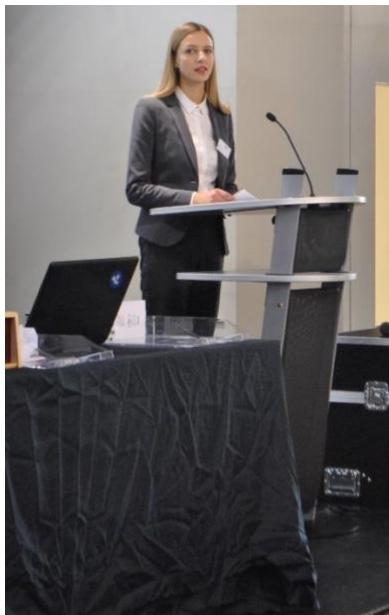




BACKGROUND GUIDE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BAYERN MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023



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Bayern Model United Nations 2023

Hosted by the United Nations Society Nuremberg e.V.

Introduction

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2023 Bayern Model United Nations! We are pleased to welcome you to the General Assembly. The topics on the agenda are:

- I. Forced Displacement Due to Climate Change
- II. Promoting the Involvement of Women in Political Participation

The BayernMUN General Assembly serves as the core forum for discussions on Security, Development and Human Rights topics affecting Member States. The international community has faced several dynamic changes over the past years; we hope to see the resolutions in this committee reflect an understanding of those changes.

This background guide will serve as an introduction to the topics listed. Accordingly, it is not meant to be used as an all-inclusive analysis for research, but rather the groundwork for your own analysis and research. The references listed for each topic will provide you with the resources you need to start your own research. Each delegation is requested to submit a position paper, which reflects your research on the topics. Please take note of our BayernMUN policies on the website and in the delegates guide. This Background Guide was adapted and updated from previous guides written for NMUN New York and NMUN Erfurt. Citations can be found at the end.

If you have any questions regarding your preparation for the committee and the conference itself, please feel free to contact any of the substantive staff of the 2030 BayernMUN.

We wish you all the best in your preparation for the conference and look forward to seeing you in February!

Sincerely,
Your BayernMUN staff!

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Committee Overview

Introduction

In 1945, following the conclusion of the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) was founded to maintain international peace and security, foster diplomatic relations between states, achieve international cooperation in addressing global problems and promoting human rights, and harmonize state actions towards these ends.¹ Article 7 of the Charter of the United Nations (1945) establishes six principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.² Of these, only the General Assembly has universal membership, rendering it a unique forum for discussion within the UN system.³ As the normative centre of the UN, the General Assembly is a generator of ideas, a place of international debate, and a hub for new concepts and practices in the political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal spheres.⁴

Governance, Structure, and Membership

All 193 UN Member States are represented in the General Assembly, with each Member State having one vote.⁵ The General Assembly may grant Observer status to intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and non-Member States or entities, which allows them to participate in sessions but does not grant them voting rights.⁶ The General Assembly makes the majority of its decisions via consensus.⁷ When a vote is held, regular decisions require a simple majority of members present and voting, while important decisions require a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.⁸

The General Assembly has six Main Committees that are topically organized around the General Assembly's main fields of responsibility: the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).⁹ The Main Committees discuss agenda items assigned to them, adopt draft resolutions, and submit a report on their work to the Plenary.¹⁰ The Plenary then considers these reports and "proceeds without debate to the adoption of the recommended resolutions and decisions. If adopted by consensus in the committee, the Plenary decides by consensus as well; likewise, if adopted by a vote in the committee, the Plenary votes on the resolution or decision in question."¹¹ The Plenary may also decide to address an issue without prior reference to a committee.¹²

Each year, the General Assembly's regular session begins on the Tuesday of the third week in September.¹³ Since its 44th session in 1989, the General Assembly has been considered in session

¹ *Charter of the United Nations, 1945*, Art. 1.

² Ibid., Art. 7.

³ UN General Assembly, *General Assembly of the United Nations*.

⁴ Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security*, 2006, pp. 91, 162; UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*

⁵ *Charter of the United Nations, 1945*, Art. 18.

⁶ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 30.

⁷ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 12.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 18.

¹⁰ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 23.

¹¹ Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations: The Global Dance*, 2006, p. 161; Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 62.

¹² New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 23.

¹³ Ibid. p. 17.

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throughout the year.¹⁴ The busiest period, otherwise known as the “main part of the General Assembly,” lasts from the start of the session in September until the end of December; it includes the general debate and most of the Main Committees’ work.¹⁵ The remainder of the year, or the “resumed part of the General Assembly,” involves thematic debates, consultation processes, and working group meetings.¹⁶ In addition to the regular session, the General Assembly may also hold special sessions on individual issues at the request of either the Security Council or a majority of Member States.¹⁷

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) is the largely ceremonial head of the General Assembly, elected each year by a simple majority of Member States to a non-renewable one-year term.¹⁸ The PGA’s duties are to facilitate Plenary sessions by directing discussion, managing the administration of meetings, and enforcing the General Assembly Rules of Procedure.¹⁹ The PGA does not preside over all six General Assembly committees separately; rather, Chairs and Vice Chairs are the facilitators of individual committees.²⁰ The PGA also performs executive duties, such as meeting regularly with the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, and the President of the Economic and Social Council; communicating with the press and the public; and organizing high-level meetings on certain thematic issues.²¹

As a main organ of the UN, the General Assembly does not report to any other organ.²² It receives substantive and organizational support from two important entities: the General Committee and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).²³ The General Committee is comprised of the PGA and the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, as well as the Chairpersons of the Main Committees; all position-holders are elected each session on a non-renewable basis.²⁴ The General Committee’s main duty, aside from making recommendations on organizational issues, is to allocate agenda items to the Plenary and the Main Committees from a preliminary list received from the UN Secretariat.²⁵ The DGACM acts as the intersection between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and provides valuable technical secretariat support, mainly through its General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division.²⁶ Within the UN Secretariat, other departments and offices offer both substantive and technical support to each of the six Main Committees.²⁷

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate of the General Assembly is defined in Chapter IV (Articles 10-22) of the Charter of the United Nations.²⁸ As stipulated by Article 10, the General Assembly is broadly tasked with discussing “any questions or any matters within the scope of the [Charter] or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the [Charter],” and it may make relevant recommendations to Member States or to the Security Council.²⁹

Functions and powers of the General Assembly include the following:

¹⁴ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 15 & 18

²¹ Ibid., p. 16-17.

²² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 98.

²³ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 17.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 24; UN DGACM, *Functions of the Department*.

²⁷ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, pp. 63-68.

²⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Ch. IV.

²⁹ Ibid., Art. 10

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- While the General Assembly may address matters of international peace and security, any such matters requiring action must also be referred to the Security Council. Further, the General Assembly may not make recommendations related to any dispute or situation in respect of which the Security Council is exercising its functions.³⁰ The only exception is if the Security Council fails to reach a decision on an issue due to lack of consensus among its permanent members, at which point the General Assembly may convene an emergency special session within 24 hours to address the issue in question.³¹
- The General Assembly may initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, educational, or health fields; the development and codification of international law; or the realization of fundamental human rights and freedoms.³²
- The General Assembly may make recommendations “for the peaceful adjustment of any situation, regardless of origin, which it deems likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations.”³³
- The General Assembly may create subsidiary organs “as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.”³⁴ ³⁴Main Committees are therefore capable of introducing resolutions that can lead to the creation and funding of agencies or meetings, as well as ad hoc committees or working groups, that consider a particular question with the purpose of reporting to the General Assembly.³⁵
- The General Assembly receives and considers regular reports from the Security Council and from other UN organs.³⁶
- The General Assembly considers and approves the UN’s budget and apportions expenses to be borne by individual Member States.³⁷
- The General Assembly “elects the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council and the 54 members of the Economic and Social Council. Together with the Security Council, but voting independently, it elects the members of the International Court of Justice.”³⁸
- The General Assembly also elects the members of its subsidiary bodies, such as the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.³⁹
- Based on the recommendation of the Security Council, the General Assembly appoints the Secretary-General.⁴⁰

Only resolutions adopted by the Plenary are put into effect as official resolutions of the General Assembly.⁴¹ However, unlike Security Council resolutions enacted under Chapter VII of the Charter, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding on Member States even after adoption by the Plenary.⁴² Nonetheless, General Assembly resolutions represent policy norms reached by consensus among Member States, and they often lead to concrete action by the international community.⁴³

³⁰ Ibid., Art. 11-12.

³¹ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 15.

³² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 13; UN General Assembly, *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly*.

