Committee Overview

Introduction

Following the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) was formed to act as a deliberative and cooperational forum for Member States to better prevent the outbreak of future hostilities.[1] The General Assembly, one of the six principal organs of the UN established under the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), was created to act as the wholly representative and deliberative arm of the organization.[2] The large variance in the scope of its mandate led the General Assembly to allocate its work among six committees that would allow each to focus on a specific theme.[3] The stated mandate of the Third Committee is the discussion of all matters related to social, humanitarian, and cultural affairs.[4] Since its foundation, this mandate has naturally developed to also include a particular specialism as the primary forum for issues around human rights.[5] More than 50 % of the resolutions adopted by the committee in recent years were submitted under the human rights agenda addressing a variety of subtopics, thereby making it the world's largest and most prominent forum for international human rights norm creation.[6] This overview will introduce the Third Committee through a contextualization of it within the wider General Assembly structure, an overview of its governance and membership, and an analysis of its mandate and associated powers before examining its current priorities.

Governance, Structure, and Membership

In accordance with the Charter, the General Assembly is comprised of all 193 UN Member States, as well as the Holy See and the State of Palestine as Observer States.[7] Furthermore the work of the committee is supported by non-governmental and intergovernmental observers like the European Union or the International Criminal Court.[8] All main General Assembly committees begin their annual session in mid-September, following the drafting and allocation of agenda items by the General Committee to each specific committee, according to theme and content.[9] Relevant reports of the Secretary-General are issued just before each corresponding agenda item, followed by an allotted time for questions for clarification or analysis.[10] As is the case for all General Assembly committees, the Third Committee adopts draft resolutions on each agenda item and a report to the General Assembly Plenary.[11] All documents require a simple majority to be adopted, unless the agenda item is considered an important question, like for example those on peace and security which require a two-thirds majority.[12] Based on this, the Plenary then adopts, either through a vote or by consensus, the draft resolutions as recommended in the committee report.[13]

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) is the largely ceremonial head of the General Assembly, elected each year by a simple majority to a one-year nonrenewable term.[14] 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.[15] The PGA does not preside over all six General Assembly committees separately; rather, Chairs and

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[1] *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 55-60.

[2] Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *About the General Assembly*, 2017.

[3] *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945; UN General Assembly, *Main Committees*, 2017.

[4] UN General Assembly, *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural*, 2017.

[5] Ibid.; UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly's Third Committee – social, humanitarian and cultural issues*, 2013; UN General Assembly, *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues – Draft proposals per agenda item*, 2017.

[6] UN HRC, *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)*, 2007; UN HRC, *Review of the work and functioning of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/16/21)*, 2011; UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly's Third Committee – social, humanitarian and cultural issues*, 2013.

[7] UN General Assembly, *Member States,* 2017.

[8] UN General Assembly, *List of non-Member States, entities and organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly (A/INF/71/5)*, 2017.

[9] Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, pp. 37-38, 62.

[10] Ibid., pp. 37-38, 65.

[11] Ibid., pp. 37-38, 62; UN General Assembly, *Reports to the Plenary*, 2017.

[12] UN General Assembly, *About the General Assembly*, 2017.

[13] Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 62.

[14] Ibid., p. 16.

[15] Ibid.

Vice Chairs are the facilitators of individual committees.[16] 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 for certain thematic issues.[17]

All General Assembly committees are supported by secretariats, which provide substantive and logistical support to the committees. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the primary substantive support wing of the Third Committee's secretariat, acting as a natural focal point for human rights bodies, reports, and other publications.[18] Given the varied nature of its work, various other UN entities may serve as substantive secretariats for the Third Committee, such as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Volunteers program, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[19] Furthermore, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) provides an annual report to the Third Committee on its own recent sessions and discussions.[20] Independent Experts, Special Rapporteurs, and Working Groups that compile reports and advise the HRC will also engage in interactive dialogues with the Third Committee on a variety of subjects.[21]

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The Third Committee derives its direction from a variety of UN documents.[22] Articles 10-17 of the Charter are the principal guidelines for the substance and scope of all General Assembly committees.[23] These articles state that the General Assembly has the authority to "initiate studies and make recommendations", as well as "receive and consider reports" from other organs of the UN, including the Security Council.[24] Article 1 also speaks of "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all", which has been said to be the foundation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) and the mandate of much of the Third Committee's work.[25] Nearly every international human rights instrument since the UDHR has built upon its core principles, thereby enlarging the Third Committee's mandate by extension.[26] The Third Committee used the UDHR as the groundwork to adopt additional and more specific international human rights instruments, chief among them the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (1966).[27] These documents, along with the two optional protocols to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, make up what is known as the *International Bill of Human Rights*.[28] Both covenants differ from the UDHR in that they are legally binding multilateral treaties to those Member States that have either ratified or acceded to them.[29]

Under its overall mandate as the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, the Third Committee spends a large portion of its time discussing matters relating to human rights and setting rights norms, demonstrated by the fact that around half of its work is based on the single agenda item "Promotion and protection of human rights".[30] However,

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[16] Ibid., pp. 15, 18.

[17] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[18] UN OHCHR, *Human Rights – New York: Mainstreaming human rights*, 2017.

[19] UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Third Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.3/71/L.1/Rev. 1)*, 2016.

[20] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Human Rights Council (A/71/53)*, 2016.

[21] Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 65; UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly's Third Committee – social, humanitarian and cultural issues*, 2013.

[22] Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011; *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 10-17.

[23] *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 10-17.

[24] Ibid., Art. 13, 15.

[25] UN OHCHR, *Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*, 1996; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

[26] UN OHCHR, *Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*, 1996.

[27] Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

[28] UN OHCHR, *Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*, 1996.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 65.

the Third Committee's work can encompass a broad variety of issues, including those beyond human rights, demonstrated during its 71st session wherein topics including crime prevention and criminal justice, international drug control, young people's social development, and the advancement of women were discussed.[31]

As part of the General Assembly, the work of the Third Committee is of a normative nature, in that it does not actually carry out the operations or tasks called for in its resolutions.[32] The Third Committee primarily works through the initiation of studies and the creation of nonbinding recommendations.[33] The task of operationalizing the Third Committee's recommendations is primarily delegated to the various agencies and offices of the UN Secretariat.[34] The Third Committee can request studies to be undertaken by relevant UN bodies such as OHCHR, UNHCR, UN-Women, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).[35] UN-Women, for example, delivered the "Report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls" (A/71/223) to the Third Committee, and UNODC similarly issued the "Report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation against the world drug problem" (A/71/316) prepared pursuant to resolutions 69/149 (2015) and 69/194 (2015), respectively.[36] The Third Committee can also call for conferences to highlight certain issues, with a notable recurring example being the World Conference on Women, originating from the Third Committee resolution 3276 (XXIX) (1974), and monitored regularly through follow up reviews every five years.[37]

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

During its 71st session, beginning in September 2016, the Third Committee addressed a variety of issues and topics, culminating in 50 final texts being adopted by the Plenary.[38] With the Third Committee meeting for the second time since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the importance of the goals as a guidance for the work of the committee was stressed.[39] The work on draft resolution concerning country-specific human rights questions led to heated discussions, due to the draft resolutions being considered "arbitrary and politicized" by some Member States.[40] The reasons for increasing discussion on issues under the human rights agenda vary, but differing opinions on human rights questions as well as various ways to address the issue are part of it.[41] A big question under debate that will need to be discussed further is whether resolutions on the human rights situation within single Member States are the suitable way to address the issue.[42] Nevertheless, the Committee adopted four draft resolutions on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.[43] While the General Assembly mostly works on a consensus basis, the committee requested recorded votes for three of the four draft resolutions.[44] Overall the General Assembly adopted 35 out of the 50 Third Committee draft resolutions

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[31] UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items to the Third Committee (A/C.3/71/1)*, 2016.

