

MLRIT MUN 2025

BACKGROUND GUIDE.



MLRIT MUN Model United Nations



UNHRC.



MLRIT MUN

Model United Nations

COMMITTEE : UNHRC



UNHRC.



Agendas:

Agenda: Addressing stereotyping, misrepresentation, censorship, and discriminatory narratives affecting marginalized groups, with special emphasis on fostering diversity, inclusion, and accountability in the digital age.

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Message From The Secretary General.

Dear Delegate,

If you're nervous, good. It means you care. Every great speaker, every confident diplomat, started right where you are: unsure, curious, and ready to learn. But at MLRITMUN, we don't wait for confidence to arrive; we build it.

This edition is more than debate and diplomacy. It is a space where ideas collide, voices rise, and leaders take shape. Here, you'll learn to think fast, speak with clarity, and solve problems that demand both logic and courage. You'll find mentors who guide you, peers who challenge you, and moments that transform you.

When the gavel strikes, remember it's not about being perfect. It's about being fearless. If you're backed against a wall, break the whole goddamn thing down. Don't wait for luck; make your own.

At MLRITMUN 2025, every delegate has a chance to rise. Speak. Challenge. Lead. Because this isn't just another conference. It's where your voice begins to matter.

And when it does, I'll be right there watching, guiding, and cheering you on.

I'll see you on the other side of the gavel.

With conviction,
Khaja Moizuddin
Secretary-General,
MLRITMUN 2025 | 7th Edition



Letter From The Executive Board.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the United Nations Human Rights Council at MLRIT MUN 2025. We are honoured to serve as your Executive Board for the duration of this conference.

This Background Guide has been prepared to provide you with a clear understanding of the agenda and to help you begin your research. It is meant to serve as a foundation – not a limitation – for your preparation. We strongly encourage you to explore credible sources and conduct further independent research beyond the contents of this guide. Please note that this document is not exhaustive and may not be cited as evidence during committee proceedings. The ROP is subject to change at the discretion of the Executive Board. We understand that MUN conferences can be both exciting and challenging, especially for first time participants. Our expectations are not based on prior experience or speaking skills, but rather on how delegates demonstrate respect for differing perspectives, uphold their country's foreign policy, and work collaboratively to create balanced and practical solutions.





Consensus building is at the heart of diplomacy, and this conference is an opportunity to practice it meaningfully.

New ideas often challenge the status quo – but such disruption is far preferable to a world shaped by stereotypes and division. Reform, dialogue, and empathy are the essence of effective policymaking and conflict resolution.

Should you require any clarification or guidance during your research or preparation, please feel free to reach out to any member of the Executive Board. We look forward to witnessing thoughtful debate, innovative ideas, and a truly engaging committee session.

Warm regards,
The Executive Board
United Nations Human Rights Council

Chairperson
Neela Siddartha

Vice Chair
Shyam D



Important Points to Remember

Rules of Procedure (ROP)

The Rules of Procedure (ROP) are the guidelines that delegates must follow during committee sessions. While the rules are generally standardized across Model UN conferences, certain elements may be adapted by the Executive Board to suit the specific conference. A reference cheat sheet is provided here for your convenience:

[ROP Document]

Key aspects to keep in mind:

1. **Procedure:** The ROP ensures organized, fair, and efficient debate. Our committee will follow the UNAUSA Rules of Procedure. While the Executive Board will enforce procedural rules, the main priority is meaningful discussion on the agenda. Delegates should not hesitate to participate due to procedural concerns.

2. **Foreign Policy:** Following your assigned country's foreign policy is essential. This is what differentiates a Model UN from a general debate – your statements should reflect your country's official stance and national interests.

3. **Role of the Executive Board:** The Executive Board facilitates debate and ensures smooth functioning. Delegates ultimately guide the committee's direction; your opinions and positions should be expressed freely. The Executive Board may ask questions or request clarifications at any time to stimulate discussion and test arguments.



