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General Assembly Third Committee Background Guide 2025

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations Washington DC Conference (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the General Assembly Third Committee. Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staff. This year's committee staff are Director Theodore Alberto and Assistant Director Andrew Kirk. Theodore is a graduate student in International Affairs and works part-time at his university's Center for the Business of Sustainability. Andrew is an undergraduate student in International Studies and Sustainability Studies and works as a Student Ambassador for his university. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretary-General Emma Bott, and Secretary-General, Alliyah Edwards.

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Realizing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through the Implementation of UNDRIP
2. Combatting Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in the Achievement of the SDGs

The General Assembly Third Committee is a principal body of the United Nations acting as a global forum to address social, humanitarian, and human rights issues internationally. The Third Committee's mandate includes formulating non-binding policy recommendations to promote international cooperation. The Third Committee is managed by a Secretariat and an elected Bureau. Resolutions are primarily adopted by consensus and submitted to the General Assembly Plenary for consideration.

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 explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit their Position Papers by 11:59 p.m. (DC Time) on 15 October in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [DC Position Papers page](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- 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.
- 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 this committee, please contact Under-Secretary-General Emma Bott at usgemma.dc@nmun.org or the Secretary-General, Alliyah Edwards at secgen.dc@nmun.org

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

Theodore Alberto, Director
Andrew Kirk, Assistant Director



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Committee Overview

Introduction

The General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy-making body in the United Nations system.¹ With its universal membership, the General Assembly makes policy recommendations to actors at all levels, including governments, regional organizations, and other United Nations bodies.² Its work is spread across six Main Committees, each of which discusses topics within a thematic area, adopting resolutions that are then considered by the broader General Assembly Plenary.³

The General Assembly Third Committee is mandated to discuss all matters related to social, humanitarian, and cultural affairs, including human rights issues.⁴ This involves a wide variety of agenda items, including: advancement of women; protection of children; treatment of refugees through the elimination of racism and discrimination; promotion of fundamental freedoms and the right to self-determination; indigenous issues; and a range of social matters such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.⁵

Mandate, Function, and Powers

The first article of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established that one of the purposes of the United Nations is the achievement of international cooperation in the promotion of human rights.⁶ Its fourth chapter established the composition and capabilities of the General Assembly, and with it the mandate of the Third Committee.⁷ The Third Committee's work is also heavily influenced by the *International Bill of Human Rights* (1966), an overarching framework consisting of three fundamental human rights documents, namely the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.⁸

The General Assembly acts as a forum for dialogue and cooperation, providing general policy recommendations rather than carrying out operative tasks.⁹ Its policy recommendations are non-binding and their implementation is conducted by Member States, the United Nations Secretariat, and other United Nations bodies, each of which independently align their work with General Assembly resolutions.¹⁰ The General Assembly's resolutions are formal documents expressing the agreement and will of the

¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Main Bodies*. N.d.

² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. pp. 1, 52.

³ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *UN General Assembly Documentation*. 2023.

⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)*. N.d.

⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 73.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Fact Sheet No. 2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 36.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 52.



international community, and the Third Committee adopts the majority of its resolutions by consensus, meaning no vote is taken and no Member States have objections to the content.¹¹ In line with the *Charter of the United Nations*, the mandate of the General Assembly can be summarized as:

- The General Assembly **will generally**: make recommendations to Member States, the Security Council, other United Nations bodies and organs, United Nations specialized agencies, and other international actors; initiate studies and advance efforts to promote international cooperation; and consider or request reports from other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; establish United Nations observance days, create expert groups or commissions, formulate mechanisms for treaty negotiation, or refer an issue to the International Court of Justice.¹²
- The General Assembly **will not generally**: dictate the specific actions required for the implementation of policies it recommends, allowing Member States and other bodies to determine and implement operational details; create new bodies except in those rare instances where ubiquitous international demand requires the consolidation of existing bodies or where a concept and mandate have been fully developed, typically through years of negotiations; make recommendations on situations under consideration by the United Nations Security Council.¹³

The Third Committee tends to focus on high-level policy recommendations, calling for meetings or conferences on specific issues, and the initiation of studies, often relying on bodies with specific expertise.¹⁴ Additionally, the Third Committee examines the reports of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, which are independent human rights experts mandated to report and advise from a thematic or country-specific perspective.¹⁵

Governance, Funding, and Structure

The General Assembly is comprised of all 193 United Nations Member States, with observer status being granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full membership.¹⁶ Each Member State receives a single, equal vote; observers may not vote on substantive items and most decisions require a simple majority.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid. p. 37, 52.

¹² Ibid. p. 36.

¹³ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Are UN resolutions binding?* 2023; United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. N.d.; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Welcome to the Human Rights Council*. 2023; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly*. N.d.

¹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council*. 2023.

¹⁶ International Service for Human Rights. *Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly: A Practical Guide for NGOs*. 2017. p. 7.

¹⁷ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 13.



The Third Committee adopts approximately two-thirds of its resolutions by consensus and without a recorded vote.¹⁸ Its resolutions are passed on to the General Assembly Plenary for consideration in an annual report.¹⁹ The Third Committee's procedures are managed by a Secretariat and elected Bureau.²⁰ The Bureau assists with opening and closing each meeting, managing the discussions, pronouncing decisions, assisting with drafts and documents, and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure.²¹ The United Nations Secretariat also assists General Assembly committees by delivering substantive and logistical support.²² The Third Committee specifically considers reports from and engages in deliberations with the Human Rights Council and most human rights treaty bodies.²³ No subsidiary bodies report to the Third Committee.²⁴ All General Assembly meetings and events are funded through the United Nations regular budget.²⁵

¹⁸ Ibid.; International Service for Human Rights. *Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly: A Practical Guide for NGOs*. 2017. p. 30.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 37-38, 62, 68.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (A/520/Rev.19)*. 2021. pp. 30-31.

²² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.

