

TBSRJMUN XXI

Economic and
Social Council



TBSRJMUN XXI

Lucia
Melcon

Eduardo
Chen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER TO DELEGATES	3
Committee Description	4
TOPIC A: Discussing the Ethical Implications of Mandatory Military Enlistment	5
a. Background information	6
b. Current Situation	8
c. Past UN Actions	10
d. Major Bloc Positions	11
e. Timeline of Events	14
f. Definition of Key Terms	15
g. Further Research	17
h. Guiding Questions	18
i. Works Cited	20
TOPIC B: Addressing the gendered international division of labour that has emerged in free trade zones	15
a. Background information	23
b. Current Situation	25
c. Past UN Actions	29
d. Major Bloc Positions	30
e. Timeline of Events	32
f. Definition of Key Terms	33
g. Further Research	34
h. Guiding Questions	35
i. Works Cited	36

LETTER TO DELEGATES

Dear Delegates,

We are beyond thrilled to welcome you all to TBSRJMUN XXI's Economic and Social Council. As chairs, we hope to guide you through the course of debate and clear up any doubts or concerns that may arise in order to guarantee that the conference is as productive and enjoyable for all!

For this conference, we have chosen to discuss the ethical implications of mandatory military enlistment and the gendered division of labour in free trade zones. Both of these hold serious threats to the well-being and security of global citizens and, thus, must be urgently addressed. Topic A will handle the moral question behind the policy of mandatory military enlistment, one which is practised in a handful of countries and implicates its young citizens and their families. Whereas, topic B will focus on addressing the gendered division of labour in free trade zones, as this huge breach in gender equality exposes vulnerable women to continuous abuse from Multinational corporations.

We are eager to witness this conference unfold and hope the delegates will reflect the passion we have towards these topics. Our council will certainly be enriched by your thoughtful speeches and ground-breaking solutions.

Lastly, we wanted to re-enforce that if any of you need any additional guidance or are confused about any aspect of the conference, feel free to send us an email. Do not hesitate in contacting us, we are here to help!

Sincerely,

Lucia Melcon

lucia.melconcarrasco@gmail.com

St. Paul's School

Eduardo Chen

duduuchen@gmail.com

St. Nicholas School

Committee Description

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established in 1945 through the UN Charter. It originated from the realisation that addressing economic, social, and environmental issues was vital for promoting international cooperation and sustainable development.



[ECOSOC Committee in session](#)

The main goal of the Economic and Social Council is to promote communication and cooperation among its member nations, UN organisations, and other stakeholders in order to address global concerns. Over time, the committee has developed to serve as a focal point for coordinating development initiatives, encouraging the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and guaranteeing policy coherence.



South Korean Military recruits participate in a military exercise

<https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2013/12/a-dreaded-rite-of-passage-koreas-mandatory-military-service/>

Topic A

Discussing the Ethical Implications of Mandatory Military Enlistment

Background Information



[Soldiers from the mixed-gender Lions of the Jordan Valley Battalion take part in an exercise in the Tzeelim army](#)

Mandatory military enlistment, also known as conscription, is a policy that requires eligible citizens to serve in the armed forces for a designated period of time; the earliest signs of mandatory military service in society goes back to the 27th century BCE, used by the Egyptian Old Kingdom. Mandatory military enlistment was, and is, highly practised during periods of conflict and/or growing tensions with nearby states, where a country's security or sovereignty could be at stake. An additional factor is a growth in nationalistic beliefs, as observed in World War I (1914-1918), World War II (1939-1945), the Cold War (1947-1991) and more recently, the Russo-Ukrainian War (2014-Present).

For most countries that have mandatory military enlistments, such as Brazil, Taiwan, and South Korea¹, there is a tendency to only have male conscripts, allowing women not to serve in their countries' mandatory military service, which raises ethical concerns regarding gender inequality, as only forcing one gender to enlist could potentially perpetuate gender discrimination and reinforce traditional gender roles,

¹ Countries with Mandatory Military Service 2023, worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-service.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

implying that men are solely responsible for national defence, and also discourage women to join such a position, due to the lack of diversity within the army.

There are also cases in which all citizens, regardless of their gender, are required to participate in their countries' mandatory military enlistment, such as Israel, Norway, and North Korea, which also raises concerns about an individual's freedom to choose their own life. Imposing this obligation on all would deny individuals the freedom to pursue alternative careers, or potentially postpone their future careers and job opportunities for the sake of serving their country. There is also growing advocacy against conscription, as the proponents argue that voluntary service would not only increase efficiency but also be more effective than a conscripted service.

However, in countries where mandatory military enlistment is required, countries often offer exemptions to individuals in certain scenarios. Countries such as Brazil may offer exemptions in cases of bad health, intentions in pursuing higher education, and religious beliefs, and while some are like Brazil, some countries might only grant exemptions in the cases where an individual has contributed to the greater development of their country.

Current Situation

Mandatory Military Enlistment has risen in popularity in areas where tensions and conflict are escalating at an alarming rate, such as in the Russo-Ukrainian War. Both sides have had increasing efforts in tightening the draft for male citizens in their countries in an effort to combat the increasing need for manpower in the conflict. This has led to a growing number of ethical concerns, among other things, of the mental well-being of soldiers fighting in the frontlines, as they are now expected to perform tasks that would be completely foreign to them in a civilian setting², and are suffering from numerous side effects of war, such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Service Era	PTSD in the Past Year	PTSD at Some Point in Life
Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF)	15 out of 100 (15%)	29 out of 100 (29%)
Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm)	14 out of 100 (14%)	21 out of 100 (21%)
Vietnam War	5 out of 100 (5%)	10 out of 100 (10%)
World War II (WWII) and Korean War	2 out of 100 (2%)	3 out of 100 (3%)

NOTE: The data in this table is from Veterans alive at the time of the study. As such, it does not include Veterans in any service area who have died and may have had PTSD.

