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# General Assembly Fourth Committee Background Guide 2019

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# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2019 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly Fourth Committee. This year's staff is: Director Davina Basse and Assistant Director Emma Bott. Davina works as a junior policy analyst for the Government of Canada and is completing her Master's thesis at the Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies. This is her fourth year on DC staff, and she is excited to return to NMUN-DC. Emma is starting her second year of law school at Thompson Rivers University. This is her first year on NMUN-DC staff and she is very excited for the conference.

The topics under discussion for General Assembly Fourth Committee are:

- I. Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Occupied Syrian Golan
- II. Comprehensive Review of Special Political Missions

The General Assembly is the main deliberative body and one of the principal organs of the United Nations. As the Special Political and Decolonization committee of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee addresses topics of the effects of atomic radiation, reviews of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, questions pertaining to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space. The nature of the topics addressed by the Fourth Committee makes it one of the most collaborative UN bodies; the committee adopts most of its draft resolutions by consensus and without a recorded vote.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretary-General Adam Wolf at [usgadam.dc@nmun.org](mailto:usgadam.dc@nmun.org) or Secretary-General Chase Mitchell at [secgen.dc@nmun.org](mailto:secgen.dc@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,  
Davina Basse, Director  
Emma Bott, Assistant Director



## Committee Overview

### **Introduction**

The General Assembly was founded as a primary organ of the United Nations (UN) under Chapter IV of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), with broad responsibilities as the foremost deliberative and policymaking entity of the UN system.<sup>1</sup> The Fourth Committee, also known as the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, is one of six Main Committees established by the General Assembly to carry out its normative functions.<sup>2</sup> The remaining Main Committees include the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).<sup>3</sup>

The Fourth Committee was originally tasked with solely addressing issues of decolonization.<sup>4</sup> In keeping with Articles 73 and 74 of the Charter, the UN works to preserve the well-being and promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of these territories.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the 1990s, the UN administered and supervised Trust Territories, a distinct category from Non-Self-Governing Territories, under an International Trusteeship System established by Chapter XII of the Charter.<sup>6</sup> The International Trusteeship System supervised territories held under mandates established by the League of Nations, territories that had been separated from states during the settlement of the Second World War, and territories that administering states voluntarily submitted to the System.<sup>7</sup> The last remaining Trust Territories transitioned to sovereign rule or voluntarily joined other states in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> Following the adoption of resolution 47/233 of 17 August 1993 on “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly,” the Fourth Committee on Decolonization merged with a separate Main Committee on political questions to become the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.<sup>9</sup>

### **Governance, Structure and Membership**

The General Assembly and its Main Committees have universal membership consisting of all 193 UN Member States.<sup>10</sup> Each Member State is afforded one vote regardless of geographical position or economic stature; a simple majority is needed to resolve general questions, while elections, budgetary questions, and important recommendations on peace and security require a two-thirds majority.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting its stature as a universal forum for international collaboration, the General Assembly and its Main Committees strive to reach decisions through consensus rather than formal voting.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, non-Member States and intergovernmental organizations contribute to the work of the General Assembly as observers.<sup>13</sup> The programmatic work of the Fourth Committee is overseen by a Bureau that is elected annually for each session.<sup>14</sup> The Bureau is comprised of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*; UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure and comments (A/520/Rev.17)*.

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure and comments (A/520/Rev.17)*.

<sup>4</sup> UN DPI, *FEATURE: The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee – special political and decolonization issues*, 2013; *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*; UN DPI, *International Trusteeship System*, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>8</sup> UN DPI, *FEATURE: The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee – special political and decolonization issues*, 2013; UN DPI, *International Trusteeship System*, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *General Assembly*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure and comments (A/520/Rev.17)*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*; New Zealand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2015-16*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>11</sup> UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly, *Observers*.

<sup>14</sup> UN General Assembly, *Bureau of the 69th Session*; UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure and comments (A/520/Rev.17)*.



Rapporteur.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Secretariat provides support for regular meetings, with technical secretariat support provided by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).<sup>16</sup>

### **Mandate, Functions and Power**

Under Chapter IV of the Charter, the General Assembly may discuss, consider, and make non-binding recommendations on issues relating to international cooperation for realizing human rights; advancing economic, social, cultural, educational, and health issues; developing and codifying international law; and, without infringing upon the authority of the Security Council, international cooperation on peace and security.<sup>17</sup> Issues allocated to the Fourth Committee under its present mandate include peacekeeping, Palestinian refugees, questions relating to information, mine action, atomic radiation, outer space, and decolonization.<sup>18</sup> The Fourth Committee also considers questions relating to the administration of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions (SPMs).<sup>19</sup>

In advance of each regular session, the General Assembly refers agenda items to each Main Committee according to the unique expertise and mandate of each body.<sup>20</sup> Main Committees may request new agenda items and amendments to the annual program of work but may not introduce new items without approval.<sup>21</sup> The Fourth Committee submits draft resolutions and decisions to the General Assembly Plenary for consideration, serving as a bridge between expert subsidiary organs and the broader international community.<sup>22</sup> Subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly that present reports to the Fourth Committee include the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), the Committee on Information (COI), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), and the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR).<sup>23</sup>

The Fourth Committee also works closely with the Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24, or C-24) to coordinate the UN system's efforts to promote independence and sovereign rule for Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs).<sup>24</sup> This work is guided by the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* (1960), which condemned the colonization of countries and affirmed self-determination of colonized peoples.<sup>25</sup> The Fourth Committee considers statements, petitions, and general agenda items relating to the 17 NSGTs currently recognized by the UN.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Fourth Committee and First Committee each discuss issues relating to outer space, each addresses distinct components of the topic.<sup>27</sup> The purview of the Fourth Committee relates to the peaceful uses of outer space, such as international cooperation for exploration, research, and the general advancement of peace, security and development.<sup>28</sup> The Fourth Committee receives reports from the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), and works closely with the UN Office for

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> UN General Assembly, *Secretariat*, UN DGACM, *Functions of the Department*, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>18</sup> UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee*.

