SOC HUM

Georgia Tech
Model United Nations

Committee
Social, Humanitarian &
Cultural Issues Committee

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#GTMUN2025

Bridging technology and diplomacy.

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Letter from the Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates,

It is my greatest honor to welcome you to the 26th Georgia Tech Model United Nations Conference. My name is Victoria Rodriguez, and I have the privilege of serving as the Secretary General for the 2025 session.

As a mechanical engineering student here at Georgia Tech, I can confidently say that participating in Model United Nations (MUN) has opened several personal, academic, and professional doors. In this journey of 13 years, I've had the opportunity of being a delegate, a director, a mentor, and finally, a Sec-Gen. Sometimes a breeze, sometimes an up-hill battle filled with blood, sweat and tears. I've made several friends and won awards along the way, but what I truly carry with me are the important things: the value of empathy, the courage to speak when it matters, and the humility to listen when others have something to teach.

This year, we are bringing you our largest GTMUN to date. With approximately 900 delegates joining us in 16 committees, we are proud to be one of the most dynamic forums for debate in the Southeastern United States. And I can promise you that it will also be the best GTMUN yet, given the tireless work of our Secretariat and staff, who have poured their hearts and souls into building a conference that you will remember long after the gavels fall.

GTMUN is more than just a conference; it is an opportunity for exploration. Through the years, we have cultivated a space where you can explore different positions on the global stage, discover new ways to approach problems and craft solutions, and test the kind of delegate you want to become. You will experiment with speeches, refine your negotiation style, and create crisis arcs that challenge both you and your peers in committee. Just as Georgia Tech is a hub for innovation, GTMUN is the best space to challenge you intellectually, diplomatically, and personally.

But the value of this conference goes beyond leadership, teamwork, and public speaking. Like our slogan says, "bridging technology and diplomacy," GTMUN is about bringing ideas closer to people. It's about connecting logic with compassion, ambition with responsibility, and creativity with collaboration. I hope the skills you foster during this year's conference (and the friends you make along the way) will be something you carry with you far beyond these two days.

As you prepare for this conference, I encourage you to bring all your energy, passion, and curiosity into every committee session. Debate boldly, listen openly, and collaborate sincerely. On behalf of the GTMUN Secretariat, I welcome you to the GTMUN 2025 Conference. We cannot wait to see the impact you will make.

Wishing you the best of luck as you prepare for your committee,

Victoria Rodriguez

Secretary General of GTMUN 2025

Position Paper Rubric

What is a *Position Paper*?

A position paper is a paper which describes how a country intends to address the topics of the committee, detailing tangible solutions to committee issues and connection to the country's policies. A position paper should contain details for each topic that will be addressed by the committee.

Formatting Requirements

- 12-point font, double-spaced Times New Roman
- 1-2 pages per topic (excluding Works Cited page)
- A Works Cited page with citations in MLA format
- Files submitted in .pdf format with title "GTMUN25_{short committee name}_{assigned country name}.pdf"
- e.g., "GTMUN25_DISEC_GERMANY.pdf" or "GTMUN25_UNOOSA_United_States.pdf"

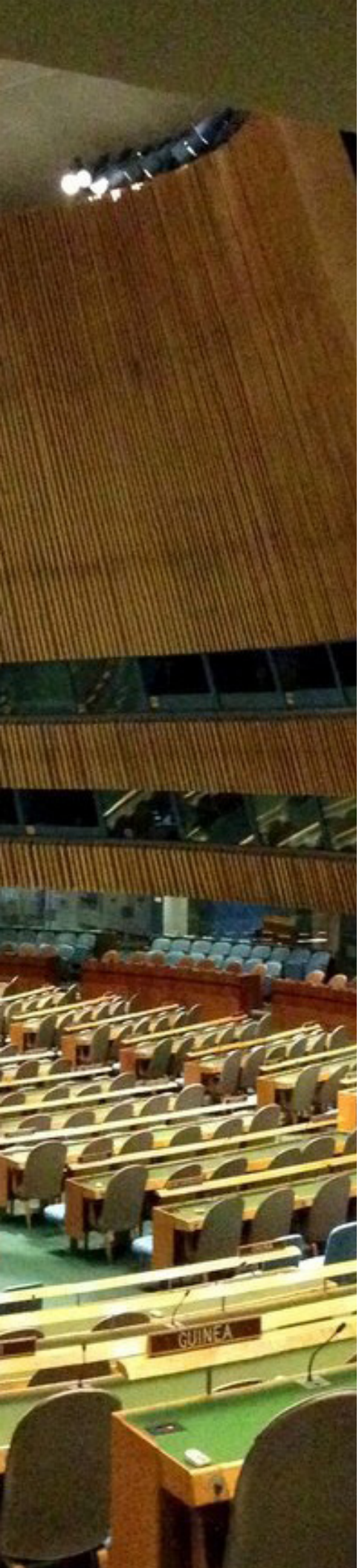
START EACH TOPIC PAGE WITH

- Committee: [Name of committee]
- Delegation: [Name of delegation]
- Topic: [Topic name/description]