Datatable on the rate of PTSD in United States veterans post-war.

Due to increasing awareness of the side effects of war and change in public perception of war, it is possible to observe an upward trend in the investment of programs that provide specialised medical care, rehabilitation services, mental health support, and assistance for service-related injuries or disabilities. However, this investment is still lacking in many countries, where veterans can often live on the streets after they serve their country.

These issues are exemplified by Ukrainian soldiers, as the overwhelming forces of the Russian Army have forced Ukraine to send their troops out not fully prepared. Although there are many problems regarding sending soldiers before they are physically able to help, a larger concern is that there is a shortage of mental health facilities and government provisions for these soldiers on the frontlines by the Ukrainian government and the international community. The only facility the soldiers have is the Kharkiv Rehabilitation Centre, which is primarily donation based.

² "As Spring Offensive Nears, Ukraine Is Drafting Reinforcements." *The Washington Post*, 11 Apr. 2023, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/04/10/ukraine-draft-troops-reinforcements-training/.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

Additionally, increased incarceration rates post-conflict further demonstrate the lack of resources allocated towards veterans and soldiers. For example, 17% of British soldiers who participated in the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been imprisoned due to acts committed in the UK. And thus not only have their lives been put on hold due to the conflict, but they also struggle to reintegrate back into society.³



Bogdan, a 21-year-old soldier treated at the Kharkiv Rehabilitation Center - CRISTIAN SEGURA

Furthermore, it can be seen that more countries around the world are harshening their policies behind mandatory military enlistment as world tensions soar to an all-time high. One such example of this is the prolongation of the mandatory military enlistment of Taiwanese citizens from four months to a year⁴, and as a result of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict, Latvia has reinstated legislation for mandatory military enlistment, required by all its male citizens.⁵

³ Segura, Cristian. "Scant Resources Available to Ukraine's Soldiers as They Confront Psychological Effects of War." *EL PAÍS English*, 24 Apr. 2023, english.elpais.com/international/2023-04-24/scant-resources-available-to-ukraines-soldiers-as-they-confront-psychological-effects-of-war.html.

⁴ Wu, Huizhong. "Taiwan Extends Compulsory Military Service to 1 Year." *AP News*, 28 Dec. 2022, apnews.com/article/taiwan-politics-china-tsai-ing-wen-7a5cef695fa4b3585411921c19d91606.

⁵ Szymanowski, Grzegorz. "Latvia Reintroduces Compulsory Military Service – DW – 04/07/2023." *Dw.Com*, 7 Apr. 2023, www.dw.com/en/latvia-with-the-war-in-ukraine-conscription-returns/a-65257169#:~:text=The%20decision%20was%20made%20by,invasion%20of%20Ukraine%20last%20year.

Past UN Actions

At this stage, the UN has not proposed any actions that would either standardise or limit mandatory military enlistment in any country, as the UN respects national sovereignty and leaves conscription to each nation's discretion.

However, the UN does have Peacekeeping forces that are operated by volunteers. The steps to create new peacekeepers are as follows:

- 1. Request from the UN:** The United Nations Secretariat requests military, law enforcement, and civilian troops from member nations when a peacekeeping mission is launched or expanded. These requests specify the mission's particular demands and requirements.
- 2. Voluntary Contributions:** Member states can then choose whether to make voluntary personnel contributions to the peacekeeping mission. Each nation decides whether to take part based on a number of variables, including political concerns, resource constraints, national interests, and foreign policy goals.
- 3. Consultations and negotiations:** To ascertain the precise contributions interested member states are willing to contribute, the UN holds consultations and talks with them. This covers the quantity and variety of individuals, tools, and assistance they can offer.
- 4. Screening and Selection:** Member States normally screen and choose individuals who fit the requirements stipulated by the United Nations from within their own armed forces or police services. This includes things like background, education, linguistic proficiency, physical fitness, and adherence to the UN code of behaviour.
- 5. Training and preparation:** Selected individuals go through training and preparation to become familiar with the operating procedures, rules of engagement, and mission-specific objectives. Typically, the participating member state or the UN work together to conduct the training.
- 6. Deployment:** The chosen personnel are sent to the mission region for the peacekeeping mission after training and preparation. Following the mission and regulations established by the Security Council and the UN Department of Peace Operations, they function under the direction and control of the UN.
- 7. Reporting:** The Security Council will then receive frequent reports from the Secretary-General on how the mission's objectives are being carried out. The Security Council examines these reports and briefings, and until the operation is finished or closed, it renews and modifies the mission's mandate as needed.⁶

⁶ "Forming a New Operation Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, peacekeeping.un.org/en/forming-new-operation.

Major Bloc Positions

Iceland

Iceland has a long-established policy of maintaining a non-military stance. Hence, they are against mandatory military enlistment and do not have a regular army. For its security requirements, the nation relies on civil law enforcement bodies like the Icelandic Police and the Icelandic Coast Guard, which are equipped with small arms, marine artillery, and air defence radar sites to maintain Iceland's defences. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is largely responsible for ensuring Iceland's security and defence. Iceland has benefited from collective defence agreements and the presence of NATO allies in the nation. It is also worth noting that Iceland also sends civilian staff to various UN operations and takes part in international peacekeeping missions,⁷ where its contributions reflect the country's commitment to international peace and security, albeit through non-military means.