[32] UN General Assembly, *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly*, 2017.

[33] Ibid.

[34] OHCHR, *Human Rights – New York: Mainstreaming human rights*, 2017; Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 65.

[35] UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Third Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.3/71/L.1/Rev. 1)*, 2016.

[36] Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *International cooperation against the world drug problem: Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/316)*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Trafficking in women and girls: Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/223)*, 2016.

[37] UN General Assembly, *Conference of the International Women's Year (XXIX) (A/RES/3726 (XXIX))*, 1974; UN-Women, *World Conferences on Women*, 2017.

[38] UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts 50 Third Committee Resolutions, as Diverging Views on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity Animate Voting (GA/11879)*, 2016.

[39] UN DPI, *Speakers Focus on Greater Solidarity with World's Most Vulnerable People, Unequal Economic Progress, Need to Empower Youth, as Third Committee Opens Session (GA/SHC/4163)*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

[40] UN DPI, *Third Committee Approves 5 Draft Resolutions on Situations in Syria, Iran, Crimea, Introduces 5 Others Concerning Self-Determination, Enhanced Cooperation (GA/SHC/4188)*, 2016.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

without a vote.45 This means that 30 % of the resolutions were adopted by recorded votes, showing the diverging views on many of the issues discussed within the agenda of the committee.46 The Third Committee also considered the question of the right of peoples to self-determination, continuing the work of the previous years.47 While the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the issue in general it also considered the question of mercenaries and the Palestinian people in two more resolutions.48 The committee considered the annual report of the HRC and, taking it into account, approved draft resolutions on a variety of human rights questions.49 This included human rights in relation with extreme poverty, right to peace, right to food, right to development, right to privacy in the digital age, as well as the freedom of religion and belief.50

The 72nd session of the General Assembly opened on 12 September 2017 and continues the initial work of implementing the SDGs.51 Secretary-General António Guterres began the General Debate by emphasizing that "we are a world in pieces" and stressed the need for more collaboration to face today's challenges.52 The Third Committee opened its discussions on 2 October 2017 and, across its 72nd1st session, will discuss a variety of issues on the human rights agenda, including the promotion and protection of children's rights, the empowerment of women and indigenous peoples, as well as receiving its annual reports from other UN bodies.53 The committee will furthermore discuss questions like the right of peoples to self-determination, eliminating various forms of discrimination, and international drug control.54

Conclusion

The Third Committee continues to perform a central role within the UN system, providing an overarching forum of discussion for a wide variety of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues and as the largest representative body for setting human rights norms.55 Particularly within the context of the adoption of the SDGs, and the foundational underpinning its mandate has across many of them, the Third Committee's work continues to be of the utmost importance.56 Delegates should aim to understand the historical precedents the Committee has set through its work on human rights and humanitarian issues, as well as how these achievements continue to contextualize and influence the work it does today across a broad spectrum of topics and situations.57

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      Charter *is the fundamental document that underpins and informs all of the subsequent work of the United*
      Nations. Delegates should understand the document as the foundational blueprint of
      the UN, both in terms of its structure and powers, but also its guiding ideals and objectives.
      Although much subsequent work has expanded upon the core principles of the Charter, *it is*
      essential that delegates understand the primary document and its context. Of particular interest
      is Article 17, which outlines the primary functions and powers of the General Assembly.

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[45] UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts 50 Third Committee Resolutions, as Diverging Views on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity Animate Voting (GA/11879)*, 2016.

[46] Ibid.

[47] UN General Assembly, *Universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination (A/RES/71/183)*, 2017.

[48] UN General Assembly, *Right of peoples to self-determination: Report of the Third Committee (A/71/483)*, 2016.

[49] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Human Rights Council (A/71/53)*, 2016.

[50] UN General Assembly, *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues – Draft proposals per agenda item*, 2017.

[51] UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts Resolution on Follow-up to, Review of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in Consensus Action (GA/11809)*, 2016.

[52] UN DPI, *Secretary-General Stresses Political Solutions in Addressing Nuclear, Terrorism Migration Issues as United States President Warns Pyongyang (GA/11947)*, 2017.

[53] UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items to the Third Committee (A/C.3/72/1)*, 2017.

[54] Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *Universal realization of the right of peoples of self-determination (A/RES/71/183)*, 2017.

[55] UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly's Third Committee – social, humanitarian and cultural issues*, 2013.

[56] UN DPI, *Speakers Focus on Greater Solidarity with World's Most Vulnerable People, Unequal Economic Progress, Need to Empower Youth, as Third Committee Opens Session (GA/SHC/4163)*, 2016.

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> *The PGA Handbook is an essential read for delegates who will be a part of a General Assembly committee. The entirety of the Handbook is relevant and delegates are encouraged to study it carefully; however, of particular interest is page 65, which offers a comprehensive breakdown of the basic information of the Third Committee, including details of proceedings and voting information. This handbook is an essential 'first-step' for delegates to understand the structures, processes and traditions of the General Assembly Committees.*

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> *This coverage of the work of the 71st session provides delegates with useful insight into the recent priorities of the committee. It provides a concise overview of resolutions adopted by the Plenary on the report of the Third Committee, and also a summary of statements made with actions undertaken on draft resolutions. Not only does this give delegates an understanding of the breadth of subject matter under consideration at the Third Committee, but it also serves as a useful starting point in their research that shapes and focuses lines of inquiry.*

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> *This is a basic overview of the work of the General Assembly, and how it is permitted to do such work under the* Charter. *The page is very easy to understand and has links on the side that can take delegates to other pages with valuable information on the General Assembly, such as the subsidiary organs, rules of procedure, and observers. All the functions of the General Assembly are clearly laid out in bullet points, and delegates should study these points carefully.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Third session. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. Retrieved 17 July 2017 from: http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html

> *The* UDHR *is the cornerstone of international human rights, and, along with the* Charter of the United Nations*, is one of the most important documents delegates should study during their preparation. Delegates should seek to fully understand these principles, given their foundational role as the fabric of how human rights are viewed today. Special attention should be paid to the principles of equality and inalienability of these rights, as well as the strong desire that Member States express for the* UDHR *to be enshrined as the global standard for human rights.*

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> *Although the overall reach of the SDGs extends beyond the remit of the Third Committee, there is significant overlap between the mandates of the two. A rights-based approach is highlighted in nearly all of the goals, and many touch upon topics that the Third Committee regularly discusses. The SDGs represent the primary development agenda of the UN and it is therefore important that delegates understand the organization's overarching objectives and how these interplay with and influence the work of the Committee.*

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I. The Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance

"By acting together to end discrimination, we can lift humanity as a whole. As societies become multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural, we will need greater political, cultural and economic investments in inclusivity and cohesion in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. We can build communities that recognize that diversity is not a source of weakness, it is a source of strength and richness. Let us stand up against intolerance and eliminate discrimination."[164]

Introduction

According to a study conducted in 2010, across the world, more than eight in ten persons reported religious affiliation.[165] Religious intolerance and social hostilities are on the rise, particularly against religious minorities.[166] For instance, in recent months, many Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar have been subjected to violence and ethnic cleansing, and have been forced to flee to neighboring Bangladesh in the hundreds of thousands.[167] The number of countries with incidents of religious intolerance towards minorities increased from 24% to 47% from 2007 to 2012, while those with instances of terrorist activities related to religious intolerance have suffered a sharp increase since 2007.[168] Additionally, the number of governments that have exerted force against different religious groups has also increased, from 31% in 2007 to 48% in 2012.[169] Many issues remain in mainstreaming the right to freedom of religion or belief.[170] There is a general lack of empirical data and understanding that the right to religion or belief is intertwined with other human rights issues, including linguistic and religious minority, and refugee issues.[171]

The protection of religious freedom enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), is of priority for the vast majority of all persons.[172] The United Nations (UN) General Assembly *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (1981) defines religious intolerance as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment of exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis."[173] Religious discrimination has been interpreted as "an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations… as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations."[174]

Both intra- and inter-faith religious conflicts pose a threat to peace.[175] Intra-faith tolerance is characterized as cooperation and amicable relations between different denominations of a religion, while inter-faith tolerance focuses on the relationship between different religions.[176] Growing religious intolerance and mistrust of multiculturalism, along with the increased trend in the securitization of human rights (limiting human rights in the name of state

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164 UN Secretary-General, *Remarks at the Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Racial Profiling and Incitement to Hatred, including in the context of migration*, 2017.

