

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization



Chair's Letter

Honorable delegates,

Hello, my name is Odalys Alvarado and I will be serving as your chair for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization! I am currently a third year Political Science and Global Studies double major here at UCSB. Although my experience with Model UN has been fairly short every bit of it has been fun and unforgettable, so I look forward to being the chair for this committee! In my spare time, I enjoy binge-watching shows on Netflix, taking walks in nature, and shopping (when I can afford it).

UNESCO was created during a time where there was a desperate need for peace and security in the world. Human rights were being violated constantly, women were still deep in their struggle for equality, and the concept of peace seemed impossible for some at the time. Even today, UNESCO's role is still vital in helping maintain human rights, women's equality, and furthering cultures of peace. I encourage you all to think deeply on how we can help resolve these issues. I'm excited to see what you all come up with, and I can't wait to work with you all soon!

Best,

Odalys Alvarado

Chair, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Background on UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization is a special agency in the United Nations that was formed on November 16, 1945, and is headquartered in Paris, France. The purpose of this committee is to contribute to world peace and security through international cooperation in education, sciences, and cultures. UNESCO has five major programs that help it fulfill its purpose, which are education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture, and communication/information. Some projects that have been created by these programs include the implementation of World Heritage Sites – historical or cultural landmarks that are protected by international treaties – the promotion of independent media and freedom of the press, literacy and teacher training programs, etc. UNESCO’s predecessor is the League of Nation’s International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, which was created in 1925 and replaced in 1945. Since its creation, UNESCO understands that governments alone may not always provide peace and security for their people. This is why UNESCO encourages nations around the world to strive for peace and security in their homelands and with other countries. As a quote in the UNESCO constitution states, “since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed”.¹

Topic 1 - Prevention of Human Rights Violations

Background

The prevention of violating human rights is an extremely important topic that the UN has tackled frequently, because it is difficult to implement a policy that ensures equal treatment of all people. Around the time that UNESCO was created, human rights violations were at an all-time high because of the catastrophic consequences of world war and the fascist regimes that were appearing all over the world. These events are what motivated leaders in several nations to decide that more needed to be done to preserve human rights. Although the situation is no longer

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-UNESCO>

as dire as it used to be, human rights violations still occur every day all over the world. The UN continues to work hard to ensure the number of these violations steadily decrease.

Past UN Actions

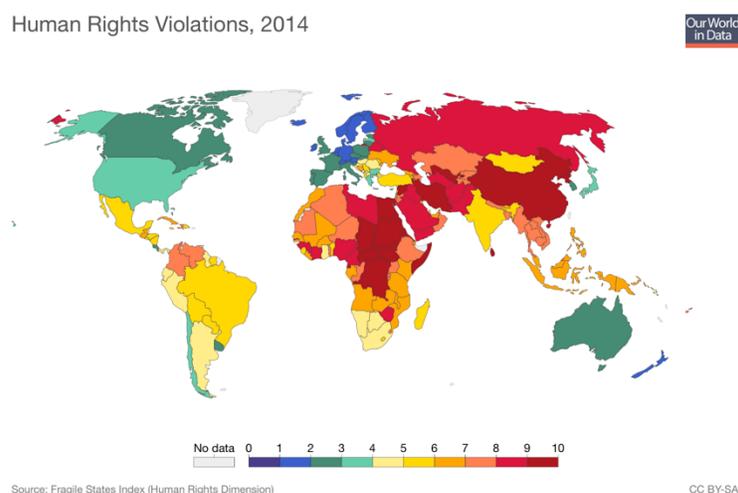
In 1948, only three years after the creation of UNESCO, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – an international document expressing the values of all members in the UN – was created. The UDHR created a foundation for what were considered to be unalienable rights which influenced future international human rights laws. However, the UDHR is not a treaty, and is therefore not legally binding. It is simply a document that conveyed the members' wish to reduce the amount of human rights violations that were occurring, so there is no way for the UN to ensure that all countries follow what it states. In 1966 a treaty called the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was created, which *is* legally binding for the countries that ratified it. The ICCPR lists the unalienable rights of the people that signing member states have to acknowledge. This is a major step towards preventing human rights violations because the ICCPR does obligate countries that have ratified it to take steps to preserve human rights. Another major advancement in the prevention of human rights violations is the creation of the Human Rights Council in 2006. This council is responsible for protecting and promoting human rights around the world, as well as making recommendations for what to do in cases of human rights violations.