In order to be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a position paper and receive a score of at least **12/20 (for single-topic committees)** or **24/40 (for double-topic committees).**

	Great (5)	Good (4)	Adequate (3)	Poor (1)
Background	• Detailed description of the topic (including dates and stakeholders) • Several facts and statistics • Discusses many relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Basic description of topic (including some dates and stakeholders) • Some facts and statistics • Discusses some relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Minimal description of topic (with no or few dates and stakeholders) • Few facts and statistics • Misses some key relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Unclear or incorrect description of topic • Incorrect or missing facts or statistics • No mention of relevant UN documents and resolutions
Policy	• Country's detailed history with issue • Detailed present position (or a strongly-defended inferred position) of country • Several references to statements from appropriate officials or documents • Several facts and statistics	• Country's basic history with issue • Present position (or reasonable inferred position) of country • Some references to statements from appropriate officials or documents • Some facts and statistics	• Sparsely describes country's history with issue • Present position (or basic inferred position) of country • Few references to statements from appropriate officials and documents • Few facts and statistics	• Incorrect or missing description of country's history with issue • Incorrect present position (or unreasonably inferred position) of country • No references to statements from appropriate officials and documents • Incorrect or missing facts and statistics
Solutions	• Detailed personal objectives • Proposes well-supported potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with and provides strong reasoning for selections • Actionable, reasonable solutions which are within the scope of the committee	• Expresses personal objectives • Proposes reasonable potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with and provides reasonable justification for selections • Actionable solutions within the scope of committee	• States personal objectivew • Proposes potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with • Actionable solutions	• No proposed goals or plans • No potential collaborators mentioned • Implausible or missing actionable solutions
Mechanics	• No grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors • Numerous and diverse citations from appropriate sources	• Few grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors • Citations from appropriate sources	• Some grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes • One or two citations from inappropriate sources	• Many grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes • No citations from appropriate sources


ETHIOPIA



Introduction to Committee

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, also known as the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), was established alongside the UN Charter in 1945 as one of the six main committees of the General Assembly. It primarily centers on addressing issues related to human rights, humanitarian affairs, and the protection of fundamental freedoms through the examination of reports from the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The committee also considers matters concerning indigenous rights, the treatment of refugees, the elimination of racial discrimination, the protection of children, and the promotion of the right to self-determination. While it cannot pass legally binding resolutions, its work is instrumental in shaping global norms and raising international awareness on social justice and humanitarian concerns. Delegates in this committee will be tasked with crafting resolutions that balance state sovereignty with universal human rights. https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml

Disclaimer

The topics addressed in this committee touch upon deeply complex cultural, historical, and political issues that affect millions of people worldwide. Many delegates may have personal connections to nomadic communities, indigenous peoples, or populations affected by sanctions, while others may come from states with histories of implementing policies that have impacted these groups. Delegates should represent their assigned nation's positions while ensuring they act in accordance with the GTMUN delegate handbook, the values of the GTMUN program, and Georgia

Tech as a whole. When engaging in debate, we ask that you approach discussions with sensitivity and awareness of the lived experiences of affected communities, avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes or dismissive characterizations of nomadic lifestyles or sanctioned populations, recognize the dignity and agency of all peoples regardless of their way of life or political circumstances, be respectful of fellow delegates' personal experiences and beliefs, and focus on creating productive, meaningful, and constructive debate that seeks genuine solutions rather than rhetoric. The goal of this committee is to develop thoughtful, evidence-based approaches to protecting human rights and alleviating humanitarian suffering while respecting cultural diversity and state sovereignty, and we encourage all delegates to engage these challenging topics with the gravity and respect they deserve.

