The United Nations Human Rights Council

History
The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) was established by the General Assembly (GA) resolution on March 15, 2006. The vote was 170–4 in favor of the establishment, with only the United States, Israel, the Marshall Islands, and Palau voting against and Iran, Venezuela, and Belarus abstaining. At that time it took over the work of the previous Commission on Human Rights which had been established by the General Assembly in 1946. The Commission’s roles and responsibilities, taken over by the HRC, were addressed and updated in GA resolution passed on December 20, 1993. The Commission was officially dissolved on June 16, 2006 as per GA resolution. The change was made for a number of reasons, one of the key ones being that the new HRC allows for human rights violators to be excluded from the work of the main UN human rights body; another was that the 5 permanent members of the Security Council (SC) were also virtually permanent members of the Commission and this was not felt to be a desirable situation. The creation of the HRC was something past Secretary General Kofi Anan had long advocated for prior to its fruition. He felt that Human Rights should be a pillar of the United Nations and that they are necessary for peace and development. The first members of the Council were selected on May 9, 2006 and the first meeting of the Council was convened on June 19, 2006. Headquarters for the council are in Geneva, Switzerland. According to its founding resolution, the HRC must meet at least 3 times per year for a minimum of 10 weeks total. The norm had been for the council to meet around 4 times a year, but it varies from year to year. In addition to these regular meetings the HRC can call special sessions when it is felt there is an issue that requires urgent attention, and the HRC has done so often. This has, in fact, become a major way, issues in specific countries are addressed.

Notable Projects
One of the major undertakings of the HRC is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Under this system, which was included in the founding resolution and later expanded upon in the HRC resolution and others, all 192 UN member states have their human rights records examined about every 4 years. This prevents any political motivation in selecting countries to examine since they are all reviewed. UPR is a state driven process; it therefore depends on state co-operation to obtain information. This allows states to explain their stance,
actions and any steps they have taken to improve human rights in their country. The first cycle of the UPR began in 2008 and is scheduled to end in 2011 and which time it will begin again. As mentioned before the HRC has the ability to call special sessions. To date they have been called on a number of issues. One prominent topic is the subject of Israel, though there have been different focuses in different sessions. Five have been about relations with the Palestinians. One was with relation to the specific town of Beit Hanoun and another was about the town of Nablus. A session has also been called on the subject of Israel with relation to Lebanon. Other topics on which special sessions have been called on are more varied and include the situations in Darfur, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic on Congo, Sri Lanka, and Haiti. Sessions have also been called that address a more global challenge rather than a specific country. These include sessions on the right to food with relation to rising food prices and the impact of financial crisis on human rights. These special sessions can be called when 1/3 of the HRC deems it necessary and they allow for a more comprehensive discussion of a particular topic.

Another important aspect of the HRC is the establishment of Special Rapporteurs on a wide range of issues from the rights of indigenous peoples to human trafficking. They are responsible for monitoring their assigned areas, making recommendations, and keeping the UN informed. This has also become an important way for the HRC to deal with the many situations that present themselves.

**Current Membership**

The membership of the Human Rights Council is determined by a system of regional representation. A group is elected by absolute majority of the General Assembly every year to serve a 3 year term, with a maximum of 2 terms served in a row. The membership includes 13 seats for African States, 13 seats for the Asian States, 6 seats for Eastern European States, 8 seats for Latin American & Caribbean States, and 7 seats for Western European & Other States. In 2011 membership of the UNHRC includes: Term ending in 2011; Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Pakistan, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Slovakia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Zambia. Term ending 2012; Bangladesh, Belgium, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Hungary, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United States of America, Uruguay. Term ending 2013; Angola, Ecuador, Guatemala, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda.

**Emphasis and Function**

The emphasis and function of the UN HRC was largely laid out in the General Assembly resolution that established it. Perambulatory clauses refer to the commitment to human
rights laid out in the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights which is resolution 217(III) A and was passed in 1948. There is also a lot of discussion on the importance of countries upholding these agreements and supporting human rights. This then is the emphasis of the HRC, ensuring the protection and defense of human rights throughout the world.