Current Status

Ever since the creation of the UN and its treaties and councils focusing on human rights, there have been many successes in preventing human rights violations. Today, there are currently 14 peacekeeping missions occurring around the world, some of which are focusing primarily on the preservation of human rights.² Unfortunately, a large amount of human rights violations still occurs today. While more developed countries don't have as many, a concerning amount of human rights violations are occurring in less developed countries.

² <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en>

Figure 1:³



Bloc Positions

- *Africa:* A large amount of human rights violations occur in Africa, because of unstable governments, conflicts, and terrorist groups. Recently, the UN has been working collaboratively with the African Union to improve peacekeeping and conflict prevention. Current peacekeeping missions are taking place in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and South Sudan. Fortunately, progress is being made in some areas and the UN Secretary-General stated in the summer of 2018 that he felt that Africa was finally starting to go towards the direction of peace.⁴ However, with rising terrorist groups, more needs to be done to ensure that human rights are preserved in the continent.
- *Asia and the Middle East:* Asia and the Middle East are also hot spots for human rights violations. In the Middle East, because of the effects of war and conflict, many civilians there live in dangerous conditions, and some fall victim to torture and other types of physical harm. Censorship of the press is also still present. Censorship is also a big issue in other parts of Asia. In India, members of the press have been murdered, and other countries such as China and North Korea still have strict censorship laws. Activists also

³ <https://ourworldindata.org/human-rights>

⁴ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-news/wind-blowing-direction-of-peace-africa-un-secretary-general>

have a hard time trying to fight for their rights in Asian countries; in Vietnam, an environmental activist was jailed and possibly faces getting sent to prison for life⁵, and many LGBTQ activists in several countries face harsh punishments and severe discrimination. In Indonesia, for example, discrimination against LGBTQ people have fueled the HIV epidemic.⁶

- *Latin America:* In Latin America many human rights violations are still present. In Brazil, corrupt police violate human rights every day, and Brazil's harsh abortion laws have caused the death of several women. In Venezuela, a severe economic crisis continues to occur with no sign of improvement – many families don't have enough food or access to basic healthcare, leading to hundreds of children dying from malnutrition.⁷ In Venezuela and other countries, such as Nicaragua, protesters that try to demand change are brutally repressed. In Mexico, the drug war rages on, causing the deaths and disappearances of thousands of people. Many human rights violations plague Latin America as the result of corrupt governments and conflict.
- *Europe:* In Europe, the biggest victims of human rights violations are refugees. Xenophobia is strong throughout the continent, and refugees that have managed to be allowed to stay there face harsh discrimination while some aren't allowed to come in at all. Many suffer hate crimes and are targeted by extremist parties that advocate for anti-Muslim policies.
- *United States:* In the US, a similar issue exists. Refugees also face xenophobic laws such as the Muslim ban and are also victims of hate crimes. Immigrants from Latin American countries also face harsh discrimination, and thousands of families have been separated, and the children being detained live in harsh conditions.

Questions to Consider

1. The UN cannot force a country to preserve human rights if it doesn't want to, so how can the UN work to make sure human rights violations don't get too severe in that situation?

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/26/vietnam-drop-charges-against-environmental-activist>

⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/video/2018/07/01/video-anti-lgbt-crackdown-indonesia-fuels-health-crisis>

⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/TodosConVenezuela>

2. The Human Rights Council replaced the UN Human Commission on Human Rights because of criticisms it received due to still having notorious human rights violators as members on the committee. Today, many argue it continues to do the same, along with being biased against countries such as Israel. How can the Human Rights Council change to eliminate this bias and become a more functional committee?

3. How can the UN eliminate the immoral censorship that continues to plague several nations?

Topic 2 – Promotion of Women’s Equality

Background

The fight for women’s rights has been around for centuries. The earliest documented action of the fight for women’s equality goes back to 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft wrote the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* that argued that women were not inferior to men, but just needed more education.⁸ The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was also a major milestone and is where the Declaration of Sentiments – a document listing the rights that the members of the convention believed women should have – was created. The movement continued on, and the first international women’s day was celebrated on March 19, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland. In 1946, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was created to promote the global advancement of women and emphasize the need for broader social and economic inclusion of women. The first UN World Conference on Women took place in Mexico City in the summer of 1975. Although women have had many achievements in their fight for equality throughout the past three centuries, the fight isn’t over yet.