<sup>19</sup> UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)* (A/C.4/69/1), 2014; UN DPI, *As Fourth Committee Reviews Special Political Missions, Focus Centres Upon Separate Funding, Bolstering Response to Realities on Ground*, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure and comments (A/520/Rev.17)*, Ch. XIII, Rules 96-98; UN General Assembly, *Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/RES/47/233)*, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *General Assembly*, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee*.

<sup>24</sup> UN DPI, *The United Nations and Decolonization*.

<sup>25</sup> UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/RES/1514(XV))*, 1960.

<sup>26</sup> UN DPI, *Non-Self-Governing Territories*, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee*.

<sup>28</sup> UN DPI, *FEATURE: The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee – special political and decolonization issues*, 2013; UNOOSA, *Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*, 2015.

Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA).<sup>29</sup> In contrast, the First Committee considers questions relating to the weaponization of outer space and its prevention.<sup>30</sup>

The Fourth Committee regularly reviews the peacekeeping mechanisms and SPMs carried out by the UN, considering recommendations on these topics from the UN Secretary-General and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly that is largely comprised of Member States and international observers who contribute to international peacekeeping operations.<sup>31</sup> Key issues considered by C-34 include the coordination of peacekeeping initiatives, capacity building for regional peacekeeping mechanisms, and improving the ability of the UN system to respond quickly and effectively when called upon by the Security Council.<sup>32</sup> SPMs complement the work of peacekeeping operations by serving as mechanisms for mediation and conflict resolution.<sup>33</sup> In recent years, the Fourth Committee has considered issues relating to the policies and administration of SPMs whilst respecting the mandates set forth by the Security Council.<sup>34</sup>

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

During the General Assembly's 73<sup>rd</sup> session, the Fourth Committee focused heavily on adding observer status to other non-governmental and governmental organizations, as well as the responsibility to protect, and prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.<sup>35</sup> The Fourth Committee addressed special political missions, in this case, the issue of temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine.<sup>36</sup> In December 2018, the Fourth Committee passed resolution 73/L.47 "The Problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov", which called on the Russian Federation to not impede lawful navigation of the seas and expressed concern on increasing tension in the region due to unlawful occupation.<sup>37</sup>

The Fourth Committee continued to dedicate significant attention to investigating Israeli practices that affect the human rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of Israeli occupied territories, receiving a report on the issue in November 2018.<sup>38</sup> Fourth Committee also approved 12 draft resolutions, many of which addressed the sovereignty of occupied territories or legally owned territories of UN Member States.<sup>39</sup> Part of the annual work of the Fourth Committee is to review the work of UNRWA, and, as with previous year, submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly Plenary to reaffirm and continue to strengthen the work of UNRWA.<sup>40</sup> On the question of Palestine, the Fourth Committee discussed the topic of Israeli settlements and the continued Israeli expansion into the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in addition to conflict and human rights concerns.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items for the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly (A/69/252)*, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of the special political missions (A/C.4/69/L.18)*, 2014; UN DPI, *General Assembly and Peacekeeping*.

<sup>32</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/69/19)*, 2015, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of the special political missions (A/C.4/69/L.18)*, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> UN General Assembly, *Agenda of the 73<sup>rd</sup> regular session*, 2019; UN General Assembly, *Meetings*, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov (A/73/L.47)*, 2018.

<sup>38</sup> UN General Assembly, *Meetings*, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> UN General Assembly, *United Nations 73<sup>rd</sup> Session Programme*, 2019; UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session*, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> UN General Assembly, *United Nations 73<sup>rd</sup> Session Programme*, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/C.4/73/L.20)*, 2018; UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session*, 2019.

Peaceful use of space was also discussed by Fourth Committee as Member States continue to improve technology that aids in new peaceful uses of outer space.<sup>42</sup> The Fourth Committee approved a draft resolution on the international cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space, calling for all Member States to remain vigilant.<sup>43</sup> The Fourth Committee remained committed to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, agreeing that substantive items be addressed in working groups at the sixty-second session of COPOUS.<sup>44</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The General Assembly Fourth Committee's most recent session addressed an array of topics and the international community has committed itself to continuing to address questions of Palestine, the peaceful uses of outer space, and sovereignty and decolonization.<sup>45</sup> The Fourth Committee remains a universal forum for discussion and debate on specific topics and is likely to continue to have new topics on its agenda as issues progress.<sup>46</sup> As the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly begins in September 2019, the work of the Fourth Committee will continue.<sup>47</sup>

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<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>

*The Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter) is the foundational document that defines not only the normative functions of the General Assembly and the committees that fall under the GA, but the operational functions as well. The UN Charter provides insight into the context and contributions of the General Assembly to the international system. Special attention should be paid to the specific mandate outlined in Chapter IV, from which the work of the Fourth Committee is derived.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-Third Session. (2018). *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session.* Retrieved 14 April 2019 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gaspd688.doc.htm>

*This overview of the Fourth Committee's work at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly outlines what was achieved, and what the Fourth Committee still needs to work on. The Fourth Committee discussed a wide array of different topics ranging from to the Issue of Guam to Israeli-Palestinian questions, a topic that has been at the forefront of the Fourth Committee in recent sessions. Delegates will find this overview helpful to aid them in understanding the work that had occurred during the 73d Session and digesting the Fourth Committee's most current priorities.*

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*This site provides a historic and contemporary review of the UN system's work on decolonization, with special emphasis on the role of the Fourth Committee and its partners. With respect to the Fourth Committee, the site maintains links to meetings coverage and video recordings on general debates relating to decolonization questions. Additional information can be found about current and former dependent territories, the*

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<sup>42</sup> UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session*,

<sup>43</sup> UN General Assembly, *International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/C.4/73/L.4)*, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid; UN General Assembly, *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session*, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> UN General Assembly, *Meetings*, 2019.