Evidence or Burden of Proof

1. News Sources:

a. Reuters – Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in the committee.

(<https://www.reuters.com/>)

b. State-operated News Agencies – These reports can be used in support of or against the state that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any Country as such, but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the committee. A few examples are:

i. RIA Novosti (Russia) <http://en.rian.ru/>

ii. IRNA (Iran) <https://www.irna.ir/>

iii. BBC (United Kingdom) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

2. Government Reports:

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information.

Examples are:

a. Government Websites like the State Department of the United States of America

(<https://www.state.gov/>) or the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation

(<https://eng.mil.ru/>)



b. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of various nations like India (<http://www.mea.gov.in/>), People's Republic of China (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>), France (<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>), Russian Federation (<https://mid.ru/en/>)
c. Multilateral Organisations like the NATO (<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>), ASEAN (<http://www.aseansec.org/>), OPEC (http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/), etc.

3. United Nations (UN) Reports:

All UN Reports are considered credible information or evidence for the Executive Board.

a. UN Bodies: Like the SC (<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>), GA (<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>), HRC (https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage) etc.

b. UN Affiliated bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.

c. Treaty Bodies like the Antarctic Treaty System (https://www.ats.aq/index_e.html), and The International Criminal Court (<https://www.icccpi.int/>).

Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>), Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org/>), Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/>) or newspapers like the Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>), Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>), etc. be accepted as a tautology.



Additional Notes:

- Reports from NGOs working with UN bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, etc., are acceptable.
- Prohibited sources: Wikipedia and general newspapers like The Guardian or Times of India will not be accepted as formal evidence.
- Delegates are free to quote or reference any source in their statements for context or argumentation, but formal proof must adhere to the guidelines above.



Hierarchy of Evidence

Evidence can be presented from a wide variety of sources but not all sources are treated as equal.

Tier 1: Includes any publication, statement, resolution, or document released by any of the United official organs or committees; any publication, statement, or document released by a UN member state in its own capacity. The evidence falling in this tier is considered most reliable during the simulation.

Tier 2: Includes: any news article published by any official media source that is owned and controlled by a UN member state. E.g.: Xinhua News (China), Prasar Bharti (India), BBC (United Kingdom) etc. The evidence falling in this tier is considered sufficiently reliable in case no other evidence from any Tier 1 source is available on that particular fact, event, or situation.

Tier 3: Includes: any publication from news sources of international repute such as Reuters, The New York Times, AgenceFrance Presse, etc. The evidence falling under this tier is considered the least reliable for the purposes of this simulation. Yet, if no better source is available in a certain scenario, it may be considered.



Foreign Policy & Foreign Relations

Foreign policy refers to what a country aims to achieve in relation to a specific issue or in its broader interactions with other nations. In the context of a Model UN, understanding your assigned country's foreign policy is essential, as it guides every aspect of your preparation. It shapes the arguments you make, the reasoning behind them, and the strategies you adopt during committee sessions. In essence, your country's foreign policy provides a framework for your participation, ensuring that your statements and actions accurately reflect your assigned nation's official stance and priorities.

Identifying a country's foreign policy is not always straightforward, as it is rarely explicitly stated. Delegates must often infer it from their country's past actions, official statements, and behavior in international forums. Reliable sources include meeting records from UN bodies such as the Security Council, Human Rights Council, or General Assembly, where the country has previously addressed related issues. Government websites, including Ministries of Foreign Affairs or External Affairs, and public statements or speeches by top leaders—such as the President, Prime Minister, Secretary of State, or Defense Minister—are also crucial resources for understanding a country's stance.



Foreign relations, on the other hand, describe the diplomatic ties and relationships a country maintains with others. This includes the presence of embassies, consulates, ambassadors, and ongoing diplomatic dialogue. While foreign policy is typically the primary focus for MUN preparation, understanding foreign relations can provide valuable context. It helps delegates anticipate potential allies, adversaries, and possible coalitions, which is critical for strategy and negotiation during committee sessions.

