

8th Annual Conference
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ECOSOC BACKGROUND GUIDE



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Welcome Note

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure to address you as members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the Wesgreen International School Model United Nations (WESMUN) 2025. This year, we convene under the title “Global Resilience: Building a Sustainable Future Together.” We are thrilled to have you as a part of this committee, and we hope to provide you with the opportunity of engaging in thought-provoking and enjoyable discussions.

Considering all the social, economic, and environmental distress present in the world today, the call for resilience has never been timelier at ECOSOC, an organ of the United Nations, as it supports the tackling of these global issues by engaging nations in partnership that brings forth benefits for the collective.

The conference will discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with narrowly focused issues such as the global arms trade and its impact on conflict in unstable regions, the critical failures in humanitarian aid systems, the revitalization of the global economy, and greater social orientation with respect to women empowerment. It is your responsibility to not only assess and discuss these matters but also develop and advocate for practical and workable solutions which are premised on the ideals of resilience, fairness, and brotherhood of nations.

This background guide has been prepared to assist you in gaining an understanding of the topics and will act as a foundation for your research. However, we deeply encourage you to conduct your own research, as this background guide should not be your sole source.

All being said, we encourage you all to be open-minded and engage with this journey with optimism. To be resilient one must be able to adapt, strategize, and look beyond conventional thinking. You are the future leaders, and you are in a position to lead conversations that will foster cooperation and equitable opportunities across generations.

We wish you the best of luck with your preparations and hope you will enjoy this experience. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us using the email address added below.

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Sincerely,
Chairs of ECOSOC.

Topic 1:

Investigating the Global Arms Trade and Its Role in Perpetuating Conflict in Unstable Regions

Introduction

The arms trade is said to boost economies; however, this trade is seen as a significant threat in terms of humanity and global security. Supporting this argument, one could say that it can be seen as a necessary tool to ensure balance of power in the international sphere and maintains stability. However, reality is far grimmer as the trade and transfer of arms sustains and promotes conflict by enabling the black market. This could be through states directly, or through private entities.

In conflict-ridden areas of the world, there is an endless cycle of violence, poor governance and strained social and political relationships predominantly due to the steady flow of weapons in the regions. From people suffering loss of life, to violence, destruction and regression of developmental projects, society pays the ultimate cost. Furthermore, one could see that there is always a degree of political influence in the arms trade restricting the ways regulation can occur.

Focusing on how the organization can help by looking at its root causes which promote violence and discord within the system is one of the key focal points of this discussion. In continuity, the minute we sit together in this room. We should not forget to keep the importance of and respect for humanity, neutrality, and independence intact. In other words, we must respect the people. Owing to this, having the military industrial complex at the forefront during decision making is simply unfeasible and detrimental for society at large.

Analysis

The global arms trade has been among the most lucrative businesses in the world with predictable increases year after year, according to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). The ready availability of weapons and ammunition and its continuous trade are some of the most influential forces perpetuating conflict in unstable regions, leading to human suffering, political repression, crime, and terror among civilian populations. Irresponsible arms transfers have the potential to destabilize entire regions, facilitate arms embargo violations, and exacerbate human rights violations. This is particularly evident in regions with high levels of violence and conflict, as global arms trade greatly hinders the regions' ability to attain internationally agreed development goals.

This multibillion-dollar industry, dominated by the United States, Russia, China, France, and Germany, provides weapons that end up in conflict zones. Global arms sales rose to \$632 billion in 2023, driven by conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and Asian tensions, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Furthermore, between 2017 and 2021, these countries accounted for over 75% of global arms exports, with major recipients being nations in conflict-prone regions such as the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. The flow of arms into these areas exacerbates existing tensions and conflicts, therefore enabling prolonged violence and undermining peacebuilding efforts.

The arms trade is driven by complex political, economic, and strategic considerations. For many exporters, arms sales are a critical tool of foreign policy. Countries often use arms transfers to solidify alliances, influence nations' policies, or balance geopolitical rivals. For instance, the United States has provided significant military aid and arms to Saudi Arabia as part of its strategy in the Middle East. Conversely, Russia has strengthened ties with nations such as Syria and Iran by supplying advanced weaponry.

Economically, arms exports contribute to domestic industrial development, which makes imposing restrictions on arms sales politically challenging. However, the humanitarian consequences of prioritizing economic gains over ethical considerations are profound.