164 Pew Research Center, *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010*, 2012, p. 10.

165 Pew Research Center, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High*, 2014, p. 10.

166 UN General Assembly, *Address by H. E. Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*, 2017.

167 Pew Research Center, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High*, 2014, pp. 10-13.

168 Ibid., p. 14.

169 UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016.

170 Ibid., 2016.

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

172 UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55)*, 1981.

173 Ibid.

174 UNESCO, *Dialogue among Civilizations: Regional Summit on Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue*, 2004, p. 6.

175 UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt: Addendum (A/HRC/25/58/Add.1)*, 2013, p. 15.

security), pose serious threats to the international system.[177] Promoting religious tolerance, understanding, and peace, are important methods of eliminating all forms of religious intolerance and fostering sustainable peace.[178]

International and Regional Framework

The UDHR protects persons from discrimination on the grounds of religion, acknowledges individuals of age should be allowed to marry regardless of religion or creed, and endorses the right to education that promotes harmony.[179] Article 18 enshrines the right of an individual to freedom of expression or belief, their right to change their beliefs, and "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."[180] Following the UDHR, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), adopted by the General Assembly in 1966, states that Member States party to the covenant undertake the duty to respect and protect the rights of their citizens, without distinguishing on the basis of religion.[181] The ICCPR enshrines the "right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion," including the right to choose and convert to a religion, children's religious rights, religious rights of parents, and freedom from coercion that would affect an individual's right to freedom of religion.[182]

On 25 November 1981, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, which established a human rights framework for addressing the freedom of religion.[183] The declaration expanded on the ICCPR and reassured the right to freedom of religion or belief by calling upon Member States to rescind discriminatory legislation in order to protect the freedom of religion and belief.[184] The General Assembly also adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* in 1992, which focuses on protecting the rights of minorities, advocating that this protection be rooted in national legislation of Member States.[185] More recently, General Assembly resolutions 71/195 and 71/196, both adopted on 19 December 2016, address intolerance related to religion and freedom of religion or belief, which are inextricably linked to one another.[186] General Assembly resolution 71/195 on "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief," notes the recent increase in hate crimes motivated by religious intolerance, and encourages constructive conversation and interfaith dialogue as a strong proactive measure to eliminate the root causes of religious intolerance.[187] Connected to eliminating religious intolerance is the right to freedom of religion or belief, addressed in General Assembly resolution 71/196, which strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and violence, discrimination and intolerance, and instances where state laws do not protect the freedom of religion.[188] Moreover, the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1988) acknowledges that attacks directed towards religious buildings constitute a war crime.[189]

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) provides a roadmap for the international community to develop and enhance human rights, ensure greater and equal access to basic services, and build capacity for the development of inclusive societies.[190] While none of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly address

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[177] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 12.

[178] UN General Assembly, *Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/RES/71/249)*, 2016.

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

[180] Ibid.

[181] UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

[182] Ibid.

[183] UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55)*, 1981.

[184] Ibid.

[185] UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (A/RES/47/135)*, 1992.

[186] UN General Assembly, *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief (A/RES/71/195)*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Freedom of religion or belief (A/RES/71/196)*, 2016.

[187] Ibid.

[188] UN General Assembly, *Freedom of religion or belief (A/RES/71/196)*, 2016.

[189] UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an ICC, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 1998.

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

religious intolerance, some of their targets note that progress should be made to advance the right to freedom of religion, such as the targets in SDGs 4, 10, 16, and 17.[191] These goals, aimed at promoting inclusive education, social cohesion and inclusivity; reducing discriminatory laws and protecting fundamental freedoms, and enhancing state policy capacity by increasing access to high quality data, all play a role in eliminating all forms of religious intolerance.[192]

From 28-29 March 2017, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) held an expert workshop on "Faith for Rights" (F4R), which resulted in the *Beirut Declaration*, outlining five principles for advancing human rights and the right to freedom of religion or belief.[193] The principles aim to translate international dialogue to local settings in order to combat religious intolerance, avoid the manipulation of faith, and promote F4R partnerships.[194] The *Beirut Declaration* recognizes the importance of religious institutions in protecting human dignity and human rights.[195] It also references the 2012 *Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence*, which focuses on the role of political and religious leaders in denouncing intolerance and violence.[196] The Rabat Plan of Action provides a concrete set of recommendations that cover legislative approaches to combat incitement to "discrimination, hostility, or violence."[197] Likewise, UN Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 16/18 of 12 April 2011 titled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief" established the Istanbul Process, which allowed the international system to address religious intolerance through positive policy measures rather than the previous "defamation of religion" approach to eliminating blasphemy laws.[198] Blasphemy laws indicate religious intolerance in a state's judiciary system and can be described as "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God."[199]

Role of the International System

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief is mandated to help protect the right to freedom of religion or belief at the national, regional, and international level, to identify all obstacles to the freedom of religion or belief, to review instances where Member States do not uphold the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, and to inform the UN of all abuses of the freedom of religion or belief from a gender perspective.[200] The Special Rapporteur's recent report on the implementation plan for the Istanbul Process notes that many violations of the right to religion or belief are carried out by non-state actors, by terrorist organizations, and by those inspired to commit acts of hatred and religious intolerance.[201]

In 2017, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published the guide *Making textbook content inclusive: A focus on religion, gender, and culture*, which contains a special section on religion.[202] The guide acknowledges that education and textbooks can assist in promoting dialogue between faiths, contributing to a learning environment that fosters inclusivity.[203] UNESCO has worked on improving textbook content since 1945, and has seen significant development since then.[204] The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] UN OHCHR, *The Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on Faith for Rights: Report and outlook*, 2017.
[194] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[195] Ibid., p. 10.
[196] UN HRC, *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4)*, 2013.
[197] Ibid., p. 6.
[198] UN HRC, *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief (A/HRC/RES/16/18)*, 2011; Article 19, *UN HRC Res 16/18: Consolidating Consensus Through Implementation*, 2016, pp. 3-4.
[199] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, pp. 13-14; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws*, 2017, p. 1.
[200] UN OHCHR, *Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief: Introduction*, 2017.
[201] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017.
[202] UNESCO, *Making textbook content inclusive: A focus on religion, gender, and culture*, 2017.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Actors for Sustainable Development works with faith-based organizations (FBOs) and different UN organizations to advance development and human rights.[205] Additionally, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) published a report titled *Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030*, which links the importance of FBOs within sustainable development, as actors that contribute to social and economic development.[206] The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, which reports directly to the UN Secretary-General in an advisory capacity, has recently published the *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could lead to Atrocity Crimes*, a document that is the result of two years of engagement with religious groups.[207] The document addresses the critical role religious leaders play in curbing the incitement to violence through hateful speech and provides a blueprint for building inclusive societies.[208] Similarly, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) brings together faith leaders for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and maintains that respecting diversity is essential to building peace.[209]

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and FBOs have a substantial role to play in promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief, as they are uniquely positioned within society to build networks of trust and promote intercultural dialogue.[210] The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), established in 2016, unites NGOs, governmental organizations, FBOs, voluntary organizations, as well as secular and non-secular actors, to further SDGs 3, 5, and 16 on health, gender equality, and peace and strong institutions.[211]

On a regional level, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has issued guidelines for reviewing legislation to protect the freedom of religion or belief as a measure to reduce religious intolerance.[212] In 2015, the European Commission held a forum on "Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe."[213] The outcomes of the forum comprised a variety of policy suggestions from participants, including a call for national action plans, increased public awareness, education on human rights and religious diversity, and quality disaggregated data on religion and discrimination on the basis of religion.[214] Furthermore, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has issued a Programme of Action until 2025 focusing on promoting intercultural dialogue and tolerance in an effort to eliminate discrimination against and misconceptions about Muslims.[215]

State-Induced Religious Intolerance

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has noted a "global pushback on human rights," some of it at the state level, which has only deepened the chasm of realizing the right to freedom of religion or belief.[216] For instance, in 2017, Russia's Supreme Court banned Jehovah's Witnesses from their country as an attempt to ban extremist religions.[217] In China, some religions are considered a threat to the state, and there is an increasing number

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[205] UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016.

