

## MUNSA XVIII

### Agenda Item I

Discussing actions that should be taken to protect and assist stateless people

#### I. Statement of the problem

1. Between 12 to 15 million people are considered to be stateless. A stateless person is formally defined as someone without citizenship or a nationality, but there are many conflicting definitions<sup>[1]</sup>. Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to a nationality”. Without proper papers, such as birth certificates, passports, or citizenship certificates, statelessness can lead to a lack of education, disclusion from political processes, and lack of healthcare<sup>[2]</sup>.
2. The children of stateless individuals are also are labeled as stateless, creating an even more overwhelming number of stateless people to rise<sup>[3]</sup>. The growing number of stateless people will likely lead to an increase in civil conflict and violence in areas where there is rampant statelessness due to the high poverty rates<sup>[4]</sup>.
3. According to the European Union’s Network on Statelessness, a major difficulty in confronting the issue of statelessness is the lack of expertise, political will, and understanding on the topic<sup>[5]</sup>. Since assisting stateless people is usually up to more than one country, conflicts arise over what should be done; few are fully addressed. There is only one document, the 1961 Convention, that the UNHCR considers universal enough to reduce the issue’s prevalence across the world and handle those who are already stateless<sup>[2]</sup>. Unfortunately only 51 states have signed the 1961 Convention, making it extremely difficult to provide assistance to stateless people worldwide<sup>[9]</sup>.
4. Causes of statelessness include people who were nationals of a country that no longer exists, governmental termination of nationality, and discrimination or gaps in nationality legislation.<sup>[6]</sup> Large numbers of stateless people exist in Southeastern Asian nations such as Thailand, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, mostly minority groups who are isolated and persecuted<sup>[7]</sup>. The Roma ethnic group and the breakup of Yugoslavia are primary reasons for a high number of stateless people in Balkan nations such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia<sup>[8]</sup>.

#### II. History of the Problem

5. Following the end of World War II in 1945, the statelessness became more severe than ever before.

In Germany, surviving Jews were still being deprived of their citizenship, leaving them in a state of lost legal belonging. At the same time, millions of Expellees, ethnic Germans that were expelled from Eastern Europe, were also left with uncertain national affiliations. By 1948, about 10,000 out of 280,000 displaced persons living in Germany, were stateless. The appearance of these stateless groups prompted the international community to seek a solution. In December 14, 1950, the United Nations General Assembly created the UNHCR to help with the statelessness crisis. The UNHCR was originally created to only work for three years and the disband, but the problem of statelessness and refugees spread throughout Europe and Asia [\[10\]](#).

6. In 1954, the first of two primary global conventions on statelessness occurred. The 1954 Convention was written in September of 1954 in New York with the intention to state the status of stateless people. This is the key legal document in defining who is a stateless person, what are their rights, and what are the legal responsibilities of states. This assisted the UN in taking action to prevent statelessness and improve the administration of several countries by first establishing the definition of a stateless person. However, reducing or eliminating statelessness required further international cooperation and change in national laws [\[9\]](#).

7. The second global convention on statelessness occurred on August 30, 1961 in New York City. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was used to impose obligations on states to grant nationality to those that would otherwise be or are stateless. Each article of the convention addresses a specific situation and what the state is obligated to do if that situation is to occur, however a state is able to add limiting factors such as age restrictions, criminal charges, etc. The convention strives to end statelessness to those in multiple situations including children born to stateless parents (Article 1), those born on ships or aircraft (Article 3), those who have a change in civil status including marriage, or adoption (Articles 5 and 6), and those deprived of nationality due to their race, religion, or political grounds (Article 9). Although the convention states in what situations should nationality be granted, it does not state the methods or strategy that should be used to resolve statelessness [\[9\]](#).

8. In recent years, several cases of statelessness have been resolved. In Bangladesh, for example, the Biharis, Urdu speakers of Bangladesh, were reconfirmed as Bangladeshi citizens. Following the partition of India in 1947, Indian Muslims fled from the state of Bihar into East Pakistan, or what is now known as Bangladesh [\[11\]](#). The Bihari spoke a different language and had different cultural practices than the Bengali, but they were still given certain opportunities due to their allegiance to West Pakistan. When the Civil War broke out in 1971 between East and West Pakistan, the Bihari lost their jobs and land, and were placed in camps where they were refused civil rights such as attending school, obtaining employment, and receiving health care. Although a portion of the Bahari were repatriated, Pakistan discontinued this process in 1993 and left the Bihari stateless in Bangladesh. In 2008, the High Court of

Dhaka granted Bangladesh nationality to the Bihari. The government began to hand out national ID cards and register voters to vote for the first time <sup>[12]</sup>.