³³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 14.

³⁴ Ibid., Art. 22.

³⁵ Weis, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, 2004, p. 161.

³⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 15.

³⁷ Ibid., Art. 17.

³⁸ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 12.

³⁹ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁰ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 12.

⁴¹ UN General Assembly, *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

The 77th session of the General Assembly (UNGA75) opened on the 13th of September 2022⁴⁴, with the General Debate opening on the 20th of September 2022.⁴⁵ It is presided over by M. Csaba Körösi (Hungary).⁴⁶ The priorities of the 77th session follow its motto, “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”⁴⁷, and are as follows:

- Upholding the UN Charter.
- Sustainability Transformation.
- Integrated, Systemic Solutions.
- Led by Science.
- Increasing Trust and Solidarity.⁴⁸

One of the high-level meetings that took place was the UNGA Platform of Women Leaders on the 20th of September 2022, with the theme “Transformative Solutions by Women Leaders to Today’s Interlinked Crises.” It gave female Heads of State and Government the opportunity to discuss their experience and to work on solutions to the ongoing problems women face when participating in politics.⁴⁹

UNGA77 is the first main session since the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Therefore, the regular plenary meetings were interrupted multiple times for the Eleventh Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly.⁵⁰ This resulted in two resolutions so far, A/RES/ES-11/4⁵¹ and A/RES/ES-11/5.⁵²

UNGA will hold 45 plenary meetings, as well as multiple informal meetings, until the end of the year.⁵³ In its 15th meeting, the General Assembly discussed strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations regarding the situation in Pakistan.⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ The 24th and 25th meetings offered a platform to discuss various Human Rights issues⁵⁶, resulting in the publication of multiple Human Rights Council resolutions since the beginning of UNGA77⁵⁷. In its 32nd meeting, the General Assembly endorsed the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)⁵⁸, and President Körösi remarked on the dangers the war in Ukraine on nuclear safety and energy security.⁵⁹

⁴⁴ UN General Assembly, *Organization of the seventy-seventh regular session of the General Assembly, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items (A/BUR/77/1*)*, p.4

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly, *Opening dates of forthcoming regular sessions of the General Assembly and of the general debate (A/INF/77/1)*, p. 1

⁴⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *President of the General Assembly*

⁴⁷ Federal Foreign Office Germany, *77th General Assembly of the United Nations: The world convenes for the summit*

⁴⁸ United Nations General Assembly, *President of the General Assembly*

⁴⁹ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations General Assembly Platform of Women Leaders*

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, *Schedule of General Assembly Plenary and Related Meetings - 77th Session*

⁵¹ UN General Assembly, *Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations (A/RES/ES-11/4)*

⁵² UN General Assembly, *Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine (A/RES/ES-11/5)*

⁵³ UN General Assembly, *Schedule of General Assembly Plenary and Related Meetings – 77th Session, 2022*.

⁵⁴ UN DPI, *Speakers Stress Key Role of Technical Support, Nuclear Safeguards, as General Assembly Considers International Atomic Energy Agency’s Annual Report, Adopts Related Text, 2022*.

⁵⁵ UN DPI, *Voicing Full Solidarity with People, Government of Pakistan, General Assembly Adopts Resolution Urging Scaled-Up Assistance to Help Country Rebuild from Massive Floods, 2022*.

⁵⁶ United Nations General Assembly (2022) *Delegates in General Assembly Support Human Rights Council’s Monitoring of Crises Worldwide, Yet Some Say Double Standards Ignore Impact on Developing Countries, 2022*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ UN DPI, *Speakers Stress Key Role of Technical Support, Nuclear Safeguards, as General Assembly Considers International Atomic Energy Agency’s Annual Report, (2022)*

⁵⁹ Körösi, C., *PGA remarks at the General Assembly plenary meeting on the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (2022)*

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The situation in Afghanistan was the topic of the 33rd meeting. Delegates expressed their concerns about the repression and Human Rights violations the Afghan people are facing⁶⁰

The Leaders' Roundtable on Climate Action meeting during the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week 2022 gave those present the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the 1.5-degree goal. It also served to highlight the need global action once again in fighting climate change and the need for firm decisions during the Conference of the Parties 27 (COP27) in Egypt in November 2023.⁶¹

The UN General Assembly will go into recess on the 12th of December 2022, concluding the main part of UNGA77.⁶² An informal plenary meeting to hear a briefing on solutions to internal displacement and a High-Level Event to launch the International Decade of Indigenous Languages will conclude this year's meetings.⁶³ Sessions will resume in January 2023.⁶⁴ Agenda items considered for the resumed part of the session are, among others, the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, prevention of armed conflict, sexual exploitation and abuse and impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.⁶⁵

Conclusion

As the "chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the UN," the General Assembly plays a key role in the UN system as "a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter."⁶⁶ Outcomes reached by the General Assembly may define new norms that can promote peace, human rights, and development.⁶⁷ Going forward, the General Assembly will continue to be a cornerstone of international efforts towards a better world.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ UN DPI, *General Assembly Voices Deep Concern Over Volatility in Afghanistan since Taliban Takeover, Unflinching Commitment to Afghans, Adopting Resolution by Vote.* (2022)

⁶¹ UN, *Informal High-Level Meeting of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (Chair's Summary), 2022*

⁶² UN General Assembly, *Schedule of General Assembly Plenary and Related Meetings - 77th Session*

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ UN General Assembly, *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly.*

⁶⁷ Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security*, 2006, pp. 91, 162

⁶⁸ Sciora & Stevenson, *Planet UN: The United Nations Confronting the Challenges of the 21st Century*, 2009.

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New Zealand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2017). *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018. Miscellaneous.*

This handbook, published annually by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, is an effort to improve the information available to the international community on the UN system. It provides extensive information on the structure and membership as well the purpose of UN organs. As such, it represents the perfect introduction to the UN system as a whole for individuals less familiar with its complexity. Therefore, delegates should consider this a must-read during preparation for the conference.

Sciora, R., & A. Stevenson. (2009). *Planet UN: The United Nations Confronting the Challenges of the 21st Century. Editions du Tricorne.*

Inspired by the documentary Planet UN, this book offers an in-depth analysis of the role of the United Nations and its challenges for the 21st century. It gives special attention to three pillars: peace, development, and human rights. It also stresses the importance of the UN's ability to adapt itself to our changing world and to react to new threats such as terrorism or nuclear risks. An account of the genesis of the UN also allows delegates to understand how the UN was started with the intent of creating a system to maintain peace and security and to become the organization it is today. Furthermore, this book contains a series of testimonies of important personalities such as the last five Secretaries-General of the UN.

Switzerland, Permanent Mission to the United Nations. (2011). *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly.*

This publication by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN is another contribution by a Member State of introductory information about the UN system. The General Assembly is a central focus of this handbook. A detailed description of its organization, structure, rules, and working methods can be found. Further providing information specific to all six Main Committees, this handbook offers a unique source of information to delegates to understand the work of the General Assembly and its place within the UN system.

Thakur, R. (2006). *The United Nations, Peace and Security.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ramesh Thakur, a renowned commentator on the UN, examines the UN from a contemporary perspective in the context of factors such as human security. The author focuses on questions related to international peace and security. By doing so, he critically analyzes the use of force by the UN with the intention of making it more effective in the light of today's threats and with a particular focus on security and how it has evolved over the years and the role of the UN system including the General Assembly. His book is a valuable guide to the UN and offers an interesting perspective on international peace.

Weis, T., et al. (2004). *The United Nations and Changing World Politics.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

This book aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of international governance and the UN, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and building peace through sustainable development. While the authors outline the failures of collective security and the problems that the UN is facing when maintaining peace by military means, they address the role played by other UN entities such as the General Assembly in international security. As such, this book questions and analyses how the international community governs itself by outlining its successes and failures.