[206] UNFPA, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016; UNFPA, *Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030*, 2016.

[207] UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could lead to Atrocity Crimes*, 2017.

[208] Ibid.

[209] UNAOC, *Who We Are: About Us*; UNAOC, *The Role of Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding in the Middle East*, 2017.

[210] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 20.

[211] International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, *About: Mission Statement*; International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, *How PaRD Works*.

[212] OSCE, *Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief*, 2004.

[213] European Commission, *"Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe"*, 2015.

[214] Ibid.

[215] OIC, *The OIC – 2025: Programme of Action*, 2016; OIC, *History*, 2017.

[216] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017.

[217] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2017 Annual Report: Key findings & Recommendations*, 2017, p. 1.

of regulations placing restrictions on religions.[218] Comparing these examples of religious intolerance at the state level reveals a host of causes for religious intolerance.[219]

Understanding the root causes of religious intolerance is paramount to creating better policy to eliminate it.[220] Root causes for religious intolerance by governments can be summarized into different categories: intolerance on the basis of religious interpretation; using religion (or secularism) to distinguish national heritage or privilege certain religions; the exercise of control of public and private life; government failure; and an imbalance of power.[221] Members of religious minorities are more vulnerable than religious majorities, as they may lack representation or protection and access to decision makers, and may experience discriminatory government policies.[222] The most pervasive form of state-induced religious intolerance is harassment and hostility of government employees towards certain religious minorities.[223] These include overly burdensome government processes such as requiring special permits for establishing places of worship, or requiring registration or legal authority for religious communities in order for them to operate.[224] Additionally, blasphemy laws, which exist in over 70 countries, serve to penalize the expression of religion or belief when considered blasphemous in nature.[225] Many blasphemy laws contradict international law regarding freedom of religion, belief, or expression, and have been deemed by the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of religion or belief to be unlawful and unjustifiable in the context of human rights, particularly the right to freedom of religion or belief.[226]

The securitization of human rights is an ongoing problem for maintaining religious freedom, as it undermines certain human rights, particularly the right to freedom of religion or belief, through state laws.[227] Some states make declarations that rights must be limited in the name of security, when, in reality, the limitation of those rights does not lessen a security risk, or when the relationship between restricting rights and security is weak or unfounded.[228] General, vague statements made by governments about the restriction of religious freedom in the name of security or order may be in some cases a cover for wanting to halt religious criticism, to maintain control over public and private life, or to discriminate against minority groups.[229]

Judiciaries and legislative frameworks within Member States play an important role in the realization of the right to freedom of religion or belief.[230] Defense of secularism in human rights cases has become ubiquitous in countries that have secular laws.[231] While the right to freedom of religion or belief is codified in international and human rights laws, the expression of such beliefs is often subject to limitations at the national level.[232] For instance, in the case of Leyla Şahin v. Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that a university in Istanbul had the right to ban headscarves from campus to protect individuals from attacks from extremist groups trying to undo Turkey's laws protecting secularism.[233] In the case of Lautsi and Others v. Italy, crucifixes were allowed in classrooms in Italy by the European Court of Human Rights, while the House of Lords in the United Kingdom in Begum v. Headteacher came to the conclusion in 2006 that it was permissible to ban young women from wearing headscarves in a

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[218] Ibid., p. 12.

[219] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016.

[220] Ibid., p. 19.

[221] Ibid., pp. 9-13.

[222] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016.

[223] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016.

[224] Ibid.

[225] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws*, 2017, p. 3.

[226] Ibid.; UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, pp. 12-13.

[227] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 12.

[228] Ibid.

[229] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, pp. 9-13.

[230] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 8.

[231] Bennoune, *Secularism and Human Rights: A Contextual Analysis of Headscarves, Religious Expression, and Women's Equality Under International Law*, 2007, p. 373.

[232] Ibid., p. 370.

[233] Ibid., pp. 370-371.

predominantly Muslim school, to ensure that the girls who did not wear headscarves were not threatened.[234] In France, a country-wide ban on veils has been upheld in human rights courts, in order to promote France's religious neutrality.[235] The cumulative impact of these cases may have serious effects for religious minorities and societies, where principles of secularism may be implemented differently in each secular country.[236] In these cases and others, an analysis of the reasons for bans on religious symbols, national law, gender equality, security, human rights law, and other factors may be considered before a decision is made by a court.[237]

One of the biggest issues facing the international community is a general lack of quality data on religious intolerance that could be used to establish better policies in the future.[238] The OHCHR published a guide in 2012 to help measure human rights indicators to assist the international community, NGOs, and Member States so that data can be disaggregated and used to develop better policy to address human rights issues.[239] This includes the disaggregation of data by religion, supporting SDG 17 and policy capacity for governments.[240]

The Role of Non-State Actors

Some of the most brutal acts of religious intolerance are carried out by non-state actors.[241] For instance, some officials of UN Member States have determined that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has committed acts of violent extremism in the name of religion, ultimately constituting genocide.[242] According to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, militant and terrorist organizations that commit atrocities in the name of religion thrive due to many of the same root causes as government-induced religious intolerance: a general lack of governance and mechanism to enforce laws prohibiting religious intolerance, segregated and splintered societies, systemic discrimination, and corruption.[243]

An issue that the international community has failed to address is the role of non-state actors in the wider issue of protecting and promoting human rights.[244] Even though non-state actors may perpetrate acts of violence or religious intolerance, it is nonetheless the responsibility of the state to protect and uphold human rights.[245] Societal contexts in different parts of the world may not be accommodating to religious diversity or multiplicity of religious interpretation, and governments may explicitly or implicitly endorse marginalization and social ostracism, or other acts of intolerance.[246] In some countries, vigilante groups may patrol their neighborhoods at night to ensure compliance with religious norms.[247] Non-state actors that engage in acts of religious intolerance may be endorsed, ignored by states, or states may have failed or may lack capacity to address non-state actors effectively.[248]

The Role of the International Community in Promoting Religious Tolerance
NGOs, FBOs, and broader religious communities have a role to play in promoting religious tolerance and eliminating intolerance, based on their unique position in society to work with communities and people from a place

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[234] European Court of Human Rights Press Unit, *Factsheet – Religious symbols and clothing*, 2017, p. 1; Bennoune, *Secularism and Human Rights: A Contextual Analysis of Headscarves, Religious Expression, and Women's Equality Under International Law*, 2007, p. 371.
[235] European Court of Human Rights, *S.A.S. v. France, Application no. 43835/11*, 2014.
[236] European Court of Human Rights Press Unit, *Factsheet – Religious symbols and clothing*, 2017.
[237] Ibid.
[238] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, p. 20; UNFPA, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016.
[239] UN OHCHR, *Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation*, 2012.
[240] Ibid.
[241] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, p. 20.
[242] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2017 Annual Report: Key findings & Recommendations*, 2017, p. 1.
[243] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, pp. 17-18.
[244] UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (A/HRC/28/66)*, 2014, p. 13.
[245] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, p. 18.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.; UNFPA, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016.
[248] UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016, p. 18.

