations are vaccinated against polio, measles mumps, rubella, and neonatal tetanus by 2020⁴.

² ALEXANDRA MINNA STERN AND HOWARD MARKEL. "THE HISTORY OF VACCINES AND IMMUNIZATION: FAMILIAR PATTERNS, NEW CHALLENGES," HEALTH AFFAIRS, LAST MODIFIED, JUNE 2005.
[HTTPS://WWW.HEALTHAFFAIRS.ORG/DOI/FULL/10.1377/HLTHAFF.24.3.611](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.24.3.611)

³ "SMALLPOX VACCINES," WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, ACCESSED JULY 23, 2018.
[HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/CSR/DISEASE/SMALLPOX/VACCINES/EN/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/smallpox/vaccines/en/)

⁴ GLOBAL VACCINE ACTION PLAN 2011-2020, (GENEVA: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2013),
[HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/IMMUNIZATION/GLOBAL_VACCINE_ACTION_PLAN/GVAP_GUIDING_PRINCIPLES_MEASURE_S_OF_SUCCESS_AND_GOALS.PDF?UA=1](http://www.who.int/immunization/global_vaccine_action_plan/gvap_guiding_principles_measure_s_of_success_and_goals.pdf?ua=1)

Along with vaccinations, understanding about how diseases are spread has helped to reduce deaths. 1847 saw Ignaz Semmelweis discover the link between patient mortality and medical staff washing their hands. The first hand hygiene laws were implemented in the 1980s in the US and are now common practice for doctors across the globe⁵. The development of germ theory by Louis Pasteur led to the understanding of how disease spread driving development of strategies to dealing with outbreaks of disease as well as ways of combating diseases.

The advancement of agricultural technology also contributed to the increased longevity of the human species. In many places, the danger of famine is, similar to the danger of major infectious disease, simply not a major concern. Modern agricultural technology allows for more food to be produced and modern preservation techniques like refrigeration allow for food to be stored for increased lengths of time. Indeed, famine and malnutrition, especially in children, infants, and the unborn, leads to decreases in the efficacy of the immune system. Famine also leads to other long term health deficiencies including mood disorders, metabolic disorders, heart disorders, and genetic disorders⁶. What all these discoveries lead to was lower infant mortality, lessened chance of dying to common diseases, and longer, healthier lives.

IMPLICATIONS IN HEALTHCARE

As mortality rates decrease, and as major infectious diseases are being controlled, new issues come to the forefront of medical care. The presence of chronic non-communicable disease has seen an overall increase in comparison to other types of disease. This creates a unique

⁵ WHO GUIDELINES ON HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTH CARE: FIRST GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY CHALLENGE CLEAN CARE IS SAFER CARE, (GENEVA: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2009).
[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/BOOKS/NBK144018/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK144018/)

⁶ GABRIELE DOBLHAMMER ET AL, "LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF FAMINE ON LIFE EXPECTANCY. A RE-ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT FINNISH FAMINE OF 1866-1868" (PRESENTATION, EUROPEAN POPULATION CONFERENCE, VIENNA, AT, 2010).
[HTTP://EPC2010.PRINCETON.EDU/PAPERS/100549](http://EPC2010.PRINCETON.EDU/PAPERS/100549)

problem for modern healthcare implementation as medical issues are becoming less temporary in all parts of the world.⁷ Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes along with other chronic mental diseases like dementia make up the majority of deaths in richest countries with chronic and degenerative disease set to make up the majority of deaths in countries with lower gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030. Death from infectious and communicable diseases and injury are expected to continue to decrease, but the elderly are more susceptible to both as their bodies and immune systems age which could lead to potential fluctuations.

Issues of disability and chronic illness are a greater threat to elderly populations and therefore must drive much of the conversation regarding proper care for these populations. The most cost effective solution to the issue of chronic disease is to not get a chronic disease in the first place as constant care leads to increased costs for all parties involved in the healthcare process. This would encourage the usage of primary care physicians to perform regular checkups and ensure that patients are living lives that reduce their risk of getting some chronic illness. However, diseases such as cancer and degenerative disorders like dementia are much more difficult to contend with in terms of preemptive control. The question of individual responsibility against collective responsibility will be one that many countries will contend with in ensuring quality of life for the elderly as well as ensuring the adequate distribution of healthcare.⁸

Healthcare costs are expected to rise all over the world in response to larger demographics of the population being older. According to the WHO the world spent 600 billion United States Dollars (USD) caring for dementia patients, both formally and informally, over the course of 2010. In 2015 the Alzheimer's Disease International concluded that there were 46.8

⁷ DOROTHY P. RICE AND CARROLL L. ESTES. "HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY: POLICY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES," LAST MODIFIED JANUARY 1, 1984. [HTTPS://WWW.HEALTHAFFAIRS.ORG/DOI/10.1377/HLTHAFF.3.4.25](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.3.4.25)

⁸ HARALD SCHMIDT. "PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS: CASES SPANNING THE GLOBE," NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY INFORMATION, LAST MODIFIED APRIL 13, 2016. [HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/BOOKS/NBK435779/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK435779/)

million people in the world with dementia and predicted the number to rise, especially in countries with lower GDP.⁹ Dementia and Alzheimers are just two of the potential long term diseases that the elderly face with cancer also seeing an increase in prevalence. The WHO estimated the 13 million new cases of cancer in 2009 cost upwards of 286 billion USD worldwide.¹⁰ It is predicted for the number of cases of cancer to increase by 23.1 million cases on average going into 2030 according to Cancer Research UK, a charity based in the United Kingdom.¹¹ Other disease such as heart disease must also be considered and it is up to the countries of the world to determine how to fund medical procedures for their elderly populations to ensure happy and healthy lives.