²³ Ibid. pp. 73-74.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2023-24*. 2022. p. 412.



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1. Realizing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through the Implementation of UNDRIP

Introduction

Indigenous peoples continue to be vulnerable to violence, relocation, human rights abuses, and the consequences of economic growth and corporate activities.²⁶ Indigenous peoples comprise around 9% of the global population and represent approximately 19% of the world's impoverished.²⁷ The United Nations position on the term "Indigenous" has no official meaning; rather, persons who identify as Indigenous and are accepted as community members are what the term "Indigenous" officially means.²⁸ Indigenous people have a long history and close links to the natural resources and land in the area, giving them the distinction as pre-colonial people or pre-settlers.²⁹ Indigenous people also belong to different social, political, or economic groups, different culture, language, and beliefs.³⁰ Indigenous people establish social groups that are a minority when compared to the overall populations of the respective Member States.³¹ Lastly, Indigenous peoples commit to maintaining and reproducing their original environments and systems as distinct peoples and tribes.³²

On 13 September 2007, the General Assembly adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) with 143 states voting in favor, and four voting against, being Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States of America.³³ The four Member States that voted against UNDRIP cited their vote being due to worries about legal interpretations, sovereignty, and certain clauses that they believed went against their internal policy.³⁴ However, the four Member States that voted against UNDRIP have since changed their positions and are now in favor of it, which indicates universality and consensus for all United Nations Member States.³⁵ Citing changing domestic policies and reconciliation pledges, all four Member States later ratified UNDRIP; these were ratified by Canada in 2016, the United States of America in 2010, New Zealand in 2010, and Australia in 2009.³⁶ Australia has been urged to entrench UNDRIP in law, while Canada introduced federal legislation in 2021 to align laws with it.³⁷ UNDRIP outlines many key rights for Indigenous peoples.³⁸ Some of these rights include fundamental human rights that are also outlined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), such as

²⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 2.

²⁷ United Nations, Global Compact. *Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 2.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 2.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 2.

³¹ Ibid. p. 3.

³² Ibid. p. 3.

³³ Ibid. p. 3.

³⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. UN Press. "General Assembly Adopts Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples; 'Major Step Forward' towards Human Rights for All, Says President". 2007.

³⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007.

³⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948. p. 1.



the rights to equality and non-discrimination in UDHR Articles 1-4.³⁹ Other essential UDHR rights further highlighted include the right to have autonomy and self-determination, along with cultural rights and socio-economic rights, such as the right to quality education and access to media in their respective native languages.⁴⁰

International and Regional Framework

UNDRIP is a milestone framework document that outlines the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples.⁴¹ One example right established in UNDRIP's framework is the legal recognition and protection of indigenous land and resources.⁴² UNDRIP's core legal framework also outlines the legal right for Indigenous peoples to have healthcare, education, protection from violence, and the environmental protection of recognized indigenous land in Articles 11-28.⁴³ Articles 11 through 28 are crucial to the work of the Third Committee, as the goal of ensuring legal rights for Indigenous peoples to have healthcare, education, and protection from violence is a principle highlighted in its mandate of promoting legislation in ensuring social, humanitarian, and cultural affairs.⁴⁴ Furthermore, UNDRIP is "the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples," according to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), which specifically addresses collective rights to land, self-determination, and cultural preservation—aspects that are insufficiently addressed by more general frameworks, such as the UDHR.⁴⁵ UNDRIP's declaration on the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples is outlined in the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) provisions in Articles 26 and 32, filling in the gaps in previous accords by providing legislative and policy instruments to counteract the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and the dispossession of their land.⁴⁶ UNDRIP's adoption, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), was a "triumph for justice", because it reinterprets universal human rights through the prism of Indigenous lived experiences, which frequently call for special protections above and beyond general non-discrimination principles.⁴⁷

The General Assembly adopted the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) in 1966, and it came into effect in 1976, following ratification by 35 Member States.⁴⁸ UNDRIP was built upon crafting of key international documents, as discussed below, as its Articles 11-28 share many key themes in the declarations of the foundational frameworks discussed in this paragraph.⁴⁹ The

³⁹ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ United Nations. *Third Committee of the General Assembly*. 2023.

⁴⁵ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁴⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 3.

⁴⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Background to the Covenant - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. N.d.

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 2.



ICESCR emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples through its focus on cultural rights.⁵⁰ The Covenant specifically highlights the right and need for cultural development in Article 1, along with the right to take part in cultural life, especially regarding science in Article 15.⁵¹ The 1989 International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* also sought to establish an international framework on the fundamental human rights of Indigenous peoples.⁵² Specifically highlighted in the preamble of the ILO Convention is the social and cultural diversity and the ecological harmony brought about by Indigenous peoples.⁵³ The ICESCR called for the responsible management of resources and the fundamental recognition of native or indigenous land.⁵⁴ In contemporary practice, the responsible management of resources would be through realizing both Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (no poverty) and SDG 15 (life on land) of General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).⁵⁵ Specifically, SDGs 1 and 15 focus on the recognition of the land tenure of Indigenous peoples along with promoting the frameworks to implement sustainable forest management through the protection of forests, such as but not limited to, anti-illegal logging protections to promote biodiversity.⁵⁶

UNDRIP calls upon the various agencies in the United Nations to enact collaborative measures to tackle Indigenous welfare, in line with the various targets of the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda also highlights the rights of Indigenous peoples through the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.⁵⁸ The Forum outlined the 370 million Indigenous peoples around the world, along with the vision to leave no one single person behind.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Forum has called for United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes to collect and disseminate data that would help in implementing programs that can help Indigenous peoples.⁶⁰ Specifically, SDG target 1.4, on "...equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources...."⁶¹ To reinforce this, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues emphasizes that legal acknowledgment of ancestral areas is a necessary component of eradicating poverty for Indigenous peoples.⁶² Furthermore, SDG target 5.2 outlines the need for sustainable management to combat deforestation, by outlining that "promoting the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally."⁶³ Since Indigenous peoples oversee 28%

⁵⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² International Labour Organization. *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*. 1989. p. 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda*. 2016. p. 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 3.