In summary, delegates should always ground their participation in their country's foreign policy while using insights from foreign relations to strengthen negotiation skills, build alliances, and craft realistic, informed positions. A clear understanding of both allows for coherent and credible representation, fostering more effective and strategic debate in committee.



Introduction to the United Nations Human Rights Council

Establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the principal intergovernmental body within the UN tasked with the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide. It was established on 15 March 2006 through UN General Assembly resolution 60/251, replacing the former Commission on Human Rights. The Commission had faced significant criticism and discredit due to controversies over its membership and perceived politicization, which underscored the need for a more credible and effective body to address global human rights issues.

The Council is composed of 47 member states, elected by the UN General Assembly through a secret ballot. Each member serves a threeyear term, and no state may hold consecutive terms for more than six years. As of December 2022, 123 out of the 193 UN member states have served on the Council at some point. The Council follows a rotating membership policy, reflecting the diversity of the UN and enabling interventions in human rights situations across different regions. Geographical distribution is carefully maintained: 13 African states, 13 AsiaPacific states, 8 Latin American states, 6 Eastern European states, and 7 Western European and other states. Members are expected to collaborate fully with the Council, and the General Assembly retains the right to suspend membership in cases of gross and systematic human rights violations.



The Council's work is guided and facilitated by a bureau, which handles procedural and organizational matters. The bureau consists of a President and four Vice Presidents, each representing one of the five regional groups. One Vice President serves as the rapporteur, and all officers hold office for one year. This organizational structure ensures that the Council's sessions are conducted smoothly and inclusively, while maintaining adherence to procedural norms.

Functions and Objectives of the United Nations Human Rights Council:

The UNHRC has broad prerogatives, allowing it to discuss both thematic human rights issues and specific situations that require its attention. Its core objectives include adopting resolutions and decisions, which, though nonbinding, carry significant political weight and can prompt governments to take action. The Council may also call special sessions to respond to urgent human rights violations and conduct Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) to assess the human rights records of all UN member states. In addition, the Council appoints Special Procedures, independent human rights experts who report on specific issues, and can authorize inquiry commissions to gather evidence for reporting human rights violations.



The Council's work is supported by several subsidiary bodies, established under its "institutionbuilding package" adopted in 2007 (resolution 5/1). Key bodies include:

- Universal Periodic Review (UPR): Every 4.5 years, each member state undergoes a comprehensive review of its human rights record, reporting on measures taken to improve human rights and receiving recommendations for further action.
- Special Procedures: Independent experts, including special rapporteurs and working groups, investigate and report on thematic or country-specific human rights issues. They provide annual reports to the Council and offer guidance on improving compliance with international human rights standards.
- Advisory Committee: Composed of 18 independent experts, the committee advises the Council on thematic issues, policy directions, and strategic planning.
- Complaint Procedure: This mechanism addresses gross and systematic human rights violations, allowing complaints from individuals, groups, or nongovernmental organizations claiming to be victims of such abuses.



Additionally, UNmandated investigative bodies established by the Council, General Assembly, or Security Council play a critical role in examining severe violations of humanitarian and human rights law. Since its inception in 2006, the Council has established numerous investigative mechanisms to address country-specific situations, producing evidence and reports that guide international responses and accountability measures.

Mandate of the Committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council's mandate is to promote and protect human rights globally, address human rights violations, and strengthen the overall protection of these rights. It investigates abuses, addresses thematic concerns, provides a platform for dialogue, makes recommendations to improve human rights records, and responds to human rights emergencies. Essentially, the Council acts as a global watchdog for human rights, ensuring the fundamental rights are upheld for all people worldwide.

For more info

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/specialprocedureshumanrightscouncil>



Introduction

In the world today, digital technology such as social media, messaging apps, online news websites influence how we perceive each other and what we know about events. Those sites have the power to amplify both truth and falsehoods, and reach individuals at an enormous scale. When dangerous or discriminatory messages spread online stereotypes, misrepresentations, discriminatory narratives they do not remain online alone. They can shape minds, fuel prejudice, marginalize communities, and, in extreme circumstances, ignite realworld violence.