In regions experiencing conflict, the influx of weapons has devastating consequences. The ongoing Yemeni Civil War remains a striking example, where weapons supplied by the U.S., UK, and others to the Saudi-led coalition have been used in airstrikes resulting in massive civilian casualties and widespread destruction. Similarly, arms supplied to non-state actors in Syria have prolonged the conflict and complicated peace negotiations.

Unfortunately, the impacts of arms trade are not limited to large-scale weaponry such as artillery, bombs, or missiles, which dominate war zones and garner greater international attention. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons also poses a significant challenge, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where their increased accessibility has fueled insurgencies, communal violence, and mass displacement. In the Sahel, for instance, porous borders and weak governance have enabled armed groups to stockpile weapons, destabilizing entire regions.

Furthermore, the increased international focus on arms trade has significant implications beyond immediate conflicts. Armed proliferation undermines state sovereignty, leading to the perpetuation of existing conflicts or the development of new ones. This destabilization can spill over into neighbouring regions, as seen in the Sahel. Additionally, military expenditures detract from investments in health, education, and development, perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment in conflict-affected areas and slowing development in unaffected ones. The International Schiller Institute emphasizes the urgent need for investment in critical domestic sectors.

The international community has taken several steps to address these challenges, though significant gaps remain. The Arms Trade treaty (ATT), adopted in 2013, represents a landmark effort to regulate the legal arms trade by establishing international standards for the transfer of conventional weapons. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and some major arms-exporting regions have yet to ratify the treaty, as many states prioritise national interests, sidelining ethical and development considerations. This has resulted in further inconsistencies, leading to failures in preventing arms from reaching conflict zones.

ECOSOC, as the UN body tasked with fostering sustainable development, can address the arms trade's humanitarian toll by promoting transparency and strengthening regulatory mechanisms like the ATT. This includes ensuring comprehensive reporting, establishing penalties for violations, and encouraging universal ratification. ECOSOC has also previously engaged with member states to advocate for stricter compliance and improved tracking systems to combat the aspect of illicit arms trade, which fuels terrorism and organised crime in fragile regions. It can also enhance global monitoring frameworks, working with member states and organizations like INTERPOL to combat arms smuggling. Supporting regional disarmament programs and incentivizing nations to prioritise sustainable development over military spending can also reduce dependence on arms. For example, initiatives like the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) aim to address the issue through practical measures such as weapon collection programs and capacity building for law enforcement.

In conclusion, the global arms trade poses significant challenges to peace and security in unstable regions, driven by the economic interests of exporting nations and the vulnerabilities of importing states. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that combines robust international regulations, technological innovation, and cooperative efforts of ECOSOC with other entities to promote sustainable development.

History:

Although ECOSOC is not primarily tasked with regulating arms trade, it does intersect with the issue through its focus on peace, security, development, and human rights. The global arms trade is a complex and highly lucrative industry involving the transfer of weapons, military equipment, and technology across borders. It can escalate conflicts in several ways:

- By supplying arms to conflicting parties which extends the duration of violence and proves harder to achieve peace;
- Used by various factions to gain advantage and control over unstable regions;
- Can undermine peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery by empowering those who are unwilling to engage in peaceful solutions.
- Can be used by state and non-state actors in ways that target civilians, leading to human rights abuse, war crimes and displacement.

ECOSOC has worked closely with UN agencies like UNDP and OCHA to stabilise conflict-affected areas, these efforts are essential in the aftermath of conflicts amplified by arms supplies, ensuring basic needs and preventing future violence. The arms trade treaty adopted in 2013 seeks to regulate the international trade of conventional arms and prevent their misuse, ECOSOC supports the treaty's principles through relevant policy discussions and the promotion of sustainable development.

ECOSOC works closely with the UN security council to address issues caused by illegal arms trade that proves a threat to the peace and safety of the population.

The HAS initiative by the council aims to provide assistance to any and all regions affected by war or conflicts, which includes regions affected by illicit arms trade and the aftermath of conflicts due to those trades.

Questions a Resolution must Answer:

- 1.** What is the effect of illicit arms trade on the peace and safety of states?
- 2.** To what degree can illegal arms trade be justified?
- 3.** How can arms trade regulations be more effectively enforced globally to prevent the flow of arms into conflict zones?
- 4.** How can major arms-exporting nations be encouraged to prioritize human rights and sustainable development over economic and strategic interests when supplying arms?
- 5.** What measures can the international community take to ensure greater transparency and accountability in arms transfers?