of trust.249 The Women's Task Force of the Parliament of the World's Religions helps to support women's leadership in faith movements, and ensures women's voices are heard in discussions relating to the promotion of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief.250 The UN has launched the "United Nations Free & Equal Campaign," which seeks to celebrate love and diversity, and which is supported by religious leaders around the world.251 This campaign helps contest messages of intolerance on the basis of religion or belief.252 In 2016, the Special Rapporteur, in conjunction with the organization Muslims for Progressive Values, organized and facilitated a conference on the right to freedom of religion or belief and sexuality.253 The conference explored the intersectionality of diversity characteristics and attempted to maintain a holistic view of human rights and human dignity.254 The conference also explored the idea that religion is not static and unchanging, and that diverse populations must be respectfully brought into discussions on promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons.255 Muslims for Progressive Values calls on the international Muslim community to engage in critical conversations about their religion, the acceptance of diversity, and respect for universal human rights.256 If FBOs and religious institutions advocated for peace, acceptance of diversity, and human rights, this would have a significant impact on religious tolerance around the world.257

Conclusion

There is a high interest from the international community and broader UN system to work alongside FBOs and NGOs to promote the freedom of religion or belief, human rights, and the SDGs in order to eliminate religious intolerance.258 While there is some information on the root causes of religious intolerance, and the mechanisms available to further understand religious intolerance around the world, it is impossible to capture every example of religious intolerance.259 Nevertheless, the international system has an opportunity to dedicate its efforts in a high-level strategy to address religious intolerance.260 Addressing religious intolerance is a primary concern for the new Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, as is operationalizing the implementation of positive policy measures, the Rabat Plan of Action, and HRC resolution 16/18.261

Further Research

Moving forward with their research, delegates should consider question such as: How can the international community reinvigorate the implementation of the Rabat Plan of Action and HRC resolution 16/18? How can the UN leverage existing partnerships and networks to advance the SDGs and the right to freedom of religion or belief? What are the important intersections in human rights that are not properly addressed in legal and judiciary systems? How can measurements and data collection on religious intolerance be improved in order to support better policy development and implementation? How to best mainstream the right to freedom of religion and belief? How might the international community support education for all human rights?

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[249]UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 20; UNFPA, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016.

[250]Parliament of the World's Religions, *What is the Parliament's Women's Task Force?*; United States Commission on International Religious Freedoms, *Women and Religious Freedom: Synergies and Opportunities*, 2017.

[251]UN Free & Equal Campaign, *About UN Free & Equal*, 2017.

[252]Ibid.

[253]Sonneveld, *Conference Summary: Freedom of Religion and Belief and Sexuality*, 2016.

[254]Ibid.

[255]Ibid., pp. 7-9.

[256]Muslims for Progressive Values, *About MPV: Collective Identity*, 2017.

[257]UNFPA, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016; Pew Research Center, *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010*, 2012, p. 10.

[258]UNFPA, *Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030*, 2016; International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, *About: Mission Statement*; UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development, *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016*, 2016.

[259]UN General Assembly, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/71/269)*, 2016.

[260]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[261]UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*, 2017, p. 7.

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> *Article 19 is a registered charity and advocacy organization that works with organizations like the UN, OSCE, Amnesty International, and governments around the world to promote the freedom of expression. This briefing provides an in-depth analysis and explanation of HRC resolution 16/18 and its importance, as well as the key components for implementing the Rabat Plan of Action. Delegates will find this source useful when looking for recommendations for further action to reducing religious intolerance, and for furthering their understanding of the Rabat Plan of Action. This source also explains why limiting expression of opinions and beliefs should only be kept as a last resort for governments when limiting the right to freedom of religion or belief.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2017). *The Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on Faith for Rights: Report and outlook*. Retrieved 14 July 2017 from: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf

> *In March 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights hosted cross-disciplinary and interfaith meetings on the relationship between the development of human rights and religion. During the Beirut meeting, the participants expanded on the Rabat Plan of Action and created the* Beirut Declaration*, along with 18 commitments to peace, harmony, and the development and advancement of human rights. This outcome document will help delegates understand the most current discussions related to human dignity, universal human rights, and religion. This source outlines the philosophy that the protection of human dignity is enshrined in religious beliefs, and acknowledges the importance of international human rights instruments to that end.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Thirty-sixth session. (1981). *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/37/590). Retrieved 14 July 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/RES/36/55

> *In 1981, the UN General Assembly adopted the* Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. *The declaration clarifies the scope of rights related to religion and belief, and provides context for all subsequent resolutions on the freedom of religion or belief. Delegates will find this source useful as it is essential for understanding the responsibilities of the international community to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, and to reduce discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1

> *Delegates will find the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development an excellent place to begin research on how human rights and sustainable development are complementary. Delegates will find SDGs 4, 10, 16, and 17 of particular interest for promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief. The SDGs provide a roadmap for sustainable development and set specific targets to be reached by 2030. Promoting the right to the freedom of religion or belief and eliminating all forms of religious intolerance will be essential for the realization of the SDGs.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance: Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (A/71/269)*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/71/269

> *This 2016 report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to the General Assembly outlines the importance of a universal approach to freedom of religion or belief. The report emphasizes inclusivity, the complex nature of the right to freedom of religion or belief, and the importance of equality. The report provides important context for the root causes of religious intolerance, as well as injustices and violations of the right to religion or belief. Delegates will find the discussion of state- and non-state-induced religious intolerance helpful in their research and in categorizing types of religious intolerance.*

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2013). *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Addendum (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4)*. Retrieved 19 July 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/HRC/22/17/Add.4

> *The addendum to the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights contains an overview of the concrete actions established through the Rabat Plan of Action. Delegates will find this report useful, as the Rabat Plan of Action is cited often as part of a solution for eliminating religious intolerance due to its universality and clear plan for implementation at the state level. The report presents a succinct summary of OHCHR's regional expert workshop meetings, exploring legal and legislative barriers that enforce religious hatred, and the culmination of those findings. It also provides a legal and legislative background for supporting religious freedom that is essential in the prohibition of incitement to national, racial, or religious hatred.*

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2017). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief (A/HRC/34/50)*. Retrieved 14 July 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/HRC/34/50

> *This report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief provides an overview of the new mandate holder's approach to his position as the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. The report focuses on modern challenges related to implementing the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur proposes an agenda for implementing this right, as well as a comprehensive framework for how the Special Rapporteur interacts with other components of the UN system. Focusing on addressing common and damaging misconceptions about the right to freedom of religion or belief, and proposing solutions and future work methods, this report will provide a guide for navigating the current state of the right to the freedom of religion or belief.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2016). *Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors in 2016: Report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 28 August 2017 from: http://www.partner-religion-development.org/fileadmin/Dateien/Resources/Knowledge_Center/Annual_Report_IATF_on_Religion_and_Development_2016.pdf

> *Delegates will find this source useful when beginning their research, as it provides critical information on how UN bodies interact with FBOs to promote sustainable development, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Organizations for Sustainable Development represents an innovative UN body that is attempting to leverage non-state actors in order to pursue an agenda that promotes sustainability as well as human rights. This report compiles information about the involvement of UN bodies with FBOs, and provides references for exploring the international framework for religion, peace, and sustainable development.*

United States Commission on International Religious Freedoms. (2017). *2017 Annual Report: Key findings & Recommendations*. Retrieved 28 August 2017 from: http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/KeyFindingsRecommendations.2017AnnualReport.pdf

> *This report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedoms contains a broad overview of countries that have restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief, and catalogs countries according to their level of religious intolerance. Delegates will find this source to be useful when researching countries that struggle to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief. This report shows the evolution over time of Member States that have been placed on Tier 1 – the states with the most instances of intolerance – as states of particular concern.*