### III. Potential Solutions

9. Statelessness is becoming a growing worldwide issue and needs to be addressed immediately. The fact that nations have different reasons for allowing statelessness to occur will make the task of creating a solution to the problem complex. Therefore the delegate should keep in mind:

- Why is statelessness occurring in the nation(s)? Does the nation have an issue with the people? Can this issue be resolved?
- What solutions have been previously used? Was the solution effective? Could you use this solution as a framework to solve future and present statelessness issues?
- What effect will the solution have on the stateless people and the nations? How will other nations react?

### IV. Position and Research Tips

To create a solution for the issue, it is vital that delegates stay true to their nations position. While developing your position, the delegate should keep in mind these questions:

- Is your country inhabited by a large number of stateless people?
- Is there political conflict occurring in your country that may cause statelessness?
- Are there are large number of stateless people entering or leaving your nation?
- Has your government signed any treaties or agreements relating to statelessness?
- If statelessness is or has been a problem in your country, what causes lead to the problem?
- Has your nation ever had a large amount of stateless people living there? If so, what was done to solve the problem?

### V. Useful Web Sources

- <http://www.unhcr.org>
- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)
- <http://www.refworld.org/statelessness.html>
- <http://www.trust.org/spotlight/Stateless-the-worlds-most-invisible-people/>
- <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/>

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[4] What Does Statelessness Mean?. (2012, February 17). *Open Society Foundations (OSF)*. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/stateless/what-does-statelessness-mean>

[5] Capacity Building . (n.d.). *European Network on Statelessness*. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://www.statelessness.eu/capacity-building>

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[11] Protracted Stateless Situations. (n.d.). *UNHCR- The UN Refugee Agency*. Retrieved May 14,

2013, from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c179.html>

[12] Constantine, G. (n.d.). Abandoned and Forgotten: The Bihari In Bangladesh. *Nowhere People*.

Retrieved May 14, 2013, from

<http://www.nowherepeople.org/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=0&p=2&a=0&at=0>

## VII. Notes to Delegates

This year will be the first year that UN Refugees will be a committee at MUNSA for quite some time! I am very excited to be chairing this unique committee that fits in perfectly with the conference theme of migration. I believe that this committee will create some very intriguing debate and that the delegates will create innovative solutions! If you have any questions about the papers or anything relating to the committee, contact me at [mobrien6330@stu.neisd.net](mailto:mobrien6330@stu.neisd.net).

## MUNSA XVIII

### Agenda Item II

#### Managing the displacement of coastal populations from rising sea levels

##### I. Statement of the Problem

1. About 634 million people live in coastal areas of low elevation <sup>[1]</sup>. This large population is vulnerable to the imminent threat of rising sea levels. It has been predicted that sea levels could rise by up to 23 inches by the end of the century <sup>[2]</sup>. This rise would cause a mass displacement of individuals which would create major complications on the global scale.

2. The causes of rising sea levels can be traced directly to increased global temperatures. Global warming is caused by an increase of carbon dioxide, methane, and other emissions in the atmosphere <sup>[3]</sup>. These gases originate from the combustion of fossil fuels, and cloud the atmosphere. The thickened atmosphere leads to what is known as the Greenhouse Effect. The Sun's heat is trapped within the thickened atmosphere. This causes an increase in global temperatures and melting of polar ice caps. The melting of polar ice caps results in the rise of sea level <sup>[4]</sup>. Already, glaciers and ice caps have shown these effects. Melting ice contributed to half an inch of sea level rise between 2003 and 2007.

3. Small island nations are already experiencing the consequences rising sea levels. The Maldives, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands are some of the more prominent nations victim of rising sea levels. In Tuvalu, sea levels have already risen enough to cause flooding. This has been detrimental to agriculture in the region as the salt from the sea water spoils cropland <sup>[5]</sup>. If sea levels were to rise as predicted, cities would face this issue similar seawater contamination in aquifers and other bodies of freshwater. A loss of freshwater would cause further complications like drinking water shortages <sup>[6]</sup>. Although many of those affected by rising levels will become internally displaced, most of the island nations, such as the Maldives, will be forced to completely relocate due to its uninhabitable standards. Because this relocation would be permanent, the statehood of those displaced would be reconsidered and millions would be rendered stateless.

4. Addressing this issue is imperative because it affects all nations with a coastlines. To complicate the matter, areas of the dense population tend to be along the coastlines. Two thirds of cities with over five million people are located in low lying areas. Cities like New York, Shanghai, Mumbai, and Tokyo are among the cities that would be most severely affected <sup>[7]</sup>. These areas also have the most population growth as the world rapidly urbanizes. As these cities grow, solutions to the problem only become more difficult. This issue must be quickly addressed to protect the one in ten people in the world who will be

affected.