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I. Forced Displacement Due to Climate Change

“Climate change is the defining challenge of our times: a challenge which interacts with and reinforces the other global megatrends such as population growth, urbanization, and growing food, water and energy insecurity. It is a challenge which is adding to the scale and complexity of human displacement: and a challenge that has important implications for the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁶⁹

Introduction

Throughout the world, weather related disasters are occurring in greater frequency and with higher intensity as a result of climate change.⁷⁰ According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, an increase in natural disasters and weather related incidents forces an average of 21.8 million people from their homes annually, with vulnerable populations facing a higher risk of forced displacement.⁷¹ Climate change and natural disasters are straining natural resources, with crops and livestock struggling to survive in climates where conditions have been severely altered.⁷² Such change is threatening everyday life and food security and is forcing many to look elsewhere for improved living conditions.⁷³ Although social and economic reasons for migration have always existed, many people are being involuntarily displaced due to climate change both within and across borders.⁷⁴ UNHCR indicates the likelihood of being displaced due to climate change and natural disaster has more than doubled since 1970, with an estimated 203.4 million people displaced between 2008 and 2015.⁷⁵ UNHCR recognizes that limited resources and environmental changes are forcing people from their homes and spurring such displacement,⁷⁶ thus marking climate change as a serious peril, threat multiplier, and a driver for refugee crises, armed conflict, and resources depletion.⁷⁷ Additionally, the risk for being uprooted from everyday life more than once, also known as secondary displacement has increased.⁷⁸

While refugees are defined as those forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or violence, there is no international recognition for those displaced and fleeing across borders due to climate change.⁷⁹ Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), individuals displaced within their own state, receive significant assistance from UNHCR and are considered to be the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society.⁸⁰ The two face significant risk when it comes to climate change and subsequent natural disaster.⁸¹ However, IDPs are less protected by international law, and do not always receive international assistance from UNHCR as Member States retain sovereignty over those within

⁶⁹ UNHRC, Statement by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Security Council Briefing „Maintenance of International Peace and Security: „New Challenges to International peace and Security and Conflict Prevention“, 2011.

⁷⁰ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Aggravating Factors: Climate Change*, 2019; Njorge, *Africa’s Humanitarian Action in Migration Policy: Adjusting to Environment and Climate Change*; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

⁷¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2017; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

⁷² International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Aggravating Factors: Climate Change*, 2019; Njorge, *Africa’s Humanitarian Action in Migration Policy: Adjusting to Environment and Climate Change*.

⁷³ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

⁷⁴ UNHCR, *UNHCR Viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘Migrant’ – Which is Right?*, 2016; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017.

⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017.

⁷⁶ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

⁷⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Compact on Refugees, Thematic Discussion 4 (Solutions)*, 2017, p. 1; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?* 2020.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

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their own borders.⁸² Despite this, IDPs are capable of receiving assistance from private donors and additional international entities such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United States Agency for International Development.⁸³ Those considered to be refugees or IDPs due to violence or persecution often reside in areas highly susceptible to the effects of climate change and global warming, also known as climate change hot zones, and may fall victim to secondary displacement due to climate change.⁸⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic made the protection of refugees increasingly difficult.⁸⁵ Over 80% of refugees reside in low to middle-income Member States, face daily challenges and vulnerabilities unique to their locations and climate, and often grapple with vulnerabilities many do not typically see, such as limited access to healthcare, food, water, and sanitation.⁸⁶ UNHCR has a pivotal role to play in establishing international protection for these groups and is furthermore aiming to provide protection and assistance for those displaced by climate change while actively addressing the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁷

International and Regional Framework

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) serves as the first internationally recognized framework protecting human rights at the international level, emphasizing that these rights are to be universally recognized and observed by Member States concerning people within Member States and the territories they control.⁸⁸ Its Article 14 recognizes the right of everyone to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries⁸⁹. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), also referred to as the “Refugee Convention” or “Geneva Convention”, serves as the main instrument of refugee law building on article 14 of the UDHR.⁹⁰ The convention details the characteristics of a refugee as well as the legal protection and rights they should receive from states who choose to sign onto the convention.⁹¹ It notably sets the principle of non-refoulement, meaning that whenever there is a risk of danger to a person’s life in their home country, countries are obligated to welcome these people.⁹² When introduced, the convention was limited to the protection of European refugees after World War II.⁹³ However, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967) expanded the limitations of the previous convention to include refugees displaced by conditions emerging after 1951.⁹⁴ It does not however refer to climate refugees⁹⁵.

Resolution 70/1 on “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, serves as landmark document and as the international community’s effort to steer towards a sustainable future.⁹⁶ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights an array of international topics, including goals that assure refugees’, IDPs’, and migrants’ needs are recognized through policy cohesion at the national level with that of international

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *Internally displaced persons IDP: On World Humanitarian Day UNAIDS celebrates the work of #RealLifeHeroes*, 2019; United States Agency for International Development, *USAID Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons Policy*, 2004.

⁸⁴ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Climate Hot Spots*, 2011.

⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*; UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

⁸⁸ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

⁸⁹ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

⁹² Tosuni, Circle of Sustainable Europe, *Climate Refugees*.

⁹³ UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*, 2020.

⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967; UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*

⁹⁵ Tosuni, Circle of Sustainable Europe, *Climate Refugees*.

⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

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law.⁹⁷ The agenda also addresses climate protection and mitigating the effects of climate change on sustainable development efforts.⁹⁸ In 2015, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) produced the Paris Agreement, encouraging all Member States to unite in the common cause to address climate change through mitigation, transparency, action, and support of frameworks and legislation designed to minimize human impact on the world's climates.⁹⁹ The agreement serves as a landmark attempt by the international community to combat climate change, and acknowledges the right to preventative assistance and support for those facing significant climate risk.¹⁰⁰ While the Paris Agreement mentions rights of migrants in its preamble, the agreement does not explicitly discuss the legal status of refugees and their protections with respect to climate change, but does call for a task force to develop recommendations to address forced displacement due to the effects of climate change.¹⁰¹

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration) was adopted by the UN General Assembly as resolution 71/1, highlighting commitments to migrants and refugees on a large scale.¹⁰² In 2018, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration convened pursuant to the New York Declaration under the auspices of the UN.¹⁰³ The conference produced the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, addressing all dimensions of migration at the international level including forced migration due to climate change and disaster.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the UN General Assembly adopted the Global Compact for Migration as resolution 73/195, outlining key objectives for safe, regular, and orderly migration, including a reduction to adverse factors leading to forced migration, such as climate change and natural disasters.¹⁰⁵

The Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Convention) (1969) serves as a regional effort to advance protections of the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹⁰⁶ The convention, adopted in Addis Ababa by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ratified by 45 of 54 Member States of the African Union, expanded the definition of a refugee and includes those "fleeing environmental catastrophes."¹⁰⁷ The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (Cartagena Declaration) (1984) was heavily influenced by the OAU Convention, and was adopted by 10 Latin American states as a result of the Colloquium on International Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central America, Mexico, and Panama.¹⁰⁸ The Cartagena Declaration also expanded on the refugee definition, with UNHCR highlighting the protection of refugees due to natural disasters.¹⁰⁹ The Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action (2014) was adopted by acclamation by a coalition of Latin American states in 2014, and urged the extension and application of regional refugee definitions at the state level, while mirroring regional initiatives previously mentioned in the Cartagena Declaration.¹¹⁰ The Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action also aims to address international and regional efforts for those internally displaced.¹¹¹

⁹⁷ UNHCR, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

⁹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), 2015.

⁹⁹ COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015; UNFCCC, *What is the Paris Agreement?*

¹⁰⁰ Lambert, *The Paris Agreement: Spotlight on Climate Migrants*, 2015; UNFCCC, *What is the Paris Agreement?*

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (A/RES/71/1), 2016; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁰³ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Okello, *The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union*, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; UNHCR, *Summary Conclusions on the Interpretation of the Extended Refugee Definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration*, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ UNHCR, *The Brazil Declaration*.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

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Role of the International System

UNHCR has engaged in climate-related displacement initiatives since the mid-1990s, with concrete policy and operational responses in the early 2000s.¹¹² Their work focuses primarily on legal guidance, development, promotion of policy coherence, research to fill knowledge gaps, and field-based operations to address internal and cross-border displacement, environmental impact, and overall risk reduction activities, including those intended to reduce or avert displacement overall.¹¹³ Since 2015, UNHCR has remained active in climate change displacement alleviation efforts, partnering with additional UN entities such as UNFCCC, intergovernmental organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and others including the Global Protection Cluster and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).¹¹⁴ In 2015, UNHCR hosted a regional workshop focusing on domestic implementation of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention (2009).¹¹⁵ The convention recognizes persons internally displaced by armed conflict, but most notably, by climate change and disaster, with article 5 formally establishing state responsibilities, protection, and assistance of such individuals displaced by climate change and disaster.¹¹⁶ UNHCR has supported the PDD since 2016, reinforcing the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, a joint consultation approach by states and multinational stakeholders in an effort to synthesize international cooperation, treatment standards of those displaced, and operational mechanisms.¹¹⁷ In 2017, UNHCR made efforts to effectively provide international protection and humanitarian assistance with their action on forced migration due to climate change and disaster through its 2017-2021 Strategic Directions.¹¹⁸ This plan of action contains five core directions: "Protect, Respond, Include, Empower, and Solve."¹¹⁹ The strategic directions serve as UNHCR's way of charting the issues surrounding displacement with relation to major global issues impacting the international community over the next five years.¹²⁰

In 2018, UNHCR collaborated with the Task Force on Displacement (TFD) to develop the Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change framework.¹²¹ The purpose of the mapping tool and collaboration is to avert forced migration due to climate change, and it includes an array of tools and guidance to reduce the frequency of displacement, exposure to the hazards responsible for such displacement, and to improve future resilience amongst populations.¹²² The compiled tools include: regional translation of available climate data and research, frameworks and guidelines to strengthen land use and productivity, regional and national policy to strengthen economic and environmental development, as well as management of natural resources.¹²³ UNHCR undertook a study in 2018, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, to address policy solutions in the occurrence of nexus dynamics, i.e. displacement due to a combination of conflict and disaster and/or climate change.¹²⁴ The study focuses on action taken in four countries within the Horn of Africa

¹¹² UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ African Union, *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Person in Africa (Kampala Convention)*, 2009; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Nansen Conference: Climate Change and Disaster Displacement in the 21st Century*, 2019; The Nansen Initiative, *About Us*.