⁸ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/landmarks-global-movement-womens-rights-timeline>

Past UN Actions

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was created. It's known as an international bill of rights for women. This treaty explicitly defines discrimination against women, establishes legal obligations for countries that ratify it to end discrimination, and aims to achieve equality between men and women.⁹ As of 2015, it is the second most ratified human rights treaty, showing that many countries (189) were willing to promote women's equality. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action was created during the 4th UN World Conference of Women. The Platform of Action highlighted 12 critical areas of concern, such as women being in power, women in the economy, violence against women, education and women, etc. These treaties have become guides for countries all over the world to follow to promote gender equality. In 2010, UN Women was created and is dedicated to achieving global gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Current Status

Although women's equality has improved considerably since the early movements in the 1800's, there are still some issues that women continue to face today. Perhaps one of the biggest issues that is still very prevalent is violence against women. Currently, 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, and only few of them seek help afterwards.

⁹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

Figure 2:¹⁰



Another issue that women still face today is inequality in the work force. Women still aren't offered paid maternity leave in some countries and are severely underrepresented in many job positions. The wage gap is also a current issue – women are still paid less than men for the exact same job. According to the World Economic Forum, it will take 170 years to close the gender pay gap around the world completely. Even in developed countries, the problem persists.

Figure 3:¹¹

Bloc Positions

- *Africa*: In Africa women do a lot of work – they do agricultural work, take care of children, etc. – but they still suffer from gender discrimination. One of the issues women face in Africa is genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, early pregnancy, and being seen as inferior to males.¹² There have been some advances – in countries such as Kenya, women are given roles in government. However, they still face discrimination and harsh criticism.

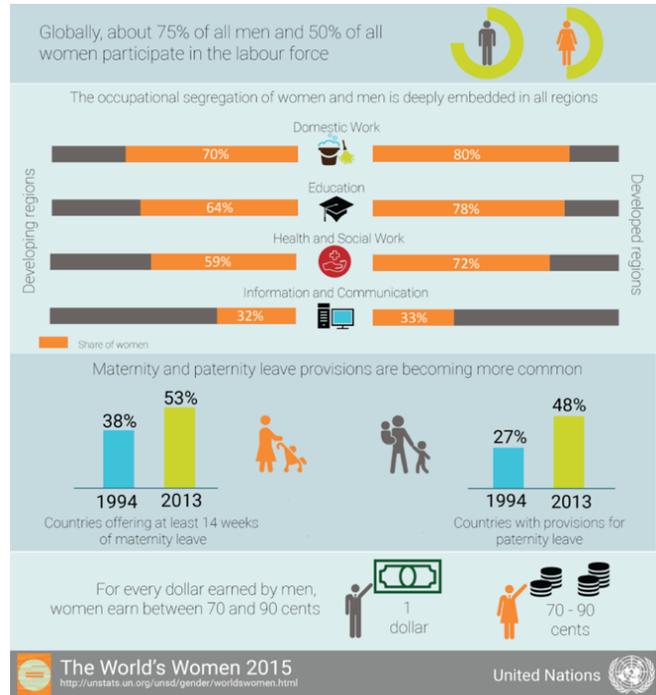
¹⁰ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter6/chapter6.html>

¹¹ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter4/chapter4.html>

¹²

<https://www.afidep.org/africas-progress-gender-equality-womens-empowerment-notable-gender-inequality-persists/>

- *Asia:* In Asian countries, women also suffer discrimination from the belief that women are inferior to men. About 2.6 million girls die before they are born because of prenatal sex selection or because of abuse or death the mother suffered.¹³ Women are also very underrepresented in leadership positions – for every 100 male leaders, there are only about 12 to 20 female leaders.