The HRC seeks to do this in a number of ways. One is by working with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to address concerns they may bring up. Though as a UN body, the council is to operate under the principles of universality, impartiality and objectivity. There are a number of specific roles given to the HRC by the resolution. Some of them are: to educate people about human rights, to make recommendations to the GA on ways to improve existing regulations in the area of human rights, and to promote full implementation of agreements and follow up on them with states.

**Topic A: Human Right to Freedom of Religion**

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

-Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18

**Introduction**

The right to freedom of religious expression encompasses a number of things. First it is helpful to begin with a definition of freedom. In this case, it is best understood in the sense of not having excessive restrictions or limitations. With relation to religious expression, this may include things like being able to establish a place of worship, obtain religious texts openly, or change one’s religion.

This is an important issue because many nations are seen as not granting freedom of religion to their citizens. For example the Pew Institute found that in 2009, 32% of countries representing 70% of the world’s populations had high or very high restrictions on religious freedom.

As the quote at the beginning of the topic indicates the UN has included this area in a number of resolutions. On that is more specific is the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief which is GA Resolution 36-55 and was passed in 1981. This is also an issue that has been addressed at great length by the HRC. In fact it was one of the issues addressed at the very first session of the HRC and it has continued to be important ever since.
Background
Throughout history, religion has played a central role in the lives of many people and it has often been a source of tension and conflict. From full-scale religious wars such as the Crusades, to things like the Inquisition and the Salem Witch Trials and forced conversions, this has often not been an area where people were really free to do as they pleased. In more recent times however, some nations have ensured a constitutional separation of the government and religion. This means any power the government may have had with regards to religion, such as determining a state religion, is relinquished and people may choose to observe their own religion freely. This has also been codified in the rights legislation of a number of countries and supported by international bodies such as the UN as well.

International Framework
The area of religious freedom is the subject of a number of key agreements. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains a clause dealing with this in particular and it is quoted at the beginning of the section on the topic. This is document with a long history; it was adopted 10 December 1948 and has achieved wide recognition since that time.

The second important document when considering freedom of religion is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Many things are mentioned, however some articles deal specifically with religion. Article 18 states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This is described as including the freedom to choose one’s religion and to worship accordingly. Additionally no one is to be subject to coercion regarding their religion. Parents are also given the right to choose the religious education of their children. Article 19 deals with freedom of expression, article 21 with freedom of assembly, and article 22 with freedom of association; all of these things also affect religious freedom. Finally in article 27 minorities, including religious, linguistic, and ethnic, are given the right to maintain their distinctness.

Another important document is the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. This is a more detailed account of the international standards in the area of freedom of religion. It acknowledges suffering brought about by religious intolerance and the importance of religion in adherents lives. Article 1 states that people should have the freedom to believe and worship in accordance with their personal convictions. It also outlines a few cases such as the rights of others where restrictions may be imposed. In article 2 a prohibition is made against discrimination, preference, exclusion, restriction, and distinction based on a persons religion. Article 5 gives parents the right to educate their children according their own religious beliefs as long as to do so is not injurious to the child. There is a list of things included in freedom of religion in Article 7. This includes the
right to worship, establish charitable institutions, to make and acquire items necessary for religious ritual, to write and share religious publications, to teach religion in a suitable place, to solicit and obtain voluntary financial support, to train and appoint leaders, to observe days of rest and holidays, and to communicate at the national and international levels.