Stereotyping is the reduction of an entire group of individuals to oversimplification or negativity; misrepresentation is depicting them inaccurately or unjustly; discriminatory narratives are accounts or arguments which represent them as inferior, threatening, or unworthy. When these surface in online environments, oppressed groups like ethnic or religious minorities, women, LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, people with disabilities tend to suffer most. These stories disempower them, mute their voices, and have the potential to cascade into exclusion or violence.

The United Nations acknowledges that the phenomenon of hate speech and disinformation (intentional lies intended to mislead) is particularly harmful in the digital era.



The UN's "Countering Disinformation" program highlights that disinformation has the capability to undermine a variety of human rights—ranging from the right to equality and nondiscrimination, to freedom of expression and the capacity to engage in public life. Likewise, UNESCO's efforts to counter hate speech highlight that education, media literacy, and digital citizenship are needed as key instruments to create resilience in societies.

As the UN Secretary General's report "Countering Disinformation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights" points out, reactions to harmful content always need to be in accordance with human rights law. That is to say, any action to counter discriminatory speech, censorship, or stereotyping must be legal, necessary, proportionate, nondiscriminatory, and include protection against abuse.

The report cautions that excessive censorship or abuse of content control can itself violate core freedoms.

UNESCO policy and educational content strongly argue for Media and Information Literacy (MIL) – educating individuals how to critically assess information, distinguish fact from fiction, comprehend the impact of algorithms on what they view, and resist manipulation. Their content also connects stereotypes in the media to misrepresentation and emphasizes a requirement for inclusive, diverse content that showcases all communities equitably.

One concrete observation: digital creators (users of digital content posted online) don't always factcheck before posting.



UNESCO's poll indicates that nearly twothirds of creators sometimes post information without checking it out; a lot of them are not sure about norms or standards, and many of them have themselves been victims of hate speech. This reveals the fragility even among those who are defining digital discourse.

The United Nations already moved in a concrete direction: the Human Rights Council endorsed a resolution in 2022 on combating disinformation as having a negative effect on human rights. Moreover, the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiated the #SpreadNoHate campaign to spread good stories about migrants and refugees around the world.

These efforts integrate symbolic, normative, and pragmatic steps. What this agenda requires your committee to think about is not so much "how to suppress bad speech" but how to design systems—legal, educational, technological, institutional— preventing the circulation and effect of damaging stereotyping and misrepresentation, safeguarding marginalized voices, and holding actors (states, media, platforms) accountable when discrimination or censorship occur.

Throughout debate, delegates will need to balance freedom of expression with protection from harm, and ensure that interventions do not become instruments of censorship themselves. Recognizing that marginalized groups often have less power and fewer platforms, your resolution should emphasize inclusion, oversight, transparency, education, and mechanisms for remedy.



Historical Background

Historically, narratives have helped shape public opinion, cultural identity, and political authority. How societies create and share these narratives—through art, literature, schools, and mass media—has repeatedly reinforced hierarchies and legitimized exclusion or discrimination. The development of stereotyping, misrepresentation, and censorship is inextricably linked with larger struggles around equality, freedom of expression, and social justice.

1. Early Media and Colonial Narratives

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when colonialism and industrialization reached their peak, media sources like newspapers, literature, and political tracts became seminal instruments for creating opinion in society. Colonizing powers often used racial and cultural stereotypes to make domination and subjugation legitimate. Indigenous people, Africans, Asians, and other nonEuropean groups were described as "uncivilized" or "inferior," and these narratives explained slavery, exploitation, and imperial conquest.

Their international diffusion via literature, schooling, and visual culture made racial hierarchies an institutionalized reality and prejudice a normalized phenomenon. These representational prejudices outlived decolonization, determining how minority and marginalized others were represented in mainstream politics and culture.