Norway

All Norwegian citizens are required to serve in the military or alternative civilian service for a set period. In order to ensure a sufficient defence force and promote a sense of national defence among its inhabitants, Norway's required military service is based on the principle of universal conscription. Depending on the branch and specialisation, military service might last anywhere between 12 and 19 months.⁸

Norway lays importance on delivering thorough military education and training at this time. Conscripts in the Norwegian Armed Forces receive training in a variety of defence-related topics, such as fighting techniques, physical fitness, leadership, and disaster preparedness.⁹ Norway also makes investments in cutting-edge machinery and technology to improve its defence capabilities.

Although being in the military is a requirement, there are exemptions and other choices. Those who are found medically unfit for military service or who have other good reasons may pursue alternative civilian service, which usually entails employment in the fields of healthcare, social welfare, or other public activities.¹⁰

⁷ "Why Does Iceland Not Have an Army?" *Blue Car Rental*, 25 Apr. 2023, www.bluecarrental.is/blog/why-does-iceland-not-have-an-army/.

⁸ "National Military Service in Norway." *Norgesportalen*, www.norway.no/en/latvia/norway-latvia/news-events/national-military-service-in-norway/#:~:text=Today%2C%20all%20Norwegian%20adults%2C%20at,military%20service%20for%2019%20months.

⁹ *Norwegian Armed Forces*, www.forsvaret.no/en.

¹⁰ "Norway." *Norway | European Bureau for Conscientious Objection*, ebco-beoc.org/norway.

Ukraine

Due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and Russia's previous annexation of Crimea back in 2014, Ukraine has reintroduced mandatory military enlistment for all of its able-bodied male citizens of ages 18 to 60, where it typically lasts 12 months. However, due to a need for human combatants to supply war efforts, the Ukrainian government is lowering the age of conscription from 27 to 25, meaning that men will be able to be drafted to war at a younger age.

The Ukrainian people, according to a study conducted on February 14th, 2023, have 61% of the population in support of continuous opposition to Russian aggression until all of Ukraine, including Crimea, is under Kyiv's control¹¹, meaning that a majority of the population is in favour of the war and is willing to support Ukrainian war efforts through any means necessary.

Israel

Israel has a longstanding policy of mandatory military enlistment for both men and women. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) require the majority of Israeli citizens to serve in the military upon reaching the age of 18. The purpose of mandatory military service is to ensure a strong and capable defence force in a region with complex security challenges. The duration of mandatory military service in Israel varies depending on the branch and specialisation. For men, the standard period of service is three years, while for women, it is two years. Even though there is the possibility of being exempted from the IDF due to religious beliefs, medical issues, or conscientious objections, oftentimes, Israeli citizens that refuse to serve in the military are at risk of prosecution by Israeli Law Enforcement.¹²

The Israeli public generally supports the policy of mandatory military service. Serving in the IDF is seen as a patriotic duty and an integral part of Israeli society. Many

¹¹ "Ukrainian Public Opinion and the War." *Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft*, 14 Feb. 2023, quincyinst.org/event/ukrainian-public-opinion-and-the-war/.

¹² Israel: The Price of Conscience,
<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/mde150671999en.pdf>.

Israelis view military service as a way to contribute to the security and defence of their country. According to statistics from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics¹³, in 2019, approximately 67.1% of eligible Jewish Israeli males and 39.7% of eligible Jewish Israeli females entered military service. These figures demonstrate the significant level of participation in mandatory military enlistment.

Canada

The last time Canada had mandatory military service was during World War II, when conscription was implemented to meet the demands of the war effort. However, conscription was a highly contentious issue, leading to significant social and political divisions within the country. In recent years, Canada has relied on a professional military, with individuals joining the Canadian Armed Forces through voluntary recruitment. This allows individuals to make their own choices regarding military service based on their interests and personal circumstances.

¹³ “CBS Site.” *הלשכה המרכזית לסטטיסטיקה*. www.cbs.gov.il/en/Pages/default.aspx.

Timeline of Events

- 1793** France introduced the first modern system of conscription during the French Revolutionary Wars, known as the *Levée en masse*.
- 1863** The United States enacts the Enrollment Act, establishing the first federal conscription during the American Civil War.
- 1916** The United Kingdom introduces conscription during World War I through the Military Service Act
- 1935** The Soviet Union established universal conscription, creating the largest standing army in the world at that time.
- 1940** Nazi Germany implemented compulsory military service for all German men during World War II.
- 1948** Following a civil war, Costa Rica became the first country to abolish mandatory military enlistment and establish a demilitarised nation without a standing army.
- 1957** Following the Korean War, South Korea implemented mandatory military enlistment for able-bodied men within a certain age range.
- 1969** Due to widespread public protest, the United States ended the draft and transitioned to an all-volunteer military force.
- 2014** In response to the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Ukraine reintroduced mandatory military enlistment to strengthen its defence capabilities and protect its sovereignty.

Definition of Key Terms

❖ Mandatory Military Enlistment

The act of requiring the citizens of their country to serve in their military. Each country decides whether or not to have both men and women serve in the military, the extent of exemptions, and the duration of the service.

❖ The Draft

A government policy that requires eligible citizens to serve in the military during times of conscription or wartime. It selects individuals for compulsory service based on age, fitness, or other criteria. It has been used to fill military ranks and maintain national defence in various countries throughout history.

❖ Military Service

The obligatory enlistment and active participation of eligible citizens in a country's armed forces. During this period, individuals undergo training in combat, defence, and military operations to fulfil national defence requirements. Military service plays a crucial role in maintaining the military's strength and readiness, and it may be mandated during times of conscription or in certain nations as a standard practice.