United Nations Involvement
This is an area that has been often discussed at the UN and there are many resolutions on the topic. The General Assembly resolutions on the topic include: 36/55, 64/164, 63/181, 62/157, 61/161, and 60/166. Most of these are simply affirmations that countries should support freedom of religion. The Human Rights Council has also been very concerned about this area and they have passed many resolutions on the topic. Most of these address the issue from the perspective of defamation and intolerance. The HRC resolutions are:

--- 4/9 which criticises defamation of religion, negative stereotyping, and the identification of Islam with terrorism after 9/11 and calls for states to ensure that their officials are not engaging in defamation.
--- 4/10 in which the HRC asks for further consideration of the issue of religious freedom and for a report from the Special Rapporteur at the time of the 6th session of the HRC.
--- 7/19 which is similar to resolution 4/9 and criticises defamation of religion and violence stemming from religious intolerance and calls on states to protect religions, especially Islam, from such defamation.
--- 6/37 which also criticises defamation of religion (Islam, Judaism, Christianity are specifically mentioned), calls for education to promote tolerance and for women and other vulnerable groups to receive special protection, calls for protection of religious sites and symbols, extends mandate of the Special Rapporteur and asks for reports
--- 10/22 which is similar to resolution 7/19 criticizes defamation of religion, especially Islam, and calls for international cooperation to put an end to this intolerance
--- 10/25 which asks that states ensure that a person’s religion does not hinder their enjoyment of their other economic, social and culture rights
--- 13/16 which condemns defamation of religion, stereotyping and violence
--- 14/11 which condemns defamation of religion and sets out responsibilities of Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief for an extended term.

Bloc Positions:

North and South America:
The Americas continue to have the lowest levels of both government and social restrictions upon religion.

Europe:
Though in Europe there are relatively few restrictions implemented by governments, social hostilities involving religion are increasing rapidly.

Middle East and North Africa:
In this region, the highest levels of both government and social restrictions upon all aspects of religious life can be found. Furthermore, many Islamic countries severely restrict religious freedoms even further, and highly favor Muslim citizens. In countries which have adopted Sharia law there is no freedom of conscience.

Sub-Saharan Africa:
Social hostilities which may result in compromises of freedom of religion have been declining in most nations of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Asia:
Many Asian states have high government restrictions, and social hostilities have also been rising.

Non-Secular Countries:
Many countries who have a state religion limit missionary activities of religions other than that state religion, regardless of which region of the world they are situated in. Examples include Islamic countries, China and Greece.

Case Study: Christians in Iraq
The nation of Iraq, while a majority Muslim country, has had a minority Christian population for 2000 years. This group had been fairly stable until recently. Since the US lead invasion of Iraq in 2003 the Christians of Iraq have come under attack repeatedly. Many have left the country, about half of the 1 million who lived in Iraq in 2003. They are facing increasing pressure from others within the country and many no longer feel safe in Iraq. Christians were accused of collaborating with the invading forces and became victims of extremism. Prior to the invasion Christian were sometimes subject to relocation but did not experience the same level of persecution as Kurds under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The most recent attacks in late October and early November 2010 brought attention to the
issue again. On October 31 Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad was seized by militants. There was a failed attempt on the part of the authorities to free those inside, however this failed and 44 people died. In the days that followed bomb attacks on what are considered ‘Christian areas’ killed another 5 people, injuring many more. This is just the latest violence targeting Christians in Iraq. The government has condemned the attacks as have some religious leaders. Islamic State for Iraq, the Al-Qaeda linked group who claimed responsibility, has stated that all Christians are legitimate targets for attack. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement condemning the attacks and urged the Iraqi government to do more to protect civilians.

Case Study: France and the Burka
On 14 September 2010 the French Senate approved a bill that bans Muslim women from wearing the full face veil or burka in public. This comes after a ban on religious symbols including the headscarf or hijab in places like schools. France has Western Europe’s largest Muslim population at around 5 million and many of the women among them do not wear the burka. Most estimates put the number at less than 2000. Though this ban then affects a small group, it’s importance is more it’s symbolic significance. The French government has said that this choice was made to protect women from oppression. Critics of this position have said that this will actually hurt women as those who are not comfortable going out without a face covering will simply not go out and become isolated from society. This move has also been said to be a reflection of the secular values of France since the Revolution. Opponents have argued that the law goes against personal freedoms and liberty as well as the right to practice one’s religion. This has been seen as an expression of Islamophobia by some and an attack on the free practice of religion.