Topic 1

Rights and Protections for Peripatetic/Nomadic Minorities

Key Terms and Acronyms

Nomadism	A way of life characterized by regular or seasonal movement rather than permanent settlement. Nomadic communities may move in search of pasture, trade, or natural resources and often have deep cultural, spiritual, and ecological ties to the land they traverse.
Peripatetic Minorities	Groups whose livelihoods rely on constant travel, often for trade or craftwork. Their movement is often economic and cultural, rather than ecological.
Sedentarization	The state-led process of encouraging or forcing nomadic groups to adopt a settled, stationary lifestyle. While sometimes presented as a development, sedentarization can threaten cultural identity, livelihoods, and autonomy.
Customary Land Rights	Traditional and unwritten systems of land ownership or stewardship used by nomadic and indigenous groups. These often conflict with modern legal systems based on individual land titles and permanent addresses.
Legal Invisibility	A condition in which communities are not formally recognized by national or international legal systems, leading to a lack of access to citizenship, justice, services, and land rights.

Indigenous Peoples	The variety of life on earth, including the diversity of species, ecosystems, and genetic variation
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)	Ethnically distinct communities that maintain historical continuity with pre-colonial societies and often retain unique cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and land-based traditions. Many nomadic groups are considered indigenous under international frameworks like the UNDRIP.
Cultural Preservation	An organism used to control a pest/invasive species

Introduction

In The Fellowship of the Ring, J.R.R Tolkien once wrote, “Not all those who wander are lost.” These words echo a truth that has existed for millennia and resonate deeply with the lived reality of millions of people whose identities, cultures, and livelihoods are shaped by movement rather than settlement. For centuries, humanity has celebrated the development of permanent settlements as milestones of civilization, with sedentary populations viewing the image of the nomad with both curiosity and suspicion alike.

Nomadism refers to a way of life rooted in cyclical or periodic movement. Unlike migrants who relocate permanently, nomadism is characterized by periodic or seasonal movement across familiar routes. This lifestyle is shaped by cultural tradition and the geographic and environmental conditions in which nomadic communities live.[1]

Nomads come back after travelling for seven days in the Moroccan desert on March 16, 2013 in M’hamid El Ghizlane, southeast of Zagora

Today, nomads continue to inhabit the world’s most challenging terrains, such as deserts, tundra, and steppes, where mobility is the most logical strategy to utilize sparse resources efficiently.[2]

Broadly, nomadic communities can be categorized into three groups, each with its own distinct patterns of movement and cultural practices:

- Pastoral Nomads move seasonally in search of pasture for their livestock. Their lives revolve around animal husbandry, and their migratory patterns are tied

to climatic cycles and forage availability for their livestock. Today, between 30 and 40 million pastoralists continue this tradition worldwide. Examples include the goat herders of the Peruvian Andes, who move vertically between ecological zones depending on the season, and the Sami of Scandinavia, whose annual 300-kilometer migration with reindeer traces back to before modern borders.[3]

Nomadic pastoralists in Mongolia prepare for a big move with their animals as the harsh climate aggravates

- Hunter-Gatherers, such as the San people of the Kalahari Desert, the Inuit in Arctic Canada, and other Amazonian tribes, rely on subsistence hunting and gathering. These societies follow animal migrations and seasonal plant growth. Though many have begun to assimilate aspects of modern economies, they remain with a deep knowledge of their environments.[2]

The nomadic Awá tribe of Brazil is one of the world's last "uncontacted" and one of the most endangered tribes

Romani men in Britain

- Peripatetic Nomads, including craftworkers and traders such as the Romani (also known as Travellers), sustain themselves through mobile trade, craftsmanship, and temporary labor. With ancestral roots in northern India, the Roma have maintained a trans-European presence for centuries.[2]

Despite their diversity, many nomadic communities share common experiences of marginalization. Modern nation-states, which are structured around land

ownership, borders, and infrastructure, often struggle or fail to accommodate populations that transcend these boundaries. Throughout the 20th century, economic development, industrial expansion, and state-building policies led to a significant decline in nomadic populations. Nomadism was frequently portrayed as outdated and incompatible with national progress or modern life.[1] However, such assumptions are increasingly being challenged. Anthropological studies reveal that nomadic peoples possess complex systems of governance, territorial organization, and legal customs that are both effective and culturally rich. Far from being primitive or lawless, many nomadic groups maintain intricate institutional frameworks (such as those historically found among the Vogouls, Samoyeds, Tongouses, and Yakuts) which rival the sophistication of many sedentary societies.[4]

Furthermore, these communities often have a strong sense of belonging and attachment to their territories, even if their presence is not continuous. Access to wide terrains of land is essential for their economic survival and the preservation of their cultural identity. Denying this access through forced settlement, legal exclusion, or environmental degradation threatens their livelihoods and existence as distinct peoples.