❖ National Service

Not to be confused with military service, it encompasses a broader range of public service activities beyond just military duties, such as community development, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and disaster relief. It can also sometimes be used in place of military service if the citizen is unable to participate in the military.

❖ **Military exemption**

A legal provision that grants certain individuals the right to be excused from mandatory military service, usually due to specific circumstances or conditions. Common grounds for exemption include medical conditions, conscientious objection, academic pursuits, or essential roles in society, ensuring not all citizens are obligated to serve in the military.

❖ **Military veteran**

An individual who has served in the armed forces and has been discharged or retired from active duty. Veterans may receive various benefits, including healthcare, disability compensation, educational assistance, housing support, job training, and preference in federal employment.

Further Research

1. Countries with mandatory military service 2023:
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-service>
2. Germany debates reintroducing military conscription:
<https://www.dw.com/en/germany-debates-reintroducing-military-conscription/a-64601831>
3. Taiwan extends mandatory military service to one year:
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64100577>
4. Article on the United States National Library on effects of military service on physical health, drinking, and smoking:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10139982/>
5. VOX EU Article on effects of military service on crime and the labour market:
<https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/what-are-effects-mandatory-military-conscription-on-crime-and-labour-market>
6. South Korea Introduces new legislation for military service exemption:
<https://time.com/6265842/south-korea-birth-rate-military-service-exemption/>

Guiding Questions

- ❖ What policies and measures can be implemented to ensure equal opportunities for all in terms of freedom of opportunities, healthcare, education, etc?
- ❖ What role can conflict/ongoing tensions play in advocating for mandatory military enlistment?
- ❖ To what extent is the participation and representation of women in compulsory service an effort toward equality?
- ❖ What are some systematic policies in place that would allow some ethical issues to go unnoticed?

Works Cited

“CBS Site.” הלשכה המרכזית לסטטיסטיקה, www.cbs.gov.il/en/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed 15 July 2023.

“National Military Service in Norway.” Norgesportalen, www.norway.no/en/latvia/norway-latvia/news-events/national-military-service-in-norway/#:^text=Today%20all%20Norwegian%20adults%2C%20at,military%20service%20for%2019%20months.

“Norway.” Norway | European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, ebco-beoc.org/norway.

Norwegian Armed Forces, www.forsvaret.no/en.

“Ukrainian Public Opinion and the War.” Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, 14 Feb. 2023, quincyinst.org/event/ukrainian-public-opinion-and-the-war/.

“Va.Gov: Veterans Affairs.” How Common Is PTSD in Veterans?, 24 July 2018, www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp.

“National Military Service in Norway.” Norgesportalen, www.norway.no/en/latvia/norway-latvia/news-events/national-military-service-in-norway/#:^text=Today%20all%20Norwegian%20adults%2C%20at,military%20service%20for%2019%20months.

Countries with Mandatory Military Service 2023, worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-service.

Soldiers from the mixed-gender Lions of the Jordan Valley Battalion take part in an exercise in the Tzeelim army <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-weighs-full-gender-integration-of-combat-units-as-women-sue-to-enlist/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1689867811078576&usg=AOvVaw3j1nVepB5Pp9zmeaPI5Zac>

Table on the rate of PTSD in United States veterans post war: [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp)

Bogdan, a 21-year-old soldier treated at the Kharkiv Rehabilitation Center - CRISTIAN SEGURA:

<https://newsrnd.com/news/2023-04-23-ukrainian-soldiers-face-the-psychological-trauma-of-war-without-resources.BJf3l2tzQ3.html>

Segura, Cristian. "Scant Resources Available to Ukraine's Soldiers as They Confront Psychological Effects of War." *EL PAÍS English*, 24 Apr. 2023, www.english.elpais.com/international/2023-04-24/scant-resources-available-to-ukrainian-soldiers-as-they-confront-psychological-effects-of-war.html

Wu, Huizhong. "Taiwan Extends Compulsory Military Service to 1 Year." *AP News*, 28 Dec. 2022, www.apnews.com/article/taiwan-politics-china-tsai-ing-wen-7a5cef695fa4b3585411921c19d91606

Szymanowski, Grzegorz. "Latvia Reintroduces Compulsory Military Service – DW – 04/07/2023." *Dw.Com*, 7 Apr. 2023, www.dw.com/en/latvia-with-the-war-in-ukraine-conscription-returns/a-65257169#:~:text=The%20decision%20was%20made%20by.invasion%20of%20Ukraine%20last%20year

"Forming a New Operation Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, www.peacekeeping.un.org/en/forming-new-operation

"Why Does Iceland Not Have an Army?" *Blue Car Rental*, 25 Apr. 2023, www.bluecarrental.is/blog/why-does-iceland-not-have-an-army/

"National Military Service in Norway." *Norgesportalen*, www.norway.no/en/latvia/norway-latvia/news-events/national-military-service-in-norway/#:~:text=Today%2C%20all%20Norwegian%20adults%2C%20at.military%20service%20for%2019%20months

Norwegian Armed Forces, www.forsvaret.no/en.

"Ukrainian Public Opinion and the War." *Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft*, 14 Feb. 2023, www.quincyinst.org/event/ukrainian-public-opinion-and-the-war/

Segura, Cristian. "Scant Resources Available to Ukraine's Soldiers as They Confront Psychological Effects of War." *EL PAÍS English*, 24 Apr. 2023, www.english.elpais.com/international/2023-04-24/scant-resources-available-to-ukrainian-soldiers-as-they-confront-psychological-effects-of-war.html

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

Israel: The Price of Conscience,
<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/mde150671999en.pdf>



Topic B

Addressing the Gendered International Division of Labour that has Emerged in Free Trade Zones

Background Information



Crowded factory in the Maquila Zone

This topic aims to address the gendered international division of labour that has emerged as migrant third-world women become a cheap flexible source of labour for multinational corporations (MNCs) in free trade zones.