¹¹⁸ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

¹²⁰ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

¹²¹ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹²² UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict, and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

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and the Americas, and aims to provide practical solutions and strengthen international response to displacement across borders.¹²⁵ In January 2020, the UN Human Rights Committee, the governing body of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), was presented with the case of *Teitiota v New Zealand* and a claim of forced displacement due to climate change.¹²⁶ Teitiota of Kiribati, an island Member State directly feeling the adverse effects of climate change through rising sea levels, claimed his life was at risk if he was forced to return to Kiribati.¹²⁷ He filed the claim after his asylum application was denied.¹²⁸ The committee ruled against Teitiota, but did indicate governments forcing individuals to return to places where climate change exposes them to a life threatening risk may be unlawful under articles 6 and 7 of the CCPR, the right to life and the right to not be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.¹²⁹ This ruling by the UN Human Rights Committee explicitly calls for a need for national and international effort to address violation of individuals' rights when discussing climate change.¹³⁰ The Committee Member Yuval Shany said that this ruling might "facilitate the success of future climate change-related asylum claims".¹³¹

The Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility (Advisory Group) aims to provide technical support to UNFCCC on all aspects of human mobility, particularly to that of forced migration, displacement, or planned relocation due to climate change.¹³² The group consists of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and several others who analyse the action taken around displacement and migration due to climate change.¹³³ Parties to UNFCCC aim to implement effective adaptation strategies against climate change-related displacement, such as those highlighted in the Paris Agreement.¹³⁴ Suggestions on behalf of the Advisory Group include the temporary or permanent resettlement of those at risk of climate change displacement, also known as facilitated migration and planned relocation.¹³⁵

Climate Change, Conflict, and Displacement

Climate Change and Conflict

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated in a 1990 report that the most significant effect of climate change could be on human migration.¹³⁶ Climate change could lead to a displacement of millions due to an array of factors, such as shoreline erosion, flooding, drought, and food scarcity.¹³⁷ Forced migration due to these issues already exists within borders, but has even forced many to cross borders to seek better living conditions, spurring further humanitarian crises.¹³⁸ Depletion of resources in areas affected by climate change and disaster often leads to increased tension, armed conflict, and secondary displacement.¹³⁹ Violence and armed conflict are more likely to occur in less developed areas experiencing significant climate change, as these areas often have little resources to effectively mitigate such conflict.¹⁴⁰ UNHCR aims to promote policy coherence at multiple levels, including:

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ UN News, *UN human rights ruling could boost climate change asylum claims*, 2020.

¹²⁹ UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ UN News, *UN human rights ruling could boost climate change asylum claims*, 2020.

¹³² UNHCR, *Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change UNFCCC-Paris COP-21*, 2015.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Brown, *Climate Change and Forced Migration: Observations, Projections, and Implications*, 2007.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹³⁹ Edwards, *Forced Displacement Worldwide at its Highest in Decades*, UNHCR, 2017.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017.

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international humanitarian aid foundations, the UN, and institutional norms of national authorities in Member States.¹⁴¹ Such coherence aims to address institutional gaps, as well as consolidation and overlap issues, while also ensuring newer policies addressing climate change displacement are mainstreamed and reflect UNHCR's 2017-2021 Strategic Directions.¹⁴² However, research to fill gaps and overlap in policy, such as those affecting Refugee Status Determination at a regional and state level, remain a priority.¹⁴³

Internal vs. Cross-Border Displacement

The effects of climate change traditionally lead to internal displacement of many before it becomes an issue of cross-border displacement.¹⁴⁴ Due to the complexity of displacement and predicting the occurrence and severity of climate change and natural disasters, an exact figure of those displaced both internally and cross-border is difficult to determine.¹⁴⁵ Two forms of cross-border displacement exist: involuntary refuge in another country in the instance of climate change or natural disaster, and residence in another country at the time of a disaster, leading to a permission to extend the stay.¹⁴⁶ In cases of severe disaster or climate-related occurrences, such as drought and famine, displacement can cross borders.¹⁴⁷ Once it does, protection and assistance for those displaced becomes increasingly uncertain, as there is no internationally recognized term for those displaced in the context of climate change, and little framework for those displaced in areas less developed.¹⁴⁸ The nature of the displacement may fall within an area known as "Nexus Dynamics", where an issue overlaps or is correlated to another event.¹⁴⁹ For instance, where climate change exacerbates existing displacement due to armed conflict or climate change causing local conflicts and displacement, as in the Horn of Africa, and an increase in natural and weather-related disasters in the Americas.¹⁵⁰ Such dynamics have presented a challenge to reintegration of those displaced, and remain a focal point of further UNHCR facilitation in the support and facilitation of climate-related refugee protection mechanisms.¹⁵¹ With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, forced migration due to climate change faces a unique obstacle.¹⁵² The rapid spread of the COVID-19 outbreak across countries has forced many to institute travel restrictions and lockdowns.¹⁵³ According to IOM, the inability for many to travel between Member States due to the pandemic presents a challenge to the human condition and undermines the ability for those who seek shelter from hazardous environments.¹⁵⁴ While many face a sense of immobilization during the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM indicates that refugees are disproportionately affected.¹⁵⁵

Adaptation Strategies to Displacement

Policy Cohesion: Nexus Dynamics

Due to the increasing frequency and intensity of climate change related incidents and disaster, scientists anticipate a vast number of people will be displaced from their homes by sudden onsets of disasters, including tropical cyclones, floods, as well as slower onsets in the form of droughts and rising

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ The Nansen Initiative, *About Us*.

¹⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁵² IOM, *COVID-19, Climate Change and Migration: Constructing Crises, Reinforcing Borders*.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

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sea levels.¹⁵⁶ Forced migration due to such adverse effects of climate change and disaster often correlates with armed conflict, requiring a unique form of assistance and protection from UNHCR.¹⁵⁷ In 2018, UNHCR's study, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, examined international protection of refugees in response to famine in Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as the earthquake response in Haiti by Brazil and Mexico.¹⁵⁸ The study examined the response by these four states, and concluded that existing legal refugee frameworks play a significant role in the response to the protection and needs of those displaced by conflict, but also have the ability to interact with those displaced due to disaster.¹⁵⁹ Through the study, UNHCR recommended further legal interpretative guidance, country-specific guidelines on eligibility, and regional specific strategies to promote the application of the Refugee Convention with respect to nexus dynamics.¹⁶⁰ Despite these findings and recommendations, a significant knowledge gap still exists, and has been a focal point of UNHCR in its 2017-2021 Strategic Directions.¹⁶¹ Because of this, UNHCR suggests an increased investment in monitoring and evaluation techniques to better learn from those displaced.¹⁶²

Planned Relocation

After the effects of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the government of Maldives made a decision to address its susceptibility to rising sea levels and natural disaster through planned relocation methods.¹⁶³ By shifting attention to the effects of climate change, Maldives placed an emphasis on resilience and has started initiatives aimed to allow individuals to move from delicate areas to those more durable.¹⁶⁴ Sixteen years later, the effects of climate change and natural disasters, once seen as threats of the future, are here and are actively presenting themselves.¹⁶⁵ While the Human Rights Committee ruled against Teititoa of Kiribati in their claim of immediate life-endangering conditions due to climate change, the determination that those fleeing the effects of climate change should not be forced to return to their country of origin serves as a landmark decision for the rights of those facing future risk of displacement.¹⁶⁶ Because climate change and natural disasters present a threat to many more like Teititoa, UNHCR has taken on the task of contributing to the international community's response.¹⁶⁷ The UNHCR study, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, presents the concept of planned relocation, or the process where a group of people are moved from their original homes to a new location and assisted with the tools to rebuild their lives.¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁶ Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.; Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018.