*work of the now disbanded International Trusteeship System, and the International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism.*

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2014). *Fourth Committee* [Website]. Retrieved 09 April 2019 from: <http://www.un.org/press/en/content/fourth-committee>

*This site is the official source of press releases and meetings coverage for the work of the General Assembly Fourth Committee, providing a timely and comprehensive review of deliberations, special events, and documents produced by the committee. Delegates seeking general information about the work of the Committee should review this site on a regular basis. Although press releases and meetings coverage are not official records, these resources often include document codes and details about noteworthy debates.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Fourth Committee. (n.d.). *Fourth Committee* [Website]. Retrieved 09 April 2019 from: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/index.shtml>

*This is the official website of the Fourth Committee, which serves as a comprehensive portal to documentation on the work of the body. This resource includes links to documents, press releases, meeting records, webcasts, and other important information about committee governance and operations. Delegates may use this site as a starting point for preliminary research on the recent work of the Fourth Committee.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Fourth Committee. (2019). *United Nations 73<sup>rd</sup> Session Programme* [Website]. Retrieved 14 April 2019 from: <http://papersmart.unmeetings.org/ga/fourth/73rd-session/programme/>

*The agenda from Papersmart, the tool that the UN utilizes to help make meetings more efficient and more digitalized, outlined the program agenda for the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the Fourth Committee. It provides the necessary outline of the session to allow delegates to understand the issues laid out before the Fourth Committee. The program also provides helpful links and tools to Fourth Committee documents that have been adopted by the body and sent to the Plenary for final review.*

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## I. Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Occupied Syrian Golan

### **Introduction**

The relationship between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) has been a complex and intricate issue since the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in 1917 and the United Kingdom's rule over the region.<sup>48</sup> Following the British *Balfour Declaration* that sought to create a Jewish homeland, multiple waves of Jewish migrants settled in the area from 1922 to 1947.<sup>49</sup> The State of Israel declared independence in 1948 and “expanded to 77% of the territory of mandate Palestine.”<sup>50</sup> In 1968, the Government of Israel began supporting the creation of settlements for Israeli citizens in the oPt.<sup>51</sup> While Israelis began to settle in the oPt, most notably in the West Bank, for religious and security reasons, concerns have been raised about these settlements since they began.<sup>52</sup> As these settlements grew, so did concerns that Palestinian homes were being uprooted, and local residents were frequently evicted from their homes without equal compensation.<sup>53</sup> Despite international condemnation of these settlements, statistics show there were over 130 individual settlements housing over 400,000 Israelis in 2016.<sup>54</sup> Although the settlers are largely peaceful, these settlements have been “deepen[ing] the sense of mistrust and undermin[ing] the two-State solution,” according to United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.<sup>55</sup> The General Assembly Fourth Committee is positioned to address this issue through monitoring the human rights situation in the region, and receiving reports from organizations involved in the region, such as UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>56</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

On 30 April 2003, a group of four actors that are commonly known as the Quartet presented a roadmap to a two-state solution to the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.<sup>57</sup> The Quartet consists of the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the European Union, and the UN, and was founded in 2002 after the Second Intifada.<sup>58</sup> The roadmap as was presented in 2003 aimed to bring peace and create two states, one Israel and the other Palestine, by 2005.<sup>59</sup> While this deadline was not met, the UN noted that the roadmap nevertheless provided useful guidelines that continue to influence the situation in the region.<sup>60</sup> Most notably, the roadmap calls on ending violence and terror, normalizing life, and removing Israeli settlements from the oPt.<sup>61</sup> A different peace proposal was put forth by the Arab League in 2002 which would become known as the *Arab Peace Initiative* and proposed the creation of a sovereign Palestine based on the 1967 borders and the repatriation of occupied territories in return for Arab recognition of Israel.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: History of the Question of Palestine*.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Bard, *Facts About Jewish Settlements in the West Bank*, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> National Public Radio, *7 Things To Know About Israeli Settlements*, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> UN General Assembly, *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Occupied Syrian Golan (A/RES/73/98)*, 2018, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> UN DPI, *Settlements Deepen Sense of Mistrust, Undermine Two-State Solution, Secretary-General Tells Palestinian Rights Committee*, 2019.

<sup>56</sup> UN General Assembly, *Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee)*; Ibid; UN General Assembly, *Israeli practices affecting the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/RES/73/99)*, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> UN Security Council, *Letter dated 7 May 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (A/2003/529)*, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 1; UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: UN System: The Quartet*.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> UN DPI, *Despite missed deadline, Quartet peace plan still valid: UN envoy*, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 3-5.

<sup>62</sup> Middle East Monitor, *Saudi leads efforts to change Arab Peace Initiative with Israel*, 2019.

In 1997, the UN held the first Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly, following a request made by the Permanent Representative of Qatar after the Israeli government agreed to establish a 6,500-unit housing project in the oPt in East Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> The most recent Emergency Special Session was the tenth of its kind and convened on 13 June 2018, a few months following the United States' decision to move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to West Jerusalem, raising concerns within the General Assembly at inflaming a religious war.<sup>64</sup>