2. 20th Century Propaganda and State Censorship

The 20th century witnessed mass production of information using radio, film, and television, which not only amplified the influence of media narratives but also their reach. Governments identified the potential of media to formulate ideology, and as such, propaganda gained common usage. Propaganda films during World War II in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan were rooted largely in dehumanizing stereotypes as a means of persuading the masses to support violence and genocide.

In the same vein, postCold War media on both sides of the capitalist and communist camps employed censorship and disinformation to advance political causes while stifling opposition views. Most postcolonial nations, born out of independence struggles, established their own censorship paradigms in the interest of national harmony, usually marginalizing ethnic minorities, political rivals, or dissident reporters.

By the second half of the 20th century, international human rights documents started to respond to these issues. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) made freedom of opinion and expression as human rights, and made a call for respect for dignity and equality. Still, finding a balance between these values was problematic, particularly when the freedom of expression was pitted against the need to suppress hate speech and discrimination.



3. The Emergence of Global Media and Cultural Stereotyping

During the late 20th century, with the emergence of television and film as worldwide industries, media representation was a behemoth cultural force. Hollywood, big European studios, and Western news agencies took the leading roles in shaping global narratives.

Yet this dominance tended to perpetuate misrepresentation—representing African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous peoples through overly simplistic or exoticizing frames. Muslim stereotypes as brutal, Africans as poor, or women as subservient became tropes that repeated themselves. This resulted in cultural homogenization and reinforced global power disparities.

This growth in Western media power also sparked fears of cultural imperialism, where multiple local voices were dominated by powerful narratives held by only a few global players. To counter this, UNESCO and international agencies started advocating for the value of cultural diversity and pluralism in the media, and this eventually resulted in the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.



4. The Digital Revolution and Social Media Era

The late 1990s and early 2000s brought the digital revolution, which fundamentally reshaped communication. The advent of the internet and social media opened unprecedented avenues for selfexpression and global connection, enabling marginalized groups to tell their stories and question conventional power structures. #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #StopAsianHate illustrated how online activism could raise voiceless voices and compel accountability.

Yet, the same digital world also proved to be fertile ground for new kinds of discrimination and manipulation. Hate speech, disinformation, and algorithmic bias grew to become significant challenges. Private corporationmanufactured algorithms started to shape what people see and think, ending up often in amplifying echo chambers as well as stereotypes. Data collection practices disproportionately targeted vulnerable groups, and online abuse was directed at women, LGBTQ+ groups, as well as ethnic minorities. At the same time, governmentcontrolled digital censorship and monitoring intensified, with governments across the world restricting online expression, blocking websites, or using disinformation to quell dissent and minority voices.



Past United Nations and Other International Actions

The global community has long understood the threats of stereotyping, misrepresentation, censorship, and discriminatory stories, especially to vulnerable groups of people. Starting from the early days of the United Nations, some of the important instruments have served as the basis for dealing with such problems through the defense of equality, representation of culture, and freedom of expression. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted in 1948, continues to serve as a foundation of these endeavors. Article 2 states that all rights and freedoms are applicable "without distinction of any kind," and Article 19 formulates the right to freedom of opinion and expression. These precepts served as the foundation for international debate on how to balance freedom of speech with the duty to inhibit hate and discrimination. Capitalizing on this, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was adopted in 1966, reiterated these rights in a legally binding treaty. Article 19 guarantees freedom of expression, while Article 20(2) requires states to make "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence" illegal. Likewise, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), signed in 1965, specifically deals with racist propaganda and discriminatory communication by requiring states to condemn and fight hatebased ideologies. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) continues to follow up on these commitments, making recommendations on hate speech and racism online.