Thus, the question facing the international community today is not whether nomadic societies can "catch up" to the modern world, but whether global systems of governance and human rights can evolve to recognize and protect alternative ways of living. Nomadism is a living tradition, deserving of dignity, legal recognition, and the right to self-determination.

As this committee begins its discussions, delegates are invited to reimagine the relationship between movement and rights, tradition and progress, and ultimately, between people and the places they call home.

Common Challenges and Discussion Points

Though nomadic societies continue to be resilient, they now face unprecedented challenges, many of which stem from policies and structures that favor settlement, privatization, and rigid conceptions of national development. These pressures threaten their physical movement, cultural preservation, legal recognition, and basic human rights.

Forced Sedentarization and Land Loss

Across the globe, governments and development agendas have implemented policies aimed at encouraging or coercing nomadic populations into permanent settlements. These sedentarization efforts are often framed as steps toward modernization or economic integration, but in practice, they frequently strip nomads of their mobility and their traditional means of survival.

Oil palm plantation on the shores of Lake Izabal in Guatemala, established in land that is of the Indigenous Maya Q'eqchi

Nomadic lands are increasingly encroached upon by expanding cities, private farms, ranches, and infrastructural projects. In Kenya, attempts to privatize and redistribute traditional Maasai grazing lands have resulted in nearly half of these territories falling into non-Maasai hands. In Rajasthan, India, the Raika camel herders have lost access to over 50% of their historical pastures in just four decades.[5] Similar patterns are seen in Inner Mongolia, where state-sponsored agriculture has overtaken grazing lands, forcing many pastoralists to become sedentary ranchers.[6]

Legal Invisibility and Statelessness

One of the most profound obstacles faced by nomadic peoples is the lack of legal recognition. National and international legal frameworks are largely designed with sedentary populations in mind, making it difficult for nomadic communities to claim land rights, access services, or even acquire citizenship.

In many legal systems, residency requirements are fundamental to accessing justice, education, healthcare, and even legal identity. As Dr. Jeremie Gilbert notes, "To get citizenship, one needs a permanent abode. To get access to justice, one needs a permanent residency".[5]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's manual on international law, which significantly shaped how the modern world understands international relations, reinforced this bias, dismissing nomadism as "utterly deprived of juridical relevance," a stance that continues to influence how governments and international bodies treat nomadic communities.[4] When land use by nomads is categorized as "empty," it becomes vulnerable to state appropriation and commercial exploitation.

Climate Change and Environmental Instability

The climate crisis is having a disproportionate impact on nomadic communities, who are deeply dependent on ecological patterns. In East Africa, the Afar people face shrinking pastures and water sources due to intensifying droughts and climate variability. Their challenges are compounded by infrastructure megaprojects and regional conflicts, which disrupt migration routes and resource access.[5]

Amazigh children in Morocco fill jugs with fresh water from a local pump, as the tribe's nomadic way of life is heavily threatened by natural disasters and climate change

In Iran, a prolonged 15-year drought has pushed many Bakhtiari nomads away from traditional herding and toward urban centers, while worsening environmental degradation makes their livelihood increasingly unsustainable.[7]

Cultural Erosion and Language Loss

The disruption of nomadic life often results in the erosion of languages, oral traditions, and cultural practices that have been passed down for generations. In Indonesia, the Punan Batu, an isolated nomadic clan in Borneo, escaped decades of forced assimilation. Anthropologists only recently discovered they speak a unique "song language" whose vocabulary has just 70% overlap between speakers, suggesting a linguistic form dating back centuries.[8]

Despite this extraordinary cultural richness, their forest habitat is being lost at an alarming rate. Palm oil plantations and logging companies continue to trespass on their land, and while the local government has acknowledged their traditional presence, legal protection for their territory remains absent.[8]

Barriers to Education, Healthcare, and Equality

Nomadic communities are often left out of modern service infrastructures. Schools, hospitals, and social services are rarely designed with mobility in mind, and as a result, nomadic children may struggle to access continuous education, while elders face difficulties receiving healthcare.

In Iran, the nomadic population of once over a million is dwindling considerably,

In many parts of the world, a birth certificate and permanent address is necessary for children to be enrolled in school

mostly because younger generations are drawn to the opportunities of urban life. Technological change and mobile internet have exposed nomadic youth, especially women, to new ideas about gender, labor, and rights. While these changes offer new pathways, they also highlight the absence of institutional support for integrating tradition and progress.[8] In many cases, modernization has created the need to choose between assimilation and abandonment. Delegates are encouraged to consider the need for serious efforts to reform systems of education, healthcare, and governance to include nomadic lifestyles.