- *Latin America:* In Latin America, more and more women are entering the labor force, but the wage gap between them and men still persists. This leads to many women still being stuck in poverty. Women in Latin America also suffer a lot from domestic violence – in 2014, 1,678 women died due to domestic abuse.¹⁴ 20 countries in Latin America have laws protecting women from domestic abuse but only 8 of them have resources that help with that specified in their national budgets, showing not much is being done to enforce these laws.
- *Europe:* The European Union is doing better than others in terms of gender equality, but it isn't perfect. The wage gap still exists in Europe, and the differences in the gap go up to 30% in countries such as Estonia. Domestic violence is an issue there as well. 1 in 3 women in Europe experience domestic violence in their lifetime. However, the European Union is taking steps to combat it with the Istanbul Convention, a treaty signed in 2017 that sets standards for prevention, protection, prosecution, and services.
- *United States:* In the United States, women still make only 78 cents for every man's dollar. There are equal pay laws in place, but the laws need to be strengthened and updated in order to help close the wage gap today.

¹³ https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/breaking-through-gender-equality-in-asia-a-the-pacific/#.W25iMS_MwUt

¹⁴ <https://www.caf.com/en/currently/news/2016/03/five-challenges-to-achieve-gender-equality-in-latin-america/>

Questions to Consider

1. How can the UN help women that fall victim to harmful cultural practices without damaging their cultures entirely?

2. The UN cannot prevent all women from experiencing violence, but how can the UN support and help women that have been victims of physical or sexual violence?

3. How can the governments of nations with an unequal representation of women in the labor force assist more women to find jobs?

Topic 3 – Furthering Cultures of Peace

Background

One of the main reasons for UNESCO's creation was to promote peace in the world during a time that was filled with war. In 1989 the concept of Culture of Peace was established at the UNESCO International Congress on "Peace in the Minds of Men".¹⁵ This is when UNESCO decided that peace was more than the end of armed conflict – it also required the learning and understanding of different cultures that can allow people to create peace. It became clear that education was vital for peace, which motivated the UN to begin to focus on creating educational programs for this purpose.

Past UN Actions

In 1999, the UN created a resolution called Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. This resolution served as a basis for the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, which encouraged participating countries to take action to promote peace. The resolution stated that what is necessary to create peace were things such as the respect of human rights, democracy and tolerance, education for peace, etc. From 2001-2010, the UN launched the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, where UNESCO promoted the importance of worldwide peace. UNESCO also created programs to fight issues

¹⁵ https://en.unesco.org/70years/building_peace

like racism and promote tolerance, such as the “Teaching Respect for All” program in Brazil, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, etc., created in 2012.¹⁶ This program provides guidelines to teachers on how to teach and raise awareness about human rights and the necessity of peace. This is an ongoing program.

Bloc Positions

- *Africa*: The African Union has been working closely with the UN to promote peace. Thanks to this collaboration, the number of conflicts has decreased – but haven’t disappeared completely. The UN has currently implemented the “Intersectoral and Interdisciplinary Program of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence” and the Mid-Term Strategy, both which are aimed to build peace by helping create inclusive and peaceful societies.¹⁷
- *Asia*: In Asia, UNESCO is currently taking steps to prepare teachers for global citizenship education, which teaches about people, process and place. UNESCO has also implemented “Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories”,¹⁸ which aims to move away from history education that depicts neighbors as enemies and focuses on the commonalities between them instead, which will hopefully encourage children to remain peaceful in the future.
- *Latin America*: Wars between nations in Latin America have been decreasing. One reason for this is that Latin Americans understand that they have a common history, which allows them to help each other out more instead of fighting.¹⁹ UNESCO implemented a Work Plan for Culture in 33 member states of Latin America which is important for advancement of the culture sector in their territories that will help create a more equitable society.

¹⁶

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/human-rights-education/resources/projects/teaching-respect-for-all/>

¹⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/new/index.php?id=122146>

¹⁸

<https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/building-peace-and-sustainability-asia-pacific-unesco-bangkok's-work-advance-sdg47>

¹⁹ <http://www.iapss.org/wp/2015/05/25/regional-peace-in-latin-america/>

- *Europe*: The creation of the European Union brought Europe together and allowed for them to be peaceful with one another. However, with Brexit inspiring other countries to possibly do the same, conflict between these nations could arise. UNESCO has hosted many conferences on human rights education that included Europe, which promoted an integrated approach to education for peace. Europe also created organizations to promote this type of education, such as “Exploring Civic Education”, created in Copenhagen.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the UN continue to use education as a tool for creating peace internationally?
2. What other collaborations can the UN make – such as its collaboration with the African Union – that can cooperate together to help bring peace to a particular region?