Subtopics:

- Exploring the role and impact of arms trade in assisting and elevating transnational crime syndicates
- Implementing innovative solutions to illegal arms trade in unstable states
- Providing victims with helpful resources to combat the harm of illicit arms trade
- The role of non-state actors in arms trafficking
- The impact of arms transfers on human rights violations

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Topic 2:

Addressing Systematic Failures in Humanitarian Aid and their Impact on Crisis Response

Introduction

Humanitarian assistance is a manifestation of the will of the international community to relieve the pain and misery of those who have been affected by war, disaster, and various other crises. However, while this noble effort has rescued many people, there are challenges. Humanitarian assistance has structural issues such as aid spans from coordination to resources and lack of accountability that most often serves to weaken crisis response and compromise the fate of the disadvantaged groups.

In an era marked by unprecedented humanitarian crises as a consequence of climate change, geopolitics, and humanitarian intervention, their stakes couldn't be greater. They not only push back life-saving measures but also foster disillusionment with respect to systems of aid, make people look up to systems and deepen the divides. It is quite apparent that to ignore or overlook such issues is no longer an option, it is a question of ethics.

The goal of this committee session is to diagnose the reasons that gave rise to these institutional malfunctions, find answers, and make at least some first steps towards systematic reform of humanitarian aid system towards more effective, equitable, and responsible assistance. As we meet today may we be considerate of the audience we are serving as we strive together to create a system that upholds the values of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Analysis

The systematic failures in humanitarian aid have long undermined global crisis efforts, leaving vulnerable populations without adequate support during their most critical moments. These failures arise from a combination of logistical inefficiencies, corruption, and governance challenges, compounded by the politicization of aid. While international frameworks, including those guided by ECOSOC, have sought to mitigate these issues, gaps persist, requiring a more unified and innovative approach to crisis management.

According to the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO), 305 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2025, and the 2024 GHO requires over \$49 billion to assist 189.9 million of the people in need across 76 countries through 47 coordinated response plans. However, devastatingly, millions of people in need will not receive this necessary assistance next year due to the rising lack of funding for the humanitarian response. Additionally, with the immense number of ongoing conflicts, donors are reducing aid budgets that displaced and conflict-affected people rely on for survival.

Prominent examples of failures in delivering humanitarian aid in crisis zones like Yemen and Gaza reveal the multifaceted challenges and highlight the crucial role of ECOSOC as well as the international community in addressing these issues. Since the start of the Yemeni Civil War in 2014, it has grown to be described as one of the “largest humanitarian crises in the world”, according to Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, Fellow at Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. She also emphasised how it is also one of the “worst international responses” to a humanitarian crisis. Despite efforts by humanitarian organisations, Yemen continues to face the catastrophic consequences of systematic failures in humanitarian aid. Challenges such as damaged infrastructure, inefficiencies, and ongoing conflict severely hinder aid delivery. For example, commercial vessels at the Port of Hudaydah face significant delays due to airstrikes and mismanagement. Furthermore, humanitarian operations are critically underfunded, resulting in issues such as hunger, malnutrition, and lack of basic necessities continuing to devastate millions of Yemenis.

In Gaza, the recent conflict has severely impact humanitarian aid delivery, with blockades and political tensions complicating access to essential supplies. This delay has exacerbated the suffering of civilians, leading to numerous public health crises. The scale of this crisis underscores the need for a coordinated global response.

One of the most pressing issues is the fragmented coordination among various stakeholders. Humanitarian crises often involve numerous actors – national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies, all operating independently. This lack of cohesion leads to resource misallocation, overlapping efforts in some regions, and complete neglect in others. ECOSOC, through its High-Level Segment meetings and partnerships, has advocated for improved inter-agency collaboration and development of centralized platforms to monitor and coordinate aid delivery.

Corruption and mismanagement present another critical barrier. In many conflict zones, local authorities or armed groups exploit aid resources for political or financial gain, diverting them away from intended beneficiaries. Somalia, for example, has witnessed instances where food aid meant for famine relief was appropriated to militias to consolidate power. Such practices erode donor trust and reduce the overall funding available for humanitarian efforts. ECOSOC, through its Economic and Social Development initiatives, has emphasized transparency and accountability in aid distribution. Innovative solutions, such as the use of blockchain technology for tracking aid supplies, have been proposed to address these challenges, but wider adoption remains limited.