Case Studies

The Tuareg of the Sahel

The Tuareg, a traditionally nomadic Berber people of the Sahara Desert, have long inhabited vast stretches of land across Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya, and Burkina Faso. Known for their expertise in desert navigation, oral traditions, and trans-Saharan trade, the Tuareg have historically maintained a degree of autonomy despite colonial

Touaregs at the Festival au Desert near Timbuktu, Mali

and post-colonial state boundaries. In Mali, however, long-standing grievances over political marginalization and economic exclusion have led to several Tuareg uprisings, including a 2012 rebellion that declared the short-lived independent state of Azawad. This movement became further entangled with violent extremist groups, triggering displacement and instability across the region.[9]

Today, Tuareg communities continue to grapple with the dual pressures of political conflict and climate change. Increasing desertification has disrupted traditional grazing routes, while armed violence and restrictive policies hinder safe movement across borders. Many Tuareg have been pushed into urban displacement camps or forced to abandon pastoralism altogether. While some advocate for greater autonomy and cultural recognition, others struggle to access basic resources in unstable states.

Roma and Travellers suffer 'persistent' discrimination in the United Kingdom. A demonstration of communities against the police, crime, sentencing and courts bell in London

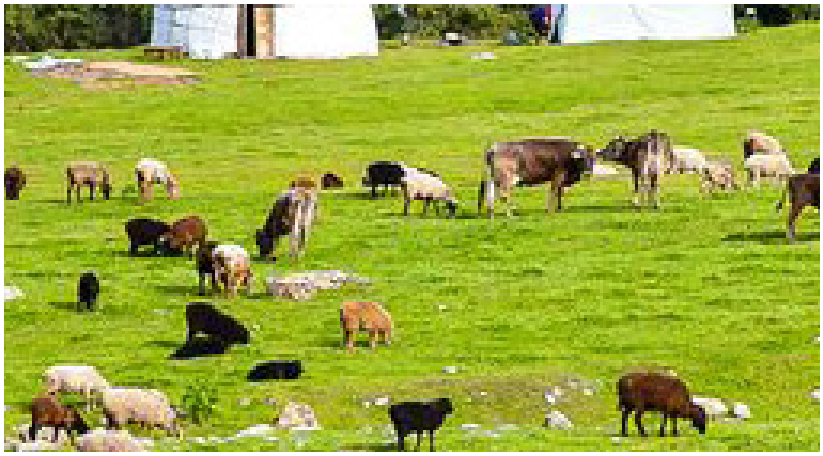
The Irish Travellers

The Irish Travellers (not to be confused with the Roma) are an indigenous, traditionally nomadic ethnic minority in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Despite living in some of the world's most developed democracies, Travellers face widespread discrimination in housing, education, and healthcare. Many municipalities resist the construction of halting sites (legal encampments), pushing Traveller families into insecure or overcrowded conditions. School segregation, employment barriers, and negative stereotypes contribute to a cycle of systemic exclusion. A 2020 report by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission confirmed that anti-Traveller bias remains entrenched in public institutions.[10] In 2017, the Irish government formally recognized the Travellers as a distinct ethnic group, affirming their cultural heritage and identity. However, this recognition has not been matched by consistent legal protections or material support. Travellers remain disproportionately affected by poverty and are often underrepresented in policymaking.

The Kyrgyz Jailoo Revival

In the mountainous regions of Kyrgyzstan, nomadism has experienced a quiet revival since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Under Soviet rule, Kyrgyz pastoralists were forcibly settled, and their seasonal migrations (known as jailoo) were curtailed. But

following the independence of Kyrgyzstan in 1991, many families returned to their ancestral pastures in the summer months, herding livestock across highland meadows in alignment with traditional ecological knowledge. This revival of seasonal movements has become a cultural emblem and even an emerging economic opportunity, with some Kyrgyz families hosting tourists in yurts as part of eco-tourism initiatives.[11] However, modern challenges remain. The lack of legal recognition for mobile land rights, gaps in mobile education, and limited healthcare access make full-time nomadism difficult, especially for younger generations. Additionally, pressures from land privatization and commercialization threaten to fragment grazing routes.



In hervivore-filled pasture ecosystems, Kyrgyz offer tourism opportunities in yurts as part of their revival initiatives

United Nations and International Efforts

Many nomadic communities suffer from legal invisibility. While many instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), affirm the rights to culture, movement, and land, they do not explicitly name nomadic peoples. This leaves interpretation to individual states, many of which continue to pursue policies that pressure or require nomads to settle.