¹⁶⁰ Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*; Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

¹⁶³ Schafer, *Bracing for climate change is a matter of survival for the Maldives*, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

¹⁶⁶ UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

¹⁶⁷ UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

¹⁶⁸ UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015; UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018.

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In 2013, the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States were established and organized through the non-governmental organization Displacement Solutions.¹⁶⁹ The idea behind the principles is to promote climate change resettlement for those at risk, while also preserving the social and cultural institutions of those settling in new areas.¹⁷⁰ The principles also indicate such action should promote comprehensive disaster risk reduction techniques and bolster capacities in order to assist with the process of resettlement.¹⁷¹ Moving certain populations from such climate related hazards, particularly those affected by rising sea levels, may serve as a viable solution.¹⁷² UNHCR, along with the Brookings Institute and Georgetown University, developed the Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation in 2015, in an attempt to establish guidelines for Member States that need to undertake planned relocation as a way to address displacement due to climate change.¹⁷³ However, determining when to relocate such populations will depend on the nature of such hazards, economic provisions, political implications, and should only be used as a last resort option for Member States.¹⁷⁴ UNHCR recognizes such action as an effective adaptation strategy toward climate change, but still a process, as legal and institutional frameworks for such action must be in place.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

Climate change and disasters have forced many to migrate and have displaced millions throughout the world, both within countries and across borders.¹⁷⁶ UNHCR has made forced migration due to climate change and disaster a focal point in their efforts to protect those most vulnerable to such displacement through the 2017-2021 Strategic Directions, UNFCCC Advisory Group partnership, IOM collaboration, reaffirmation of the 2020 UNHRC statement on forced displacement due to climate change, and involvement with several other climate change displacement initiatives.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, regional organizations and coalitions have taken actions since the Refugee Convention in 1951 to expand on the protection of those displaced internally and across borders.¹⁷⁸ However, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique obstacle to refugees as assistance and response operations must adapt to address displacement during a global health emergency.¹⁷⁹ Displacement due to climate change and disasters is expected to continue, with many at risk, particularly in less developed areas and those affected by rising sea levels.¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁹ Displacement Solutions, *The Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States*, 2013; UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015; UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid; UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

¹⁷⁸ Okello, *The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union*, 2014; UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

¹⁷⁹ UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

¹⁸⁰ UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

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Further Research

Delegates should consider the following questions when conducting their research: What can UNHCR do for the protection of refugees and migrants displaced due to climate change? How will approaches differ concerning IDPs and climate refugees crossing borders? How will these protections affect national governments and their interests, particularly with the ruling of the Human Rights Committee? What practices or strategies have been implemented in areas considered to be climate change hot zones? How does conflict play a role in areas already feeling the effects of climate change and natural disaster? How can UNHCR address forced migration due to climate change with respect to the SDGs? How should UNHCR and the international community go about climate change resilience?

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Annotated Bibliography

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/climate-change-and-disasters.html>

The source provided comes directly from UNHCR's website and contains a brief background into the recent work of the committee in the realm of climate change and disaster displacement. The source summarizes UNHCR's role when addressing climate change and disaster displacement, while also highlighting suggested policy action and framework on the topic. Delegates will find this source significantly useful when conducting research on climate change and its relation to displacement. Furthermore, the website provides links to many other relevant documents on the issue.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/562f798d9/planned-relocation-guidance-october-2015.html>

This guidance was compiled and published by UNHCR in 2015 and focuses on forced displacement due to climate change and disaster through planned relocation. The report highlights planned relocation as an adaptation strategy against climate change, and provides legal and policy frameworks, implementation strategies, and oversight mechanisms. The report also provides a set of principles in accordance with the guidance, focusing not only on response to climate change and disaster, but also anticipation of future climate change. Delegates will find this source particularly helpful, as it provides suggested action directly from UNHCR.

Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*. Retrieved 18 July 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2020/1/5e2ab8ae4/un-human-rights-committee-decision-climate-change-wake-up-call-according.html>

The article provided highlights a case heard by the United Nations Human Rights Council in early 2020. The case ultimately ruled against an individual claiming their life would be at risk if they were forced to return to their home country, because of its susceptibility to climate change. Despite ruling against the individual's claim, UNHRC indicated Member States forcing people to return to countries stricken by significant climate change may be unlawful and in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Delegates will find this document useful as it serves as the United Nations first ruling against the forced return of climate change refugees to their home countries by foreign governments.

Platform on Disaster Displacement. (2018, October 6). *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://disasterdisplacement.org/climate-change-conflict-and-displacement-understanding-the-nexus>

The Platform on Disaster Displacement works to protect people displaced across borders due to climate change and disaster. The article provides insight into a recent study conducted by UNHCR, International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change. The study aims to explain the correlation of nexus dynamics, particularly those of climate change displacement and armed conflict. The source will be useful to delegates as they consider the impact climate change has on not just displacement, but war and conflict.

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United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2018). *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Part II: Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12 (Part II))*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: [https://undocs.org/A/73/12\(Part%20II\)](https://undocs.org/A/73/12(Part%20II))

The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aims to reflect on past actions, while also highlighting the challenges going forward when addressing refugees. UNHCR indicates several root-causes with climate change, disasters, and environmental degradation receiving attention. The New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees receives significant reference, as the report aims to highlight areas of concern moving forward. Delegates will find the source useful when researching suggested courses of action.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2019). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from:

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The Intergovernmental Conference convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, and pursuant to the New York Declaration (2016). The Global Compact on Migration was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018, and attempts to address all dimensions of international migration, including forced migration due to climate change and disaster. The source provided contains definitions, shared responsibilities, and purposes. Delegates will find this source useful, as it displays action taken by the international community immediately after the New York Declaration.

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II. Promoting the Involvement of Women in Political Participation

*"It is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half the human race. As study after study has taught us, there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women."*¹⁸¹

Introduction

In 2003, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution 58/142 titled "Women and political participation," marking the first time the UN General Assembly highlighted the importance of increasing *women's participation* in positions of power and decision-making.¹⁸² Resolution 58/142 considers political participation of women to include: women engaging in political activities, taking part in the conduct of public affairs, associating freely, assembling peacefully, expressing one's opinions, and seeking, receiving, and imparting political information and ideas freely.¹⁸³ Voting in elections and public referendums, being eligible for election to publicly elected bodies, participating in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, holding public office, and performing public functions at all levels of government are also means of political participation.¹⁸⁴ The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) affirms that equal access of men and women to power, decision-making, and leadership at all levels of political affairs is necessary to make governments more representative of the composition of society and to ensure that the interests of women are taken into account in policy-making.¹⁸⁵ Further, the participation of women in politics is a form of women's empowerment and it is essential to the protection of women's political rights and the achievement of gender equality, sustainable development, peace, and democracy.¹⁸⁶

Women's representation in political decision-making continues to improve slowly.¹⁸⁷ Based on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) annual report, which tracks women's participation in parliament and monitors its progress and trends, October 1st, 2022, 26.3% of all national parliamentarians are women, a slow increase from 11.3% in 1995.¹⁸⁸ However, top-level representation of women is still very low. Only 13 countries have a woman Head of State, and 15 countries have a woman Head of Government.¹⁸⁹ On the level of ministers, as of 2022, 21% of government ministers are women, who most commonly hold portfolios in social affairs.¹⁹⁰ According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), women in political positions are more likely to address issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and child-care, and pensions.¹⁹¹ UN-Women also presents evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes can make a change in society.¹⁹² For instance, in Norway, a direct causal

¹⁸¹ Annan, *Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations*, 2007.

¹⁸² UN-Women, *Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation*.

¹⁸³ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/58/142), 2003, pp. 1-5; UN-Women, *Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation*

¹⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/66/130), 2011, pp. 1-5; UN-Women, *Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation*.

¹⁸⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the Fourteenth session* (E/3360-E/CN.6/367), 1960; UN-Women, *The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20: Women in power and decision-making*.

¹⁸⁶ Women Deliver, *Strengthen women's political participation and decision-making power*; UNDP, *Women's equal political participation*.