Free trade zones (FTZs) are defined by the World Bank as being “*fenced-in, duty-free areas, offering warehousing, storage, and distribution facilities for trade, transshipment, and re-export operations*”¹⁴. They are government-established economic zones where goods are imported, processed, and exported with minimum barriers and more lenient regulations. FTZs emerged in the mid-20th century when countries attempted to attract foreign investment to promote industrialization and decrease unemployment. These designated areas have cheaper labour costs which are advantageous to companies trying to minimise production costs and increase profit. While FTZs certainly offer economic opportunities, they are also to blame for the worsening of the gendered division of labour, where women hold low-paying jobs.

¹⁴ Special Economic Zones - The World Bank, documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/343901468330977533/pdf/458690WP0Box331s0April200801PUBLIC1.pdf.

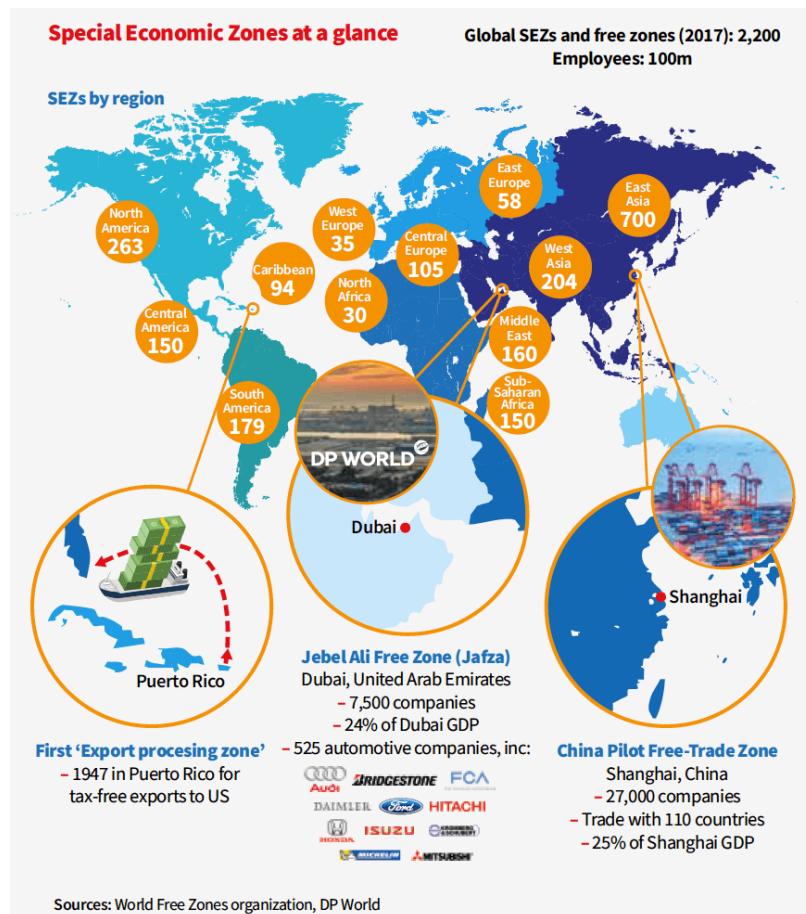
In theory, FTZs appear beneficial to all involved, as it decreases unemployment and companies can produce more whilst wasting less with the decreased taxes. However, this economic liberty also allows MNCs to exploit the market and the individuals employed in the market. This has created a system in which labour abuses are tolerated and overlooked.

The gendered international division of labour refers to the global pattern of unequal distribution of work and resources between men and women. Whilst men dominate the more influential work positions in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), women are often subjected to low-skilled jobs. Multinational corporations are attracted to the benefits offered by free trade zones, including tax incentives, and modern infrastructure. Thus, they are expanding and abusing the readily available workforce. The gendered international division of labour is deeply linked with pre-existing gender associations and historical patterns of segregation. However, the implementation of these zones has arguably emphasised this as gender expectations have shaped the allocation of labour within the zones. Women have been associated with labour-intensive industries, like textile production and garment assembly, for generations and currently dominate them in FTZs.

The majority of workers in FTZs suffer from poor working conditions and insufficient labour protection, however, female workers are disproportionately affected. Aside from facing these challenges, they have limited access to government protection and lack representation. Therefore, due to female workers' lack of bargaining power and existing social norms, the issues they face in the FTZs are aggravated.

Current Situation

FTZs exist in developed and developing nations and often have strategic locations near ports and other transport networks. Certain regions have a greater number of FTZs due to more lenient economic policies. Some of these are China, the United Arab Emirates, the Dominican Republic, and the United Kingdom. Some of the most influential FTZs are the Jebel Ali Free Zone in Dubai, the Shanghai Pudong New Area in China, and Shannon Free Zone in Ireland. There are now over 47 free zones in the United Arab Emirates alone, and the Jebel Ali Free Zone has more than 7,500 companies.¹⁵ Due to such an extensive number of workers and companies and a lack of sufficient regulations, it is difficult to have accurate data on harassment and mistreatment.



Map showing the global distribution of SEZs (FTZs)

¹⁵ "Do Special Economic Zones Benefit Women?" SupplyChainBrain RSS, www.supplychainbrain.com/blogs/1-think-tank/post/36744-do-special-economic-zones-benefit-women.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

Some FTZs concentrate on manufacturing activities, like textile production, and others have more specialised services like IT research. Those focused on exports are called Export Processing Zones (EPZs). There are undeniable advantages of these designated areas, as they offer proximity to markets, simplified procedures and skilled labour.