However, despite not having explicit protections, some international legal protections do exist for nomadic communities under the broader category of indigenous and tribal peoples. Governing documents like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) assert the rights of indigenous communities to maintain their cultures, territories, and traditional livelihoods. While not legally binding, the declaration is a powerful normative tool that calls on governments to obtain free, prior, and informed consent before undertaking actions that affect indigenous lands. Similarly, ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989) offers a legally binding framework that acknowledges the land,

cultural, and mobility rights of traditional communities. However, only 24 countries have ratified it, and its enforcement remains limited.

Directives / QARMAs

To what extent, if any, should governments encourage sedentarization, and at what point does encouragement become coercion?

How can education, healthcare and other public services be made more accessible to mobile populations without requiring assimilation into sedentary society?

In areas where nomadic communities cross multiple national borders (e.g., the Sahel in Central Africa), how can states collaborate to protect their freedom of movement and cultural continuity?

What are the gender-specific challenges within nomadic communities, and how can policy address the preservation of culture and tradition, whilst facilitating the empowerment of women and youth?

How might the goals of climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and conservation be aligned with the needs of nomadic populations?

Can technology (mobile internet, renewable energy, or portable infrastructure) be harnessed to improve access to education, healthcare, and communication for nomadic communities without compromising their mobility or autonomy?

How can the rich heritage of nomadic peoples be preserved for future generations and what role should governments and international organizations play in this process?

How can modern states ensure that recognition of nomadic peoples goes beyond symbolic declarations and results in real access to rights, justice, and protection?

If some members of nomadic communities chose to abandon traditional lifestyles, should this be seen as a cultural loss? How can policy respect the right to preserve tradition and the right to change it?

Topic 2

Humanitarian Consequences of Sanctions on Civilians

Key Terms and Acronyms

Economic Sanctions (Sanctions)	Economic and financial measures taken by the UN or individual countries to limit trade with a specific country in order to achieve a certain political goal, usually improving the political situation in a sanctioned country.
Economic Coercion	Use of economic pressure, including sanctions, trade restrictions, and financial penalties, to compel changes in target State behavior. Distinguished from economic warfare by its explicit political objectives and expectation that compliance can restore normal economic relations.
Embargo	Complete prohibition on trade in specific goods or with particular countries/entities. More restrictive than quotas or tariffs, representing total blockade rather than limitation. Can be comprehensive (all trade) or selective (specific commodities like oil or arms).
Individual Sanctions	Sanctions that target individual people, usually veto players with political and financial power or ties to a problematic policy.
Veto Players	Actors whose agreement is necessary for sanctions implementation, modification, or termination. Include UN Security Council permanent members in multilateral contexts, key coalition partners in unilateral regimes, and domestic constituencies whose opposition can undermine sanctions effectiveness or humanitarian protections.
Comprehensive/ Universal Sanctions	Economic measures that broadly restrict trade, financial transactions, and diplomatic relations with a target state. Distinguished from targeted sanctions by their economy-wide scope, creating higher risk for civilian harm through systemic economic disruption.

Smart/Targeted Sanctions	Measures designed to minimize humanitarian impact by focusing on specific individuals, entities, or sectors rather than entire economies. Include asset freezes, travel bans, and sectoral restrictions (e.g., arms embargoes, luxury goods bans).
Humanitarian Exemptions	Legal provisions within sanctions regimes that permit trade in essential goods like food, medicine, and medical equipment. Often include complex licensing procedures that can create practical barriers despite theoretical permissions.
Dual-Use Goods	Items with both civilian and military applications (e.g., certain chemicals, communications equipment, industrial machinery). Sanctions often restrict these goods, potentially limiting access to items with legitimate humanitarian purposes.
Secondary Sanctions	Penalties imposed on third-party entities that engage in prohibited activities with sanctioned targets. Create "chilling effects" where organizations over-comply to avoid legal risks, often restricting legitimate humanitarian trade.
De-risking	Financial institutions' practice of terminating relationships with entire countries or sectors to avoid sanctions compliance costs and legal risks. Can severely limit humanitarian organizations' ability to transfer funds for aid operations.
Sanctions Fatigue	Phenomenon where prolonged sanctions regimes lose international support and effectiveness, potentially undermining both policy goals and humanitarian protection mechanisms.
Unintended Consequences	Harmful effects on civilian populations that result from sanctions implementation despite not being policy objectives. Distinguished from "collateral damage" by implying these effects could be better anticipated and mitigated through improved design.