⁵⁸ United Nations, General Assembly, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda*. 2016. p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 1.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 15.

⁶² United Nations, General Assembly, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda*. 2016. p. 15.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 24.



of the world's land and preserve 80% of its biodiversity, the role of indigenous peoples in stewardship is vital.⁶⁴

Role of the International System

The Third Committee is charged with dealing with social, humanitarian, and cultural matters, and is essential to the advancement of Indigenous peoples' rights across the world.⁶⁵ The Third Committee has placed a high priority on elevating Indigenous voices and tackling issues like improving healthcare to Indigenous peoples and the efforts of indigenous land acknowledgement that stems from colonialism and marginalization ever since UNDRIP was adopted in 2007.⁶⁶ The Third Committee calls on Member States to implement the UNDRIP, safeguard Indigenous territories, and provide substantial input in the procedures for making decisions through yearly resolutions, such as General Assembly resolution 78/477 on “Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (2023).⁶⁷ This framework, outlined in the resolution, demonstrates the Committee's dedication to converting idealistic ideas into workable policy, such as preserving cultural heritage, granting equal access to resources, and defending self-determination.⁶⁸ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) also collates statistics and prepares reports on Indigenous welfare.⁶⁹

Indigenous rights are at the forefront of the United Nations' priorities through General Assembly resolution 77/460 (2022), on *The Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.⁷⁰ Resolution 77/640 covers a comprehensive set of rights for Indigenous peoples, such as acknowledgement and return of Indigenous land, fostering a positive online environment, and a call violence towards end violence for Indigenous women and girls.⁷¹ Furthermore, the resolution also calls upon United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to enact humanitarian action for indigenous children, especially in healthcare and education.⁷² To guarantee that their perspectives influence international decisions, recent initiatives have included increasing Indigenous peoples participation in United Nations procedures, such as the 2024 resolution designating co-facilitators and Indigenous advisers.⁷³ In keeping with its continued commitment to cultural rights, the Third Committee also established the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) to reinvigorate the linguistic legacy established by Indigenous

⁶⁴ International Institute for Sustainable Development SDG Knowledge Hub. “Guest Article: No Sustainable Development without Indigenous Peoples | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD. 2019.

⁶⁵ United Nations. *Third Committee of the General Assembly*. 2023.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ United Nations, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD). *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution “Rights of Indigenous Peoples”*. 2025.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/77/460)*. 2022.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ United Nations, General Assembly Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *General Assembly Completes Substantive Work, Adopting Several Texts, Including on Multilingualism, Indigenous Peoples' Enhanced Participation at United Nations*. 2024.



peoples.⁷⁴ The Third Committee's function in incorporating Indigenous viewpoints into frameworks for global governance is highlighted by these acts.⁷⁵

HRC has many initiatives to ensure the rights of Indigenous peoples.⁷⁶ HRC's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was created in 2007 through resolution 6/36.⁷⁷ The mechanism primarily receives knowledge and counsel on Indigenous Peoples' rights from the reports made to the OHCHR.⁷⁸ The Expert Mechanism also helps Member States fulfill the objectives of UNDRIP by focusing its investigative missions to include the examination of Indigenous rights.⁷⁹ The Expert Mechanism carries out research to promote and safeguard the rights of Indigenous peoples by: defining the implications of fundamental principles like autonomy and the right to free and informed consent; analyzing successful practices and obstacles in a wide range of areas related to Indigenous peoples' rights; and proposing policies, laws, and programs that Member States and other entities can implement.⁸⁰ To supplement this mission, seven independent experts on Indigenous peoples' rights make up the Expert Mechanism.⁸¹ HRC appoints the experts, who are chosen based on their gender balance, expertise in Indigenous rights, and appropriate consideration for experts of Indigenous heritage.⁸² From here, the General Assembly reports the Expert Mechanism findings through resolutions, such as the 2023 General Assembly resolution 78/477.⁸³

HRC also has a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, whose mandate is to encourage effective methods for putting international norms about Indigenous peoples' rights into practice, such as new legislation, government initiatives, and positive agreements between governments and Indigenous peoples.⁸⁴ The seven Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also provides suggestions and ideas for suitable actions to stop and address infringements on indigenous peoples' rights.⁸⁵ Lastly, the Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples report on the global state of Indigenous peoples' human rights.⁸⁶ Specifically, the Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples discuss particular instances when the rights of Indigenous peoples have allegedly been violated.⁸⁷ The General Assembly reports the Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous

⁷⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* | United Nations for Indigenous Peoples. 2022.

⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *General Assembly Completes Substantive Work, Adopting Several Texts, Including on Multilingualism, Indigenous Peoples' Enhanced Participation at United Nations*. 2024.

⁷⁶ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ United Nations, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD). *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution "Rights of Indigenous Peoples"*. 2025.

⁸⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.



Peoples findings through resolutions, such as the 2023 General Assembly resolution 78/477.⁸⁸ The World Bank also provides policy recommendations for the environmental protection of indigenous land through initiatives such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).⁸⁹ Regionally, there is the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC), which is an organization that focuses on ensuring the indigenous and cultural rights of 135 Indigenous peoples groups on the African continent.⁹⁰ The IPACC seeks to promote and conserve Indigenous culture in the African continent, through documenting culture, such as familial traditions, Indigenous medicine, and Indigenous ceremonies and dances.⁹¹ There are also advocacy-based Indigenous rights groups, such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, an Indigenous organization in the Americas that focuses on climate change, preserving indigenous knowledge, and environmental protection.⁹² Other non-government organizations (NGOs) that focus on Indigenous rights include Survival International, which specifically focuses on pursuing land rights and land reclamation for Indigenous people.⁹³ Organizations, like the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council focus on cultivating and protecting indigenous methods of healthcare and treatment.⁹⁴ Lastly, the World Health Organization (WHO) has also promoted and called for promoting indigenous methods of traditional healing and treatment.⁹⁵

