



## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Background Guide**

#### **Introduction**

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the Organization. Comprising all Member States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

The Assembly meets in regular sessions from September to December each year, and thereafter as required. It discusses specific issues through dedicated agenda items or sub-items, which lead to the adoption of resolutions.

The pandemic is not the only issue the world faces. Racism, intolerance, inequality, climate change, poverty, hunger, armed conflict, and other ills remain global challenges. These challenges call for global action, and the General Assembly is a critical opportunity for all to come together and chart a course for the future.

#### **Important Links:**

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/>

<https://www.sdgfund.org/>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

## **DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Women around the world have always had an ongoing battle with attempting to achieve equality to their male counterparts. While as a whole many nations have made efforts to advance equality within their countries, there are others that do not recognize women as equal to men. Even within countries where women have achieved equality, or at least have made strides towards equality, there still exists discrimination against women that women are forced to combat. Now, more than ever, we need global leadership to find a way out of this ongoing crisis and put women at the forefront of policy decisions.

The United Nations General Assembly (GA) advocates for the equality of all people, including women. Despite the progress that the issue of women's rights has made, 143 out of 195 countries that guarantee women to have equality still have some discrimination persistent in their societies. Specifically, discrimination has been found to occur in the following areas: social norms, laws and policies, employment opportunities and gender based stereotypes; to name a few. In 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women was established and has been instrumental in advancing the rights of women in countries across the globe.

Discrimination based on gender is found in a variety of different areas. Discrimination may be found in terms of women's access to land and property ownership. Women may not have access to owning land for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, it is because the land is in the name of a male family member, such as the woman's husband, brother, or son. Owning land can be a huge deal in some cultures, showing one's social status over others. Culture can play a huge role in terms of determining whether or not it is deemed acceptable for women to own land. If a woman deals with other obstacles, like a disability or being an elderly widow, she may face additional problems when trying to gain land or property ownership. Along with this, women can develop an inevitable dependence on the men in their lives in order to access certain resources, which according to the Office of the Higher Commissioner for United Nations Human Rights, "can subject women to insecurity and violence". In terms of equal access to property, the United Nations outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 17 that, "Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others".

Women may also face discrimination in sexual and reproductive rights. In the face of increasing political pushback against sexual and reproductive health and rights in many countries, women today are left without many of the protections of just a decade ago, and many others still have not seen the progress they need. The United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner defines women's sexual and reproductive health as, "the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination". The United Nations reports that there are frequently violations of these rights for women. Women may not be allowed to receive care for medical needs specific to

women or if they do receive the care, it is of low quality. For example, recent legal restrictions on contraceptives. With this, some women may also be forced to undergo medical procedures without their consent. This may include, but is not limited to, the following: forced abortion, virginity examinations, sterilization, and genital mutilation. Women are also viewed for their role in reproduction and can be forced into early marriages for the sake of producing children. In the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) article 16, there are eight different points outlined within the first part of the article, to name a couple: “[men and women] have the same rights to enter marriage” and “the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution”.

Along with searching for equality for women in a wide variety of areas, women across the globe also struggle with violent acts against them. Discrimination against women and violence against women can go hand in hand, as the CEDAW stated in General Recommendation No. 19 that “violence against women is a form of discrimination.” Violence against women is an issue that still affects women worldwide: in fact, 1 in 3 women have experienced some form of sexual or verbal violence. The United Nations believes that it is possible to eliminate violence against women, but this task has proven to be difficult when nations cannot agree on what acts of violence deserve what kind of punishment.

In terms of fighting back against violence and discrimination against women, a few measures have been implemented. Bringing awareness to the women’s rights issues has been a critical point in attempting to combat discrimination and violence against women. There have been new legal frameworks created that have bolstered the rights of women within countries. New practices and innovations have been reported to the GA, the Human Rights Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women that highlight the developments of the new measures. Despite the successes, women have been able to reap thus far, there is still discrimination and violence present based on gender, and it is important for countries to continue to come together to find the most effective ways to combat it.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can more countries get involved in combating discrimination against women?
2. What are effective ways to advance the rights of women in countries that have limited resources?
3. How can countries come together to protect women from acts of violence?

### **Important Links:**

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

[Council resolution 11\(II\) of 21 June 1946.](#)

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/175/76/PDF/G1117576.pdf?OpenElement>

[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_217\(III\).pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_217(III).pdf)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article16>

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Recommendations.aspx>

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate change is a real issue that is affecting countries across the globe. This can range from extreme drought to flooding, major natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes, and rising temperatures that are melting the ice caps, thereby causing sea levels to rise. In fact, the last two decades have been the warmest ever recorded. Climate change has been attributed to humans excessively using fossil fuels and other nonrenewable energy sources that are releasing greenhouse gasses, harming the ozone layer, as well as the quality of our air and water in general. While many countries recognize the need to reduce energy usage and the type of energy being used, other countries may not have the resources to institute such changes or may not recognize climate change as a serious threat. Now, the urgency and the complexity of the climate change crisis require actions at a new depth and scale.

The United Nations has been employing several different tactics to combat the advancement of climate change. The UN advocates for mitigation of outdated energy uses in order to prevent greenhouse gasses. The UN is able to do this in a variety of ways, such as by helping communities update older equipment or by bringing in all new equipment that is far more efficient. The UN also advocates for adaptation as another tactic, that is, adaptation to the warming climate. Adaptation may be done through four different means. The first, ecosystem-based adaptation, which hopes to create projects that promote and use biodiversity. Second is knowledge, analysis, and networking, which simply seeks to spread information. Third is access to adaptation finance, which hopes to provide countries with access to finances that help them adapt to the changing climate. The fourth and final method is adaptation and policy planning, which provides research and recommendations for how to deal with the changing climate. Some of the other methods that the UN is utilizing to deal with climate change include: Climate Resilient Development, Climate Finance, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), the Climate Technology Centre and Network, and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+).

Along with these plans and projects, it is important to examine other efforts made by the UN. In 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established and has nearly every delegation as a member of it. In 1995, the Kyoto Protocol was established, and essentially developed nations are expected to reduce emissions during the different periods, the current period beginning in 2013 and ending in 2020. In 2016, the Paris Agreement established that its signatories desired to keep the global temperature under 2 degrees Celsius of the pre-industrial temperature for this century. The UN also has created the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This panel was set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide a source of scientific information. In 2022, the panel released its Sixth Assessment Report, which recognizes the interdependence of climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, and human societies along with contemporary climate change impacts and risks with evidence for each key finding. The Climate Summit in 2022 will be held in November with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres being the spear-head as he calls for further global action on climate change.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How successful have these methods been in combating the environmental dilemma that is climate change?
2. What are the reasons that some nations do not recognize climate change as a major issue?
3. What can the UN do to further its effort with climate change?
4. How can the UN mandate countries to combat the issue?

### **Important Links:**

<https://www.unenvironment.org/>

<http://ccacoalition.org/en/content/about>

<https://www.ctc-n.org/about-ctcn>

<https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/what-redd>

<https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/the-big-picture/introduction-to-climate-finance>

<https://unfccc.int/process/the-kyoto-protocol>

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/>

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>

<http://unfccc.int/timeline/>