Introduction

As enforced by the United Nations Security Council, sanctions are targeted measures meant to limit the ability of a State to engage in destructive or illegal conduct. Though sometimes effective in forcing policy change, such as in the promotion of human rights in South Africa[1] or slowing the nuclear program in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea[2], sanctions are often designed and implemented without due care for their humanitarian impact. Especially in dual-use sectors (e.g., nuclear medicine, biotechnology), broad restrictions on global trade can harm economic development, exacerbate existing internal tensions, and intensify humanitarian crises. Sanctions also cut off affected States from the quickly-evolving and increasingly global trade system, potentially lengthening negative externalities to much after they are lifted. As States rely on sanctions placed both through and outside of the United Nations System, this powerful ability of the Security Council must be carefully considered.

Though the United Nations has previously limited the humanitarian impact of sanctions, as through RES/2428(2018), the General Assembly is yet to propose measures that meaningfully eliminate unintended humanitarian impacts of sanctions. Additionally, breakdowns in agreement among the Security Council on several key issues have resulted in the rise of uni- or multi-lateral sanctions outside of the UN system, often as a default response to perceived but not confirmed transgressions by a Member State. Yet, targeted sanctions on some sensitive or military-relevant sectors - arms, dual-use materials - have resulted in the slowing or elimination of damaging military agendas. Against the background of a global rise in authoritarianism and the damaging potential of rogue states, SOCHUM must consider when and what type of sanctions should be placed upon a State, as well as specific measures international bodies can take to mitigate negative humanitarian effects.

History

The first mandatory sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council were against Rhodesia in December 1966; however, slow enforcement allowed Rhodesia to make large trade deals before the sanctions truly came into effect.[3] Their effect is as yet unclear; while these sanctions undoubtedly contributed in some capacity to Rhodesia's collapse in

Grassroots organizing flier from late 1970s advocating continued sanctions on Rhodesia

1979, what ultimately led to the regime change was likely the independence of hostile neighbors and ongoing war. However, the measures did clearly negatively impact economic development in the region[4], mirroring the impact of sanction regimes to come.

The Security Council placed the Islamic Republic of Iraq under a series of sanctions from 1990-2003 with the express purpose of pressuring the State to end its occupation of Kuwait and end its nuclear weapons program. They ultimately succeeded with this goal, with Saddam Hussein reporting [WHEN] that Iraq's arms "had been eliminated by the UN sanctions." However, the broad effect of the sanctions and the continuation of sanctions after the end of the Iraqi war led to humanitarian controversies which have shaped how the UN applies sanctions to this day.[5]

Iraqis shop at an outdoor market in Baghdad for essential foods February 2, 1997. At the time, Iraq's Central Bank governor Isam Hweish said that despite U.N. sanctions, imposed on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, trade across its porous borders with Jordan, Turkey and Iran helped maintain a supply of some necessary goods

The UN later determined that sanctions on Iraq proliferated disease and increased the risk of famine; for instance, nearly half of all Iraqis who had clean drinking water lost access following embargos on chemicals used for water treatment.[6] Despite language in the sanction policy specifically allowing imports of medicine and food for humanitarian needs, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) found that "the continuing U.N. ban on Iraqi oil exports has left Hussein's government and people without the resources to import food and medicine".[7] Debates arose over whether the effects of the sanctions constituted human rights abuses, and notably, two consecutive UN Humanitarian Coordinators in Iraq criticized the sanctions and resigned as a result.[8, 9]

An Iraqi child is treated at a hospital in 1999, which shows a shortage of basic medicines. UNICEF reports that sanctions at the end of the Gulf War have contributed to poverty levels

In response to the humanitarian crises and controversies of the sanctions in Iraq, the UN began to shift away from their traditional, comprehensive sanctions in favor of "smart sanctions". Instead of restrictions on all trade into a country, "smart sanctions" aimed to reduce humanitarian impact by specifically targeting responsible policymakers (e.g., by imposing arms embargos, travel restrictions, or individual asset freezes).[10] These smart sanctions were applied on natural resources, arms, and travel in Liberia in 2003, effectively eliminating transactions that were undermining Liberian peace and security, which allowed for Liberia to stabilize following its civil war. This push for peace and security was also supported by the Security Council's flexible handling of Liberian sanctions, which allowed sanctions to be lifted over 13 years as the situation in Liberia improved.[11]