Case Study: Religious Conflict in India
India has had problems with religious violence for some time. This conflict is not limited to any one group as there have been conflicts between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians in turn. In 2002 there were conflicts between Hindus and Muslims after a number of Hindus died in a train fire. More recently, Hindus attacked Christians in 2008 after a Hindu leader was killed and Christians were accused. In 2009 India was added to a list of countries that do not protect religious minorities adequately by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. While things have been less violent of late, underlying tensions remain. Several Indian states also have restrictions on religious conversion, for example Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Orissa. These have come about after pressure from certain groups, mainly Hindu, who felt threatened by the proselytization of other groups, mainly Christian. This may be useful in understanding the root of the violence that has occurred.
Future Efforts
A key area for future progress in the area of freedom of religion is for governments to determine how to best protect their religious minorities. In some cases, though not all, the restriction on freedom of religion comes from society, other citizens, not the government. This is a tricky area because of course governments must be careful not to infringe on the rights of people who may be challenging others unnecessarily.

Another area that is important is one that is more prominent in nations with multiple religious groups or a tradition of secularism. This is the role of religious expression in public life. Whether a politician’s religion should matter in an election or whether religious symbols should be allowed in state institutions, even if worn by individuals, fall under this category. One must strike a balance between allowing people to adhere to their religion and not offending others, allowing a common space all can share.

Conclusion
In conclusion, freedom of religion has been strongly embraced by the UN in numerous resolutions and agreements. The number of these documents may, however, indicate that nations have not necessarily agreed on what this means or how to implement it. There are numerous examples of religious conflict, persecution and intolerance throughout the world today and throughout history. This is not restricted to one country or region but is a global issue. There is, however, reason for hope and there are also many examples of different religious groups living harmoniously and even working together to better the world.

Questions to Consider
• What religious groups are represented in your country?
• Does your country have a history of religious conflict?
• Does your country allow prositlization or conversion?
• Does your country have a state religion?
• What is the social situation regarding religion in your country? Are things permitted legally restricted in practice or vice versa?
• Does your country agree with the idea of freedom of religion? Does it think it is a good thing that should be promoted?

Further Reading:
Topic B: Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling

Background

Human trafficking is a highly profitable illegal business in which people are coerced or tricked into traveling far from their homes to work for little or no money. These modern day slaves are disproportionately women and children who are forced to work as hard laborers, soldiers, domestic servants and prostitutes.

Aspects of globalization that have helped legitimate businesses prosper have also allowed human trafficking to become a multi-million dollar industry. For instance, the cost of intercontinental transportation has decreased dramatically. Communication between distant regions is also rapid and inexpensive. Trafficking can therefore be conducted quickly, efficiently and inexpensively, creating large profits for illegal traffickers.

The victims of human trafficking are not the only ones hurt by this illegal practice—proceeds from trafficking are used to fund terrorism and corruption around the world. To date, member states have taken few steps to address the issue of human trafficking.
The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 12 million people around the world may be engaged in some form of forced labor. Of these, at least 2.4 million were also victims of human trafficking. About 80 percent of the victims of trafficking are women and girls, and half are children under the age of 18.

Some victims are kidnapped from their home countries. Other times traffickers use deception to trick people into agreeing to travel overseas. They promise the victims good jobs in their new locations. They often charge the victims a large sum of money to make the journey. Victims are usually young and poor, so they must borrow the cost of the journey from the traffickers. When they arrive in their new locations, the victims are forced to work indefinitely in bad conditions to pay off their debts.

Sometimes people from very poor areas sell their children to traffickers because they believe their lives will be better overseas. But this is rarely the case. Children who are trafficked overseas often face a life of prostitution or are used in illegal child pornography.