United States Commission on International Religious Freedoms. (2017). *Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws*. Retrieved 28 August 2017 from: http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Blasphemy%20Laws%20Report.pdf

> *Delegates will find that this report contains definitions for and information on Member States that have blasphemy laws. This source also cites specific blasphemy laws. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief believes blasphemy laws to be restrictive and antithetical to universal human rights. By understanding blasphemy laws, delegates can assess whether the Member State they are representing has legislation that is restrictive of the freedom of religion or belief. Important sections for review are Part IV and the Annex, which detail the findings of the report.*

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III. Ensuring Equitable Access to Education

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."[262]

Introduction

Education is a basic human right and is foundational in fostering peace, eliminating poverty, and stimulating economic development.[263] The right to education, incorporated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), is acknowledged globally as pivotal in the advancement of economic growth and development, and inciting societal progress.[264] Education provides tools that enable economically and socially disadvantaged populations to rise out of poverty and engage fully in society.[265] Despite significant progress in global education, much work remains to be done, as millions of children and adults live without access to equitable educational opportunities.[266] The most progress has been achieved in primary education, which is typically defined as education "for children between the ages of about five and eleven."[267] Currently, 91% of children in developing countries are registered for primary education, yet 121 million children remain out of primary and lower secondary school altogether.[268] Notably, of those children not enrolled in school, more than 50% live in sub-Saharan Africa, and equally as many in conflict-impacted areas.[269]

Gender equality in education is another area requiring further effort.[270] While equality in primary education access between girls and boys globally has been achieved, equitable access at all levels of education has not been realized.[271] Gender inequality in education weakens society by denying women the opportunity to develop skills and participate in the labor market.[272] Moreover, 100 million children globally are deficient in basic literacy, with more than 60% of them being women.[273] Furthermore, denying equal access to education threatens the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[274] The right to education is a primary principle underpinning the 2030 Agenda and SDG 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning."[275] The premise of SDG 4 is that ensuring a quality education is foundational to improving livelihoods and overall sustainable development in societies.[276] More broadly, education is critical to not only the success of SDG 4, but will also facilitate the achievement of many other SDGs by reducing poverty, building vocational skills, and eliminating the gender gap, thus providing equal opportunities for all.[277]

International and Regional Framework

Since the inception of the United Nations (UN), the international community has prioritized education.[278] According to Article 26 of the UDHR, all individuals have the right to education.[279] Following the adoption of the UDHR, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (1960) followed several years later by the *Recommendation Concerning the Condition*

[262] UN DPI, *If Information and Knowledge are Central to Democracy, they are Conditions for Development*, 1997.

[263] UNESCO, *Education for the 21st Century*.

[264] UNICEF, *Education*, 2017; UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, pp. 114-116.

[265] UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, pp. xi-xii.

[266] UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017.

[267] UNESCO, *International Standard Classification of Education*, 2011, pp. 30-33.

[268] UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017; Global Partnership for Education, *Out-of-school Children*, 2017.

[269] UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid.

[272] UNGEI, *Gender Analysis in Education: A Conceptual Overview*, 2012, pp. 3-5.

[273] UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Ibid.; UN World Education Forum, *Incheon Declaration – Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*, 2015, pp.7-11.

[276] UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017.

[277] Ibid.

[278] UNICEF, *Education*, 2017; UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education*, 2007, pp. 1-5.

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

of Teachers (1966).[280] Respectively, these efforts sought to combat discrimination of all kinds in schools and to provide basic recommendations concerning the training of educational professionals.[281] As a landmark year, 1966 saw the creation of several other foundational documents framing global education policy, including the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1966).[282] Through this convention, in Article 5 and Article 7, UNESCO promotes equitable education regardless of race or color for all people.[283] Likewise, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) outlines the right to education in articles 13 and 14.[284] Most importantly, however, the covenant solidifies free primary education as well as equitable access to higher education as an absolute right for all persons.[285] Seeking to expand upon the *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979) highlights the importance of providing equitable opportunities for women, including in education.[286] Furthermore, beyond stating the right to education for every child, Article 28 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) discusses the need to provide alternative forms of secondary education, such as general and vocational education.[287] Additionally, this document outlines educational attendance requirements and efforts to reduce dropout rates. [288] Finally, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006) expands the existing international framework on education by paying particular attention to equal access for individuals with disabilities.[289]

At the international level, the UN took a major step to advance education in 2000 when it adopted the Millennium Development Goals, whereby Member States agreed to achieve global access to "free, quality, and compulsory primary education" by 2015.[290] In 2015, the international community furthered its commitment to that ideal by adopting the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, encompassing 17 SDGs.[291] Ensuing equitable access to education is related to the achievement of all the SDGs.[292] For instance, if all children achieved basic literacy, over 100 million people could be lifted out of poverty, which advances global progress in achieving SDG 1 (eradicating poverty).[293] Moreover, educating mothers leads to improved nutrition and thus the achievement of SDG 2, which aims to end hunger, and SDG3, which focuses on health.[294] SDG 4, the primary goal focusing on education, has several targets, including one that emphasizes the importance of equal access to quality vocational and technical training for men and women.[295] Another target aims to ensure that literacy and numeracy for all is achieved.[296] The Education 2030 Agenda was born out of collaboration among Member States and is led by UNESCO.[297] The *Incheon Declaration* (2015), adopted in the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea, was one of the outcomes of this agenda.[298] The *Incheon Declaration* was a commitment from the global education community affirming the importance of education as an impetus to development.[299]

On a regional basis, many initiatives furthering global education are undertaken. For example, the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (ACRWC) (1990) discourages any Member States of the African Union

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[280]UNESCO, *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, 1960; UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers*, 1966.
[281]Ibid.
[282]UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/2106 (XX))*, 1965.
[283]Ibid.
[284]UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.
[285]Ibid.
[286]UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.
[287]UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989.
[288]Ibid.
[289]UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (A/RES/61/106)*, 2006.
[290]UNESCO, *World Education Forum Final Report*, 2000, p.19.
[291]UN DPI, *The Sustainable Development Agenda*, 2017.
[292]Global Partnership for Education, *17 ways education influences the sustainable development goals*, 2015.
[293]Ibid.
[294]Ibid.
[295]UN DESA, *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, 2017.
[296]Ibid.
[297]UNESCO, *Leading Education 2030*.
[298]Ibid.
[299]Ibid.

(AU) from practicing any custom or tradition that does not align with the educational rights outlined in the ACRWC, including child marriage, recruiting children into armed conflict, and religious practices that interfere with educational access.[300] Another regional effort is the *Declaration of Scarborough and Commitments to Action* (2005), adopted as a result of a meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) to discuss how the region could provide quality, inclusive education.[301] Likewise, the *Europe 2020 strategy of the European Union* (2010) notes education's transformative impact on society.[302] In this strategy, education is described as a lifelong process and as a means to holistically improve Europe's innovative capabilities.[303] While there is a vast framework of international legislation and regional efforts promoting global quality education, implementing these ideals and achieving equitable educational objectives is a more difficult challenge.[304]

Role of the International System

UNESCO is the primary organization responsible for global collaboration on education, culture, science, and communication.[305] Working diligently to strengthen relationships between Member States, UNESCO strives to ensure that every individual is able to access quality education.[306] A primary view of UNESCO is that education transforms lives, minimizes poverty, and provides opportunities for all.[307] UNESCO is charged with leading the Global Education 2030 Agenda, as established in SDG 4.[308] Likewise, UNESCO also leads important education programs, including the Global Database on the Right to Education, which provides country-level data regarding access to education.[309] The data is divided into five categories: treaty ratification, monitoring education rights, constitutional rights to education, legislation, and policy.[310] This data is vital for researchers and policymakers in the advancement of the global education agenda, and to monitor progress cross-nationally.[311]

