

BACKGROUND BRIEF

World Scout Jamboree Model UN 2019
Third Committee General Assembly



SOCHUM

SOCIAL, CULTURAL &
HUMANITARIAN COMMITTEE

What does the Third Committee do?

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, or the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), focuses on issues dealing with fundamental human rights in the international community. SOCHUM was founded in 1948 in reaction to the establishment of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Third Committee promotes and enforces basic freedoms and ideals meant to be enjoyed by the entire international community such as the right to life, the expression of cultures, the freedom of political participation, the protection of children's rights, and the promotion of social development, among many others.

What is the goal of the Third Committee?

SOCHUM operates with the goal of designing peaceful settlements for issues within the large spectrum of social, humanitarian, and cultural complications in the international community. This body does so by initiating studies that encourage the proposal of recommendations for the promotion of international cooperation and fundamental freedoms for all. The past session held by the Third Committee dealt with issues such as the protection of children from bullies, the prevention of torture, and the importance of justice reparation.

SOCHUM is allocated to the social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. All members of the General Assembly vote with the same degree of power as all other states, equating all members of the United Nations. While the General Assembly cannot call troops to war or impose economic sanctions, this forum is crucial for the formulation of ideas that can later be suggested to other UN bodies. **While the resolutions passed in the Third Committee are non-binding, this committee is useful for states to bring any discussion of international security to the floor.**



TOPIC 1: REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT FROM CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS



18 year old Laila with her son Abul and daughter Jida, flee persecution in Myanmar. Photo: Tommy Trenchard/Oxfam

Refugees face numerous challenges. Follow the journey of Laila. Click on:
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2017/10/perilous-flight-rohingya-refugee-171024065649056.html>

Who are refugees?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), people may only claim refugee status if they meet the definition of a refugee set by the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This Convention states that a refugee is a person who has a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”



Refugees come from several parts of the world:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/12/refugee-crisis-2016-12-countries-12-months-161230202844687.html>

An interview being conducted with a Syrian boy in an informal tented settlement in Beqaa, Lebanon. Photo credit: © Nour Tayeh/Médecins du Monde France, Lebanon

In a statement addressed to the United Nations Security Council in 2011, former High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres called climate change “the defining challenge of our times.” Guterres continued to explain that climate change “interacts with and reinforces the other global megatrends such as population growth, urbanization, and growing food, water and energy insecurity. It is a challenge which is adding to the scale and complexity of human displacement; and a challenge that has important implications for the maintenance of international peace and security.”



Since the 1970s, the likelihood of displacement due to natural disasters has doubled; between 2008 and 2015, a total of 203.4 million people were displaced by natural disasters. Climate change affects the entire global community, and recent figures predict that there will be two billion climate refugees by the end of the century. Those affected most directly by climate change risk loss of social and cultural identity linked to their home, and are increasingly vulnerable to human rights abuses in their transitions. A majority of refugees rely on their environments for the basic resources which they need to survive. High concentrations of people can put pressure on already limited resources and can even induce conflict over resource access.

What is the issue? What is the relationship between climate change and the situation of refugees?



<https://youtu.be/b6QEDbl5zrg>



While displaced people are protected by national laws and international human rights frameworks, including the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, there is little **legal precedent** relating to disasters and climate change. In most cases, these people do not qualify as refugees under international refugee law and human rights laws do not address critical issues such as their admission, stay, and basic rights.

Has the great climate change migration already begun?

As rising sea levels, drought and disasters scrub some of Earth's most picturesque places off the map, the first climate refugees apply for asylum. **But the UN doesn't grant refugee status for victims of climate change.**

Where will they go? READ ABOUT IT so you can fully debate topic 1:

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2014/sep/15/climate-change-refugees-un-storms-natural-disasters-sea-levels-environment>

Read this too:

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2014/sep/18/refugee-camps-climate-change-victims-migration-pacific-islands>

<https://www.eco-business.com/news/drought-and-conflict-can-spur-climate-refugees/>

A disparity in classification or inadequate criteria to distinguish between forced and voluntary movements in the context of disasters and climate change leaves thousands displaced and without classification under refugee status, withholding vital resources and allocations from those who may benefit greatly from them. SOCHUM has a unique opportunity to address this issue through a humanitarian lens, absorbing the wealth of information available on global climate patterns to better equip the global community to support those affected most by climate change.

If there are no clear definitions and specific legal protection, what should be done to address the needs of "climate refugees"?

Check these additional links to get ready to discuss TOPIC 1:

UNITED NATIONS www.un.org **Check the section CLIMATE CHANGE**

<https://unchronicle.un.org/article/next-disaster-strikes-humanitarian-impact-climate-change>

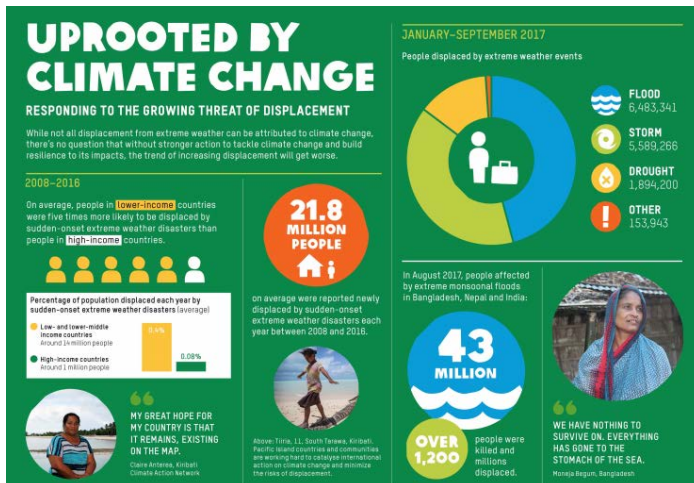
<https://unchronicle.un.org/article/small-islands-rising-seas>