Due to modern improvements in transportation and communication technologies, it costs relatively less to traffic a person today than it did two centuries ago during the transatlantic slave trade. Slave traffickers are therefore making much higher profits than their counterparts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Compared to other illegal activities, the costs associated with starting up in the human trafficking business-sometimes called the "barriers to entry"-are very low. In addition, criminal sentences for those who are caught are much more lenient than for other forms of illegal trafficking, such as drug smuggling. For these reasons, human trafficking is a very attractive activity for criminal and terrorist groups.

But terrorist cells and organized crime groups are not the only ones benefiting from this horrific practice. Corrupt officials in states where human trafficking takes place often take bribes from traffickers. Sometimes human traffickers give officials cash payments to look the other way when trafficking takes place. But other times, corrupt officials are actually closely involved with the human trafficking business, profiting directly from the sale of victims into forced labor. For these reasons, human trafficking encourages corruption and damages the rule of law.

**Combating the Trafficking of Human Beings**

Human trafficking is the “recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labor and servitude,” Oftentimes, victims of trafficking are exported to other nations with any of a number of intended purposes—manual agricultural labor, sweatshop labor, prostitution, military recruitment, domestic bondage, and, in extreme cases, organ harvesting. Methods of capturing victims may include threats against victim and family, kidnapping, fraud or coercion. In certain cases, assent is given, although this does not justify the crime or diminish its magnitude.
Concrete statistics for human trafficking are easy to come by, but difficult to agree on. It is estimated by many sources that the number of annually trafficked individuals worldwide may lay between 500,000 and 4 million. The number of currently-enslaved individuals may be as large as 27-30 million worldwide. It is important to note that the majority of human trafficking comes right out of developing nations, where the poverty line is decidedly high and people search for any means of sustenance. Lastly, it is prudent to distinguish between smuggling and trafficking. In the former case, the transported people are free upon arrival, and profits are made by directors who illegally import immigrants. In the former, the person is, as described, degraded and enslaved for exploitative reasons.

Countries high on the list of “origin countries” are Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Thailand and Ukraine. High on the list of destinations are Belgium, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Thailand, Turkey and the United States. Some regions are predominantly destinations for trafficked victims — Western Europe, North America, Western Asia and Turkey, while the Commonwealth of Independent States is largely an origin region. Africa, Asia, Central and South Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean are significant regions for both origin and destination, according to the report.

Human trafficking tends to be centralized in certain areas for distinct reasons. Russia and former Soviet nations are especially hard-hit due to the economic hardships that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 90’s. Income differentials are still fairly large, even in developed countries like Russia, where the richest 20% control about half of the country’s GDP, and the richest 40% of the population controls about 70% of the GDP. It is not uncommon for women to earn 60% or less than men in Eastern European economies. It is not difficult to see why, when faced with these meager financial conditions, many look for ways to escape and fall right into the hands of criminal organizations that promise opportunities for education, work and a richer lifestyle. In many cases, they are sold into prostitution, enslaved and kept in a nation where they often do not know the official language. Weary of police, they remain in captivity for years at a time. It is estimated that 200-500 thousand women are trafficked from Russia, former Soviet Republics and Balkan states annually.

In the case of Eastern Europe, women are sold by kidnappers, con artists and criminal organizations, while in Southeast Asia, the situation differs slightly. Though the same methods are used frequently, it is also common among traffickers to obtain their quarry from willing parents who are lured by the large salaries that stand to be gained by selling their children. Many
children are sold to organizations that force the children to beg on the streets, and surrender their wages to masters. Others work as underage prostitutes. A working figure comes out at around 200-300 thousand victims in and around Japan, Thailand and the Philippines.

There are many different ideas on ways to reduce trafficking in humans. Most proposals involve trying to reduce either the supply of people who are vulnerable to being trafficked or the demand for trafficked individuals. One proposal is to legalize prostitution, which is currently against the law in some countries and not in others. Supporters of legalizing prostitution say that if the practice were allowed, there would be less demand for illegally trafficked individuals. The reason, they say, is that police would be more likely to detect signs of human trafficking if the prostitution industry were fully regulated by the government. Yet others do not believe this approach will be effective. Illegally trafficked prostitutes will simply work on the black market for less money than "official" prostitutes, they say. Moreover, many countries feel that prostitution is physically and emotionally harmful to young women—and something that governments should not condone.