WORLD ASSEMBLIES ON AGING

The First World Assembly on Aging was held in Vienna in 1982 by recommendation of the UN General Assembly and laid out the groundwork to “launch an international action programme aimed at guaranteeing economic and social security to older persons, as well as opportunities to contribute to national development". A point worth noting is that the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging focused on the growth of the population older than 60, whilst the World Bank collects data on persons aged 65 and above. The document outlines that each individual country should observe and acknowledge their individual demographics and make active plans to deal with any issues that might arise from said demographics while maintaining a place in the global economic order.

⁹ "DEMENTIA STATISTICS," ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL, RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.ALZ.CO.UK/RESEARCH/STATISTICS](https://www.alz.co.uk/research/statistics)

¹⁰ "GLOBAL HEALTH AND AGING." WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 20, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/AGEING/PUBLICATIONS/GLOBAL_HEALTH.PDF](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global_health.pdf)

¹¹ "WORLDWIDE CANCER STATISTICS," CANCER RESEARCH UK. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.CANCERRESEARCHUK.ORG/HEALTH-PROFESSIONAL/CANCER-STATISTICS/WORLDWIDE-CANCER/INCIDENCE](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/worldwide-cancer/incidence)

In total, the Vienna document provided 62 recommendations, along with contexts for these recommendations, to countries as the world population grows older. The document itself recognizes the vagueness of some of its statements and addresses this by encouraging a more national solution to aging problems rather than relying on the international community. Many of the introductory recommendations are based primarily around encouraging countries to acknowledge the issues that may arise from aging populations and to prepare accordingly. While the document puts a considerable amount of emphasis on individual governments to address the issue, it also encourages private volunteers and enterprises to take part in assisting the population as it grows older. Private involvement is significantly understated throughout the document, as recommendations include guidelines around how public housing should work as well as integration between public healthcare and social security. It also suggests that governments provide a minimum income for the elderly.

The document addresses a sweeping range of issues around aging individuals while maintaining a focus on human rights and dignity for the elderly¹². The Vienna document was then reinforced in 2002 with the Second World Assembly on Aging held in Madrid. While the Vienna document served as a list of recommendations, the Madrid assembly expanded on the issue. The Madrid document shifted focus to include developing countries and provided a greater emphasis on private sector involvement and government integration with the private sector. The two share a common thread regarding the right of the elderly to self determination, protection of human rights, and the right for anyone to work until they choose not to.

The Madrid document went into much greater detail on many topics of aging and it addressed new issues as well. Neglect and elder abuse, a trend more common in developed

¹² "INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGING." INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON AGING, ACCESSED AUGUST 4, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/EVENTS/ELDERABUSE/PDF/VIPAA.PDF](http://www.un.org/en/events/elderabuse/pdf/vipaa.pdf)

nations, is discussed while the effect HIV/AIDS has on the elderly in developing nations is also discussed. Most importantly, the Madrid document expanded the focus of who should be working to implement the recommendations presented by the two documents. While the Vienna document provided great emphasis on individual country participation, the Madrid document calls for a greater combination of national, international, and private organizations, governments, and bodies to look to execute the plans put forth by the two assemblies¹³.

MODERN CASE STUDIES OF AGING

With all of this in mind, an understanding can be reached about what is required to get a person to have a higher chance of living longer. Proper medical care and nutrition are vital to inherent longevity. While the World Assemblies on Aging provided solutions, the issue of aging populations continues to plague many nations. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in Japan. As of 2017 Japan has the highest percentage of adults 65 and older in the world. Japan is joined by many European nations that face the issue of rapid aging.

Table 1
% of pop over 65

Country	1960	2017
Japan	6	27
Italy	9	23
Portugal	8	22

¹³ "POLITICAL DECLARATION AND MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN ON AGING." SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING, ACCESSED AUGUST 4, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/ESA/SOCDEV/DOCUMENTS/AGEING/MIPAA/POLITICAL-DECLARATION-EN.PDF](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/mipaa/political-declaration-en.pdf)

Between the 2002 assembly and the 72nd session of the Third Committee, Japan's population saw a shift of 18% to 27% of the population being 65 and older¹⁴. This shows that the World Assemblies are even more important and must play a greater role in the world. However, the aging population is just one of the things that factors into Japan's high elderly population. Birth rates in Japan, as well as Europe have decreased while their populations have aged. Japan also has the sixth highest suicide rate in the world, the second highest of the major industrial nations. Suicide also is the highest cause of death in the demographic group of people aged 15-35; the group that is expected to care for Japan's aging population. While the Japanese government has taken steps to reduce the suicide rate, and has seen some success, this opens questions regarding how other factors can play into demographic imbalance in countries¹⁵.