Likewise, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) advocates for advancing the global education agenda and the rights of children globally.[312] Operating in 143 countries, UNICEF works tirelessly to increase equal and affordable education, to strengthen existing education programs, and to promote innovation in the classroom through technical assistance and financial support.[313] UNICEF collaborates with governments at all levels to expand global early learning education services.[314] Moreover, UNICEF utilizes Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) to gather data on children's lingual, numerical, physical, psychological, and cognitive development.[315] MICS were developed in response to the World Summit for Children in an effort to measure global progress in education.[316] This data comprises a country's Early Childhood Development Index and is made accessible to governments to provide a basis for policy recommendations and educational reform when necessary.[317]

Beyond UNESCO and UNICEF, The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education is appointed by the Human Rights Council (HRC) to monitor the right to education globally.[318] In 1998, the Commission on Human Rights, the precursor to the HRC, outlined the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in its resolution 1998/33 on the realization of all rights contained in the UDHR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[319] The

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[300]OAU, *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, 1990.
[301]OAS, *Declaration of Scarborough and Commitments to Action*, 2005.
[302]European Commission, *Europe 2020 strategy*.
[303]Ibid.
[304]UNESCO, *Leading Education 2030*.
[305]UNESCO, *About Us*, 2017.
[306]Ibid.
[307]Ibid.
[308]Ibid.
[309]UNESCO, *Global Database on the Right to education*, 2017.
[310]Ibid.
[311]Ibid.
[312]UNICEF, *Education – Early Learning*, 2017.
[313]Ibid.
[314]Ibid.
[315]Ibid.
[316]UNICEF, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2014.
[317]UN OHCHR, *Special Rapporteur on the right to education*, 2017.
[318]Ibid.
[319]Ibid.

Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education participates in country visits, investigates alleged violations of the right to education, leads intergovernmental dialogues, and submits annual reports to the HRC and General Assembly on relevant developments concerning education.[320]

Various other UN entities collaborate in, and advance equitable access to education, including the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[321] These organizations cooperate in order to advance projects that are mutually beneficial to meet global educational goals.[322] Likewise, not-for-profit organizations such as the Global Partnership for Education, World Education, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation impact global education policies.[323] Through specialization, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can operate with more flexibility than Member States or local governments.[324] NGOs possess a targeted focus, allowing them to impact specific populations more efficiently.[325] Collectively, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and other international actors, all play a vital role in ensuring that global access to quality education becomes a reality.[326]

Education Accessibility for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Among other factors, war, violence, economic strife, and political turmoil are creating unprecedented levels of international displacement.[327] Worldwide, 65.6 million individuals have been forcibly displaced due to discrimination, war, violence, and human rights violations.[328] Of those displaced, 22.5 million are refugees, and among them, over 50% are under 18 years old.[329] Ensuring access to education for refugees is essential to UNHCR's mandate.[330] Without access to early childhood and primary education, the foundation for future success is compromised.[331] Moreover, educational institutions should be a place where students feel protected and safe.[332] Refugees and displaced populations often flee from turmoil and instability, thus, feeling protected and safe is imperative for their educational success.[333] Schools also play an important role in recognizing at-risk children and can be a resource for ensuring that children receive access to necessary support services.[334]

Refugees have an increased risk of being denied educational opportunities; in fact, only 50% of the refugee population has access to primary education, while the global average is 90%.[335] As of 2016, six million refugee adolescents and children of school age fell under the mandate of UNHCR.[336] However, only 2.3 million of those six million adolescents and children were enrolled in school.[337] Accordingly, UNHCR collaborates with host governments to increase refugee access to quality, accredited education within existing national educational systems.[338] One of the largest obstacles preventing further progress in this area is the steep increase in refugees and internally displaced persons since 2011.[339] In fact, in 2014 alone, the number of school-aged refugees increased by

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[320] Ibid.
[321] UNDP, *Quality Education*, 2017; UNHCR, *Education*, 2017; Global Partnership for Education, *About Us*, 2017; World Education, *About Us*, 2017; The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *What We Do*, 2017.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] UNESCO, *Right to Education*.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid.
[327] UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2017.
[328] Ibid.; UNHCR, World at War, 2014, pp. 2-5.
[329] UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2017.
[330] UNHCR, *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*, 2016, p. 4.
[331] Ibid., pp. 2-5.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[334] Ibid., p. 10.
[335] Ibid., p. 8.
[336] Ibid., p. 3.
[337] Ibid., pp. 3-8
[338] Ibid., pp. 2-7.
[339] Ibid., p. 8.

30%.[340] An increase at this rate requires a minimum of 12,000 supplemental classrooms and 20,000 new teachers annually.[341]

To address these needs, various global programs have been implemented to ensure education access for refugees and internally displaced persons.[342] The UNHCR Educate a Child (EAC) program targets out-of-school refugee children and focuses on improving educational quality, accessibility, and retention of students.[343] Through this initiative, UNHCR encourages educational innovation, the construction of educational infrastructure, and teacher training.[344] Since 2012, EAC has resulted in 400,000 out-of-school children in 12 countries enrolling in school.[345] Despite this success, further progress is needed, as refugees fall behind their peers educationally and economically.[346] For instance, in Chad, Kenya, Malaysia, and Pakistan, the percentage of refugee children enrolled in primary education is 50% less than their host country peers.[347]

The effect of conflict on education is stark.[348] In 2009, 94% of Syrian children were enrolled in primary or secondary education.[349] By 2016, following five years of civil war, that number decreased to 60%, leaving over 2 million school-aged children without any access to educational opportunities.[350] In surrounding countries, nearly 5 million Syrian refugees are registered with UNHCR, 35% of whom are of school age.[351] Collectively, between the refugees located in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, nearly 900,000 Syrian refugee children are out of school.[352]

Education for Women and Girls

Realizing gender equality and empowering women and girls is recognized in SDG 5 and is integral to the 2030 Agenda.[353] Expanding access to education for women and girls goes far beyond enrollment in the classroom.[354] It includes ensuring that girls feel safe while attending school, and that they complete all levels of education, enabling them to integrate successfully into the labor market.[355] Educating girls is a vital component in development, as women with higher levels of education lead more stable and healthier lives.[356] Educated women earn higher annual incomes and marry later.[357] Moreover, they tend to have less children, and provide better healthcare and education for their children, if they decide to become mothers.[358] Collectively, these factors build stronger communities and households, and have the potential to improve the economic stability of a country.[359]

Despite these benefits, as of 2017, over 130 million girls are not enrolled in school.[360] Likewise, 15 million girls of primary-school age, 50% of which reside in sub-Saharan Africa, will never attend school.[361] The primary determinant for whether a girl can access education is poverty.[362] For example, in Niger only four percent of impoverished young women in the North West zone are literate, in contrast to 99% of wealthy young women in the

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[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Ibid., pp. 6-10.
[343] Ibid., p.10.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid., p.11.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.
[353] UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals- Goal 4: Quality Education*, 2017.
[354] The World Bank, *Girls Education*, 2017.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.