NGOs have argued for greater penalties for traffickers and stricter enforcement. They also lobby for reducing or eliminating penalties for trafficking victims who are forcibly involved in criminal activities such as prostitution. One challenge is that it is often difficult to determine who is a victim of trafficking unless they come forward. Several NGOs have launched awareness campaigns so that victims understand that they will not be penalized, and come forward without fear of prosecution.

Other policy makers have suggested that the supply side of the modern slave trade should be targeted. They point out that by promoting economic growth in very poor regions, people will have alternatives to going overseas for jobs and will be less vulnerable to traffickers. But the process of development can take a very long time, and may not have an immediate impact. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of people will continue to become victims of trafficking each year.

Another proposal for combating human trafficking is to publicize the names of countries that have bad records with human trafficking. Sometimes called "naming and shaming," this method relies on countries to report honestly about which governments are not cooperating in the fight against human trafficking. "Reputation matters in today's global economy, a reputation for harboring criminals is something no state wants," explains Ethan B. Kapstein, a writer for Foreign Affairs magazine.
The Work of the United Nations

The UN has a long history of opposing the trafficking of human beings. In 1949, the General Assembly passed the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Prostitution of Others. Then, in 2000, the UN General Assembly updated the Convention Against Transnational Crime by adopting the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

In March 1999, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the Global Program against Trafficking in Human Beings (GPAT), a cooperative effort of the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the UNODC. GPAT was designed to help individual member states do their part to stop trafficking in human beings. The program helps to inform states about the role of terrorist and criminal groups in human trafficking. GPAT primarily focuses on the use of judicial (court) systems in the fight against trafficking. As one of the only programs that centers on the criminal justice aspect of the problem, GPAT is helping states to address this issue by prosecuting offenders.

The UN has struggled with two main problems in the effort to end human trafficking. The first is that many states choose to focus on other issues that they believe to be more pressing, such as security issues. The delegates in this body must therefore create the political will to address the issue of human trafficking. Second, it has been difficult for member states to agree on an official legal definition for human trafficking. One reason is that it is often difficult to distinguish between those who are moved voluntarily across borders and those who were tricked or coerced into going. Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking, but with complicated language that states have found difficult to incorporate into their national laws.

Bloc Positions:

No governing body actively accepts and condones human trafficking, although different states may have varying levels of laxity on its behalf. Crucial players will include nations that have very large underground connections to the world of human trade, such as Russia, India and Japan. All three are major transit points and exporters of trafficked humans, and account for the greater majority of all human trade. Another potential faction could be that of poorer nations, serving the role of feeder states. Nations in this category, including the Philippines, Thailand and the Sudan have a primary goal of reducing poverty before any substantial action could be processed. The third category of nations in the debate on human trafficking is that of the generally wealthy nations that have a guilty conscience on the matter. These countries (from the
European Union and United States) serve as buyers to a great extent, and share blame fairly equally.

Since the creation of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2006, it has been the primary goal of this body to eliminate human trafficking in all its forms in any of the Member State in the U.N. Do to problems that may arise in some of these nations, mainly do to the secretive nature of this crime, a majority of these crimes go unreported, with many of the culprits go unpunished. Because of the horrific nature of this crime many United Nations organizations deal with human trafficking. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) has just begun work in the field of preventing human trafficking. With the help of other organizations and other U.N. bodies the goal of the UNHCR is to effectively halt and prosecute those involved in the crime of Human Trafficking.

Currently many bodies in the UN refer to Human Trafficking as modern-day slavery. It affects men, women, and children alike, but according to the International Police Organization (INTERPOL), women and children are more susceptible to this crime because of the high profits that can be accrued from the sex trade, which financially props up many traditional forms of organized crime. There are 27 million people enslaved today. They come from every region in the world, every cultural background, religion, and ethnic makeup. It is the responsibility of the international community to make sure that these people have a voice and that one day they can breathe the air of freedom.