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been instrumental in advancing diversity, inclusion, and equitable representation in international communication. Its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001 defines cultural diversity as "the common heritage of humanity," highlighting the importance of encouraging pluralism in media and education. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005, drawing from this, urges member states to produce and distribute diverse cultural content as well as provide access to media representation on equitable terms. UNESCO's Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Programme also supports education efforts that allow one to critically analyze online information and spot bias, misinformation, and stereotyping. These moves as a whole demonstrate the global community's awareness that misrepresentation in media and communication is not just a cultural concern but a human rights issue.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have widened the debate to encompass the virtual world. The UNHRC Resolution 16/18 (2011) called on states to fight intolerance and negative stereotyping based on religion or belief while ensuring freedom of expression. The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech was initiated in 2019 to offer a global, coordinated strategy towards combating hate speech online as well as offline, with key focus on education, prevention, and cooperation with digital platforms.



The OHCHR BTech Project, launched the same year, analyzed the place of digital technologies in human rights, with a focus on corporate responsibility and transparency in the tech sector. In addition, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011), while being nonbinding, have emerged as a vital point of reference in ensuring corporate accountability for the human rights consequences of their activities, including discriminatory algorithms and moderation of online content. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, in reports like A/HRC/47/25 (2021), has also analyzed the role of online platforms in shaping access to information and sustaining bias and marginalization.

At the global level, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has reaffirmed the need to safeguard human rights in the digital era. Resolution 68/167 (2013), which is "The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age," urged for enhanced protection against surveillance and abuse of data, especially for vulnerable groups. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), as embodied in Resolution 70/125 (2015), emphasized the importance of inclusive access to digital technologies as a gateway to human rights and development. In more recent times, Resolution 76/227 (2021) invited states and businesses to combat online hate speech, disinformation, and discrimination while protecting freedom of expression. These initiatives together reflect an increasing awareness of the dual character of digital environments—as vehicles of empowerment and as possible sources of harm. Beyond the UN system, intergovernmental and regional institutions have acted in complementary fashion.



The Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 is a wellrounded framework for the fight against hate speech while upholding free expression. The European Union Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online (2016), which was created in collaboration with the leading technology companies, is an important milestone toward selfregulation and accountability on the internet. Similarly, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and the Maputo Protocol (2003) affirm equality and nondiscrimination in communication, whereas the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (2012) reaffirms freedom of expression in the context of cultural diversity and technological change. These regional codes reinforce a common sense across continents that representation, diversity, and inclusion are critical to maintaining democratic discourse and securing marginalized voices.

Even as these large strides are made, the global response is still fragmented and uneven. Implementation gaps continue, with most states in need of more effective enforcement mechanisms for antidiscrimination statutes. Corporate accountability remains elusive, as big tech firms tend to operate outside the reach of international legal monitoring. Algorithmic bias and the AI system's lack of transparency aggravate current disparities, while some governments improperly utilize antihate speech legislation as a means to censor and silence minority views or oppositional voices. Furthermore, the international digital divide restricts marginalized communities from engaging in online debate and being voices for their stories. These gaps underscore the imperative for international cooperation focused on human rights to guarantee that digitalization contributes to inclusion, diversity, and responsibility and not discrimination.



Major Challenges

Despite years of international attention, the struggle against stereotyping, misrepresentation, censorship, and discriminatory narratives remains far from over. The digital age, while promising inclusion and connectivity, has also given rise to new and complex forms of inequality. Marginalized communities continue to find their identities misrepresented, their voices silenced, and their experiences distorted in spaces that were meant to democratize expression. The challenge for the global community lies not only in addressing these injustices but in reimagining how technology, media, and policy can reflect the dignity and diversity of all people.

One of the most persistent difficulties is finding the right balance between freedom of expression and protection from hate speech. Freedom of speech is one of the most cherished human rights, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet it is also one of the most misused. Around the world, the line between legitimate expression and harmful incitement has become increasingly blurred. Too often, hateful narratives targeting racial, religious, or gender minorities are justified under the banner of “free speech,” while in other cases, restrictive laws are used to suppress criticism and silence minority voices. This tension reveals a global dilemma: how to ensure that freedom of expression uplifts, rather than endangers, vulnerable communities.