¹⁸⁷ UN-Women, *One in five ministers is a woman, according to a new IPU/UN-Women Map*, 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Inter-parliamentary Union, *New IPU report shows well-designed quotas lead to significantly more women MPs*, 2019; UN-Women, *Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation*, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ UN-Women, *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*, 2022 (UN Women calculation based on information provided by Permanent Missions to the United Nations. Some leaders hold positions of both head of government and head of state. Only elected Heads of State have been taken into account.)

¹⁹⁰ UN-Women, *Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation*, 2019.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

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relationship was found between the presence of women in municipal councils and the number of municipal child-care services.¹⁹³ Similarly, in India, the number of drinking water projects was 62% higher in areas with women-led councils rather than men-led councils.¹⁹⁴

International and Regional Framework

The *Charter of the United Nations* and the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) proclaim equal rights of men and women.¹⁹⁵ Equality in political participation is specifically fundamental to Article 21 of the UDHR, which declares that all people have the right to participate in the government of their country and to access public services.¹⁹⁶ Following in 1953, the General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* to protect the equal status of women to exercise political rights, one of which is the participation of women in political decision-making positions.¹⁹⁷ In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* to further emphasize the necessity of gender equality.¹⁹⁸ In the last three decades, new international standards were set, including the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA), adopted by the international community at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, which tackles 12 areas in women's rights, including women in power and decision-making.¹⁹⁹ The BPfA calls on governments to take measures to ensure women's full participation in political structures and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, in 2000, Security Council resolution 1325, an influential landmark document on the topic of women, peace, and security, stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in politics, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.²⁰¹

In 1990, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted resolution 1990/4, highlighting the importance of equality in political participation and decision-making, urging the advancement of women be considered a priority in national decision-making, as well as calling for women to be active agents in those decisions.²⁰² Similarly, ECOSOC resolution 1990/15 emphasized that governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other representative groups must aim to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 1995 to achieve a more equal representation between men and women.²⁰³ Over the last decade, progress was made to reach this goal; however, no country reached the 30% goal.²⁰⁴ The UN General Assembly adopted two landmark resolutions in 2003 and 2011 that highlighted the importance of women's political participation.²⁰⁵ In 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 58/142 urging Member States to protect the right of women to participate in their government at all levels and to eliminate laws that prevent or restrict women's participation in the political process.²⁰⁶ Similarly the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Charter of the United Nations, 1945; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)), 1948.

¹⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)), 1948.

¹⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* (A/RES/640 (VII)), 1953.

¹⁹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180), 1979.

¹⁹⁹ UN-Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome*, 2014.

²⁰⁰ UN-Women, *Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20*, 2015.

²⁰¹ UN Security Council, *Women and peace and security* (S/RES/1325 (2000)), 2000.

²⁰² UN ECOSOC, *Equality in political participation and decision-making* (E/RES/1990/4), 1990, pp. 8-9.

²⁰³ UN ECOSOC, *Recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000* (E/RES/1990/15), 1990, pp. 14-18.

²⁰⁴ UN-Women, *Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation*, 2019; Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review*, 2015

²⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/58/142), 2003, pp. 1-5.; UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/66/130), 2011, pp. 1-5.

²⁰⁶ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/58/142), 2003, pp. 1-5.

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66/130 asks Member States to respect women's right to participate in public office and to review the impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women.²⁰⁷

Most recently in 2015, the UN adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, providing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to reduce poverty, protect human rights, ensure greater gender equality and inclusive societies, and enhance access to basic services.²⁰⁸ Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to achieve the SDGs and are integrated across the 2030 Agenda.²⁰⁹ However, there is also the stand-alone SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in all areas.²¹⁰ SDG target 5.5 strives to ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in economic, political, and public life.²¹¹ Based on the 2019 report of the UN Secretary-General on the progress of the SDGs, low levels of political participation and the underrepresentation of women at all levels of political leadership undermine the ability to achieve SDG 5.²¹²

Role of the International System

Many UN entities are involved in promoting political participation of women, including the Security Council, UN-Women, CSW, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). CSW's role in promoting the involvement of women in political participation is to review the progress made and problems persisting in the area of women in power and decision-making outlined in the BPfA.²¹³ CSW also writes policy recommendations and agreed upon standards for the international community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs), who help advance women's participation in political processes.²¹⁴

In 2014, the CSW's 58th Session tackled the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, preceding the SDGs, for women and girls.²¹⁵ The conclusions adopted in the session call on governments and other actors to implement policies and actions to ensure women's full and equal participation at all levels of decision-making in the public and private sectors.²¹⁶ At the 59th Session, CSW reviewed the implementation of the BPfA and accentuated that greater efforts are required to support women's political participation through capacity building, training, and gathering quality data.²¹⁷ The session also encouraged governments to develop dedicated gender equality structures, such as gender equality offices/units, gender equality networks, and ombud services, to promote and monitor gender equality.²¹⁸ Furthermore, the session discussed particular gaps to

²⁰⁷ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/66/130), 2011, pp. 1-5.

²⁰⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), 2015

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, 2019.

²¹¹ UNDP, *Goal 5 Targets*.

²¹² UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, 2019.

²¹³ UN-Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women: report on the fifty-eighth session* (15 March 2013 and 10-21 March 2014) (E/2014/27-E/CN.6/2014/15), 2014.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women: report on the fifty-ninth session* (21 March 2014 and 9-20 March 2015), 2015; UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General* (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²¹⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women: report on the fifty-ninth session* (21 March 2014 and 9-20 March 2015), 2015; GENDER-NET, *Plans and initiatives in selected research institutions aiming to stimulate gender equality and enact structural change*, 2015.

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women's political participation such as the lack of attention given to women's participation and influence in trade unions, which are important for prioritizing issues concerning gender equality and advocating for women's rights at the workplace.²¹⁹ The adopted conclusions of the session also reiterated the barriers to women's political participation, which include poverty, the lack of access to education and healthcare, and the threat of violence and intimidation.²²⁰ The 65th session of the CSW emphasized the necessity to include women in the formulation and implementation of government policies and regulations in order to reflect women's and girls' specific needs and expressed concerns on the persisting structural barriers and obstacles to women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life. It further recognized the need to enhance women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in advisory and decision-making bodies of political parties and, as appropriate, civil society organizations. Especially, young women are underrepresented in public life and disproportionately excluded from consultation on issues that affect them. To increase women's full and equal political participation, the commission also highlighted the need to fully engage men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change, and as strategic partners and allies in the promotion of women.²²¹ The upcoming 67th Session of CSW in March 2023 will focus on Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women in girls.²²²

UN-Women plays a more direct role in assisting the implementation of programs and initiatives, such as providing training for women political candidates to build their capacities and to run more efficient political campaigns.²²³ UN-Women also advocates for legislative reforms to guarantee women's fair access to the political sphere and facilitates meetings with CSOs to initiate programs that ensure elections uphold women's rights and are free from electoral violence.²²⁴ For instance, in the 2013 elections in Kenya, UN-Women provided training to nearly 900 female candidates, increasing the number of women legislators by more than 20%.²²⁵ Moreover, UN-Women integrates gender equality in governance and national planning (GNP) by establishing gender-responsive capacities, systems, and resources that reflect an understanding of the realities of women's lives and addresses their issues.²²⁶ A corporate evaluation of the UN-Women GNP portfolio showed that UN-Women expanded policy or political spaces for gender responsiveness and enabled government stakeholders, CSOs, and women machineries, a form of institutionalized or bureaucratic representation of women, to capitalize on those spaces.²²⁷ UN-Women cooperates with national women's machineries established as formal government structures of Member States to advocate and support for policies that promote the advancement of women.²²⁸ UNDP also encourages gender responsiveness of political institutions and supports women's access to opportunities to exercise their political rights through the training of female candidates, awareness campaigns, and promoting gender parity in electoral management bodies.²²⁹ In 2016, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2016/2, which urged the UN system, its agencies, funds, and programs, to mainstream a gender perspective into all UN policies.²³⁰ In 2017, the General Assembly

²¹⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women: report on the fifty-ninth session* (21 March 2014 and 9-20 March 2015), 2015.

²²⁰ Ibid.; UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²²¹ UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women: report on the sixty-fifth session* (15-26 March 2021) (E/CN.6/2021/L.3), 2021

²²² UN-Women, CSW67 (2023)

²²³ UN-Women, *Women's Leadership and Political Participation*, 2013.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ UN-Women, *Gender Equality: A Governance Matter*, 2013, p. 1.

²²⁷ UN-Women, *Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning*, 2019.

²²⁸ Ibid.; UN-Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome*, 2014.

²²⁹ UNDP, *Women's equal political participation*.

²³⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system* (E/RES/2016/2), 2016.