Committee Directive for Addressing the Human Trafficking Issue:

There are three main challenges facing member states:

• Reducing demand, whether for cheap goods manufactured in sweatshops or for underpriced commodities produced by bonded people in farms and mines or for services provided by sex workers;

• Targeting criminals who profit from the vulnerability of people trying to escape from poverty, unemployment, hunger and oppression;
• Protecting trafficking victims, taking particular care to address the special needs of women and children.

Efforts to counter trafficking so far have been uncoordinated and inefficient. The lack of systematic reporting by authorities is a real problem. Governments need to try harder. As delegates of the Human Right Council, you need to have an open mind and willingness to cooperate with other nations, as well as a good scope of the entirety of the problem. It may be necessary to work one’s way to the base of the problem(s) and try to work out a way to stop trafficking from the ground up. There may be potential divisions among two prominent groups of nations—those nations that experience poverty and exploitation and are the primary exporters of slaves, and those that have effectively curbed the practice with strong borders, watchful eyes and effective law enforcement. These nations, although more privileged, do import slaves on many occasions. Once again, diplomacy and cooperation are the keys to successful forum, and will serve to eliminate excessive finger-pointing.

Questions to Consider:

1. What has your country done to prevent Human Trafficking?
2. Is your country a problem area of Human Trafficking?
3. What can the UNHRC do to more efficiently deal with problem of Human Trafficking and prosecute those responsible?
4. What can member states do to cooperate more effectively with the UNHRC in preventing human trafficking?
5. What are some major obstacles facing individuals who have been trafficked?
6. How do variables such as immigration status, language and literacy, sex/gender, geographic location, age, race and ethnicity, country of origin, destination countries, etc. factor into an individual’s access and willingness to seek help if help is even available?
7. Are existing policies and laws adequate, appropriate, and sensitive in responding to the various needs or victims/survivors of trafficking when they are “rescued” or seek help and services?
8. How might legal and social responses further harm and/or endanger victims/survivors?
9. What is “justice” for the victim/survivor of trafficking? Who gets to define this?
10. What are some of the realities an individual may face when returning to their country of origin—particularly for women victims/survivors of sex trafficking?
Position Paper Submission Guidelines

A Position Paper is a brief summarize of a country's policy and interests concerning the topics on the Agenda. It should contain a clear statement of the country’s position on the topic and clear reasoning, also suggesting a plan of action concerning the issues under consideration. The Position Paper should be a product of the delegate’s own research and should be concise and substantial.

In the first part of your Position Paper you should briefly address the issues on the Agenda, the relevancy and the scope of the problem. You should mention the major players, the current developments concerning the issues under discussion, the action UN has taken in this respect, whether by specialized agencies, regional bodies or non-governmental organizations, the most significant resolutions that have been passed, international treaties and provisions for future action.

In the second part you should specify the official position of the country you represent in respect to the issues under consideration. It should include brief statements about where your country stands on the issue in question, past statements on the topic by representatives of your government, especially if these mention the significance of the issues on the Agenda to your country, specific suggestions that your country will support in providing a solution for the issues in question. You should also make reference to the role UN has assumed to confront this issue. You do not need to go into detail about your negotiating positions.

Remember that you have to represent the position of your assigned country. Therefore you should not speak in the first person (“I”), but with the voice of the country you represent. You may offer your own ideas on the solution of the problem, but bear in mind that the ideas that you present the committee with, should not contradict with the policies of the country you represent.

The Position Paper should be no more than one page long per topic.

Sample Position Paper

Committee:
Country:
Topic Area A:
Topic Area B:

Delegation: Luxembourg
Represented by SICAS

Position Paper for the International Organization for Migration
The issues before the International Organization for Migration are the following: Social Development and Migration Assistance in Afghanistan and Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings.