Ensuring Healthcare for Indigenous Peoples

UNDRIP has cited the right to health care to Indigenous people without discrimination in Article 21.⁹⁶ UN DESA cites that Indigenous peoples have a reduced life expectancy by up to 20 years when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.⁹⁷ UN DESA further expands on this issue by citing that Indigenous peoples have worse health, are more likely to be disabled, have a lower quality of life, and eventually die sooner.⁹⁸ Specifically, Indigenous peoples are more vulnerable to high levels of diabetes and tuberculosis.⁹⁹ For example, Type 2 diabetes affects more than 50% of Indigenous individuals over 35, and this percentage is expected to increase.¹⁰⁰ In certain Indigenous groups, diabetes has become a pandemic, endangering the overall long-term well-being of Indigenous people.¹⁰¹ A contributing factor to these health vulnerabilities is poverty, which especially affects Indigenous women.¹⁰² Furthermore, poverty, environmental degradation, and a lack of culturally competent healthcare are frequently connected to the high rates of maternal mortality, malnutrition, and chronic illnesses like diabetes that

⁸⁸ United Nations, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD). *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution "Rights of Indigenous Peoples"*. 2025.

⁸⁹ Asyl Undeland, Development and Changing Climate. World Bank Blogs. *Indigenous land rights - a critical pillar of climate action*. 2021.

⁹⁰ Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee, *About IPACC*. N.d.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Indigenous Environmental Network. *Our Mission*. N.d.

⁹³ Survival International. *About Us and Our Work*. N.d.

⁹⁴ Indigenous Primary Health Care Council. *The IPHCC & Advancing Health Care for Indigenous Peoples*. 2023.

⁹⁵ WHO TEAM (Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine) *WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 meeting report: Gujarat Declaration*. 2023.

⁹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 17.

⁹⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Indigenous Peoples*. N.d.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.



disproportionately affect indigenous women.¹⁰³ Specifically, the Third Committee calls on Member States to implement UNDRIP in regards to Indigenous healthcare, along with providing substantial input in the procedures for making decisions through yearly resolutions, such as General Assembly resolution 78/477 (2023).¹⁰⁴

To help combat these health vulnerabilities, organizations like the Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing at the University of Manitoba have developed the Indigenous Healthcare Quality Framework.¹⁰⁵ The framework has 4 essential components that help develop a comprehensive and efficient healthcare system.¹⁰⁶ These components of the framework are: patients, healthcare providers, healthcare systems, and rights-based healthcare.¹⁰⁷ The integration of a morally driven rights-based healthcare framework allows patients and healthcare providers to develop a healthcare system that caters to Indigenous peoples who may face cultural or technological challenges.¹⁰⁸ A healthcare system that caters to Indigenous peoples is one that factors in cultural beliefs and traditional healing methods to complement modern medicine based on the requests of the specific Indigenous groups.¹⁰⁹ Healthcare providers can be assisted by international and regional non-profit organizations such as the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, a group where Indigenous peoples are served by an Indigenous-led and Indigenous-governed organization, which has 21 members in the Indigenous Primary Health Care Organization (IPHCO).¹¹⁰ Traditional healing and culture-based therapies are among the integrated and holistic treatments that the council and its organizations can offer.¹¹¹ These organizations ensure that Indigenous rights are represented and led by constituents who understand Indigenous culture.¹¹² Overall, the integration of a health framework and indigenous led organizations can help realize the goals of UNDRIP in the specific dimension of healthcare.¹¹³

Self-determination, environmental stewardship, and the preservation of Indigenous languages—all of which are inextricably linked to traditional health knowledge—are emphasized in General Assembly resolution 77/460 (2022) on "The Rights of Indigenous Peoples."¹¹⁴ WHO and the General Assembly have advocated for the incorporation of traditional Indigenous medicine into national health systems.¹¹⁵ WHO's Traditional Medicine Strategy (2014–2023) comes first, by increasing accessibility in rural regions, this strategy places a strong emphasis on the evidence-based integration of traditional techniques like acupuncture and herbal therapy into basic healthcare.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, WHO's Global Summit on Traditional Medicine produced the Gujarat Declaration (2023) advocates for utilizing Indigenous

¹⁰³ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD). *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution "Rights of Indigenous Peoples"*. 2025.

¹⁰⁵ Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing. *Indigenous Healthcare Quality Framework*. N.d.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Indigenous Primary Health Care Council. *The IPHCC & Advancing Health Care for Indigenous Peoples*. 2023.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/77/460)*. 2022. p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 3.

¹¹⁶ WHO TEAM (Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine). *WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 meeting report: Gujarat Declaration*. 2023.



knowledge to accomplish the SDGs and universal health coverage (UHC).¹¹⁷ The Global Summit draws attention to the need for culturally competent healthcare, as well as the function of traditional medicine in the treatment of mental health issues and noncommunicable illnesses.¹¹⁸ Finally, WHO's classification and inclusion of diseases from traditional medicine in the International Classification of Diseases is known as ICD-11-Coding for Traditional Medicine, making it possible to collect data uniformly and improving the recognition worldwide.¹¹⁹

Spearheading the Land Acknowledgement and Return to Indigenous Peoples

There are 370 million Indigenous peoples that depend on land and natural resources.¹²⁰ Indigenous peoples protect 50% of the world's total surface of land but only have formally recognized ownership of 10% of the world's land.¹²¹ However, Member States often foster disagreements and claim sovereign rights to Indigenous land.¹²² UNDRIP makes many references to the rights to indigenous land.¹²³ Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop, and govern lands, territories, and resources that they have historically owned, inhabited, or used, according to Article 26.¹²⁴ By linking cultural and spiritual identity to land stewardship, Article 25 affirms Indigenous peoples' right to preserve and deepen their "distinctive spiritual relationship" with historically owned or occupied lands, territories, lakes and rivers, and coastal seas.¹²⁵ Lastly, with a focus on protection against forced displacement, Article 10 forbids the eviction of Indigenous peoples from their lands without their FPIC or reasonable and equitable compensation.¹²⁶

