

Baylor University High School Model United Nations

Fall 2009 Conference



*General Assembly, Third Committee*

*Background & Preparation Guide*

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_, Rapporteur

\_\_\_\_\_, Rapporteur

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2009 Baylor University Model United Nations High School Conference! More specifically, welcome to the General Assembly Third Committee. I, along with the other committee chairs, am excited for the opportunity to chair this committee, and am especially looking forward to hearing your debate for the duration of our conference. Year after year, the General Assembly allocates to its Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee, commonly referred to as the “Third Committee,” agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people’s all over the world. The two topics for this committee include: The Human Rights for Youth as well as Information Communication Technology as a means of Development. These highly interesting topics provide a wide range of social and humanitarian issues, and are designed to broaden your horizons on crucial issues located throughout the world’s many regions. I hope you thoroughly enjoy researching and debating these topics concerning youth and communication technology as relating to this committee in the SOCHUM.

This research guide has been prepared to provide a basic history of this committee and to equip you with background on the topics. While it encompasses different approaches and a guideline for the topics, it is not an exhaustive list of questions and solutions. I highly encourage you to facilitate your own research and dive deeper in the topics provided, paying careful attention to your government’s positions and past actions. With an ample knowledge of the topics and solutions for the future, you will be better equipped to debate effectively in committee. This aide will help better your arguments and positions with regards to the topics on hand. I highly encourage you to thoroughly review the research guide to help better influence your work with these topics. Careful reading alongside comprehensive is essential in your reasoning, debate, and overall experience in the Model United Nations High School Conference. This conference is meant to be an education experience designed for the improvement of research and negotiating skills. Hopefully, the model conference should offer greater insight for you into these issues; as well as a broader understanding of the UN, how it works, and what its limitations are. It should also provide the opportunity for you to think about and propose alternative solutions to these global problems. Also, much of the core framework of the research is provided in this package. It falls to you simply to catch up on any current happenings and work out the solutions. I look forward to hearing your dialogue on the Third Committee topics and to meeting you in the fall. Until then, good luck with your research!

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair

Baylor University High School Model United Nations 2009

## History of the Third Committee

### *Introduction*

Most of the deliberation in the United Nations is done by the General Assembly. This was one of the main goals of the founders. To make things easier to coordinate, the General Assembly (GA) is broken down into six main committees, each with its own range of topics of specialization. The focus of the Third Committee is social, cultural, and humanitarian affairs. This committee is commonly known by as SOCHUM (Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian). SOCHUM was founded as one of the original branches of the United Nations in 1945. Social and humanitarian development, and the preservation of and respect for cultures are basic building blocks of the UN. Although there are several bodies of the UN whose task it is to address such issues, SOCHUM provides the widest access to UN members.

The third committee is charged with several tasks. These range from the recognition and preservation of different cultures, to the advancement of the rights and status of historically neglected groups of people. As a committee of the General Assembly, all of the countries which are members of the UN have access to the third committee. Likewise, every represented country will have a member on SOCHUM.

Furthermore, the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural affairs committee (SOCHUM) is part of the greater General Assembly (GA). The GA is the largest body within the United Nations and is characterized by six main committees including: Disarmament and International Security, Economic and Financial, Social, Humanitarian and Cultural, Special Political and Decolonization, Administrative and Budgetary, and the Legal Committee. Commonly referred to as the Third Committee, SOCHUM's primary focus is the examination of human rights issues. This committee was created to address a multitude of international issues that do not fall under the realm of other committees in the General Assembly. The SOCHUM committee's responsibility is to complete resolutions on social, humanitarian, and cultural issues affecting various parts of the world. Some topics include the advancement of women, protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the elimination of racial discrimination, and the promotion of the right to self-determination. The GA includes representation from all member states. All six committees have the responsibility of preparing draft resolutions for the GA plenary body to approve.

According to the UN Charter, the Third Committee (along with the other main committees) shall initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of promoting international co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields, and assist in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. The United Nations issued eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000. Combating AIDS, malaria and other diseases, eradication of extreme poverty hunger, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, ensuring primary education, promoting gender equality, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development are all the eight goals set by the United Nations. All votes within this committee are decided on by a simple majority rules vote, not unanimously, because SOCHUM decides on non-pressing and non-military matters. This committee cannot mediate confrontations between two or more countries however it can press for the continued efforts of

maintaining peaceful relations. The issues delegated to this committee encompass human rights issues from a variety of different cultures in the world. The overview can also be broken down for better explanation by reviewing past charters by the United Nations voting, subsidiary organs, and by considering the latest developments.

