



Tennessee YMCA Model United Nations

SECRETARY GENERAL'S WELCOME

Dear Delegates,

My name is Greta Li, and I am absolutely thrilled to serve as your Secretary General for the Tennessee CCE Model United Nations Conference. On behalf of the Secretariat, I would like to welcome you. Our conference is an opportunity for you to discover nuances in international policy, collaborate with peers from across Tennessee, and learn to articulate your thoughts respectfully. I encourage you to be bold and innovative in proposing solutions to international issues. Our conference highlights four United Nations committees: DISEC, ECOFIN, SOCHUM, and SPECPOL. To give you a better sense of the committees, I'd like to introduce a few broad topics in each committee that I'm passionate about.

The Disarmament and International Security (DISEC) Committee addresses global challenges to international peace, especially regarding disarmament of nuclear, chemical, and other weapons. Topics of interest to me are the **regulation of arms trade** and **nuclear disarmament**. Arms, whether sold legally or through illicit arms trafficking, have been used to exacerbate civil wars, prop up criminal gangs and drug cartels, and kill innocent civilians. I encourage you to consider what accountability around arms sales would look like and how best to combat illicit arms trafficking, especially with its transnational scope. Nuclear proliferation is also a contentious issue that the UN has grappled with since the Cold War. While most member states have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), some nations like North Korea and Israel haven't, both of whose current actions are concerning the UN. I urge you to consider what transparency could look like among UN member states and how to best safeguard against nuclear terrorism and modern nuclear arms races.

The Economic and Financial (ECOFIN) Committee focuses on sustainable economic growth to improve the quality of life—namely eradicating poverty, addressing food and water insecurity, and managing global resources. Topics of interest to me are **economic development in response to climate change** and **labor rights**. The IPCC released a climate change report this year, revealing that some environmental damage is irreversible for the foreseeable future. Sea levels and temperatures are rising while increasing food insecurity and decreasing biodiversity are still major issues. I ask you to think about improving the efficiency of global supply chains, moving to sustainability, and supporting the stabilization of nations' economies. Labor rights, specifically the right to "decent work" is also essential. The UN has a duty to support full and productive employment for all. I advise you to explore the labor standards and protections for different groups like children, migrant workers, people with disabilities, etc.

The Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian (SOCHUM) Committee tackles human rights issues, social development, and various humanitarian affairs such as protecting vulnerable groups and

advancing women's rights. Topics of interest to me are **protection of refugees and internally displaced people** and **access to quality education**. Refugees remain in a limbo state of "statelessness" and face struggles with integration, often having to live in makeshift camps with overburdened infrastructure. Internally displaced people (IDP) are also highly vulnerable in their own country, especially if civil conflicts are ongoing. I encourage delegates to pioneer programs to distribute humanitarian aid, relocate refugees and IDPs, and respond to root cause issues such as the new Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Another social issue is access to quality education. Recent educational gains in reading proficiency have been reversed due to COVID-19. I urge delegates to advocate for equity in education to overcome income inequality, discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and other markers, and existing infrastructure barriers.

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) concentrates on matters ranging from decolonization of the non-self-governing territories, peacekeeping operations, and other special political missions. Topics of interest to me are **peacekeeping development** and **Israeli practices in occupied Palestine**. Peacekeepers have faced controversies such as sexual misconduct and failures to prevent genocide. I ask delegates to think about reforming the peacekeepers, especially with forming equal partnerships with local communities, digitizing the peacekeepers with better technology, and holding peacekeepers accountable with fair, thorough investigations. The SPECPOL committee also addresses Israel-Palestine conflict. There are multiple special committees inquiring on ongoing human rights violations within occupied Palestine. While treating this topic with careful consideration, I advise delegates to think about options for the UN to protect human rights, de-escalate the conflict, and mediate a lasting peace agreement if possible. There is no expectation for you to "solve" this tragic conflict, but I ask that you engage with topics that are sensitive, complex, and tough to think about.

These topics are only a few of the world's most pressing issues. Perfect solutions are ever elusive, but I hope that you can think more critically about our place in this increasingly globalized world after this conference. A note: We have the privilege to imagine other people's realities. Those we discuss are real people, not numbers, statistics, or talking points. Please remember to treat these topics with the gravitas they deserve. On a more meta note, the people presenting the resolution may have chosen their topic for a personal reason, so let's make MUN a welcoming place for each other. I'm so excited to see the direction that you will take each other through in this conference, your local community, and beyond! See you in November.

Sincerely,

Greta Li

Secretary General

Tennessee YMCA MUN 2021

Conference A



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SECRETARY GENERAL'S AGENDA

Model United Nations A – Greta Li

1. Disarmament and International Security

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

2. Economic and Financial

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

3. Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural

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

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

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

4. Special Political and Decolonization

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

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

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