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/5975e6cf7/climate-change-disaster-displacement-overview-unhcrs-role.html>

OXFAM International

https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/ig-climate-displacement-infographic-021117-en_1.pdf

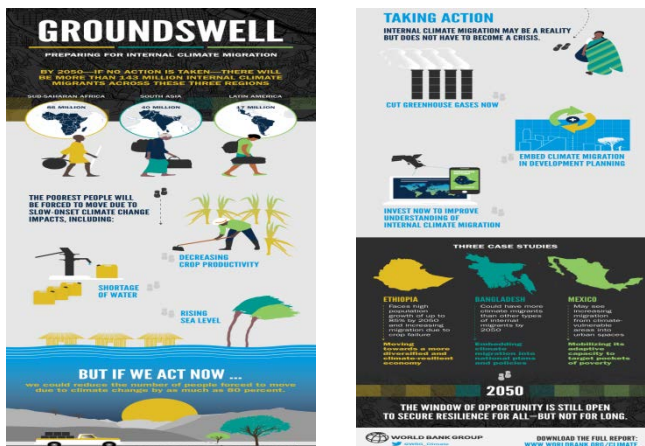
Do you need to get the scope of the problem visually? Check this infographic designed by OXFAM International!



The World Bank

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2018/03/19/groundswell---preparing-for-internal-climate-migration>

What will happen in the future? Read the projections of the World Bank about climate change and its impact on internal displacements



International Bar Association

<http://www.ibanet.org>

Check the article "Climate refugees"? Addressing the international legal gaps" written by Benjamin Glahn

TOPIC 2: ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH PRISON REFORM



These questions can guide you while preparing to address topic 2:

1. Has your country taken any action towards prison reform within the past fifty years? If so, how can those solutions be improved or be applied to other prison systems? If not, what limitations are preventing such action?
2. How have existing social and cultural influences impacted your country's policies and management regarding prison and penal systems? Are there any stigmas surrounding prisoners within the government or society in general? How could these be mitigated on a national and international perspective?

Alternatives to Imprisonment

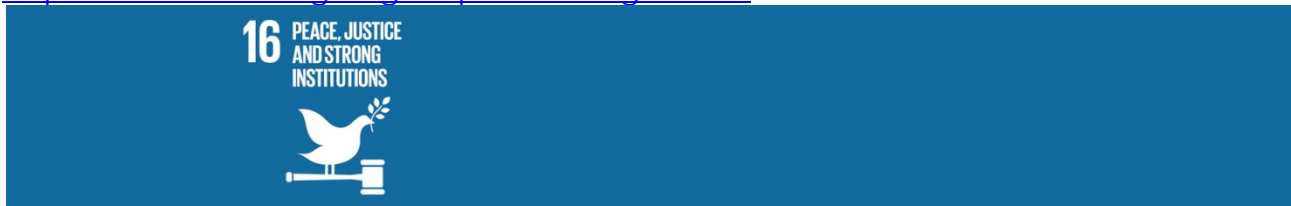
Read pages 46-49

<http://www.nhsmun.nyc/system/files/SOCHUM.pdf>

Of the millions of prisoners worldwide, a significant portion is convicted for minor, non-violent offences. From unlawful trespassing to abusive language, these inmates are subjected to poor living conditions under their sentence with potentially damaging influences. Many of those detained are also awaiting trial, sometimes waiting longer to see a judge than their prison sentence. With such disproportionate uses of imprisonment and ineffective judicial proceedings, several prisons face severe overcrowding issues with around 25 national prison systems worldwide exceeding their official capacity twice, and a few reaching an occupancy rate of over 300%. As a result, provision of basic resources for all inmates becomes increasingly difficult, causing prisons to become more prone to human rights abuses due to lacking conditions and services.

Check Sustainable Development Goal 16, check *specifically* the section titled [Thirty per cent of prisoners worldwide, two-thirds of them in developing countries, are being held without being sentenced](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-16/)

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-16/>



Despite universal use of imprisonment, non-custodial, or non-judicial, alternatives have proven to be more effective in rehabilitating prisoners charged with minor crimes and of vulnerable populations, minimizing congestion in the process.

In accordance with SDG 16, implementing alternatives to imprisonment can promote “effective, accountable institutions at all levels” and “protect fundamental freedoms.” The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures, the Tokyo Rules, promotes reducing the use of imprisonment only to when necessary and taking proper safeguards regarding alternatives. Inappropriate implementation can infringe on human dignity and could have reverse intended effects by expanding criminalization. Proper non-custodial sanctions, however, can benefit criminal justice systems by reducing recidivism as proven in Australia where the percentage of ex-prisoners who reoffended decreased from 31 to 11% for those granted non-custodial alternatives compared to those who were sentenced up to two years. This resolution sets international standards regarding non-custodial measures, aiming to boost community involvement and sense of societal responsibility for more effective reintegration.

<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/access-to-justice-and-rule-of-law-institutions/police-justice-and-corrections-2/>

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/prison-reform-and-alternatives-to-imprisonment.html>

Check this resource*:

<http://www.nhsmun.nyc/system/files/SOCHUM.pdf>

Read pages 44-48

Read pages 49-50 (**Headings Countries with Unbiased Imprisonment Policies and Adequate Prison Resources and Countries with Mass Incarceration and Reformation Efforts**)

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