International organizations, like Land Rights Now, work to safeguard and advance the land rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples by enlisting the help of media outlets, organizations, communities, and engaged individuals throughout the world.¹²⁷ Specifically, UNDRIP cites the need to advance the land acknowledgement and return to Indigenous peoples, other initiatives such as sustainable development and equal representation of Indigenous Peoples can also happen at local and national levels.¹²⁸ The World Bank also reaffirms this by stating Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) are among the most successful groups in protecting and managing the woods and the local ecosystems on which they depend and live in a sustainable manner.¹²⁹

¹¹⁷ WHO TEAM (Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine). *WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 meeting report: Gujarat Declaration*. 2023.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ World Health Organization. "WHO Releases 2025 Update to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)". 2025.

¹²⁰ Land Rights Now. *A Global Call To Protect Indigenous And Community Land Rights*. N.d.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 2.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 19.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

¹²⁷ Land Rights Now. *A Global Call To Protect Indigenous And Community Land Rights*. N.d.

¹²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 2.

¹²⁹ Asyl Undeland, Development and Changing Climate. World Bank Blogs. *Indigenous land rights - a critical pillar of climate action*. 2021.



Underpinning their position as stewards of ecosystems and biodiversity, Indigenous peoples have the right to preserve and deepen their "distinctive spiritual relationship" with traditionally held or occupied lands, territories, and resources, as reaffirmed in Article 25 of the UNDRIP.¹³⁰ According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Indigenous Spirituality is often closely connected to land-based activities, such as the hunting, trapping, cultivating and harvesting practices of that particular Indigenous community.¹³¹ The International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) also reaffirms the right to responsibly steward and implement biodiversity initiatives for indigenous land to preserve indigenous language.¹³² Over the past 10 years, Member States taking part in the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) have learned of policy recommendations about what is required to improve collective and community land and forest tenure.¹³³ Although IPLC rights are recognized by the legal systems across all FCPF Carbon Fund Member States, some of them are not enforceable at scale for a variety of reasons.¹³⁴ Each Member State offers a chance to advance collective ownership of forests through institutional, legal, and/or policy changes.¹³⁵ There are key gaps to be addressed by implementing and improving upon the operational and legal aspects of the World Bank's FCPF, which can be used to help preserve the land of Indigenous peoples through environmental protections.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Guided by UNDRIP and other various legal frameworks, such as ICESCR, there are international instruments that are currently in place for Member States to abide by these protections for Indigenous peoples.¹³⁷ Multiple General Assembly resolutions, such as 77/460 and the Third Committee's International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) complement the many mechanisms of HRC, and also provide a basis for which Member States can act on these issues in both the domestic and the international sphere.¹³⁸ Ensuring the implementation of quality healthcare for Indigenous peoples, in line with the Indigenous Healthcare Quality Framework, ensures marginalized Indigenous peoples receive the medical treatment that is beneficial and created specifically for their needs.¹³⁹ Lastly, recognizing the land rights of Indigenous peoples also helps ensure sustainability for the ecosystems that they manage and help steward.¹⁴⁰

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can we expand upon General Assembly resolution 77/460 and ensure Indigenous peoples' rights are

¹³⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007. p. 19.

¹³¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Indigenous spiritual practices*. 2020.

¹³² United Nations General Assembly. *General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | United Nations for Indigenous Peoples*. 2022.

¹³³ Undeland. World Bank Blogs. *Indigenous land rights - a critical pillar of climate action*. 2021.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007.

¹³⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/77/460)*. 2022.

¹³⁹ Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing. *Indigenous Healthcare Quality Framework*. N.d.

¹⁴⁰ Undeland. World Bank Blogs. *Indigenous land rights - a critical pillar of climate action*. 2021.



comprehensively protected in conjunction with the articles of UNDRIP? What can be further done to strengthen the actions in the Third Committee's International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032)? How do we improve on existing international and regional frameworks that adhere to the rights of Indigenous peoples? What specific programs or projects should be implemented in the Indigenous Healthcare Quality Framework to ensure that Indigenous peoples receive the healthcare they need? What can be done to improve the FCPF of the World Bank to ensure that Indigenous peoples and their land is preserved?



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2. Combatting Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in the Achievement of the SDGs

Introduction

According to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), one in six people worldwide experience some form of discrimination, with women and people with disabilities being disproportionately affected.¹⁴¹ UNSD also declares racial discrimination as discrimination based on ethnicity, color, or language to be the most common form of intolerance.¹⁴² To address generational patterns of inequality and discrimination, General Assembly resolution 70/1 on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2015) (2030 Agenda) was adopted, outlining a call to action with the creation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁴³ SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) calls for the reduction of inequality within and among Member States, which is important to consider when discussing institutional or systemic inequalities.¹⁴⁴ SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) focuses on the inclusion and availability of equality and prosperity, specifically towards combating intolerances like racism and xenophobia.¹⁴⁵ SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) calls for peaceful and inclusive societies that reduce inequalities and end violence.¹⁴⁶ Reducing inequality and intolerances like racism and xenophobia is an integral aspect of achieving an equal and non-discriminatory world designed in the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴⁷

The definition of racism by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is detailed in Article 2 of the *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice* (1978), which also defines the concept of systemic racism as structural arrangements and institutionalized practices resulting in racial inequality.¹⁴⁸ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance defines systemic racism as laws, policies, or practices in institutions that discriminate or exclude based on race, origin, or descent, in contrast to racism being defined as any theory with claims that any racial or ethnic groups are inferior or superior.¹⁴⁹ Related intolerances include discrimination based upon language, religion, and birth or status.¹⁵⁰ These intolerances listed by the Special Rapporteur are often considered to be the product of historical patterns of enslavement, colonialism, and apartheid—political systems rooted in racial and social discrimination.¹⁵¹ The aforementioned Special Rapporteur promotes the concept of Special Measures and broad anti-racism and equality measures to achieve the SDGs and combat systemic discrimination.¹⁵² Special

¹⁴¹ United Nations Statistics Division. *Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2023.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ United Nations Children’s Fund, Unicef Data. *SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities*. N.d.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Global Goals. *Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities*. N.d.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Global Goals. *Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities*. N.d.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice*. 1978.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (A/79/316 (2024))*. 2024.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (A/79/316 (2024))*. 2024.