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called upon the entities of the UN, Member States, and NGOs, to accelerate the effective mainstreaming of a gender perspective in its resolution 72/234.²³¹ A 2018 UN Secretary-General report on mainstreaming gender in the UN system reviewed country programs to monitor and track the implementation of gender mainstreaming.²³² The report showed that progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in country programs better support Member States in removing the legal, economic, and political structural barriers that discriminate against women.²³³

Additionally, NGOs and CSOs are often involved in empowering women to participate in politics. The Femmes Africa Solidarité is an NGO that promotes women's equal access and opportunity to participate in decision-making and politics, where its conceptual framework is based on Security Council resolution 1325.²³⁴ The International Women's Democracy Center (IWDC) is another NGO established to strengthen women's global leadership by focusing on increasing the participation of women in policy and decision-making within their own governments; and is granted consultative status to ECOSOC.²³⁵ IWDC achieves its objectives by setting up training programs and workshops such as the Campaign Management Workshop, which trains women leaders the skills and tools to stand as candidates for elected office.²³⁶ Other regional NGOs, like the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, are similarly involved in promoting equal participation of women in politics by organizing and hosting global conferences on women in politics.²³⁷ In 2017, as part of a joint program between the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Community of Democracies, and UNDP, regional consultations took place in Africa, America, the Arab Region, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe to analyse the main policies in place to advance the political empowerment of women.²³⁸ Moreover, the European Union (EU) developed the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-25 (GAP III) that aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls, and safeguard gains made on gender equality during the 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action.²³⁹ Other regional organizations, like the Arab Women Organization, prioritize the enhancement of women's political participation by collecting data regarding the status of women in the region, coordinating local and national efforts pertaining to women's issues, and organizing seminars and workshops to coordinate joint regional action regarding women's issues.²⁴⁰

Political Exclusion of Women from Marginalized Groups

While Member States reaffirmed the BPfA in 2015, progress since then has been slow and uneven, where no country has fully achieved equality and empowerment for women.²⁴¹ Many women experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability, and marginalization throughout their

²³¹ UN General Assembly, *Women in Development (A/RES/72/234)*, 2017.

²³² UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, Report of the Secretary-General (E/2018/53)*, 2018.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Femmes Africa Solidarité, *Origin of FAS; UN Security Council, Women and peace and security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*, 2000.

²³⁵ IWDC, *About*.

²³⁶ IWDC, *Programs*.

²³⁷ Center for Asia-Pacific Women, *About CAPWIP*.

²³⁸ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Permanent Secretariat of the Community Democracies, & UNDP, Regional Organizations, Gender Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women*, 2017.

²³⁹ European Commission, *Gender Action Plan – putting women and girl's rights at the heart of the global recovery for a gender-equal world*, 2020.

²⁴⁰ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, & UNDP, Advancing Women's Political Participation: Middle East and North Africa Consultation on Gender Equality & Political Empowerment*, 2017.

²⁴¹ UNDP, *Progress in the implementation of UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3)*, 2015.

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life.²⁴² Gender inequalities intersect with other forms of inequality, which leads to uneven progress in the lives of women as they combat the multiple inequalities they experience.²⁴³ Women often make up the most disadvantaged group within marginalized groups with limited access to land, credit, and even decision-making processes.²⁴⁴ Major gaps exist for poor women and girls living in rural areas and in poor urban settlements, women with HIV/AIDS infections, and women with disabilities.²⁴⁵ Further, indigenous women, migrant women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women, domestic female workers, and women from ethnic, cultural, or religious minorities face additional barriers in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making.²⁴⁶

Statistics collected to monitor progress and shortcomings on gender equality are usually only disaggregated by sex, thus overlooking differences and inequalities among women based on other factors.²⁴⁷ Research disaggregated across a range of demographic characteristics to account for inter- and intra-group differences is important to assess and analyse gender issues and to reveal multidimensional deprivations that are hidden by averages and aggregations.²⁴⁸ Furthermore, laws, policies, and efforts are needed to ensure that the needs, interests, and perspectives of marginalized groups of women and girls are integrated across all policy areas and that such groups of women participate in the shaping of policies.²⁴⁹ It is also important to equip women with the necessary tools such as education, training, and personal resources to strengthen the role of all women in political and public life.²⁵⁰

Many Member States have made efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making, but there still exists a stark gap in regards to ensuring the participation of particularly marginalized women in political decision-making forums.²⁵¹ A number of actions illustrating how to overcome political exclusion of marginalized women include: for example, the introduction of constitutional and legislative reforms paired with community education initiatives as piloted in Uganda.²⁵² This effort tackles the political exclusion of people with disabilities and promotes attitudinal and behavioural change to overcome systemic obstacles to the inclusion of marginalized groups of women.²⁵³ In Kenya, for example, Wajir women overcame political and social exclusion by organizing themselves into the Wajir Women Association for Peace, where they worked with local governments to achieve greater democratic inclusion, promote peacebuilding, and secure future attitudinal changes towards women in decision-making positions.²⁵⁴ Strengthening civil society's support for marginalized groups through formal organization into coordinated structures assists campaigns and promotes women's political participation.²⁵⁵ Lastly, in Kosovo, shuttle services to and from courts and

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁴⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the Fourteenth session* (E/3360-E/CN.6/367), 1960.

²⁴⁵ UNDP, *Women's equal political participation*; UN General Assembly, *Women and political participation* (A/RES/66/130), 2011.

²⁴⁶ UN General Assembly, *Women and political participation* (A/RES/66/130), 2011.

²⁴⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁴⁸ Equal Measures 2030, *Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index*, 2019.

²⁴⁹ UN General Assembly, *Women and Political Participation* (A/RES/58/142), 2003, pp. 1-5.

²⁵⁰ UN-Women, *Women in power and decision-making: Strengthening voices for democracy*, 2014.

²⁵¹ UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁵² IDEA, *Overcoming political exclusion*, 2013, p. 28.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ IDEA, *Journeys from Exclusion to Inclusion: Marginalized women's successes in overcoming political exclusion*, 2013, p. 16.

²⁵⁵ IDEA, *Overcoming political exclusion*, 2013, p. 32.

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court liaison officers for ethnic groups facilitate access to courts addressing female minorities being excluded from accessing the judiciary system.²⁵⁶

Challenges to Women's Political Participation

Women face disproportionate challenges to actively participate at all levels of politics and decision-making relative to their male counterparts.²⁵⁷ Challenges include discriminatory socio-cultural and religious practices that keep women in a subordinate position and disregard their decision-making

power.²⁵⁸ According to UNDP, in many countries, traditions continue to portray women's primary roles as mothers and housewives, restricting them to those roles which are often unrecognized as work and unpaid.²⁵⁹ This, for instance, hinders women from entering politics themselves and can influence their voting decisions on election day, if the male head of household tells them how to vote.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, women on average are financially poorer than men, lacking access to and ownership of land, bearing disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work, and being paid less or more likely being unemployed.²⁶¹ The poorer financial disposition of women is a critical challenge for their participation in politics since seeking elective positions is expensive, requiring large financial involvement which many cannot afford.²⁶² Not only do women consider the costs of running a campaign, but they also consider the costs in the domestic sphere to cover their absence such as child-care costs.²⁶³ Canada, for instance, adopted legislation at the electoral level which places child-care expenses as part of the expenses of a candidate for election because child-care costs impose an unequal burden on many women seeking elected office.²⁶⁴

According to OHCHR, risky political environments where women could face violence, assassinations, threats, and blackmail are another challenge to women's participation in politics because they scare away women from active participation in politics.²⁶⁵ The lack of prosecution of violent attacks against women in politics also discourages the participation of women in politics.²⁶⁶ Additionally, political party discrimination against women occurs deliberately to humiliate and frustrate women into losing focus and excluding them from active participation.²⁶⁷ Since many women are vulnerable to political violence, they are unlikely to attend frequent political meetings that occur late in the night.²⁶⁸ Results from IPU's 2016 study on violence against women (VAW) in parliament of 39 countries showed that 44.4% of women received threats of death, rape, beatings or kidnapping, 25.5% experienced physical violence in the parliament, and 46.7% feared for their security and that of their family.²⁶⁹ Efforts by Member States to

²⁵⁶ UNDP, *Marginalized minorities in development programming*, p. 48, 2010.

²⁵⁷ UN General Assembly, *Women's Participation in Exercise of Political Power Cannot Be Disputed*, General Assembly President Stresses as She Opens High-Level Event (A/61/122/Add.1), 2019.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ UNDP, *Public perceptions on gender equality in politics and business*, 2013; UN-Women, *Redistribute unpaid work*.

