



# Tennessee YMCA Model United Nations

## SECRETARY GENERAL'S AGENDA

### Model United Nations A – Greta Li

#### 1. Disarmament and International Security

- **Regulation of the Arms Trade:** Heavy arms are categorized into battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre systems, combat aircraft/vehicles, helicopters, warships, and missiles. Arms sold between nations through official channels can often be used in human rights violations, such as Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen. The rampant illicit arms trafficking of small arms and light weapons is also another area of concern for the UN. For example, Mexican criminal gangs have firearms that can be traced back to the US. Some governments have ignored current UN embargoes to arm militias and proxy groups with firearms in unstable areas like Somalia. The UN has made it its mission to eradicate the illegal trade of those weapons with initiatives like the International Tracing Instrument. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how can the UN enforce stronger criteria for denying exports/transfers in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)? How will member states hold each other accountable and reaffirm their commitment to transparency? How can existing weapons tracing systems be improved?
- **Nuclear Disarmament:** A massive decrease in global stockpiles of nuclear weapons followed the end of the Cold War. However, tensions over nuclearization and the rhetoric of deterrence still remain. Four states (India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Sudan) have never signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); North Korea withdrew in 2003; Iran has been found in non-compliance with the treaty since 2002. There have been a number of worrying developments recently. There are indicators that North Korea's nuclear reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex has restarted, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an independent agency that has partnered with the UN, has noted a lack of cooperation and communication from Iran about reporting nuclear activities in locations of interest. Israel's nuclear arms status is still ambiguous, and tensions between Israel and Iran continue to fuel their arms race. Damage from atomic bombs, nuclear fallout, and possible nuclear terrorism must be prevented. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how should the UN react to the maintenance and modernization of nuclear-armed states? What can be done to work with the states who are separate from the NPT? How should the UN regulate other arms developments, like hypersonic missiles?

## 2. Economic and Financial

- **Economic development in response to climate change:** According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in 2021, humanity is in Code Red. Many climate effects are irreversible for the foreseeable future, but countries can follow mitigation measures, such as major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. For example, one recent success of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the phasing out of lead gasoline. Climate change can be linked to a myriad of issues: decreased biodiversity, food insecurity, climate refugees, and more. Economies often depend on the climate and Earth's physical features, such as raw materials exports and disasters disrupting global supply chains. Climate change has impacts on the microeconomic level, such as people's livelihoods in coastal areas, to the macroeconomic level, such as the impact of climate change on a country's main export. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how can the UN support shifts towards sustainable economic policies? How can member states minimize waste and maximize efficiency?
- **Labor rights:** The United Nations has cited "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" as its Sustainable Development Goal 8. Decent work is defined as opportunities for everyone to work for a fair income in a safe workplace and for better social and development opportunities. Because of COVID-19, millions have lost their jobs and struggle with supporting themselves and their dependents. Workplace barriers have included gender inequality, discrimination against people with disabilities, unfair recruitment, and the lack of freedom of association. Migrant workers must also be protected, and child labor must be ended as soon as possible. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: what can UN member states do to close the gaps in social protection coverage through labor standards and security? How should the UN address labor challenges from globalization? What programs can be continued or created that address fair, humane treatment of workers around the world? How can we move towards creating green jobs?

## 3. Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural

- **Protection of Refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples:** There is currently an estimate of 20.7 million refugees and 48 million internally displaced people, out of the 82.4 million forcibly displaced people. The Universal Declaration of Human rights declares that everyone has a right to nationality, but unfortunately, refugees remain in a "stateless" state. They face barriers of integration and often live in refugee

camps, such as the Sahrawi camp in Algeria, Sudanese Kakuma camp in Kenya, and the Syrian Zaatari camp in Jordan. COVID-19 has exposed camp infrastructure deficiencies and the evident lack of supplies for refugees. There continue to be conflicts that drive people to flee their home country, most notably the recent Afghanistan government fall to the Taliban. On the other hand, internally displaced people remain within the borders of their home country, which means they are a vulnerable population. Often, they are not protected by their government and still face the ongoing civil conflicts that displaced them in the first place. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how can the UN address the root causes of displacement? What can be done about the protracted displacement of refugees, some of whom have grown up in camps for their entire lives? What sort of relocation and integration programs can be created to relieve burdens on countries with high numbers of refugees such as Turkey? How can the typical “cluster approach” for internally displaced people be improved?

- **Access to Quality Education:** In 2018, around 258 million children and youth were out of school. During COVID-19, those numbers have only increased, and it is predicted that 20 years’ worth of educational gains were lost based on the number of children falling below minimum reading proficiency levels. Access to quality education is a multi-pronged issue. Children face barriers to attendance, whether that be home life, discrimination on account of gender, race, and other markers, and poverty. Once they get to school, the school may suffer from overcrowding, lack of funding, untrained teachers, and more. But quality education can open doors for better job opportunities to overcome income inequality. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how can the UN support equitable and inclusive education? What is the balance between the UN giving external aid and empowering local communities for sustainable growth? What is the balance between suggesting educational standards and protecting the community’s autonomy to learn about their own culture and history?

#### 4. Special Political and Decolonization

- **Peacekeeping development:** While peacekeeping missions have had positive impacts such as the protection of civilians during the Liberian civil wars, there are a number of serious accusations against the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). One is the failure to prevent genocides, such as the Rwandan genocide. Some others are the reports of peacekeepers sexually abusing women in Haiti and allegedly causing the cholera outbreak there. Effectiveness of peacekeepers depends on a multitude of areas. UN Peacekeeping mandates have changed over time, such as

only using force for defense to using force if necessary to protect civilian lives. Some states like Syria are not allowing peacekeepers the freedom of movement. Even during COVID-19, now the UNPKO is considering digitization and technological advancements for peacekeeping. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: how can the UN hold peacekeepers and their missions accountable? If it's necessary for the UNPKO to be more effective, how much can the current mandates on acceptable action be changed? What current areas in the world would benefit from a peacekeeping force or more regulation?

- **Israeli practices in occupied Arab territories:** Israelis and Palestinians have over a hundred year conflict over land ownership and sovereignty. From the 1947 UN proposal for separate states to the Six Day War, the Intifadas, Jewish settlements in Gaza and West Bank, the current state of the conflict is Israel's occupation and conflict with Hamas, a Palestinian extremist group in Gaza. Recent events such as Palestinian force arrests of human rights defenders and the alarming deaths of children from Israeli military air strikes show that this conflict will escalate. No matter what, international law protects all civilian lives in occupied territories. As you write your resolution, please consider these questions: what actions can the UN actually take to influence Israel, a member state, to uphold human rights through accountability of their own military's actions? How should the UN respond to Hamas and their actions? What are potential ways this conflict could escalate into another war, and how can the UN de-escalate or preemptively prepare for it?