Another pressing issue is the invisible bias built into digital technologies. Algorithms that decide what news people see, what videos go viral, or which voices are amplified are not neutral—they reflect the data and assumptions of the societies that create them. When that data carries historical prejudice, it becomes encoded into the systems we use every day. This means that an artificial intelligence tool might inadvertently reinforce racial or gender stereotypes, or that content moderation systems could unfairly silence minority activists while overlooking actual hate speech. The lack of transparency in these algorithms makes it nearly impossible for individuals to understand or challenge the discrimination they face online. What began as a tool for connection has, in many ways, become a mirror reflecting humanity's deepest biases.

Corporate accountability is another area of deep concern. A handful of powerful technology companies now control how billions of people access and share information. Their algorithms shape political debates, influence elections, and define cultural narratives across continents. Yet these corporations often operate with minimal oversight, guided more by commercial interests than by ethical responsibility. While some platforms have introduced policies to counter hate speech or misinformation, enforcement is inconsistent and often lacks cultural sensitivity. The absence of binding global standards allows these companies to escape accountability for the spread of harmful narratives and digital discrimination, leaving users especially marginalized ones without real recourse.

At the same time, censorship and state control of information have become more sophisticated. Governments in various parts of the world continue to justify censorship as a means of maintaining national stability or protecting citizens from harmful content. However, in many cases, these measures serve to silence dissent, restrict press freedom, and suppress marginalized perspectives. From blocking websites to surveilling activists, state-driven censorship deepens social exclusion and undermines trust in institutions. In the very spaces where people once hoped for liberation through information, many now face new forms of control and invisibility.

The persistence of misrepresentation in global media continues to shape how communities perceive one another. Even in an era of unprecedented access to information, marginalized groups are often portrayed through narrow, biased lenses—whether as victims, threats, or caricatures. Western media dominance has historically sidelined local narratives, reducing complex societies to simplistic tropes. This lack of representation not only distorts global understanding but also affects how these communities view themselves. Without meaningful inclusion in storytelling, decisionmaking, and leadership, digital media risks perpetuating the same inequalities it once promised to dismantle.



Compounding all these issues is the digital divide, which remains one of the most tangible barriers to inclusion. Access to technology and the internet is far from universal. Millions of people, particularly women, rural populations, and ethnic minorities still lack reliable internet connections or the digital literacy needed to navigate online spaces safely. As the world moves increasingly online, those left behind risk losing their voices entirely. Bridging this divide is not merely a question of infrastructure, but of empowerment ensuring that every person can tell their story, participate in dialogue, and shape the digital narratives that affect their lives.



Case Studies

Case Study 1: The Rohingya Crisis and Hate Speech on the Internet in Myanmar

In the Rohingya crisis of Myanmar (2016–2017), social media, led by Facebook, played a pivotal role in propelling hate speech and violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority group. Subsequent investigations indicated that organized campaigns of misinformation, including disinformation narratives depicting the Rohingya as "invaders," propagated extensively on online platforms. The Independent International FactFinding Mission on Myanmar by the United Nations found that Facebook had been employed to "incite offline violence" and did not stop the dissemination of dehumanizing content. The case highlights threats posed by algorithmic amplification of hate speech, the ineffectiveness of moderation outside English languages, and the need for immediate platform accountability and cultural awareness in governance online.

Case Study 2: #BlackLivesMatter and the Battle Against Digital Misrepresentation

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement originated in the United States as a protest against systemic racism and police brutality but evolved into an international call for racial justice within a matter of weeks. Social media provided critical means of mobilization, narrative production, and collective action—enabling marginalized groups to contest concentrated power.



Yet, the movement was also confronted with waves of disinformation, selective censorship, and racially charged media framing, which misshaped its message. The BLM experience shows the ways in which the digital environment can empower and also put marginalized communities at risk—raising their profile while making them targets for narrative control and digital aggression.