Table 4. Ratios of female workers in paid employment in the textiles and clothing sector in selected developing countries
(latest year available)

Country/economy	Female workers (percentage)
Bangladesh*	90
Cambodia*	90
Hong Kong, China	63
India	11
Macao, China	76
Philippines	72
Sri Lanka*	87
Botswana	80
Mauritius	67
Colombia	62
Costa Rica	58
Ecuador	56
Mexico	57
Peru	43

[Table showing the different % of female workers in textile and garment factories in developing countries](#)

Free trade zones have an alarming percentage of female workers in LDCs, as they are an available source of cheap labour. In these countries, women are often less educated and consequently perceived as more compliant and easier to manage than men. This often results in them being exploited with long hours, minimum job security and more. Around 85% of FTZ workers are women and they tend to be young and unmarried.¹⁶ When first accepting the job, they have hopes of being well-paid and being employed for the long term, however, these hopes are rarely fulfilled. Also, in low-income countries, 92% of working females have informal jobs, in comparison to 87% of men.¹⁷ For example, Sri Lanka has two free trade zones and the biggest one, Katuanyake, employs 60,000 workers. 80% of these are women who grew up in rural

¹⁶ "Do Special Economic Zones Benefit Women?" SupplyChainBrain RSS, www.supplychainbrain.com/blogs/1-think-tank/post/36744-do-special-economic-zones-benefit-women.

¹⁷ Beyond Barriers: The Gender Implications of Trade Liberalization In ..., https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/beyond_barriers_gender_southeast_asia.pdf.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

areas and were first employed when aged 18-25.¹⁸ In general, women are concentrated in intensive industries, including textiles and electronics assembly.

Another dominant example of the gendered division of labour in FTZs is in the electronics manufacturing industry, especially in Mexico, China, and Southeast Asian countries.¹⁹ The women are employed in tasks that involve detailed work, including attaching small elements or quality control. These are the roles that are considered to require precision and are labour-intensive. On the other hand, those found in positions that require more expertise, like machinery operation and management roles, are often male. The division is evident here, as women are classified as more suitable for repetitive tasks, whilst men are viewed as more experienced and better capable of handling more powerful jobs.²⁰

The past decades have revealed increasing recognition of the urgency that is the gendered international division of labour in FTZs. Governments, international organisations, and other civic groups have made efforts to enhance gender equality and prevent the gendered division of labour from aggravating.

¹⁸ "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Garment Workers in Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zones (FTZs): United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, www.undp.org/srilanka/publications/impact-covid-19-pandemic-women-garment-workers-sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-free-trade-zones-ftzs

¹⁹ *Trade and Gender - UNCTAD*, unctad.org/system/files/official-document/edm20042_en.pdf. Accessed 29 June 2023.

²⁰ *Beyond Barriers: The Gender Implications of Trade Liberalization In ...*, www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/beyond_barriers_gender_southeast_asia.pdf. Accessed 21 June 2023.

Past UN Actions

❖ **1979: UN General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

This is an international treaty that attempts to decrease gender discrimination and promote equal rights in numerous sectors, including the employment sector.²¹

❖ **1999: ILO adopts the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**

Emphasises the importance of gender equality and attempts to eliminate discrimination in the work environment.²²

❖ **2004: UN Development Programme report on “Promoting Fair Globalization in Textiles and Clothing in a Post-MFA Environment”**

This report emphasised the importance of fair labour regulations and social protection in the textile and garment industry. These are greatly related to FTZs as these industries are heavily present in these areas.²³

❖ **2015: Sustainable Development Goals are adopted**

17 Goals that seek to achieve sustainable development by 2030

SDG 5 focuses on empowering women and addresses disparities in labour²⁴

❖ **2016: HRC adopts the resolution on ‘Human Rights and Transnational Corporation and Other Business Enterprises’**

The resolution highlights the urgency of addressing human rights and calls on states to regulate all businesses (even those operating in free trade zones)²⁵

❖ **2018: ILO adopts Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**

This recognizes the urgency of addressing gender-based harassment and addressing issues in several areas of work, including free trade zones.²⁶

²¹ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979." OHCHR, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women

²² "Ilo Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Declaration)." International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20ILO%20Declaration%20on%20Fundamental,our%20social%20and%20economic%20lives

²³ "Global Textile and Clothing Industry Urges New Role for ILO on Post-MFA Jobs Impact." Global Textile and Clothing Industry Urges New Role for ILO on Post-MFA Jobs Impact, 27 Oct. 2005, ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_007243/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁴ "Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/no-poverty?gclid=FA1alQobChM1647KmaXU_wIV2zzUARODFwmzFAAYAiAAFeJ-IPD_BwE

²⁵ "Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises :" United Nations, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/1298796?ln=en.

²⁶ Convention C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A%3AP12100_ILO_CODE%3AC190.