## II. History of the Issue

5. The issue of rising sea levels was fairly unanticipated. Consequently, little action has been taken to address it. However, the UNHCR has taken steps to support other environmental refugees of floods. In 2011, the UNHCR supplied Pakistani refugees with emergency supplies and shelter [\[8\]](#). The disaster caused hundreds of deaths and water related diseases such as malaria and diarrhea [\[9\]](#). Rising sea levels will cause similar effects on coastal populations. The support and distribution of aid by the UNHCR could again be used in event of the similar disasters caused by rising sea levels.

6. Despite the modern presence of rising sea levels, the issue originates earlier than most realize. Sea levels have risen by about seven inches over the course of the last century [\[2\]](#). Small island nations have already taken some steps to address the issue. In 1994, small island nations assembled to discuss the issue in the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. This initiative, led by Barbados, addressed the environmental weaknesses of islands [\[10\]](#).

7. However, little has been done to exclusively address the issue of rising sea levels. These island nations must form a plan of action that will ensure the success of their relocation. The island nation of Tuvalu demonstrates the first steps of action to address this issue. Their agreement with New Zealand will allow for migration to higher land [\[5\]](#). Another island nation that has taken initiatives against climate change is Kiribati. The government of Kiribati recently purchased 6,000 acres of land in Fiji. This land will serve as a safe location of evacuation for Kiribati [\[11\]](#). Tuvalu and Kiribati are models of the plans necessary to be carried out on a global scale.

9. One of the more famous vulnerable islands are the Maldives. In 2011, the release of the movie “The Island President” raised awareness of the issue and placed the Maldives in the spotlight for islands vulnerable to rising sea levels. The movie documents the Maldives president, Mohamed Nasheed’s push for action. Nasheed’s main goals are to embrace climate change and to hold developed nations accountable. Nasheed hopes that the United States takes the initiative to address the issue of climate change [\[12\]](#).

10. The issues of climate change and rising sea levels are occurring at this very moment. However its source is routed in the past. Climate change and rising sea levels can be attributed to rapid industrialization of the beginning in the 18th century [\[13\]](#). A major result of industrialization was the surge in the combustion of fossil fuels such as coal and petroleum [\[3\]](#). While these fuels are still used today,

different methods of refining and environmental regulations have been instilled to improve air quality. Steps to utilize fossil fuels with less environmental impact are key in solving this issue, but do not account for the damage already inflicted. Studies show that the process of global warming is irreversible to an extent [\[14\]](#). Therefore a solution to the issue must address the handling of environmental refugees.

### III. Potential Solutions

Rising Sea levels could create millions of refugees and stateless people all over the world. This will cause both national and international migration. Individuals seeking higher ground may be forced to migrate across borders into different nations. This means that all nations should be involved in handling the issue. Unlike most issues dealt with by UN Refugees, rising sea levels will generate problems in developed nations in addition to developing nations. Any nation with a coastline will be affected by this issue. When forming solutions, the delegate should keep in mind:

- Does the solution address the concerns of both developed and developing nations?
- Does the solution address the source of rising sea levels and climate change?
- Does the solution address the mass displacement of individuals, worldwide?
- In nations where overpopulation is already an existing issue, how will large populations along the coast be dealt with? Will they be relocated within the nation? or Will they be relocated elsewhere?
- If a nation becomes uninhabitable, where will the population be relocated? Will the relocation cause problems with another nation?
- Will relocated populations keep their statehood? If not, what will solve the issue of statelessness? If so, how will the affected state continue to exist?

### IV. Position and Research Tips

To create a solution for the issue, it is vital that delegates stay true to their nations position. While developing your position, the delegate should keep in mind these questions:

- How sensitive is your nation to rising sea levels?
- Is your nation a major producer of greenhouse gasses which is causing the issue?
- Is your nation being affected by rising sea levels? Will it be affected in the future?
- How is your nation planning to deal with the rising sea levels?
- Is your nation making arrangements to help other nations?



## V. Useful Web Sources

- <http://www.unhcr.org>
- <http://flood.firetree.net/>
- <http://www.epa.gov/climatestudents/impacts/signs/sea-level.html>
- <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/>
- <http://newamericamedia.org/2012/08/the-rising-tide----environmental-refugees.php>

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## VII. Notes to Delegates

Hello my name is Jess Lopez and I am one of the chairs for UN Refugees. This year's conference theme of migration makes this committee very important. Therefore I hope all of you are prepared and as eager as I am for MUNSA XVII. If you have any questions about this topic, you can email me at [jlopez8702@stu.neisd.net](mailto:jlopez8702@stu.neisd.net).