I. Social Development and Migration Assistance in Afghanistan
Luxembourg recognizes the widening gap between the rich and the poorest countries and emphasizes that the developed world, and particularly the European Union, should increasingly assist developing countries in achieving sustainable development, and take account of the suffering of peoples around the world. Luxembourg stresses the importance of international assistance and social development in currently fragile Afghanistan not only as a response to humanitarian need, but also for the purposes of international security and conflict resolution. Recognizing the importance of international solidarity and cooperation for progress, Luxembourg reaffirms its commitment expressed in the Bonn Agreement, to assist in bringing about “national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in Afghanistan.” Luxembourg recognizes its responsibilities as one of the richest countries of the world. Our development aid exceeds the target rate of 0.7% of GDP set by the United Nations and will reach 1% of GDP by the year 2005. In addition, Luxembourg is, along with other EU members, one of the top donor’s to the UNAMA program, established by Security Council Resolution 1401 as part of the Afghanistan Transitional Administration (ATA), which serves to coordinate international assistance efforts in support of the transition to peace. Luxembourg also supports and contributes to the Afghanistan Interim Authority Fund (ATA), set up to meet the most pressing needs of re-establishing the civil service. Luxembourg stress the importance of linking essential humanitarian assistance and crisis responses with sustained development, as emphasized by the Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People (ITAP) in the National Development Framework (NDF) strategy, and encourages all countries to support large number of initiatives that address the ongoing humanitarian crisis with a combination of emergency and recovery programming, including the Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI), the Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA) program, and the Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR) program. Recognizing the importance of education and professional skills,
Luxembourg is one of the top three contributors to UNDP Rapid Deployment Facility in Afghanistan, which serves as a flexible mechanism through which international experts as well as Afghan nationals can serve as UN Volunteers. In conclusion, Luxembourg urges the international community to strengthen and implement their commitment to assist with the rehabilitation, recovery, and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in order to prevent extended.

II. Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

In accordance with the Declaration of Human Rights, Luxembourg remains committed to the protection of human rights in the global community. Luxembourg feels that the government of any nation should act as an instrument of the people, and it should protect the fundamental rights of people regardless of their gender or nationality. Human rights’ violations, particularly the trafficking of human beings, have become a global phenomenon that can occur in any nation at any given time. Due to the transient nature of the trafficking of human beings, all nations are susceptible to its effects within their borders. A problem of this magnitude can only be combated through mutual cooperation among nation-states. Transnational organized crime groups victimize migrants through the practice of trafficking human beings for the purpose of exploitation. The exploitation of migrants has become a highly profitable activity for transnational organized crime groups across the globe that exposes unsuspecting migrants to forced labor, involuntary servitude, and sexual exploitation. Luxembourg fully supports the objective of the Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings, started in March 1999, to assist member states in their fight against the illegal practice of trafficking of human beings.

Luxembourg recognizes the importance of all international endeavors that have sought to eliminate the trafficking of human beings. Luxembourg has signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children as well as the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The UN Millennium General Assembly adopted these protocols that were drafted as a result of the International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on November 15th, 2000. Luxembourg has immersed itself in the struggle against the trafficking of human beings. As a destination for smuggling activities, Luxembourg has vested interest in eliminating the trafficking of human beings. In recent years, the trafficking of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation has increasingly become a problem in Luxembourg. As a result, Luxembourg’s domestic law has been adjusted in accordance with international law to deal more efficiently with this problem. Under the new legislation, any individuals arrested for the trafficking of human beings are subject...
to 5 years of imprisonment under the penal code. Luxembourg urges other nations to adopt similar domestic laws that would punish the leaders of these transnational organized crime groups that specialize in trafficking. It is only through the enforcement of laws against the trafficking of human beings that the number of human rights’ violations against migrants will begin to subside. Luxembourg feels that through mutual cooperation among nation-states this crime can be reduced significantly, if not eliminated, from the global community.

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