Major Bloc Positions

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has two free trade zones and the biggest one,, employs 60,000 workers. 80% of these are women who grew up in rural areas and were first employed when aged 18-25.²⁷ Trade unions in Sri Lanka are co-opted by political parties and actions such as strikes have been put down by the state since 1977. Moreover, union membership is extremely limited and the leading voices tend to be male, despite the majority of workers being female. In the past, the state has even threatened to fire workers who went on strike and has followed through with these threats. In 1980, around 100,000 employees went on strike and were fired, resulting in a loss of dedicated trade union leaders and further weakening the power of the workers.²⁸ Two-thirds of the workers in the FTZ claim to want to join a trade union but are unable to do so because of their complicated schedules and limited liberty outside of the factories.²⁹

China

China inaugurated its first FTZ in Shanghai in 2013 and currently has 21 areas, each one with a specific function.³⁰ There is a tremendous gender wage gap in China, as the average women's salary is only 72% of the average men's salary.³¹ This is due to existing societal norms with women having 'worse' and lower-ranking jobs. One of China's FTZs, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, has an urgent problem of

²⁷ "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Garment Workers in Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zones (Ftzs): United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, www.undp.org/srilanka/publications/impact-covid-19-pandemic-women-garment-workers-sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-free-trade-zones-ftzs

²⁸ "Why Are Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zone Unions Unable to Fight for Better Working Conditions?" Daily FT www.ft.lk/columns/Why-are-Sri-Lanka-s-Free-Trade-Zone-Unions-unable-to-fight-for-better-working-conditions/4-714969

²⁹ Daily FT, www.ft.lk/columns/Why-are-Sri-Lanka-s-Free-Trade-Zone-Unions-unable-to-fight-for-better-working-conditions/4-714969

³⁰ iContainers. "Most Important Free Trade Zones in the World." *iContainers* www.icontainers.com/us/2019/08/20/worlds-most-important-free-trade-zones/.

³¹ Bai, Wei, et al. "The Gender Pay Gap in China: Insights from a Discrimination Perspective." *arXiv.Org*, 19 June 2022, arxiv.org/abs/2206.09306

gendered labour division and inhumane conditions for female workers. Studies have revealed that over 90% of the total labour in the garment and electronics plants in Shenzhen are females under 25.³² They are all classified as rural peasant workers and will never be considered formal workers, no matter how long they stay in the city. As they lack formal employment, they do not have the right to live in the city, so they are often accommodated in worker dormitories. This is the 'dormitory labour regime' and it can lead to exploitative employment where female workers are trapped in poor conditions. Due to the government's small involvement in the area, low-class, rural females are exploited and unable to fight for their rights. Limited statistics reveal most females earn only 60-72 USD per month and work 12 hours a day.³³

Canada

Canada has been one of the leading countries in the incorporation of gender equality in trade areas. An example of this is the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, which has a whole chapter dedicated to promoting women's empowerment. The government has also implemented several programs to support women entrepreneurs in FTZs. The Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, for instance, funds and mentors female-owned businesses to help them grow with international trade. Canada has also invested in educational programs to enhance women's skills in the trade field. Such knowledge allows women to access leadership roles and benefit from the opportunities offered by FTZs.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has eight Export Processing Units (EPZs) which offer similar incentives to corporations as free trade zones do. Around 75% of the women employed in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) claim to have been victims of mental and verbal harassment.³⁴ 66% of the total workers are female and a study has revealed

³² Women Workers and Precarious Employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China, www.jstor.org/stable/4030611.

³³ Women Workers and Precarious Employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China, www.jstor.org/stable/4030611.

³⁴ December, TBS Report20, and TBS Report. "75% Women Workers of DEPZ Factories Mentally, Verbally Harassed." *The Business Standard*, www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/75-women-workers-depz-factories-mentally-verbally-harassed-research-555118

that 57% of victims do not file complaints out of fear.³⁵ Many of those who have filed complaints of sexual harassment have been forced to resign from the factory. Furthermore, after someone is fired, their ID number is published to prevent them from being hired by other companies. The workers in the garment industry are mostly female (80%) and those in charge are male, thus, the women have limited power. Almost three-fourths of female employment in Bangladesh are involved in the garment industry.³⁶ In 2001, the Rana Plaza building collapsed, highlighting the lack of safety in FTZs. This building housed various garment factories and became one of the deadliest industrial accidents in history.

Dominican Republic

The Human Rights Watch carried out a survey that revealed that approximately two-thirds of the women in FTZs in the Dominican Republic are subjected to mandatory pregnancy testing.³⁷ This is a condition for maintaining their jobs, meaning that those pregnant suffer harassment and risk being fired. Despite several human rights treaties banning discrimination on the basis of sex, the government has failed to put a stop to these breaches of human rights. In 2001, 32% of the country's total exports came from FTZs and they have continued to increase.³⁸ 70% of these exports came from the textile manufacturing sector, where most workers are female.³⁹

³⁵ December, TBS Report20, and TBS Report. "75% Women Workers of DEPZ Factories Mentally, Verbally Harassed." *The Business Standard*, 20 Dec. 2022, www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/75-women-workers-depz-factories-mentally-verbally-harassed-research-555118

³⁶ "Free Trade Zones in the Dominican Republic." *Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic's Free Trade Zones*, www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm.

³⁷ "Free Trade Zones in the Dominican Republic." *Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic's Free Trade Zones*, www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm.

³⁸ *Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic's Free Trade Zones*, www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm.

³⁹ *Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic's Free Trade Zones*, www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm.

Timeline of Events

- 1965** The first modern EPZ is established in Shannon, Ireland.
- 1970s-80s** There was a rapid expansion of FTZs in developing countries, especially in Asia. Countries like South Korea and Taiwan adopted these new policies.
- 1994** The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is formed to increase global trade and regulate international commerce.
- 1995** North American Free Trade Agreement between the USA, Canada and Mexico. This led to the establishment of several free trade zones and more cross-border trade in North America.
- 2000s** Increasing concerns about the labour rights and conditions in FTZs, especially regarding women. This led to an increase in protection and regulation for workers.
- 2001** The Rana Plaza building collapsed in Bangladesh, highlighting the lack of safety in FTZs and raising global concerns. This building housed various garment factories and became one of the deadliest industrial accidents in history.
- 2013** The Rana Plaza Coordination Committee is created to guarantee victims of the tragedy are adequately compensated.
- 2020** COVID-19 Pandemic leads to disruptions in supply chains and highlights the vulnerabilities of labour conditions.