Logistical challenges further compound these failures. In regions affected by natural disasters or armed conflict, inadequate infrastructure often hinders the timely delivery of aid. In Yemen, for example, naval blockades and damaged transportation networks have severely restricted the flow of humanitarian supplies, exacerbating food shortages and health crises. ECOSOC has called for investment in resilient infrastructure as part of its agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizing that robust logistical systems are essential for effective crisis response. However, funding for such initiatives remains insufficient, particularly in regions where they are needed most.

Humanitarian aid is often focused on addressing immediate needs, such as food, shelter, and medical care, while neglecting the root causes of crises. This reactive approach creates a cycle of dependency, as seen in protracted crises like those in South Sudan and Afghanistan. ECOSOC has championed the integration of humanitarian aid with sustainable development programs, promoting initiatives that empower local communities to rebuild and reduce reliance on external assistance.

The broader implications of these failures extend beyond the immediate suffering of affected populations. Inefficient aid delivery undermines global efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly goals related to poverty alleviation, health, and education. Moreover, prolonged crises destabilize regions, fuelling migration, economic instability, and political unrest, which can spill over into neighbouring countries and create global challenges. ECOSOC, as the principal body for coordinating the UN's economic and social work, is uniquely positioned to address these issues. By fostering international dialogue, mobilizing resources, and promoting innovative solutions, ECOSOC can lead the way in reforming the humanitarian aid system to ensure that it is more equitable, effective, and sustainable.

History:

Humanitarian aid is one of the key topics discussed during UN segments, and lately the denial of humanitarian aid has increased significantly causing an increase in death toll and violation of children's right to life, education and the highest attainable standard of health. The denial of humanitarian access is one of the six grave violations monitored by the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict established by Council resolution 1612 (2005). ECOSOC, which was created by the United Nations charter in 1945 as one of the principal organs of the UN. the council was formed to help address and solve the economic, social and cultural activities around the world. the main goals of the council are to promote:

- higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems, and international cultural and educational cooperation; and
- universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

The first meeting of the Council was convened from 23 January to 18 February 1946, in London, UK, with Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar (India) as its first President.

ECOSOC put forward entities like UNAIDS, in 1996, to provide assistance to countries and people in need of aid to combat the rising HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria cases. On 25 July of 2023, ECOSOC adopted its 2023 resolution on the joint united nations programme on HIV/AIDS, at the meeting, the council considered the 2023 report of the UNAIDS executive director. Germany presented a joint statement by Germany and Kenya introducing the 2023 Resolution on the Joint Programme. The resolution maintains its call for reinvigorated efforts to protect human rights and promote gender equality in the context of HIV, expressing concern over laws, policies, and practices that hinder access for all people to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support service. ECOSOC established an inclusive and multisectoral joint programme model which brings together the expertise of several united nation organizations and is governed by an inclusive board that includes people most affected by HIV as its members.

In 1998 the first humanitarian affairs segment was held by the council, the segment addresses the United Nations coordinated response to natural and man-made disasters, including earthquakes and hurricanes, hazardous waste accidents, famines, armed conflicts, ozone layer depletion and climate change. The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) and ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development took place on 24-27 June 2024 in New York. The HAS (25-27 June) took place under the theme “Putting humanity first in the face of conflicts and climate change: strengthening humanitarian assistance and respect for international humanitarian law, and promoting effectiveness, innovation, and partnerships.” This segment brings together representatives from UN agencies like UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA and NGOs. The segment is then held to update and report on humanitarian needs, gaps in response and progress. Recently the HAS has increased awareness on the effect of climate change on humanitarian aid, and the segment shone light on the idea of using technology and innovative ways to help spread humanitarian aid to countries in need

Questions a Resolution must Answer:

1. What are the long-lasting effects of wars and conflicts on the stability of humanitarian aid?
2. To what extent does climate change affect the availability of humanitarian aid?
3. What mechanisms can be implemented to improve coordination between international humanitarian organizations to prevent gaps in aid distribution?
4. How can humanitarian aid delivery be made more resilient to challenges such as armed conflict, bureaucratic hurdles, and political obstacles?
5. What steps can be taken to ensure that humanitarian aid is effectively reaching vulnerable populations, such as those in remote or besieged areas?

Subtopics:

- Encouraging international cooperation to provide immediate humanitarian aid to people in conflict zones
- Future strategies to prevent conflicts from affecting the rate of humanitarian relief
- Improving coordination among humanitarian organisations
- Addressing the funding gaps in humanitarian aid
- The role of humanitarian aid in post-conflict reconstructions

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