St. Bonaventure University - High School Model UN Conference

Committee: Special Political and Decolonization

Topics:
- Refugees and Diplomatic Asylum
- Outer Space
- The Legacy of Proxy Wars

Chair: Taylor Elliott

Welcome delegates. It is a pleasure to be your Chair this year at the Saint Bonaventure University High School Model United Nations Conference of 2018. I am an International Studies major here at Saint Bonaventure. I have two years' worth of chairing experience from past high school conferences. I expect all participants to be familiar with the rules of procedures of the conference. I also expect delegates to be thoroughly familiar with their countries and their positions on the various issues under consideration in this conference. I also believe that all of you are passionate about this committee and its importance and relevance. I am very confident that all delegates will enjoy the experience that Model UN provides. I also believe that the main purpose of the conference is not solely to obtain awards but rather to work hard and learn from each other and work together to offer solutions to the problems we will be discussing. Without further ado, let me present some idea on the topics that will be debated in our committee. I will also suggest some sources that you may want to consult in preparing for the conference. I am looking forward to seeing you all in the conference!

Co-Chair: Daniel Bakowski

Hello everyone, my name is Daniel Bakowski and I will be the Co-Chair of this committee this year! I am a Political Science and International Studies double major with a minor in Pre-Law here at St. Bonaventure University. I have several years of experience participating in conferences very similar to this one in the past. I advise you to do your best to represent your countries to the best of your ability even though you may not personally agree with your nation's stance on certain issues. This is a simulation experience and you are playing roles and you have to understand and faithfully represent your country's position.

Refugees and Diplomatic Asylum:

The definition of a refugee "is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence". According to UNHCR there are 22.5 million refugees in the world today and 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. These figures are increasing at rapid rates throughout the world because of many countries' inappropriate actions toward their own people and because of wars: "War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries" and many of these refugees and displaced persons are denied the basic human rights that the United Nations grants every citizen of the world. The United Nations General Assembly established the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency)

on December 14, 1950 after World War II in order to help many people who were displaced by the war.

Displaced persons are "people forced to flee their homes but never cross an international border". These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it—in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even forests and fields and many cannot even find shelter. Displaced persons become displaced not only because of political conflicts but also because of natural disasters.

More than half of all refugees worldwide come from just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan and more than half, approximately 51 percent, of those refugees are children under the ages of 18. The Syrian refugee Crisis started with the Syrian Civil War when the revolution (part of the Arab Spring) turned violent and invited regional and international interventions. Syria became an attractive spot for terrorists from all over the world. The civil war in Syria also has a sectarian dimension that pitted the Alawites (Shiite-affiliated) against Sunni Muslims. In many respects, Syria became a proxy war (or just another manifestation) of the ongoing war between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

The Afghanistan refugee crisis started with the Afghanistan war between the country's national government and extremist groups that included Al-Qaeda and the Taliban that eventually created ISIS as well.

The South Sudanese refugee crisis started after South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, but conflict erupted after the president accused the vice president of a coup against him which led to rounds of violence and led to the displacement of more than 400,000 people.

Questions to Consider:

- What is your country's position towards refugees and diplomatic asylum? Does your country have significant numbers of refugees? How does your country treat them? Does your country accept political asylum?
- What is your country's position on displaced persons? What, if any, aid is given?
- Do refugees bring in threats to host countries? If so, how can nations protect themselves from such threats without endangering the lives of refugees?
- What can the UNHCR do to provide more for refugees in refugee camps? Can the UN do more?

References:
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https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/22/opinion/the-next-refugee-crisis-afghanistan.html
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Outer Space

Ever since the dawn of the space age, the United States has played a crucial role in the development of space programs. However, given the recent developments and advancements in technology and other major powers taking interest in space exploration, there has been a very real fear that this will lead to another arms race in outer space with the weaponization of Earth's orbit becoming more and more a very real possibility.

To combat this, the UN's General Assembly sought the creation of a brand-new subcommittee known as the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in 1959 to promote a more cooperative approach to the sharing of technology, information, and the furtherance of humanity's exploration of space. Since then, the United Nations has passed several international treaties including the *Outer Space Treaty* and *Moon Treaty* that paved the way for a bright and optimistic future of mutual understanding for the betterment of universal knowledge regarding the truly expansive universe around us.

As a result, numerous nations all over the world have already begun to pool their resources and funds to create space programs in developing countries across the globe by assisting them with the construction of launch pads, headquarters, and satellites, however, the intentions behind such cooperation is not always as benevolent as they seem. States, as you all know, compete with one another and states have selfish interests and are not always guided by ulterior motives.

Questions to Consider:

- Does your country have a space program? If so, how developed is it?
- What scientific accomplishments has your country contributed to the field of space travel and exploration?
- What are the nature of satellites or orbital technology your country has launched into space?
- How has your country benefited from having a space program?
- What countries already have space programs?
- What are the benefits of international cooperation in outer space?
- Are we alone?
- What are the prospects of conflict over space?
- Are there real possibilities of states claiming 'real estate' in outer space? That is, claiming such space as national sovereignty?
- Is the militarization of space a real possibility, a real threat to world peace?

References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_government_space_agencies

https://www.unov.org/unov/en/unoosa.html

https://www.state.gov/t/isn/5181.htm

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militarisation_of_space

The Legacy of Proxy Wars

A "proxy war," refers to any form of military action, crisis, or war instigated directly by an outside power without that outside force becoming involved in the conflict directly; that is, outside powers fight wars by using other local powers/proxy powers.

This has been an ongoing problem, especially during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union and the United States avoided 'direct' confrontation and preferred to fight one another through proxy wars (think Vietnam for example, or Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979). This problem persists today. There are many historical conflicts that have impacted our world today. The Vietnam War became a proxy war when the United States got involved to prevent Vietnamese nationalists from unifying their country. One of the major conflicts during the Cold War was the Korean War which turned into a proxy war between the USSR and the United States over the containment of communism. Afghanistan war was a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union and the US was determined to inflict defeat on the Soviets and to turn Afghanistan into the Soviet's Vietnam. The US supported the Afghan mujahedeen who fought the Soviet troops but some of whom would later form the backbone of al-Qaeda. As you can see, proxy wars could have some serious repercussions.

How do we prevent new proxy wars from happening? How do we prevent outside powers from using weaker states as their battleground? These are the types of questions that should be asked when looking to end proxy wars. But, we also need to be mindful of the short term and long term consequences of proxy wars (think of where N. Korea stands now and think of where the US intervention against the Soviets in Afghanistan took us!)

Questions to Consider:

- Has your country ever been involved in a proxy war?
- Was your country affected by proxy wars? How?
- What could be done to prevent proxy wars?
- What can the UN do?
- Can the UN do anything nowadays?
- What about the role of regional organizations?
- What are the human costs of proxy wars?
- Can we hold great powers responsible for using smaller and weaker countries as their proxy?
- Are those 'proxy' countries responsible as well?
- Can you think of proxy wars nowadays? Which ones?

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