Definition of Key Terms

❖ Gendered international division of labour

The global pattern of unequal distribution of work and resources between men and women. Whilst men dominate the more influential work positions in LDCs, women are often subjected to low-skilled jobs.

❖ Free trade zones (FTZs)

Government-established economic zones that provide tax incentives, less enforced labour regulations, modern infrastructure, and more, to attract foreign MNCs.

❖ Multinational Corporations (MNCs)

Large companies that operate in more than one country. They often have their headquarters in their home country and establish branches in other countries, known as host countries.

❖ Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

Another term used to refer to FTZs. These zones are established to promote export-oriented industries and increase foreign direct investment.

❖ Foreign direct investment (FDI)

A term that refers to an investment made by a company or individual into an aspect of another country to fulfil a lasting interest in that country.

❖ Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Developing countries listed by the United Nations that display the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development.

Further Research

1. UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality Task Force on Gender and Trade:
https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/edm20042_en.pdf
2. UNCTAD Gendered Labour Markets and Globalisation in Asia:
<https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/poedmm133.en.pdf>
3. Women workers and precarious employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/13552070412331332170?needAccess=true&role=button>
4. Opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area:
<https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2019/Opportunities%20for%20Women%20Entrepreneurs%20in%20the%20Context%20of%20the%20African%20Continental%20Free%20Trade%20Area%20AfCF.pdf>

Guiding Questions

- ❖ What policies and measures can be implemented to ensure equal opportunities for women in terms of access to education, training, and employment within free trade zones?
- ❖ How can data collection, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms be strengthened to better understand and address the gendered division of labour in free trade zones?
- ❖ What role can trade unions and worker organisations play in advocating for gender equality and improved working conditions in free trade zones?
- ❖ How can the participation and representation of women in decision-making processes within free trade zones be increased?

Works Cited

“China’s Free Trade Zones.” *PTL Group*, 22 Feb. 2023, [www.ptl-group.com/guides/chinas-free-trade-zones/#:^text=Free%20Trade%20Zones%20\(FTZ\)%20are,encouraging%20and%20facilitating%20international%20trade](http://www.ptl-group.com/guides/chinas-free-trade-zones/#:^text=Free%20Trade%20Zones%20(FTZ)%20are,encouraging%20and%20facilitating%20international%20trade).

December, TBS Report20, and TBS Report. “75% Women Workers of DEPZ Factories Mentally, Verbally Harassed.” *The Business Standard*, 20 Dec. 2022, www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/75-women-workers-depz-factories-mentally-verbally-harassed-research-555118

“Do Special Economic Zones Benefit Women?” *SupplyChainBrain RSS*, www.supplychainbrain.com/blogs/1-think-tank/post/36744-do-special-economic-zones-benefit-women. Accessed 15 June 2023.

“The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Garment Workers in Sri Lanka’s Free Trade Zones (Ftzs): United Nations Development Programme.” *UNDP*, www.undp.org/srilanka/publications/impact-covid-19-pandemic-women-garment-workers-sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-free-trade-zones-ftzs Accessed 15 June 2023.

Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic’s Free Trade Zones: Implications for the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, April 2004), www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm. Accessed 15 June 2023.

“UN Women Africa.” *UN Women*, www.africa.unwomen.org/en Accessed 15 June 2023.

“UN Women Bangladesh.” *Asia*, www.asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/bangladesh. Accessed 15 June 2023.

‘Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers’: An Analysis of Women’s Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1057/fr.1981.6..> Accessed 15 June 2023.

Beyond Barriers: The Gender Implications of Trade Liberalization In ..., [https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/beyond_barriers_gender_southeast_asia.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/beyond_barriers_gender_southeast_asia.pdf). Accessed 21 June 2023.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

Women Workers and Precarious Employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China,
www.jstor.org/stable/4030611. Accessed 27 June 2023.

“Free Trade Zones in the Dominican Republic.” Pregnancy-Based Sex Discrimination in the Dominican Republic’s Free Trade Zones,
www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/cafta_dr0404.htm. Accessed 27 June 2023.

iContainers. “Most Important Free Trade Zones in the World.” iContainers, 9 Nov. 2020,
www.icontainers.com/us/2019/08/20/worlds-most-important-free-trade-zones/

Trade and Gender - UNCTAD, unctad.org/system/files/official-document/edm20042_e.pdf. Accessed 29 June 2023.

“Why Are Sri Lanka’s Free Trade Zone Unions Unable to Fight for Better Working Conditions?” Daily FT, 19 Mar. 2021, www.ft.lk/columns/Why-are-Sri-Lanka-s-Free-Trade-Zone-Unions-unable-to-fight-for-better-working-conditions/4-714969.

Women Workers and Precarious Employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China,
www.jstor.org/stable/4030611.

“Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979.” OHCHR,
www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women

“Ilo Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Declaration).” International Labour Organization,
www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20ILO%20Declaration%20on%20Fundamental%20social%20and%20economic%20lives

“Global Textile and Clothing Industry Urges New Role for ILO on Post-MFA Jobs Impact.” Global Textile and Clothing Industry Urges New Role for ILO on Post-MFA Jobs Impact, 27 Oct. 2005, ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_007243/lang--en/index.htm.

“Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations Development Programme.” UNDP,
www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/no-poverty?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI647KmaXUwlV2zzUARODFwmzEAAYAiAAEgJ-IPD_BwE

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL | TBSRJMUN XXI

“Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises:” United Nations, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/1298796?ln=en.

Convention C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A%3AP12100_ILO_CODE%3AC190.