¹⁵² Ibid.



Measures can be understood as targeted benefits for marginalized groups or affirmative action, such as: reservations or quotas within political representation and educational support for marginalized groups.¹⁵³ Reports by the Special Rapporteur and the recommendation of implementing special measures are examples of SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), achieving frameworks to combat discrimination.¹⁵⁴

It is the responsibility of the General Assembly Third Committee to promote discussion and examine questions of racism and racial discrimination, and with the addition of the 2030 Agenda, the Third Committee extended its responsibilities to combating xenophobia and the interconnectedness of intolerance and gender with recommendations and a detailed call to action consisting of the SDGs.¹⁵⁵ Addressing discrimination requires cooperation and mutual understanding to ensure the end of historical cycles and legacies of systemic racism, which would make a sustainable and better future nearly unachievable.¹⁵⁶

International and Regional Framework

The 2030 Agenda is an overarching, universal framework to achieve a better and sustainable future.¹⁵⁷ While this framework was not directly drafted by the Third Committee, it influences the work of the committee through the structured SDGs to promote efficient discussion and examinations of human rights questions.¹⁵⁸ Combating inequality in the name of people-centered goals requires the preexistence of key, standard-setting documents, such as: the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) and the *Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* (DDPA) (2001).¹⁵⁹ The UDHR is the foundation of all human rights related documents and treaties, as it defines the universally protected fundamental human rights, with focus on Article 2 highlighting the basis of non-discrimination.¹⁶⁰ The DDPA reaffirms the duty to protect these fundamental rights while also recognizing contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances related to advancements in technology, migration and refugees, and political rhetoric rooted in racism.¹⁶¹ These two influential documents continue to support modern strategies to achieve the SDGs.¹⁶²

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015.

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¹⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)). 1948; United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. *Declaration and Programme of Action*. 2002; United Nations Conference on International



SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) focuses on social inclusion, equal rights, and eliminating discrimination and intolerance.¹⁶³ Promoting social, political, and economic inclusion, equal opportunities, and migrant protections shape SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and outline the recommended facets to achieve a sustainable future.¹⁶⁴ The UDHR is the basis of this goal as it emphasizes equal rights and opportunities.¹⁶⁵ Both the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (UNERD) (1963) and the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD) (1965) reference respect for human rights and the fundamental freedoms outlined in the UDHR as they promote equality and protection against any form of discrimination.¹⁶⁶ UNERD promotes equality and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.¹⁶⁷ SDG target 10.3 on “ensuring equal opportunities and end discrimination” focuses on reducing inequalities and ending discrimination.¹⁶⁸ By urging Member States to ensure equal rights and end racial intolerance, UNERD promotes the achievement of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities).¹⁶⁹ ICERD urges Member States to eradicate discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare.¹⁷⁰ ICERD promotes social, economic, and political inclusion, as outlined in SDG target 10.2 on “promoting universal social, political and economic inclusion.”¹⁷¹ UDHR, UNERD, and ICERD predate the creation of the SDGs in 2015, these declarations outline and support the necessary steps to achieve a sustainable future.¹⁷²

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) promotes peaceful and inclusive societies while fostering accountable and inclusive institutions.¹⁷³ Inclusive institutions, representative decision-making, protection of fundamental freedoms, and promotion of non-discriminatory laws are all necessary facets of achieving SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).¹⁷⁴ At a regional level, the *Declaration on Apartheid and*

Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁶³ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/1904 (XVIII))*. 1963; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/2106 (XX))*. 1965; United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/1904 (XVIII))*. 1963.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/1904 (XVIII))*. 1963.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/2106 (XX))*. 1965.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.



Its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa (1989) condemns systems of racial segregation and institutional discrimination, and details the damaging effects of apartheid.¹⁷⁵ Article 9 of the Declaration promotes the achievement of SDG target 16.3 on “promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all” by promoting the rule of law and ending systemic injustice, as well as SDG target 16.C on “promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies” by promoting the creation and adoption of anti-discriminatory laws and policies within the proposed national constitution.¹⁷⁶ At an international level, the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* (VDPA) (1993) promotes democracy, the rule of law, and the creation of institutions to ensure the protection of human rights.¹⁷⁷ Section 2 of VDPA emphasizes SDG target 16.7 on “ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels” as well as SDG target 16.B on “promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.”¹⁷⁸ The *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration* (GCM) (2019) ensures the accomplishment of SDG 16 (peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) through the creation of comprehensive frameworks to ensure the safety of migrants and orderly integration into society.¹⁷⁹

Both the *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (1999) and the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* (2011) promote the protection of human rights through education and advocacy to foster non-discrimination through developed understanding and tolerance.¹⁸⁰ SDG target 16.A on “strengthening relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime” promotes a more informed society with capabilities to empower the institutions described in SDG target 16.B on “promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.”¹⁸¹ Ultimately, the aforementioned declarations promote the achievement of SDG 16 (peace, justice and Strong institutions) through inclusive and equal institutions and opportunities.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on Apartheid and Its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa (A/RES/S-16/1)*. 1989.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on Apartheid and Its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa (A/RES/S-16/1)*. 1989; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁷⁷ United Nations, World Conference on Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, World Conference on Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195 (2019))*. 2019.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (A/RES/53/144)*. 1999; United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (A/RES/66/137)*. 2011.