The lack of effect of the World Assemblies on Aging was noted in the 72nd session of the Third Committee, with the the second preambulatory clause of the adopted resolution stating, "Recognizing that, in many parts of the world, awareness of the Madrid Plan of Action remains limited or non-existent, which limits the scope of implementation efforts."¹⁶ This raises even more questions as to whether or not another assembly should be held with the focus of raising awareness for an issue that doesn't seem to have grabbed the attention of the public as was expected. The issue of aging populations has yet to hit developing countries, especially those in Asia and Africa, while it poses a much greater problem to developed countries. This puts particular strain on developed nations to address the issue.

¹⁴ "POPULATION AGES 65 AND ABOVE (% OF TOTAL)." THE WORLD BANK, ACCESSED JULY 30, 2018. [HTTPS://DATA.WORLDBANK.ORG/INDICATOR/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS)

¹⁵ TOMOKO OTAKE. "SUICIDES DOWN, BUT JAPAN STILL SECOND HIGHEST AMONG MAJOR INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS, REPORT SAYS," LAST MODIFIED MAY 30, 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/NEWS/2017/05/30/NATIONAL/SOCIAL-ISSUES/PREVENTIVE-EFFORTS-SEEN-HELPING-2016-SAW-ANOTHER-DECLINE-SUICIDES-JAPAN-21897/#.W3PTUEHKG2W](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/30/national/social-issues/preventive-efforts-seen-helping-2016-saw-another-decline-suicides-japan-21897/#.W3PTUEHKG2W)

¹⁶ UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 72ND SESSION. THIRD COMMITTEE. *SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY ECUADOR: * REVISED DRAFT RESOLUTION*. (A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1). 13 NOVEMBER 2017. [HTTP://UNDOCS.ORG/A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1](http://undocs.org/A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1)

Japan sits as the country to be impacted by an older population the most and its actions, whether they result in failure or success, will most likely influence how many other nations deal with the pending issue. As a country develops, it goes through what is referred to as a demographic window where there is a boom in the working age population, followed by a decreased fertility rate, and finally a higher percentage of the population that is older. In Uruguay, a study by the World bank suggested that this demographic shift would lead to an increase in the cost of social services such as health and education from 25% of total GDP allocation to 43% of total GDP allocation from 2013 to 2100¹⁷. This would have a huge impact on the economy and Uruguay isn't even the most hard pressed of all the nations in regard to its aging population. As shown in Table 1, Italy and Portugal followed a similar trend in demographic change that Japan did and many other European and developed countries are close behind. This would encourage that any future recommendations regarding aging focus on how to alter the economy to deal with an older population as well as providing enough care and focus on the elderly.

CONCLUSION

The issue of aging populations is a complicated one that has been addressed thoroughly but still has unexplored, and underemphasized aspects to it. Ultimately, each country will have to face its own problems head on but the impact of a connected world could potentially change outcomes some countries are afraid of. The effectiveness of the the previous Assemblies on Aging has already been called into question and perhaps different plans are required for different times. The goal of all these deliberations must of course focus on the security, happiness, and

¹⁷ LETICIA FERREIRA. "HOW DOES AN AGING POPULATION AFFECT A COUNTRY?," LAST MODIFIED SEPTEMBER 1, 2016. [HTTP://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/NEWS/FEATURE/2016/09/05/URUGUAY-COMO-AFECTA-PAIS-ENVEJECIMIENTO-POBLACION](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/09/05/uruguay-como-afecta-pais-envejecimiento-poblacion)

overall treatment of the elderly across the world. Human rights must be upheld, especially for the most vulnerable in society. It is the focus of this committee to provide a proactive framework to address the future of societies as they age and how to deal with the consequences of what aging populations mean to the future of every country.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Consider actions taken and suggested in the past Assemblies on Aging. What must be added to ensure effective care and precautions are taken in the future as the world's population ages?
2. What solutions, not already explored, can be put in place to ensure the safety, security, and livelihood of elderly populations?
3. How can aging populations help themselves rather than relying on younger generations to provide most of the assistance necessary?
4. What other factors affect the age demographic shifts in developed countries and how can these factors be addressed?
5. How can the work of the Past Assemblies on Aging be made more well known across the world to encourage countries to address this inevitable issue?
6. How can the international community address aging on both a country by country basis as well as at a global scale?
7. What roles should governments, organizations, companies, and the international community play in addressing aging and how can these groups be integrated effectively?
8. How will the economies of the future shift with aging populations and what must be done to ensure economic stability?
9. How should chronic and degenerative diseases be dealt with and what steps should the international community take to ensure quality of life for aging populations?

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