There are numerous General Assembly resolutions concerning the oPt and Israeli settlements in the region, as the question of the status of the oPt has been on the UN's agenda since 1947.<sup>65</sup> A hallmark resolution is General Assembly resolution 73/19 (2018) entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine," because the resolution explicitly lays out the terms and frameworks with which the international community should achieve the two-state solution while recognizing "the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people" and notes the importance to adhere to the pre-1967 borders.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, General Assembly resolution 73/98 (2018) is the most recent resolution concerning "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan."<sup>67</sup> The resolution condemns Israel of proceeding what it calls the "E-1 plan" that effectively isolates Palestinians in East Jerusalem and points out the continuing human rights violations that occur through the demolition and forced eviction of Palestinians within the oPt.<sup>68</sup> Citing international law, the resolution condemns the illegal settlements in the oPt and calls upon "Israel, the occupying Power," to ensure that any settlements do not violate international law and Palestinian residents' rights are protected.<sup>69</sup> General Assembly resolutions 72/87 (2017) and 73/99 (2018) entitled "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" delve into the human rights that are infringed upon within the oPt.<sup>70</sup> Concerning the Israeli settlements in the oPt, Resolution 73/99 (2018) highlights the importance of upholding and respecting the human rights of Palestinians living in the oPt.<sup>71</sup> The report of the Secretary-General 73/420 (2018) titled "Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" and the note by the Secretary-General 73/499 (2018) entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories" go into more detail and expand on resolution 73/99 (2018) concerning the impact of Israeli settlements on human rights.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the notes by the Secretary-General 62/75 (2007) and 73/87 (2018) entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan" discuss the economic and social impacts Israeli settlements in the oPt have on the local population.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> UN General Assembly, *Tenth Emergency Special Session*.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid; UN DPI, *General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Asking Nations Not to Locate Diplomatic Missions in Jerusalem*, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> UN General Assembly, *Future government of Palestine (A/RES/181(II))*, 1947.

<sup>66</sup> UN General Assembly, *Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/RES/73/19)*, 2018.

<sup>67</sup> UN General Assembly, *Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/RES/73/96)*, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> UN General Assembly, *Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/RES/72/87)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Israeli practices affecting the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/RES/73/99)*, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid; UN General Assembly, *Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/420)*, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> UN General Assembly, *Note by the Secretary-General: Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/62/75-E/2007/13)*, 2007; UN General Assembly, *Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/73/87-E/2018/69)*, 2018.

## ***Role of the International System***

As the General Assembly is the UN's main deliberative body, the questions surrounding the oPt, including Israeli settlements in the oPt have been on the General Assembly's agenda since 1947.<sup>74</sup> During the 73<sup>rd</sup> session, the Fourth Committee approved nine draft resolutions on Israeli-Palestinian questions, including one on Israeli settlements in the oPt, which would become General Assembly resolution 73/98 (2018).<sup>75</sup> Another core UN body discussing the issues surrounding Israel and the oPt is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as it is responsible for addressing the economic and social issues surrounding Israeli settlements in the oPt.<sup>76</sup> The third core UN body discussing Israel and the oPt is the Security Council, which deals with matters of threats to international peace.<sup>77</sup> However, the Security Council has not taken affirmative action to make tangible progress on Israeli-Palestinian relations and achieving a two-state solution.<sup>78</sup>

A number of UN bodies focus on matters of human rights in the oPt and concerning Israeli settlements in the oPt.<sup>79</sup> One such human rights organization that plays an integral role in dealing with Israeli settlements in the oPt is the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).<sup>80</sup> In 2016, the OHCHR was tasked by the Human Rights Council (HRC) to create a database tracking Israeli settlements in the oPt.<sup>81</sup> There are also numerous specialized agencies within the UN system responsible for dealing with matters surrounding the oPt and Israeli settlements.<sup>82</sup> The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) was created in 1975 by the General Assembly and is mandated to help the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination without interference of external actors.<sup>83</sup> In doing so, CEIRPP collaborates with over 1,000 civil society organizations that range from humanitarian organizations to churches and trade unions.<sup>84</sup> The Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is the main representative of the UN Secretary-General on matters of peace and security in the Middle East, specifically focusing on relations surrounding the oPt.<sup>85</sup> UNRWA was created in 1949 through General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) and, through the support of voluntary contributions, provides education, infrastructure, health care, microfinance, and refugee camp maintenance in the region.<sup>86</sup> Finally, the UN Truce Supervision Organization is the peacekeeping mission that has been overseeing ceasefire and armistice agreements between Israel and the oPt since 1948.<sup>87</sup>

## ***Legal Applicability of Israeli Settlements and Security Considerations***

According to General Assembly resolutions and Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), Israeli settlements in the oPt infringe on international law.<sup>88</sup> An advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2004 also determined that the growing number of Israeli settlements in the oPt were in

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<sup>74</sup> UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: General Assembly*.

<sup>75</sup> UN DPI, *Fourth Committee Approves 12 Drafts, Including 9 on Israeli-Palestinian Questions, as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Third Session*, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: The United Nations Economic and Social Council*.

<sup>77</sup> UN DPI, *'Continuing absence' of political solution to Israel-Palestine conflict 'undermines and compounds' UN efforts to end wholesale crisis*, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> UN OHCHR, *UN rights office issues report on business and human rights in settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory*, 2018; UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People*; UNRWA, *Who We Are*.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> UN OHCHR, *Database Pursuant Human Rights Council Resolution 31/36*, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid; UN DPA, *UNSCO – The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process: About*, 2019; Ibid; UNTSO, *Mandate*, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> UNISPAL, *The Question of Palestine: Civil Society and the Question of Palestine*.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



breach of international law and impeded on the Palestinian’s right to self-determination.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the ICJ’s advisory opinion stated that Israel has neglected its responsibilities as outlined in international humanitarian and international human rights law.<sup>90</sup> As the oPt has been under Israeli occupation since 1967, resolutions such as General Assembly resolution 73/98 (2018), argue that Israel is in breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, also known as the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>91</sup> According to General Assembly resolution 73/98 (2018), Israel’s breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention is based on the fact that under the auspices of this convention, the occupying power is not allowed to transfer civilians of its own population into the occupied territory.<sup>92</sup>

Alternatively, the Israeli settlers’ argument for the continuing support of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is that the territory was taken from Jordan, which has since ceded control of the territory.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, the settlers see the oPt as a territory with “no legal sovereign” controlling the area and thus not a violation of international legal principles.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the Israeli government does not consider the West Bank as part of its sovereign territory.<sup>95</sup> Israel regards the West Bank as a disputed territory and thus rejects the claims that it is infringing on international law.<sup>96</sup> East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel in 1967 and is claimed by Israel as part of its capital and now houses a significant Israeli population.<sup>97</sup> However, unlike Israel, who views the West Bank and East Jerusalem as separate entities, the Palestinian population perceives both areas to be one occupied West Bank.<sup>98</sup>