Case Study 3:

Algorithmic Bias and Artificial Intelligence Discrimination

With artificial intelligence increasingly used in hiring processes, in law enforcement, and on the internet, algorithmic bias is fast becoming a real threat to equality and inclusion. Research has highlighted the fact that facial recognition technologies frequently misidentify darker-skinned or female individuals, resulting in wrongful arrest and monitoring. Likewise, automated recruitment software has been shown to be discriminatory towards male applicants based on biased training data. These episodes demonstrate that AI technologies, in no way neutral, frequently mirror prevalent societal biases present within their data. The absence of transparency, ethical governance, and diversity in tech creation continues to fuel digital discrimination—making fairness in algorithms an urgent human rights issue in the 21st century.



Recent Advancements:

UN Policy Paper: Countering Online Hate Speech (2023)

The UN Office on Genocide Prevention has published a policy paper titled “Countering and Addressing Online Hate Speech: A Guide for Policy Makers and Practitioners”. This guide focuses on how governments, tech companies, and civil society can collaborate to respond to hate speech online. It emphasizes use of new technologies, raising awareness, fostering education, and developing positive narratives.

UN Advisory Body Recommendations for AI Governance (2024-2025)

A 39-member UN advisory body has released a set of recommendations to address governance gaps in artificial intelligence. These include calls for:

- A global AI standards exchange to share best practices and norms.
- A global AI capacity development network so countries (especially those with weaker regulation or infrastructure) can better understand and manage AI risks.
- A global AI data framework for transparency and accountability.
- The establishment of a small AI office to help coordinate implementation of these proposals.

These recommendations represent an important step toward binding or semi-binding mechanisms for oversight.



UNDP Digital Inclusion Playbook 2.0

In September 2024, the United Nations Development Programme launched Digital Inclusion Playbook 2.0, following a 100-day global consultation involving over 500 contributors across many sectors and regions. This playsheet aims to help countries and communities do inclusive digital transformation—ensuring policies, infrastructure, and governance are designed so that marginalized groups are not excluded.

Asia-Pacific “Visionary Blueprint” for Inclusive Digital Future

At a ministerial conference in Astana (Kazakhstan) in September 2024, Asia-Pacific countries agreed to a “visionary blueprint for inclusive digital economies.” Key priorities include bridging the digital divide, boosting digital trust and literacy, responsible use of data, enhancing connectivity and innovation, especially in under-served regions.

UNHCR’s Digital Inclusion Strategy

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has committed to a five-year strategy to promote digital inclusion among refugees and displaced communities. Measures include building governmental and partner capacity, leveraging data and research, and ensuring that programs are informed by diversity (age, gender) and context so no one is left behind.



Regulation & Private Sector Codes in the EU Regarding Online Hate Speech

The European Union has strengthened its Digital Services Act (DSA) and integrated an updated Code of Conduct for platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, etc., that mandates faster review of reported hateful content (including different categories like race, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation), transparency about how recommendation/reach/algorithmic amplification works, and cooperation with public/non-profit bodies.

Gender-Inclusive Digital Policy Push

UNESCO's Information for All Programme and its partners (Global Digital Inclusion Partnership etc.) have been pushing for gender-transformative policies to ensure digital inclusion does not perpetuate gender inequalities. This includes advocating that connectivity, privacy, content moderation, and digital literacy initiatives explicitly include women and gender minorities.



Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- How can freedom of expression be guaranteed by states and businesses while not allowing hate speech?
- What devices should the UN put in place to hold online platforms accountable?
- How can AI systems become more inclusive and less discriminatory?
- How can digital literacy give voice to marginalized communities?
- How can censorship be blocked from being a force of oppression?
- What can the global community do to promote fair representation in international media?

Reference Documents

- UN Human Rights Council Reports on Hate Speech (A/HRC/47/25)
- UNESCO: Addressing Online Hate Speech (2015)
- UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2019)
- OHCHR B-Tech Project Documents
- Amnesty International: Toxic Twitter Report
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/167 (Right to Privacy in the Digital Age)