Article 11, Chapter IV of the United Nations' Charter deals with the matter of voting where "Each member of the General Assembly shall have one vote" which is in turn translated into the functioning of the Third Committee as well.

The Charter of the United Nations in its Article 22, Chapter 4 mentions that, "The General Assembly may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions." However at this point in time, we the SOCHUM Executive Board at LIMUN, would make an earnest appeal to you to weigh out the consequences of establishing 'another such body' that will be 'just another addition' to the already clogged organization structure of the United Nations. Only if the agenda genuinely needs such an organization should you venture into even considering the inception of one.

On 17th December 2008, in the United Nations 63rd Session the Third Committee passed the following resolution: A/RES/63/117 concerning the topic of 'Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.' Thus, it is amply clear that SOCHUM and its functions play an almost necessary role in the present world scenario specifically in terms of Social, Humanitarian and Cultural issues that establish the very basis of humanity.

The General Assembly's third committee, Social, Humanitarian and Cultural plays a very important role in the United Nations and thus should be given especially great attention when considering the two issues of human rights for youth and communication technology for development. These two issues are immensely important in the world today and the SOCHUM has the capability in aiding such problematic issues.

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## Topics

### ***I. Promoting Information Communication Technologies in Social Development***

*"Recent developments in the fields of communications and information technology are indeed revolutionary in nature. Information and knowledge are expanding in quantity and accessibility. In many fields future decision-makers will be presented with unprecedented new tools for development. In such fields as agriculture, health, education, human resources and environmental management, or transport and business development, the consequences could be really quite revolutionary. Communications and information technology have enormous potential, especially for developing countries, and in furthering sustainable development."*

*Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General 1997-2006*

## ***Background***

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are defined as the services, technologies and goods used in the conveying, processing, and storage of data by electronic means. Some areas of influence include telecommunications, television and radio broadcasting, computer hardware and software, computer services and electronic media such as the internet, email, online shopping and even computer games. With a wide range of operating industries, ICTs provide potential for institutional, social, and economic restructuring within both developed and developing nations (Marcelle). The widespread growth of the internet and mobile cell phone companies has greatly contributed to ICT development. For instance, it took a mere eight years for the internet to grow from a network of 213 host computers, to supporting several thousand users, to its now present size of 56 million internet hosts and 190 million users. Further, the number of countries connected to the global network has also grown from 20 nations in 1990 to more than 200 by July of 1999 (Marcelle).

As evidenced by the rapid increase in technology throughout the twenty-first century, ICTs have become an indispensable tool in the fight against world poverty. ICTs serve as valuable resources for developing nations striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, an increased correlation between ICTs and the MDGs has emerged within the realm of sustainable development, with the hopes of using ICTs in areas such as poverty reduction, basic healthcare, and education. The potential for economic growth is also a crucial aspect of ICT development. For most industrialized nations, the road to development encompassed various stages and was achieved through hard work and slow progress through the integration of new technologies in the economic sector. There is a current potential for developing nations to ‘leapfrog’ parts of the development process and achieve industrial status quicker than ever before. This notion is derived from the foundations of ICTs and is possible through the development of programs such as telemedicine, distance education, wireless applications, and the use of internet sources as a means for overcoming infrastructural barriers and inducing greater economic growth (Chacko).

### *The United Nations and ICT Development*

The United Nations has been integral to the success and implementation of ICTs in developing regions. One of the earliest and most fundamental contributors to communication technologies is the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Based in Geneva and encompassing over 191 member states and over 700 sector members and observers, the ITU’s main focus is to enable the growth and development of telecommunication and information networks and to bridge the digital divide through infrastructure and capacity building. Since becoming a UN specialized agency in 1947, the ITU has provided a forum for private-public partnerships and a consensus-based approach to efficient telecommunication services throughout the world. In addition, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held its first meeting in Geneva in December 2003 and followed up in 2005 with a second phase held in Tunisia. The WSIS specifically targets the role of e-government and e-learning and the increased access to information and knowledge on a local level.