### ***Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory***

The maintenance of human rights in the oPt has been of particular concern, with much of the international community viewing Israeli settlements posing a threat to the maintenance of human rights in the oPt.<sup>99</sup> In addition to the reported unlawful detentions and other human rights abuses in the oPt, the Israeli settlements have caused Palestinians to be uprooted and forcefully evicted from their homes to accommodate growing Israeli settlements in the oPt, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 73/98 (2018).<sup>100</sup> According to the Human Rights Watch’s 2019 report on Israel and Palestine, Israeli authorities “discriminate[d] systematically against Palestinians and in favor of settlers” by allowing freedom of movement, providing services, and issuing building permits selectively.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Israeli authorities were reported to have destroyed 390 Palestinian homes in 2018, “forcibly displacing 407 people” to make way for new Israeli settlements in the West Bank.<sup>102</sup> As highlighted in the 2018 note by the Secretary-General entitled “Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories” (A/73/499), Palestinians were pressured to relocate to make land available for Israeli settlers through direct measures, such as forced evictions and demolitions.<sup>103</sup> Less direct methods of ensuring displacement, such as limitation of services, police raids, and the detention of civilians including children, were also employed.<sup>104</sup> Although this special committee was a UN undertaking, “Israel did not recognize and cooperate with the Special

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<sup>89</sup> UN General Assembly, *Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Note by the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/273)*, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Israel and Palestine: Events of 2018*, 2019.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Committee.<sup>105</sup> According to the General Assembly, this divergence on efforts in ensuring that human rights are maintained and protected in the oPt, especially in relation to Israeli settlements in the region, runs counter to the General Assembly's repeated emphasis that collaboration from all sides is necessary in working to achieve sustainable peace in the region.<sup>106</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The continuation by Israel, often regarded as the occupying Power, of settlement activities in the oPt is of high concern to the General Assembly Fourth Committee.<sup>107</sup> As the ICJ has found that these settlements are contrary to international law and impede on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, a solution to these settlements needs to be found.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, it has been widely recognized that Israeli settlements and the presence of Israeli forces in the oPt have negatively affected the human rights of local Palestinians, such as their lacking right to self-determination, arbitrary arrests, and torture.<sup>109</sup> Moving forward, it is important that the General Assembly Fourth Committee works within the UN system to find a solution to the Israeli settlements in the oPt, including East Jerusalem and the Occupied Syrian Golan.<sup>110</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates consider how to address this issue, they should consider the following questions: Seeing the complexity of Israeli settlements in the oPt, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, how can the UN General Assembly help achieve a sustainable solution that accommodates all parties involved? How could the General Assembly implement an effective accountability mechanism to help uphold human rights in the oPt? Seeing as Israeli settlements have been constructed in the oPt, what are possible mechanisms through which a two-state solution, as proposed and supported by the UN, could still be achieved?

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*This chapter of the Human Rights Watch's annual report provides a detailed account of the security, humanitarian, and human rights relationship between Israel and the oPt. In addition to an extensive overview of the situation in all regions of the oPt, the report provides insightful statistics concerning the Israeli settlements in the oPt. Delegates will find this report useful as it provides extensive information on the effects of Israeli settlements on the oPt and the Palestinian and other Arab populations in the area.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Tenth emergency special session. (2004). *Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem (A/RES/ES-10/15)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 2 March 2019 from: <http://www.undocs.org/A/RES/ES-10/15>

*This resolution recognizes the importance of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s advisory opinion following Israel's construction of a border wall separating Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Furthermore, the resolution highlights the aspects of the ICJ's that were requested and are based on a question posed by the United Nations regarding the construction of this border wall. This resource is helpful for delegates as the resolution highlights relevant aspects of the ICJ's extensive advisory opinion.*

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-second session. (2007). *Note by the Secretary-General: Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/62/75-E/2007/13)*. Retrieved 2 March 2019 from:

<http://www.undocs.org/A/62/75>

*This note by the Secretary-General discusses one of the consequences of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the conflict between the two parties. In addition to a detailed assessment of the negative economic consequences by the Palestinian people, the note also discusses injuries, arbitrary arrests, population displacement, and restrictions to humanitarian aid. Delegates will find this note insightful, as it provides a detailed overview of the effects Israeli settlements have on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Palestinian people.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2018). *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Occupied Syrian Golan (A/RES/73/98)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the Report of the Fourth Committee. Retrieved 2 March 2019 from:

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*This resolution was adopted in response to the continued work of the Special Committee in assessing the impact of Israel on the Palestinian people and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The document reiterates the detrimental effects of the current situation and request Israel to seize its policies and stop the creation of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It clearly highlights the dynamics within the General Assembly and its recognition for the maintenance of human rights and international law.*

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## II. Comprehensive Review of Special Political Missions

*“Efforts to improve the effectiveness, transparency, accountability and representativeness of special political missions must include, at their core, a focus on mission capacities to strengthen prevention of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict.”<sup>111</sup>*

### **Introduction**

United Nations (UN) Peace Operations broadly encompass the organization's work to build peace in regions across the world through peacekeeping operations, political missions, and good office engagements.<sup>112</sup> Special Political Missions (SPMs) hold their own place in UN Peace Operations as flexible tools for preventing conflict and sustaining peace.<sup>113</sup> According to *United Nations Political Missions: Report of the Secretary-General*, while SPMs can vary widely in their functions they can be broadly defined as civilian-led missions that are deployed for a limited duration to conduct political activities that help build sustainable peace.<sup>114</sup> SPMs monitor, facilitate, and build capacity, as opposed to a peacekeeping operation (PKO) which is a Security Council-approved internationally-led military mission to help maintain peace and stability.<sup>115</sup> Prior to the 1990s, SPMs referred to political missions assisted in supporting with decolonization efforts, ending civil wars, and helping democratize certain Member States.<sup>116</sup> SPMs now exist as one important part of UN Peace Operations and work to prevent conflicts, help mediate peace processes, protect civilians, and sustain difficult peace processes.<sup>117</sup> Using their flexibility, SPMs operate in environments “marked by regionalized conflicts and intercommunal violence, large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, [...] transnational organized crime, arms proliferation[,] and terrorism.”<sup>118</sup>