²⁶⁰ Kunovich et al., *Gender in politics*, 2007.

²⁶¹ UN-Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2019.

²⁶² UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁶³ Women's Environment & Development Organization, *Women Candidates and Campaign Finance*, 2007.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ OHCHR, *Violence against Women in Politics*, 2018; UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁶⁶ OHCHR, *Gender based violence against women in politics and during elections must be eradicated, warns UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women*, 2019.

²⁶⁷ Kunovich et al., *Gender in politics*, 2007; Shames, *Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power*, 2015.

²⁶⁸ Shames, *Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power*, 2015.

²⁶⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*, 2016.

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end VAW in politics include parliamentary response and organized campaigns that call attention to widespread sexual and physical harassment of women in politics.²⁷⁰ Amongst others, challenges faced by women also include the negative social perceptions about the leadership ability of women and the lack of support from families and the media.²⁷¹ Repeated exposure to female elected officials improves perceptions of women's ability and effectiveness in politics and leads to future electoral gains and support for women.²⁷²

Legislative, electoral, and constitutional laws also challenge the representation of women and their political participation.²⁷³ Legislation governing political parties can discriminate against women by placing provisions on candidate registration.²⁷⁴ Those include high candidate deposit costs or requirements that are difficult to fulfil because of women's unequal political and socio-economic power in comparison to men.²⁷⁵ However, as of 2016, over 120 countries have established quota policies to ensure more women have leadership roles in government, where the range targeted in quotas varies across countries.²⁷⁶ For instance, in Niger, the goal is 10% of female representation in parliament, while in Panama, the target is 50%.²⁷⁷ While some Member States implement quota systems to increase the women's participation in government, quotas still do not ensure enough women are elected in political parties.²⁷⁸ For voting and elections, women may face obstacles in casting their vote, for instance, as polling stations are located in remote or unsafe areas, which makes women reluctant to use them.²⁷⁹

One path to change has been through the social, economic, and political transformations that have offered greater opportunities for women to assume different roles and opened way for new political institutions.²⁸⁰ More specific strategies of change can be seen in Senegal in 2012, where CSOs and UN-Women launched an awareness campaign and a training program on the electoral process to educate and encourage female candidates.²⁸¹ The outcome of the elections resulted in a near balance between men and women in the National Assembly.²⁸² Similarly, in 2013, increased access of women to the political decision-making process in Cameroon was gained through placing participatory neighbourhood structures that worked with local government and other state actors.²⁸³ In Georgia, in 2014, with the support of UNDP, mechanisms to increase networking and develop the capacities of women politicians included establishing a local forum.²⁸⁴ Moreover, in 2015, the National Council for Women in Egypt developed a website for women candidates to provide a platform for all women candidates to promote their electoral campaigns, which increased their reach to voters and decreased their campaign costs.²⁸⁵ In a last example, following the civil war in Liberia in 2003, a women-led peace movement, paired with gender-sensitive donor nations, and a UN mission with a mandate to incorporate

²⁷⁰ OHCHR, *Violence against Women in Politics*, 2018.

²⁷¹ UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3), 2015.

²⁷² Women Deliver, *Strengthen women's political participation and decision-making power*; UNDP, *Women's equal political participation*.

²⁷³ UN-Women, *Women's Leadership and Political Participation*, 2013.

²⁷⁴ OSCE, *Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties*, 2014.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report: Gender inequality persists in leadership positions*, 2017.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ UNSD, *Power and decision-making*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Women's Participation in Exercise of Political Power Cannot Be Disputed, General Assembly President Stresses as She Opens High-Level Event (A/61/122/Add.1)*, 2019.

²⁷⁹ UN-Women, *Elections*.

²⁸⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review*, 2015.

²⁸¹ Women Deliver, *Strengthen Girls' and Women's Political Participation and Decision-Making Power*, 2016.

²⁸² Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review*, 2015.

²⁸³ IDEA, *Overcoming political exclusion*, 2013, p. 32.

²⁸⁴ UNDP, *Strengthening women's political participation*, 2016.

²⁸⁵ OECD, *Women's political participation in Egypt*, 2018.

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gender mainstreaming, resulted in gender-sensitive police reforms.²⁸⁶ This led to the recruitment of female police officers and a new unit to respond to gender-based violence was created.²⁸⁷

Conclusion

All women need to equally participate in the political process of their countries to ensure a democratic and inclusive national society.²⁸⁸ Inclusive participation of women in government influences the extent of emphasis on gender equality in policy and practice.²⁸⁹ CSW, alongside UN-Women, established, supported, and financed many initiatives to work towards equal participation, to implement the BPfA, and to achieve SDG 5.²⁹⁰ While measures have been taken to empower women politically, many barriers still exist that prevent women from full and equal participation in the political life.²⁹¹ Working towards achieving equal political participation of women will remain one of the priorities for CSW in order to ensure gender equality.²⁹²

Further Research

While researching this topic, delegates should consider the following questions: How can the CSW and other UN entities work with Member States to achieve equal representation for women in local, national, and international governance bodies? How can the CSW shape norms and policies that address the causes of low political participation of women such as poverty, gender-based violence, lack of access to education, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work? What role can men play as advocates in empowering women? How can governments provide resources to facilitate involving marginalized groups in governmental practices? How can the UN remain sensitive to cultural practices while ensuring the voices of women are heard in decision-making processes? How can the CSW shape policies to encourage the implementation of a gender-sensitive political structure? What capacity-building activities should occur within Member States, CSOs, and intergovernmental organizations to fill implementation gaps?

²⁸⁶ Bacon, Liberia's gender-sensitive police reform: Improving representation and responsiveness in a post-conflict setting, 2015.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ UN ECOSOC, Equality in political participation and decision-making (E/1990/4), 1990.

²⁸⁹ UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report: Gender inequality persists in leadership positions, 2017.

²⁹⁰ UN-Women, Progress 20 years on: Beijing+20 reviews are underway, 2014.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² UN-Women, Commission on the Status of Women.

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The IPU report shows statistics of women's participation in parliament and other domains of government. The latest report of 2018 is based on countries that held elections in 2018. Furthermore, the IPU data confirms that the global share of women in parliament continues to slowly rise. It also shows that electoral quotas for women have spread to all regions and that well-designed quotas increase gender equality. However, the report elaborates that country-level experiences with quotas have shown that not all quotas are equally effective. This report is important for delegates as a source for statistics and for information on electoral law and quotas.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2015). Report on the Commission on the Status of Women, fifty-ninth session (21 March 2014 and 9-20 March 2015) (E/2015/27- E/CN.6/2015/10). Retrieved 18 August 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/E/2015/27>

The 2015 report of CSW to the ECOSOC is a summary of the work that CSW has accomplished the past years, especially the Beijing+20 national and regional review processes. This document is essential for delegates since it provides information on the organizational structure of CSW and the pressing themes it addresses. It also provides a draft resolution on the "future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women," and presents gaps to women's political participation. Further, the report includes a list of considered documents during the session.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2015). Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/3). Retrieved 18 August 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2015/3>

This is a summary of the report that was made to provide a review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on its 20th anniversary. It highlights matters such as VAW, access to employment and education, and women in power and decision-making. The BPfA continues to act as the main framework for women's empowerment and it presents the priorities for future action and for accelerated implementation. It is also a great resource for the peripheral issues of this topic including the political exclusion of marginalized groups, electoral quotas, and the political VAW.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2013). Women's Leadership and Political Participation. Retrieved 17 August 2019 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2013/12/UN%20WomenLGThemBriefUSwebrev2%20pdf.pdf>

This website presents how women are underrepresented as voters as well as in leading positions in politics. It offers an overview of the role of UN-Women in relation to the restriction in the political participation of women. Several obstacles to participating in political life including structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions are mentioned as well as several solutions that could be implemented to tackle the issue. The website also shows examples of Member States with facts and figures that demonstrate improvements in political participation. The source is useful for delegates since UN-Women and CSW constantly work together to achieve common goals, including encouraging the involvement of women in politics.

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This UN resolution is the latest one that fully tackles the issue of women in political participation. It provides several clauses about the importance of addressing the topic and the reason it is a threat to democracy. Furthermore, it offers operative clauses that encourage Member States to take certain steps to promote the involvement of women in the political sphere. Most importantly, it also tackles concepts of conflict resolution, gender quotas, and minority groups. This resolution is helpful for delegates since it presents the acts that constitute political participation, and it offers recommendations that the delegates should keep in mind when stipulating further measures for addressing the topic.

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