The UN ICT Task Force was established in 2001 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with the hopes of providing comprehensive strategies for development of communication technologies throughout the world. A main goal of the Task Force is to build upon existing ICT initiatives with the aim of facilitating coordination and collaboration among all involved in the projects (“Plan”). Furthermore, the Task Force seeks an environment

conducive to development and the elimination of poverty through strategic policy advice and by raising awareness. Regional specific projects include the establishment of the African Stakeholders Network (ASN) and the Partnership for ICT in Africa (PICTA). At the national level ASN works towards building ICT capacity through cooperation with governments, policy makers, civil society, NGOs, the private sector, and ICT professionals (“Plan”). Further areas of regional Task Force projects include Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States, as well as Europe and Central Asia. Since its inception, the ICT Task Force has held ten global forum meetings ranging in topic from internet governance to harnessing the potential of ICTs in education.

The Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (GAID) was established by the UN Secretary-General in 2006 as a follow-up to the Task Force. Though the ICT Task Force made substantial strides in using ICTs as a tool of reducing the MDGs, the need for a continued effort was evident. The GAID provides a multi-stakeholder approach to development and believes a people-centered and knowledge-based information society is crucial to achieving sustainable development in crucial parts of the world (“What”). At a meeting in May 2008 in Kuala Lumpur the GAID Steering Committee decided on four main areas of focus for the period of 2008-2010. These include access, connectivity, content and education in ICT development. ICT For Development (ICT4D) is a further part of the alliance and provides practical solutions to best bridge the digital divide.

### *Education and ICTs*

Promotion of education and literacy is a crucial aspect of sustainable development. The development of communication technology is not complete without a comprehensive look at the nature of education programs and ICTs. There are a variety of approaches to education and technology, ranging from primary education to virtual universities. All have a place in the use of ICTs as social development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) ICT Competency Standards for Teachers represents a priority on the improvement of infrastructure, teaching conditions and training and the improvement of education world-wide (“UNESCO”).

There are numerous programs in place with the aim of using communication technologies as a way to provide greater access to education and development. The African Virtual University (AVU) is a prime example of technology spreading the ideas of development throughout the world. First established in 1997 as a project of the World Bank, the AVU now is chaired by five African nations and is known for its cross-cultural educational links and ability to work beyond borders and conflicts in order to promote e-learning and higher education (“Background”).

The World Bank is also committed to promoting education through ICT development. Some of the World Bank projects include supplying computers and connectivity to local areas and building school computer labs, enabling instruction in computer programming and computer literacy, and promoting better administration in the education sector through the development of education management information systems (“ICT”). Information technologies are mostly used as a way of gathering and disseminating information. Both technology and the tools available for education are constantly changing. As new technologies are introduced, it is crucial they be adapted to an educational setting. Radio and TV provide the bulk of educational programming in many countries. New forms of communication such as satellite broadcasting and multi-channel

learning have the potential to greatly increase access to education for all. One of the main challenges facing ICTs in education is the continued development of internet capacity in enabling teachers to fully connect with fellow teachers, students, and other learning communities (“ICT”).

### ***Conclusion***

Information communication technology is crucial to the continued development of member states. The distribution of technology leads to an incredible amount of development possibilities. Communication technology is helpful in the economic sector, in building infrastructure, in healthcare, and in the overall economic growth of a developing country. While the implementation of ICTs has already proven successful, there is much more to be done. What will it take to fully achieve the Millennium Development Goals? Are ICTs a feasible long term solution? How should developing nations implement communication technology in their governments and local areas? How should ICTs be distributed? Can ICTs really fuel economic growth? How can partnerships between public and private sectors enhance the use of ICTs in development? How can one use ICTs to accelerate progress towards education for all and throughout life? Do ICTs have the potential to significantly reduce poverty? How does healthcare fit into the ICT development? What is the most important aspect of the ICT field in terms of social development? These questions are equally important and require further research into the nature of development in order to discover solutions. Though there are many questions that remain, one thing is certain: there is great potential for ICTs to make a significant impact on the developing world.

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## ***II. Promotion and Protection of the rights of children and youth in Sub-Saharan Africa***

*"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace."*

*Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General*

### ***Introduction***

Protecting the rights of children has become a critical concern and is very pertinent to the United Nations and international community. Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century a critical situation endures for children in various areas of the world and more specifically in Africa where there is continued cycle of poverty, inequality, disease epidemics and derisory economic conditions. There has been an increase in child pornography, sex trafficking, neglect, gender inequality and education deficiency.