Many SPMs are overseen by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). Some SPMs are however not directly managed by the DPPA, such as Security Council panels.<sup>119</sup> Even though SPMs were not formally recognized as their own entity until 1993 with the establishment of the UN Office in Burundi and the UN Special Mission in Afghanistan, political missions have, to some degree, been present since the UN's inception.<sup>120</sup> SPMs also face drawbacks, such as possessing inadequate resources, paying insufficient attention to situation-specific mandates, and being unable to effectively time the enactment of certain UN peace operations.<sup>121</sup> As such, in 2015, the Secretary-General proposed four necessary shifts for an SPM to be successful: ensuring the primacy of politics in an SPM, determining the adequate spectrum of peace operations, fostering regional and global partnerships, and a more “field-focused United Nations Secretariat and more people-centred United Nations Peace Operations.”<sup>122</sup> As part of its mandate, the General Assembly fourth committee is in a position to ensure SPMs are effective and make improvements.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> UN DPO, *United Nations Peace Operations*, 2019.

<sup>112</sup> Kugal, *No Helmets, Just Suits: Political missions as an instrument of the UN Security Council for civilian conflict management*, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/RES/72/89)*, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> UN DPI, *United Nations Political Missions: Report of the Secretary-General*, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> UN General Assembly, *Identical letters dated June 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/70/95-S/2015/446)*, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> UN General Assembly, *Overall policy matter pertaining to special political missions: Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/337)*, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> UN DPPA, *DPPA Around the World*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*; UN Peacekeeping, *Reforming Peacekeeping*, 2019.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-30.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

## ***International and Regional Framework***

The international community first took a deep look at the role of Peace Operations in the 1992 Report of the Secretary-General titled *An Agenda for Peace*.<sup>124</sup> The report indicated that a lack of political will and an unengaged international community were components of unsuccessful settlement of disputes, as well as the absence of a reliable means to conduct and execute activities meant to build peace.<sup>125</sup> According to the report, sustainable peace requires more than just the absence of war and that post conflict peace-building is a necessary counterpart to preventative diplomacy.<sup>126</sup> SPMs pay attention to these shortcomings by creating platforms for diplomacy and offering the local community experts in fields ranging from economic integration, the rule of law, and the construction of sound policies.<sup>127</sup>

Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to the UN's failures to prevent the genocide in Rwanda and protect the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, appointed the Panel of United Nations Peace Operations.<sup>128</sup> The Panel was tasked with analyzing the failures of the current UN peace operations and identifying how to make existing operations better with "realistic recommendations for change," resulting in the comprehensive *Brahimi Report* (2000).<sup>129</sup> In 2008, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' subsidiary Department of Field Support published the report *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines*, encompassing all aspects regarding UN Peace Operations.<sup>130</sup> This guide aimed to both examine different aspects of UN peace efforts in finding best practices and give a better understanding of UN peace operations in terms of their strengths and limitations.<sup>131</sup> The doctrine indicates that there is often a need for SPM to precede, follow, or sometimes work in conjunction with a PKO to support the process of long-term recovery for a Member State or region.<sup>132</sup>

The UN General Assembly adopted resolution 58/294 titled "Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council" in 2004 and was the first time the body explicitly mentioned SPMs.<sup>133</sup> The subsequent year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/281 (2005) titled "Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the Reports, Letters of the Secretary-General Assembly and/or the Security Council" regarding the expenditures of individual SPMs and other special envoys.<sup>134</sup> Starting in 2014, the General Assembly replaced this reporting process with a more comprehensive mechanism for reviewing SPMs.<sup>135</sup> The first of such resolutions was General Assembly resolution 68/85 (2013) entitled "Comprehensive review of special political missions," which called for cooperation among relevant partners, the UN Secretariat, and that the Secretary-General release an overall report regarding SPM efforts "toward ensuring transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender participation, expertise and effectiveness."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Center for UN Reform Education, *An Agenda for Peace*, 1992.

<sup>126</sup> UN General Assembly, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping: Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992 (A/47/277-S/24111)*, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid p.11.

<sup>128</sup> UN Peacekeeping, *United Nations Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2002.

<sup>129</sup> UN General Assembly & Security Council, *Identical letters dated 21 August 2000 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/55/305-S/2000/809)*, 2000.

<sup>130</sup> UN DPO, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> UN General Assembly, *Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or Security Council (A/RES/58/294)*, 2004, p.1.

<sup>134</sup> UN General Assembly, *Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the Report, Letters of the Secretary – General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/RES/60/281)*, 2005.

<sup>135</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/RES/69/95)*, 2014.

<sup>136</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/RES/68/85)*, 2013, p. 1.