¹⁸¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁸² United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.



Role of the International System

The Third Committee tackles the challenges of discrimination and inequality in the achievement of the SDGs alongside other United Nations bodies, such as the Human Rights Council (HRC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Racism, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, as well as bodies to combat gender-based discrimination like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Committee on the Elimination Against Women, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).¹⁸³ To ensure progress in combating racial discrimination and other intolerances, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/234 (2023) “A Global Call for Concrete Action for the Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination, xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action” to increase the participation and ratification of the ICERD.¹⁸⁴ This resolution also fosters a more cooperative partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and restates support for the HRC leadership on the implementation of DDPA, as the goals of DDPA and the 2030 Agenda are inherently connected, for example, with HRC resolution 48/18 “From rhetoric to reality: a global call for concrete action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance” (2021), which discusses the need for advisory committees in order to promote racial justice.¹⁸⁵ Highlighted within this resolution, General Assembly resolution 75/314 (2021) on “Establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent” and resolution 76/1 (2021) on “United Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance” represent effective strides made to combat inequality and racial discrimination.¹⁸⁶

General Assembly resolution 75/314 is the establishment of a permanent forum of people of African descent to contribute to economic, political, and social inclusion and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁸⁷ General Assembly resolution 76/1 acknowledges a recent rise in discrimination and intolerance and calls upon Member States to recommit to the fight against racism and intolerance.¹⁸⁸ General Assembly resolution 67/172 (2013) on “Protection of Migrants” urges Member States to introduce policies and programmes with both a migrant-perspective and gender-perspective to better protect those most susceptible to discrimination.¹⁸⁹ The General Assembly addressed the challenge and rise of neo-nazism, or the revival of the nazi ideology rooted in a belief of racial superiority and systemic inequality, and its relevance to the DDPA with the adoption of resolution 78/190 (2023) on “Combating Glorification of Naxism, Neo-Nazism and Other Practices that Contribute to Fueling Contemporary Forms

¹⁸³ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *A Global Call for Concrete Action for the Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (A/RES/78/234 (2023))*. 2023.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent (A/RES/75/314 (2021))*. 2021.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (A/RES/76/1 (2021))*. 2021.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of Migrants (A/RES/67/172 (2013))*. 2013.



of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.”¹⁹⁰ Resolution 78/190 expands and adapts the programme of action to address modern challenges like discrimination via digital technologies and discrimination based upon religion, belief, and origin.¹⁹¹ General Assembly resolution 72/279 on “Repositioning of the United Nations Development system in the Context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System” progresses the United Nations Development System through updates and repositioning as an effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda.¹⁹² Within resolution 72/279, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group was created, and a more transparent and inclusive body has opened more opportunities to combat racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance.¹⁹³

HRC was established under General Assembly resolution 60/251 entitled “Human Rights Council” (2006), often examining similar non-discrimination and human rights questions to the Third Committee.¹⁹⁴ Under this resolution, HRC was given the task of promoting universal respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms through adopted HRC resolutions and recommendations made to the General Assembly to adapt international law regarding human rights protections.¹⁹⁵ The responsibilities and mandate of HRC assume the same responsibilities and mandate of the Commission on Human Rights outlined in General Assembly resolution 48/141 (1993), allowing the body to address racism and related intolerance.¹⁹⁶ Under the mandate, HRC created the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance with HRC resolution 7/34 (2008), granting the responsibility to investigate alleged violations and to make recommendations on all levels with the aim of preventing and combating all forms of intolerance.¹⁹⁷ Articles 2.a through 2.o details the nature of violations in need of investigation, such as religious intolerance, xenophobia, and the victims included in the DDPA.¹⁹⁸ The mandate of the special rapporteur faces renewals and amendments to the original mandate, specifically, HRC resolution 52/36 (2023) expanded the responsibilities of the special rapporteur to bear in mind the necessity of the 2030 Agenda and the importance of SDGs 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in ending discrimination and intolerance.¹⁹⁹

Xenophobia Experienced by Migrants

The United Nations recognizes xenophobia as a challenge to equality and the freedom from discrimination; however, the 2030 Agenda fails to explicitly include xenophobia as a form of discrimination

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Combating Glorification of Naxism, Neo-Nazism and Other Practices that Contribute to Fueling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (A/RES/78/190 (2023))*. 2023.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Repositioning of the United Nations Development system in the Context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (A/RES/72/279 (2018))*. 2018.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251 (2006))*. 2006.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *High Commissioner for the Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights (A/RES/48/141 (1993))*. 1993.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (HRC/RES/7/34 (2008))*. 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Mandate of Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (HRC/RES/52/36 (2023))*. 2023.



and intolerance.²⁰⁰ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance issued report A/HRC/50/60 (2022) detailing the lack of connection between the agenda and addressing xenophobia, but despite this lack of connection, DDPA remains the blueprint for combating xenophobia.²⁰¹ DDPA was created with a victim-oriented approach, putting the rights and dignity of victims of related discrimination at the forefront, by highlighting and prioritizing the importance of combating xenophobia experienced by non-nationals, specifically migrants and refugees, through international and domestic legal protections.²⁰² Developments in recognizing the challenge of xenophobia persist, for example, General Assembly resolution 65/199 (2011) on “Inadmissibility of Certain Practices that Contribute to Fueling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance” extends recognition to instances of discrimination on the internet and the use of media to propagate discrimination.²⁰³ Resolution 65/199 is an example of adapting to challenges that may increase the severity and rate of discrimination.²⁰⁴ Additionally, this resolution also urges Member States to develop domestic criminal law to allow for enhanced penalties for crimes with racist or xenophobic intentions.²⁰⁵