The current global economy is rapidly changing and offers many advantages to youth, however, many youth are put in a difficult situation in which they are not given access and availability to knowledge and required skills that will help them succeed in the global economy. The UN has created an organization called The World Programme of Action for Youth, which

stress the importance that youth in our world. Their importance is not only in the domestic community but also in the international community and the goal of the World Programme of Action is to encourage participation, development and peace. The Programme urges countries to take an active role in educating, feeding, and promoting the general welfare

### ***History of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa***

The greatest issue facing Sub-Saharan Africa is the pressing issue of poverty and hunger. Over 200 million youth are living on less than one dollar a day, and over 515 million live on just two dollars a day. So many children go hungry that over 6 million children a year around the world dies from malnutrition. In 2002, it was found that 1 in 6 children would die before the age of 5 due to malnutrition as well as disease and other influences. Studies have found that poverty is much more common in indigenous areas, which constitutes most of the African area. In these areas Africans are faced with many diseases, and water-borne illness that primarily aide in the premature death of infants and children. Africa is a place with deficient amounts of potable water and exponentially increasing rates of disease. Almost 3,000 people die of AIDS each day, and many of those deaths are children.

Limited financial resources have also lead to increased poverty and aides to the cycle of poor educational resources. It is believed that education is a basic human right and many youth in Africa are deprived the right to education. In the Follow Up of the World Programme of Action for Youth, it was discovered that sub-Saharan children on average get five to six years less of primary and secondary school than children in Western Europe and the Americas. In UNESCO's overview of sub-Saharan Africa in 2000 only 58 % of children were even enrolled in primary school, which is the lowest rate of any region in the world. Education is important for the empowerment and many Africans are struggling with high illiteracy rates and substandard education practices.

### ***Reports on the Protection of Children***

A report was issued during the sixty-third session of the Third Committee, which included various recommendations and support in order to manage and protect children and youth. In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was created in order to protect the civil, political, economic and cultural rights of children. The convention submits a report to the Third Committee every year on the situation dealing with the protection of children. Multiple resolutions have been passed addressing the important issues that specifically concern the topic of children. The general assembly urges states to actively participate in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols as well as encourages the active role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report urges non-discrimination, economic and social well-being, enjoyment of an attainable standard of health, reduction of violence, and the rights of children who have been affected by armed conflict.



The report addresses the importance of each state to be actively involved in the education of children, as well as giving them the resources in order to obtain economic well-being and a healthy standard of living. The agenda addresses the basics including safe water sources, education on disease prevention, education on agriculture and sustenance farming, and opportunity to attend school.

### ***Protection from Armed Conflict***

In the past few decades there has been an increase in child involvement in violent conflicts, specifically in areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Children are kidnapped, captured, and held against their will in order to be trained to kill others. Girls are being forced into sexual slavery and young children are being brainwashed and forced to kill and torture others. Because of these armed conflicts villages are destroyed, goods are ruined, schools are closed, and many children and adults suffer intense traumatic situations. In 1993 the UN recognized the problem, and asked the Secretary-General to begin a study of armed conflict in 15 African regions. In the study it was found that many armed conflicts in Africa were total warfare in which women and children were victims of violence and this was in clear conflict with these people's basic human rights. There is a pressing need to protect children from conflict. This also led to the discovery and advocacy of the importance of education and the schools role in protecting children from violence.

The UN also recognizes the importance of political accountability and the importance of children in the political arena in order to prevent armed conflict. Civil society needs to be empowered to challenge conflict and stress the importance of peaceful negotiation and deter the use of children in armed dispute. The UN also urges states to support the Optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which would raise the legal age for a child to enter any sort of military conflict from 15 to age 18. In Article 38 of the United Nations convention on Rights of Children (1989) it stated "State parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities." A Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has been created that includes 6 non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. They urge an international legal standard that prohibits military requirement of children under the age of 18.

### ***Conclusion***

It is important to stress the promotion and protection of children's rights because it is difficult for them to gain a voice without assistance. They are constantly facing struggles and it is the responsibility to eliminate issues such as violence against children, to promote the economic well-being of children, prevent the sale or trafficking of children, to increase education and the literacy rate, as well as to promote general health and social standing. The efforts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children as well as the efforts of NGO's have helped to increase opportunity for children in sub-Saharan Africa, however continued effort is

dire in order to increase the opportunity for all youth and children. How can we promote the rights of all children in Africa? What institutions can be established in order to facilitate and insure the safety of children? What other programs could the UNCRC implement in order to be more successful? Is it still a current and urgent need to protect children from armed conflict? Why are children in armed conflict a violation of their human rights? What are some other vital areas that children's rights are being violated? How has poverty affected the rights of children? Is it possible to eradicate the issues of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa? What is the role of the global community in the efforts to promote and protect the rights of children?

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