Beginning in 2017 through General Assembly resolution 72/199 titled “Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar,” the UN began to reform its peace and security system and toolbox.<sup>137</sup> The purpose of this restructuring was to prioritize prevention and sustainable peace, “enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions,” streamline UN peace and security operations and programs, and improve collaboration between peace and security missions and development and human rights bodies at the UN.<sup>138</sup> To bring about this change, the UN proposed five “elements of Reform”: creating the DPPA and Department of Peace Operations, creating a “single political-operational structure” that integrates regional governance structures, establishing executive-level “Standing Principals Groups” in the UN Secretariat, enhancing priority areas to ensure the cohesion of programs across the UN, and introducing numerous non-structural changes into the UN peace and security process.<sup>139</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

The UN Security Council has a role in maintaining and establishing many SPMs.<sup>140</sup> Though flexible, the specificity of certain SPMs means that as conflicts change and need new resources, SPMs mandated by the Security Council can often be follow-up missions to prior SPMs.<sup>141</sup> For example, the UN Mission in Angola (UNMA) was created to succeed the UN Office in Angola (UNOA), which was first to address capacity building and humanitarian assistance in 1999.<sup>142</sup> UNMA came to assist government officials in meeting their human rights obligations, economic recovery, and development goals.<sup>143</sup>

The General Assembly takes most of its action regarding SPMs through the work of the Special Political and Decolonization, or Fourth Committee.<sup>144</sup> In the 2018 draft resolution entitled “Comprehensive Review of Special Political Missions” (A/C.4/73/L.8), the committee recognizes precedent that SPMS are a flexible tool for the UN to use in maintaining international peace and security as they provide a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.<sup>145</sup> The draft resolution highlights aspects necessary to create and operate effective SPMS, such as clear and achievable mandates, support and coordination between regional and sub regional organizations to ensure conflict prevention.<sup>146</sup> The document also highlights the restructuring of the peace and security architecture as the preferable option to ensure a more coordinated approach to strengthen SPMs and their ability to deliver on their mandates.<sup>147</sup>

In 2005, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was created by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council to function as an intergovernmental advisory body of the UN supporting peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.<sup>148</sup> The establishment of this body came from the 2005 General Assembly resolution 60/180 entitled “The Peacebuilding Commission,” and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005).<sup>149</sup> Of those resolutions, the mandate created aimed to bring together relevant actors and resources to share and advise best practices of post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, focus on reconstruction and institution-building efforts in order to bring about a future of sustainable development, and to improve the coordination of the relevant actors and ensure financing for post conflict recovery.<sup>150</sup> In

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<sup>137</sup> UN General Assembly, *Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar (A/RES/72/199)*, 2017.

<sup>138</sup> UN United to Reform, *Peace and Security Reform*.

<sup>139</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Overall Policy Matters Pertaining to Special Political Missions (A/73/377)*, 2018.

<sup>140</sup> UN Security Council, *Political Missions and Offices*, 2019.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> UN General Assembly, *Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee)*, 2019.

<sup>145</sup> UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/RES/73/101)*, 2018, p.1.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> UN PBC, *Peacebuilding Commission*, 2019.

<sup>149</sup> UN PBC, *Mandate*, 2019; UN General Assembly, *The Peacebuilding Commission (A/RES/60/180)*, 2005, p. 2; UN Security Council, *Post-conflict peacebuilding (S/RES/1645 (2005))*, 2005.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

the Report of the PBC on its twelfth session from 29 January 2019, report 73/734 where the PBC asserted the belief that for SPMs to be more effective, the PBC should be more included in the determinations of SPM reviews and created mandates.<sup>151</sup>

***What Special Political Missions Can Provide: UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) & the Special Envoy on Myanmar***

The UN Regional Office For Central Africa (UNOCA) is an SPM that operates with a regional mandate to help prevent conflict and consolidate peace in Central Africa.<sup>152</sup> UNOCA’s work covers eleven Member States and include Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.<sup>153</sup> Established by the UN Secretary-General and Security Council in March 2011, UNOCA works with national, regional, sub-regional, and grass roots organizations to address cross-border challenges.<sup>154</sup> UNOCA also works with the African Union and Member States affected by the militia groups, such as the Lord’s Resistance Army and Boko Haram through facilitating dialogue between regional actors to help implement strategies that improve civilian protection, early-warning response to violence, and humanitarian response.<sup>155</sup>

Another SPM of note is the Special Envoy on Myanmar, which was approved following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/248 (2018) entitled “Situation of human rights in Myanmar.”<sup>156</sup> The Special Envoy acts as the link between Myanmar and the UN Secretariat, most notably the Secretary-General, in its process of democratization and “to make the peace process more inclusive, improve the lives of its peoples and secure greater empowerment to them.”<sup>157</sup> The Special Envoy on Myanmar is an example of an SPM in a Member State where there is no simultaneous peacekeeping operation.<sup>158</sup> Although there is regional unrest in Myanmar, the goals for the Special Envoy are to help move the political processes forward and to ensure sustainable peace and prosperity for the Member State.<sup>159</sup>

Although SPMs frequently run in parallel to other UN operations, missions, and programs ranging from UN Development Programme (UNDP) projects to PKOs, they serve their own specific mission that is distinct from other engagements.<sup>160</sup> Unlike more rigid engagements such as PKOs, SPMs are more flexible and can be more easily adapted to specific environments in Member States or regions, as is the case with UNOCA.<sup>161</sup> This is to say that, for example, UNOCA can be a large SPM that acts as an umbrella and encompasses coordinating the fight against the terrorist organization Boko Haram, combating the Lord’s Resistance Army, fighting maritime piracy, thwarting poachers, and hosting the “Peace Tournament: Football for a Better World.”<sup>162</sup> Alternatively, the Special Envoy on Myanmar’s sole focus is to support the Myanmar government in its democratization efforts and to help ensure sustainable peace.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its twelfth session (A/73/724-S/2019/88)*, 2019, p. 9.

<sup>152</sup> UN DPPA, *United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa*, 2019.

<sup>153</sup> UNOCA, *History and Map*, 2019.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> UN General Assembly, *Situation of Hyman Rights in Myanmar (A/RES/72/248)*, 2018.