Following contemporary forms of discrimination outlined in DDPA, the Third Committee works in tandem with other United Nations bodies like HRC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as these bodies are responsible for investigations relating to both human rights and migrants, including investigations regarding torture, lack of legal aid for migrants, and facilitation of resettlement.²⁰⁶ Within the OHCHR, the subsidiary committee of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration, created under General Assembly resolution 56/266 (2002), works to address xenophobia and related intolerance.²⁰⁷ Within this committee’s report to the General Assembly, HRC resolution 48/18 (2021) recalls the 2030 Agenda and DDPA are inherently connected, and achieving the goals of DDPA will in turn achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda.²⁰⁸ The General Assembly has also made progress of its own through resolution 67/172 called , “Protection for Migrants” (2013), and resolution 73/195 called “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” (2019) creating a cooperative framework of domestic laws to ensure migration safe from xenophobic attacks.²⁰⁹ Objective 17 of this framework

²⁰⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (A/HRC/50/60 (2022)). 2022.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. *Declaration and Programme of Action*. 2002.

²⁰³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Inadmissibility of Certain Practices that Contribute to Fueling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (A/RES/65/199 (2011)). 2011.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council* (A/RES/60/251 (2006)). 2006.

²⁰⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related intolerance* (A/RES/52/266 (2022)). 2022.

²⁰⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of action on its Eighth Session* (A/78/385 (2023)). 2023.

²⁰⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of Migrants* (A/RES/67/172 (2013)). 2013; United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (A/RES/73/195 (2019)). 2019.



focuses on the elimination of discrimination, highlighting the creation of legislation to penalize hate crimes, Objective 17.a, and prevent profiling of migrants, Objective 17.d.²¹⁰

Interconnectedness of Gender Discrimination and Racism

The intersection of forms of discrimination, including discrimination based upon sex, race, and ethnicity, deeply impacts and inhibits the enjoyment of human rights, especially for women and girls.²¹¹ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights delivered report 35/10 (2017) to the General Assembly, highlighting the necessity of mechanisms to protect the human rights of women and girls from compounding or intersectional discrimination.²¹² Report 35/10 recalls the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) ratified as General Assembly resolution 34/180 (1979), in which the assembly addressed with concern the continued discrimination of women.²¹³ Resolution 34/180 outlines obligations of Member States to combat gender based discrimination are contained within this resolution, including protections in healthcare, employment, and education.²¹⁴ Additionally, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has deemed intersectionality as a basic facet and piece of these obligations.²¹⁵ To achieve advancement in combating gender based discrimination and intersectional discrimination rooted in xenophobia and racism, bodies such as CSW and UN Women were created.²¹⁶ The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) created CSW through resolution 11 (1946) with the function of making recommendations and reports to the council regarding the promotion of equal rights in politics, economics, and the social field regardless of identifiers like gender, sex, race, and ethnicity.²¹⁷ General Assembly resolution 64/289 (2010) merged four pre-existing bodies to form UN Women.²¹⁸ This body was created with the responsibility of promoting economic and political engagement of women, with an emphasis on combating the disparities and violence experienced by women of color.²¹⁹

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the importance of realizing human rights and achieving gender equality, specifically SDGs 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), and 16 (peace, justice, and strong Institutions).²²⁰ SDG 5 (gender equality) focuses specifically on gender discrimination and gender

²¹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (A/RES/73/195 (2019)). 2019.

²¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (A/HRC/35/10 (2017)). 2017.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (A/RES/34/180 (1979)). 1979.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (A/HRC/35/10 (2017)). 2017.

²¹⁶ United Nations, UN Websites. *Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet: Gender Equality*. N.d.

²¹⁷ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Commission on the Status of Women* (E/RES/11 (1946)). 1946.

²¹⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner* (A/HRC/35/10 (2017)). 2017.

²¹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner* (A/HRC/35/10 (2017)). 2017.

²²⁰ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015.



equality.²²¹ SDG target 5.1 on “end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere” emphasizes the overarching need to eliminate gender based discrimination, and SDG target 5.5 on “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life” highlights the importance of full participation of women in all levels of political, economic, and public life.²²² In addition to achieving gender equality through SDG 5 (gender equality), the nature of intersectional discrimination requires the understanding of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).²²³ The similarities and connected nature of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 5 (gender equality), promotes full participation in society and the elimination of discriminatory laws and mechanisms based upon things like race, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, and origin.²²⁴ DDPA urges Member States to apply a gender-perspective to understand multifaceted discrimination and encourages the integration of concepts on race and gender into training of public officials and law enforcement officials is a major part of DDPA.²²⁵

Conclusion

The achievement of a sustainable future is impossible without first combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance as these inequalities perpetuate stagnating progress in all other SDGs.²²⁶ The call for complete and equal social and economic integration in DDPA compliments the comprehensive framework of the 2030 Agenda, as SDGs 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) call for special measures to end discrimination and foster a secure and equal future.²²⁷ The development and inclusion of xenophobia as a form of discrimination and intolerance through DDPA ensures the achievement of the SDGs.²²⁸ Academics such as the American Association for Advancement of Science advocate that insufficient commitment to combating racism and intolerance in the SDGs requires improvement of effort and the addition of supplemental frameworks including the DDPA and the acknowledgement of intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination.²²⁹

Further Research

In their own research, delegates should consider the following questions: How can the international community improve upon measures of combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. *Declaration and Programme of Action (2002)*. 2002.

²²⁶ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. ; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of action on its Eighth Session (A/78/385 (2023))*. 2023.

²²⁹ American Association for the Advancement of Science. *Eliminating Racism through the 2030 SDGs*. 2021.



Related Intolerance? In what areas or goals can the international community approve upon? How can Member States work cooperatively to combat racism and related intolerance regionally? How can Member States address disparities unique to different regions? How can Member States utilize and apply gender-based perspectives to combat inequalities? How can Member States promote measures to combat regional xenophobia?



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