Current Issues

United Nations sanctions have been in place against Afghanistan since 1999, including targeted sanctions against the Taliban and the industries they control. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, sanctions were reduced to only target specific individuals, but with their resurgence and capture of Kabul in 2021, the sanctions against the Taliban are functionally comprehensive, placing major restrictions on the new government and developing economy. Several critics have described this as a byproduct of unclear guidelines and severe penalties, which create systematic over-caution that produces comprehensive effects regardless of stated policy goals.[12] Despite this, negative effects of the sanctions on Afghan citizens under

A woman gives bread to young people in need in front of bakery in Kabul on September 19, 2021

Taliban rule are undeniable. Many of the same humanitarian concerns present in Iraq during its sanction regime are now present in Afghanistan, including rising costs for basic goods, food insecurity, and rising inequality. In addition, regulations associated with sanction enforcement have slowed the flow of humanitarian aid into the country, which remains the only source of food and medicine for many civilians.[13]

A similar sanction regime with similarly concerning effectiveness and humanitarian impacts is present in North Korea. In response to nuclear tests over the last 20 years, the Security Council has strengthened sanctions that have targeted financial institutions, arms dealings, raw material imports, and DPRK citizens working abroad. The DPRK has been successful in evading these sanctions through its use of various illicit techniques, including cyber-attacks, document falsification, and ship-to-ship good transfers.[14] This comes as NGOs and UN humanitarian aid organizations face the same issues caused by sanctions in Iraq and Afghanistan, putting the efficacy of these sanctions into doubt. Recent research suggests that one way to address this issue is to target veto players - individuals whose approval is necessary for governmental changes - in sanctioned countries. An assessment of economic data between 1946 and 2005 showed sanctions against a country with a larger number of veto players have a higher rate of success,[15] but the mechanisms behind this correlation are still poorly understood. Understanding this phenomenon and developing ways the UN could utilize this correlation may inform efforts to make widespread sanctions both more effective and humanitarian.

Humanitarian concerns still arise in sanctions placed by individual states, outside the bounds of the UN. For example, the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union (EU) have placed comprehensive sanctions against the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), contested political bodies in areas of Ukraine claiming independence following heavy influence campaigns and a series of invasions by the Russian Federation. Navigating the different restrictions imposed by these bodies has severely restricted the ability of NGOs from these countries to operate in the region of the ongoing war.[16] Similarly, prior to the Joint

Seller in a district of Marinka in the suburbs of Donetsk. The village is cut in two by the front line. Donetsk, Ukraine, 29 December 2019

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran Deal, the United States and EU placed increasingly severe unilateral sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran that went far beyond UN measures, particularly targeting the country's financial and energy sectors through US control of infrastructure behind the global financial system. These had far-reaching impacts, reaching a maximum of 19.1% of rGDP four years after the application of the sanctions, and plummeting the value of the country's currency.[17]

Economic sanctions created vital domestic shortages to life-saving medicines, leaving an estimated 6 million Iranian patients with limited treatment access for a host of diseases, while medication prices increased 30 to 40% as a result of dollar–currency fluctuations, making vital medications unaffordable even if they are available to purchase on the local market. The crisis was compounded by quality and safety concerns, as inaccessibility of vital medications and their raw ingredients combined with Iran's weakening domestic pharmaceutical industry resulted in an influx of counterfeit, fraudulent, and substandard medicines into Iran's health care system.[18]

Conclusion

Sanctions present a fundamental dilemma: they are tools necessary for international order with demonstrable, often devastating humanitarian costs. Despite the introduction of "smart sanctions," bureaucratic risk-aversion creates outsize effects on civilians, further increasing instability and damaging economic development for decades. Delegates face a critical opportunity to develop innovations that preserve sanctions as legitimate tools of international law while establishing robust safeguards for civilian populations. The issues described are symptoms of institutional design failures that can and must be addressed through deliberate reform.

Directives / QARMAs

How can the international community design sanctions regimes that effectively target problematic behaviors while preventing adverse humanitarian impacts on civilian populations, including impeded delivery of humanitarian aid and essential goods?

What institutional reforms and monitoring frameworks should be established to enhance the effectiveness of multilateral sanctions when addressing urgent humanitarian crises?

How should the international community balance the legitimate use of economic pressure to address violations of international law with respect for state sovereignty?

What principles should govern the coordination between UN-mandated sanctions and uni- or multilateral sanctions imposed by individual member states or groups of Member States outside of the UN system?

What frameworks and oversight mechanisms should be implemented to ensure that sanctions relief and economic reintegration effectively contribute to sustainable development and conflict prevention in previously sanctioned states?

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