<sup>157</sup> UN DPPA, *Special Envoy Myanmar*.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> UNOCA, *Fight against terrorism and Boko Haram*, 2019; UNOCA, *Fight against Lord’s Resistance Army, LRA*, 2019; UNOCA, *Fight against maritime piracy*, 2019; UNOCA, *Poaching and traffic of wild species*, 2019; UNOCA, *Peace Tournament: Football for a Better World*, 2019.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

## ***Evolution of SPMs: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace***

In November 2018, Under-Secretary-General Rosemary A. DiCarlo gave a briefing to the General Assembly Fourth Committee on “Comprehensive Review of SPMs.”<sup>164</sup> In this briefing, DiCarlo gave examples of several SPMs that saw success for their efforts in supporting long-term peace efforts in challenging and evolving environments; one of which mentioned the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).<sup>165</sup> UNAMI is a political mission that was established in 2003 and continues to operate with an updated mission mandate.<sup>166</sup> UNAMI has been helping to support government efforts for inclusive dialogue of all its citizens, as well as regional cooperation with neighboring countries. The mission underwent numerous changes ranging from emergency response, to stabilization, and later in the processes of recovery, reconstruction, and regular development.<sup>167</sup>

In response to the evolution of SPMs, the General Assembly adopted resolution 73/101 (2018) entitled “Comprehensive review of special political missions” to improve SPMs and increase their effectiveness.<sup>168</sup> Among the suggestions, the resolution called for the Secretary-General “to hold regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue” with involved entities, such as Member States and strengthening accountability to the Security Council by encouraging the Security Council to request more regular reporting.<sup>169</sup> The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to produce a report at the next session that assesses SPMs’ “efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and the equal participation of women, as well as youth participation.”<sup>170</sup> In addition to the review measures, the cross-pillar initiative between the DPPA and the UNDP entitled the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention is meant to achieve a holistic approach towards sustainable stability in Member States.<sup>171</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

SPMs serve a special role within the UN system as they can embody a great variety of types of activities and can run alongside other UN programs.<sup>172</sup> They are unique, civilian-led operations that work to support political activities, such as monitoring elections or mediating peace agreements, that help build and sustain peace.<sup>173</sup> They also often work in challenging and evolving environments, which require they be nimble and adaptive.<sup>174</sup> As with many current UN efforts, there is a growing need for SPMs to evolve and adapt to a changing world and for Member States to equip the UN with the necessary resources and leadership to accomplish such aspirations.<sup>175</sup> With the recent restructuring of the UN system and the creation of a joint peace and security pillar, Member States are positioned to guide how SPMs can be bolstered to more effectively address conflict and violence through civilian-led efforts.<sup>176</sup>

### ***Further Research***

Delegates should consider the following questions as they research this issue: As the UN reforms continue, how can SPMs adapt to maintain their importance within the UN’s peace and security realm? What should the comprehensive review of SPMs include in order to enhance their effectiveness and

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<sup>164</sup> UN DPPA, *Briefing to the Fourth Committee on “Comprehensive Review of Special Political Missions”, Under-Secretary-General Rosemary A. DiCarlo*, 2018.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> UN DPPA, *United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq*, 2019.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> UN DPPA, *Peace and Development Advisors – Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention*.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 2018.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

improve their applicability? How should the General Assembly Fourth Committee approach the comprehensive review of SPMs to ensure that the missions are able to maintain their adaptability while also ensuring transparency and inclusivity of missions?

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*This overview provides a concise view of SPMs, how they operate within the international community, and how they differ and collaborate with different UN entities, such as PKOs. This source is particularly valuable as it provides a broad understanding of the civilian component that SPMs operate under and how their work is mandated and carried out. Delegates will find this resource useful in learning about the general concepts and history behind SPMs.*

United Nations Department of Public Information. (n.d.). *United Nations Political Missions: Report of the Secretary-General*. Retrieved 15 July 2019 from:

[http://www.unis.unvienna.org/pdf/0\\_Regular\\_Updates/Political\\_Missions\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unis.unvienna.org/pdf/0_Regular_Updates/Political_Missions_Report.pdf)

*The Secretary-General and UN Department of Public Information published this concise report that details the activities of SPMs within the UN system. This resource is particularly helpful in providing a comprehensive and detailed overview of how different SPMs functions and operations, and outlines specific activities that are being conducted. Delegates will find this resource particularly helpful in conceptualizing how SPMs practically conduct their work and how it ties into actions they wish SPMs to take.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2018). *Report of the Secretary-General: Overall Policy Matters Pertaining to Special Political Missions (A/73/377)*. Retrieved 9 June 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/A/73/337>

*This report of the Secretary-General is the most recent report about special political missions. The report is an extensive document that provides an overview of recent developments within special political missions, key operational developments, interactive dialogue with Member States, key policy issues, and concluding observations. According to the report, key policy issues pertaining to special political missions are conflict prevention and sustaining peace, regional partnerships and the work of regional offices, ensuring an inclusive approach to peace, safety and security, and geographical distribution and gender representation.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2018). *Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/RES/73/101)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 17 July 2019 from:

<https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/101>

*This document is the most recent resolution highlighting the continuing need for the comprehensive review of special political missions. The resolution details the UN's plans and goals for the upcoming year to improve special political missions and streamline peace and security efforts. Incorporating inclusive considerations, transparency, and a gendered lens are also highlighted as important aspects of special political missions. Delegates will find this source useful as it provides a concise overview of the UN's most recent review efforts.*

United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. (n.d.). *DPPA Around the World* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from: <https://dppa.un.org/en/dppa-around-world>

*This website provides a detailed overview of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The page includes an interactive map of current special political missions and also a link to past missions. The website also provides detailed explanations of the different types of special political missions and how they contribute to*





*the UN's greater peace and security efforts. Delegates will find this website useful as it is a centralized website that explains the intricacies of special political missions and has links to all relevant programs for further elaboration.*

United Nations, United to Reform. (n.d.). *Peace and Security Reform* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from: <https://reform.un.org/content/peace-and-security-reform>

*This website is the centralized page for the UN's peace and security pillar reform. As the UN is undergoing its re-organization and the peace and security pillar is significantly reformed, this website provides an up-to-date overview of the changes. The website also explains the mandates of the two new peace and security bodies: the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations. This source is a valuable resource for delegates to consult to understand the ongoing changes of the UN's peace and security reforms.*

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