South East region of the country.363 Consistently, rurally located individuals facing social and economic disadvantage, such as a low household income, are identified as the most deprived populations in terms of education.364

Further exacerbating these challenges is the changing nature of the global economy, which necessitates increasingly more specialized laborers with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) backgrounds.365 Although men far outnumber women in STEM fields, recent efforts by the UN and partner NGOs are working to bridge this gap.366 In 2015, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) partnered with Moldovan universities and information technology (IT) companies to launch GirlsGoIT.367 Each year, up to 65 young girls are afforded the opportunity to attend the week-long program where STEM industries like robotics, web development, 3D printing, and coding are presented.368 Through hands-on learning and day trips to Moldovan IT companies, participants gain firsthand experience and develop marketable skills in high-demand STEM industries.369 Similarly, in 2016, UN-Women partnered with The Mozilla Foundation to create Mozilla Clubs in Kenya and South Africa.370 This pilot program offers young women the opportunity to develop web literacy skills, including web navigation, web development, coding, and more.371 The ultimate goal of both GirlsGoIT and the Mozilla Clubs is to ensure young women and girls are not left behind during the "fourth industrial revolution," which is defined as the current industrial revolution marked by technological advancements and digitalization.372 By initiating programs to develop IT skills, raising awareness of opportunities in STEM fields, and developing educational opportunities for women now, women will be able to reap the benefits of the forthcoming economic revolution.373

Conclusion

Since 2000, the international community has made substantial progress in achieving universal primary education.374 Educational enrollment rates across developing regions have increased, and the gender gap has been reduced.375 Moreover, literacy has improved substantially, and the number of children out of school has decreased by 50%.376 While these are all significant achievements, progress is more difficult to realize among vulnerable populations, including women, children, refugees, and internally displaced persons.377 Often, vulnerable populations disproportionately lack access to education, leading to negative lifelong implications.378 Inclusive and quality education plays an important role in sustainable development, and thus must be prioritized globally for further progress to be achieved.379 Efforts to not only provide basic primary and secondary education, but also opportunities to prepare women for future economic opportunities, are needed now more than ever.380 In doing so, the international community will greatly increase its ability to accomplish the SDG 4 and live up to the principles established in the UDHR.381

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363 Ibid.
364 Ibid.
365 UN-Women, *No Hidden Figures: success stories can help girls' STEM careers*, 2017.
366 Ibid.
367 United Nations in Moldova, *Sixty-five girls across Moldova acquired technology skills at GirlsGoIT summer camp*, 2017.
368 Ibid.
369 Ibid.
370 UN-Women, *Empowering Women and Girls through Web Literacy*, 2016.
371 Ibid.
372 UN-Women, *No Hidden Figures: success stories can help girls' STEM careers*, 2017.
373 Ibid.
374 UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals- Goal 4: Quality Education*, 2017.
375 Ibid.
376 Ibid.
377 Ibid.
378 Ibid.
379 UNESCO, *Literacy and Education for Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment*, 2014, pp. 7-10.
380 UN-Women, *No Hidden Figures: success stories can help girls' STEM careers*, 2017.
381 UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals- Goal 4: Quality Education*, 2017.

Further Research

As delegates continue their research on this issue, they should consider the following questions: How can the international community coordinate more effectively to meet the educational needs of displaced persons? How can Member States ensure that the education of internally displaced persons and refugees are not disrupted permanently? Likewise, how can access to education be extended to those living in conflict areas? How can global action on these issues by UN agencies, other international bodies, and NGOs be better aligned? How can global educational policies be improved? What can be done to bridge the gap between educational opportunities for urban and rural populations? For women and girls, what efforts can be undertaken to ensure equal access to educational opportunities? Specifically, how can STEM fields achieve gender parity?

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> *The Special Rapporteur on the right to education monitors global education progress. This website discusses the history of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and defines the human right to education. The source also highlights the legal obligations of Member States and their respective governments with regards to the provision of education. It is an important source for delegates as it provides a historical perspective on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and outlines the actions needed to fulfill this mandate.*

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> *General Comment No. 13 outlines Member State commitments in relation to realizing the right to education. The source discusses Article 13 of the* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights *at the granular level, and provides a clear and concise breakdown of the rights set forth within it. As the most comprehensive resource pertaining to global education in human rights law, this explanation on the* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights *is undoubtedly useful to delegates. The source also articulates Member State expectations related to global education. Specifically, the mandate established affordable, available, and acceptable education for all. It is important for delegates as it provides a background on Member State expectations related to global education.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2014). *Literacy and Education for Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment* [Report]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from:
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> *The* Literacy and Education for Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment *report focuses on uplifting women. It draws attention to the fact that women account for two-thirds of the world's non-literate population, and emphasizes the importance of women's literacy in achieving sustainable development. Particularly notable is the emphasis on the profound impact that empowering women can have on a community. Women's literacy is correlated with increased social and economic benefits. For instance, literate women in Pakistan earn 95% more income than non-literate women on an annual basis. This report is important for delegates as it identifies obstacles to access to education, and reviews existing literacy programs and lessons learned from them.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Education Forum. (2015). *Incheon Declaration – Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all* [Report]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf
> *This report is useful for delegates as it provides a granular breakdown of Sustainable Development Goal 4, "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." This document is divided into three sections: section one provides*

a comprehensive overview of SDG 4; section two discusses the nuances of the goal, its respective targets, and implementation plan; finally, section three proposes a path forward to coordinate global education efforts, monitoring, and follow up. This resource is foundational for delegates in understanding and framing policy on access to education. In addition, delegates are provided with a summary of the Incheon Declaration and the international community's recognition of education as essential to development.

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> *This resource provides a historical analysis of past UN activities related to education. It also draws attention to ongoing UNESCO ground-level partnerships with schools through the UNESCO Associate School Project Network (ASPnet), which began as a pilot program for 33 schools in 15 Member States. Particularly notable is that this resource has links to supplemental education projects, including country profiles, school profiles, and global evaluations on achieving the right to education. This website is important for delegates, as it provides global data on education and country-specific profiles that will be useful for their research.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-first session. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/6546). Retrieved 4 September 2017 from: http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200(XXI)
> *The* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights *is foundational in international human rights law. Particularly, Article 13 and Article 14 outline education as a human right. This document frames global education policy and is therefore vital for delegates to review during their research. Importantly, this resource will aid delegates in understanding the nuances of the right to education, which include mandatory and free primary education for all, and widely available secondary and higher educational opportunities. Likewise, it will also help delegates identify policy concerns facing education, such as gender, economic, and geographic inequality.*

United Nations, Girls Education Initiative. (2017). *About Us* [Website]. Retrieved 4 September 2017 from: http://www.ungei.org/whatisungei/index.html
> *The Girls Education Initiative is a valuable asset to delegates interested in gaining an understanding of the UN's past, current, and future actions concerning the expansion of primary educational opportunities for girls. Particularly useful, the website includes an "information by country" section that details current and past efforts to improve access to education in specific Member States within three regions: Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Delegates will also find links to a number of reports detailing the initiative's policy priorities, recommended strategies to accomplish these, and studies to further the international community's understanding of the importance of achieving gender equality in education.*

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> *The* Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas *focuses on access to education in urban areas for refugees. Urban areas often host higher volumes of refugees, and ensuring access to education in these areas is particularly important, but also challenging. With increasing numbers of refugees in certain regions of the world, access to education for both local and refugee children is imperative. Education enables vulnerable populations to develop critical life skills, leading people to become more independent and employable. This report is important for delegates, as it provides background information on access to education for vulnerable populations. In addition, this source provides insight into the nuances of urban education, while also identifying broad best practices that can be implemented cross-nationally.*

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2016). *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis* [Report]. Retrieved 4 September 2017 from: http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0
> *The number of refugees worldwide continues to grow in response to violence, natural disasters, and conflict. Delegates interested in the impact of displacement on children's educational*

obtainment will find this UNHCR report especially enlightening. The report details the current status of educational opportunities for refugee children and succinctly summarizes the core arguments for expanding these opportunities further. Delegates are presented with multiple case studies illustrating individual refugees' journeys, and the importance of education in each of their lives. Following each case study, the report provides recommendations for increasing educational access to refugees, including scholarship financing, e-learning, and accelerated education programs. Finally, roadblocks to these policy recommendations are explored, as well as other areas for improvement.

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> *The education section of the UNHCR website is a useful starting point for delegates getting acquainted with the topic, as it provides a broad overview of the global status of education. Additionally, this resource provides links to current UNHCR initiatives and programs related to education. This resource also contains recent stories, multimedia resources, and information on current events, such as the* 2012-2016 Education Strategy*, which provide comprehensive background information that will be useful for delegates when writing position papers. Notably, delegates will find the sections education in emergencies, sustainable development, and refugee education in crisis useful when conducting their research.*

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