

## General Assembly Plenary Committee

### Welcome

Dear delegates,

Welcome to BUSUN and the General Assembly Plenary Committee. We all look forward to seeing you this upcoming fall for what we expect to be a fun and engaging conference.

My name is Yosuke Kurokawa, and I will serve as the chairperson for the committee this year. I will be detailing the three topics of debate in this background guide, but before that, I would first like to introduce myself. I am a sophomore at Brown University, concentrating in biomedical engineering. I am originally from Japan, but I have lived in Rhode Island for the past 9 years. I consider myself to be pretty chill, enjoying things like photography and playing the guitar, as well as playing backyard football and tennis with my friends.

My involvement in Model UN started during sophomore year in high school, and last year I worked as the director for this same committee. Over the years, I have seen and participated in many remarkable conferences, and hopefully you will come out of this conference with that same experience. This is a great chance to showcase and develop your knowledge in international affairs, in addition to learning how to work with others to create and agree on viable solutions to the issues presented.

This background guide will help you in your research, but this serves merely as a guide and additional research is required for you to fully understand the position of your country. Having extensive information on the topics of debate will give you confidence and will reflect on your participation, so please come prepared!

I hope that you will have a blast at Brown. I really love this place and its relaxed environment, so definitely try to enjoy your time here. If you have any questions about this committee or anything about Brown University in general, feel free to email me.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all in the fall!

Sincerely,  
Yosuke Kurokawa  
GA Plenary Chair  
plenary@busun.net

### Committee History

The General Assembly is the only organ of the United Nations that represents every member state. Within the General Assembly, there are six Main Committees that discuss topics of special interest, like disarmament and international security or economic and financial matters. The GA Plenary is the overarching body of the general assembly, dealing with all the topics that relate to more than one Main Committee or which do not relate to any Main Committee.

The Plenary can be used for agenda items of special political importance, such as the Millennium Declaration and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The main purpose is to write resolutions, or high-level policy statements and recommendations that aim to resolve any issues presented.

### Topic 1: Arctic Resources and the Law of the Sea

#### Background

The Arctic technically refers to everything above 66 degrees, 30 minutes North Latitude, but generally it refers to the extremely cold and dry region around the North Pole. Many forms of life inhabit the Arctic, such as fish, marine mammals, birds, land animals, plants, and human societies. The Arctic also contains a considerable amount of natural resources including petroleum oil and gas.

Under international law, no country currently owns the North Pole or the region of the Arctic Ocean surrounding it. The United Nations Conference on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) resulted in the Law of the Sea Convention, which limits the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to 200 nautical miles off the country's coast. This means that countries near the Arctic such as Canada and Russia have the rights to the resources within 200 nautical miles off the coast. The Law of the Sea Convention also outlines how to solve problems regarding marine environment, scientific research, and settlement of disputes.

#### Current Situation

Under current international laws, no country has a territorial right to the Arctic; therefore, no country has claims to the Arctic resources beyond the country's EEZ. A 2008 United States Geological Survey estimates that the Arctic contains 90 billion barrels of undiscovered, technically recoverable crude oil. This accounts for about 13 percent, 30 percent and 20 percent of the estimated amount of global undiscovered oil, natural gas, and natural

gas liquids respectively.

One of the main problems about the Arctic resources concerns the wildlife of the Arctic and how it has been affected by global warming. Trying to exploit the resources in the Arctic region may stress the ecosystem that has been protected by thousands of years of ice by increasing pollution in the area. The melting of permafrost leads to a release of methane gas, a greenhouse gas that can cause further adverse change in the climate.

The Law of the Sea Convention went into effect in 1994; however, many countries have yet to ratify it. Each country is given 10 years to make claims to extend its EEZ. Countries neighboring the Arctic, including Norway, Russia, and Denmark, have attempted to claim sectors of the Arctic as a part of their territory. The Arctic Ocean has been a topic of debate, especially the Northwest Passage as it provides a trade route between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans.

An Arctic Ocean summit between the US, Russia, Denmark, Canada, and Norway resulted in the Ilulissat Declaration, stating that the five countries will take responsibility over the Arctic and that they will oppose any "new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean".

### Bloc Positions

*North America:* Canada has made claims to sovereignty over the Northwest Passage; the US has made opposing claims. Although the United States now recognizes the Law of the Sea Convention, the US has yet to ratify it, claiming that it would impinge upon U.S. sovereignty.

*Europe:* The EEZ of the European Union is shared, so vessels from one country can fish in another country's EEZ. Denmark, Russia, and Norway claim parts of the Arctic Ocean as a part of their national water; however, the other European Union countries consider it as international water. Russia has recently raised the possibility of a war in the Arctic within a decade over the control of the Arctic oil and gas reserves.

### Questions To Consider

1. Can a country claim a part of the Arctic as its territory? Should any given country have access to the resources contained within the Arctic?
2. What are the environmental consequences of taking resources from the Arctic?
3. Is the current law of the sea just or unjust? Why do

some countries refuse to ratify it?

### Helpful Resources

- Countries in tug-of-war over Arctic resources  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/science/01/02/arctic.rights.dispute/index.html>
- Conference could mark start of Arctic power struggle  
<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/world/story.html?id=d0135cd8-c15a-48a3-9579-0df5f8e185c1>

## **Topic 2: Targeting Terrorists in Sovereign States**

### Background

Terrorism refers to the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce an opposing side, especially for political purposes. The exact definition of terrorism has been a hot topic of debate. The United Nations has yet to agree on a definition, stating, "The lack of agreement on a definition of terrorism has been a major obstacle to meaningful international countermeasures. Cynics have often commented that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.'"

### Current Situation

The UN has been cracking down on terrorism, especially after the events of 9/11. The UN Security Council has passed several binding resolutions targeting terrorism, including Resolution 1566, which calls on all countries to prosecute or extradite anyone supporting terrorist acts.

The key issue in dealing with terrorism is respecting national sovereignty. Some countries are unable to cope with terrorist activities taking place inside or outside of their own territory. For cases like this, the international community can start a multilateral effort to target the terrorist group in order to help the country.

There are some cases where a country uses terrorism to gain political interests and advantages from other states. This becomes a challenge to the international community. Countries affected by such terrorism can decide to take actions against the terrorists as a method of self-defense, which on the other hand can be considered an act of aggression by other countries.

Bloc Positions

*United States, European Union:* In 2002, President Bush signed an executive order to create Guantanamo Bay, a detention facility for indefinitely keeping suspected international terrorists in confinement. President Obama has promised to shut down the facility within this year, working with the European Union to help accommodate the detainees. The US and the EU have also worked closely together to come up with a new transatlantic strategy on counter-terrorism.

*Middle East:* The Al Qaeda network and other terrorist regimes have risen in the Middle East in recent history. Most governments oppose terrorism; however, some governments like Iran and Sudan have been known to fund and support certain terrorist groups. State sponsored terrorism has led to widespread massacres of minorities in the area.

Questions To Consider

1. What steps should the UN take in order to prevent further terrorist activities and neutralize their threat on global peace?
2. The phrase “one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter” has been used frequently. How can the UN define terrorism? Can a certain criteria be used to categorize terrorist activities from none-terrorist activities?
3. Under what circumstances, if any, can the UN violate a country's sovereignty and interfere with the government in order to prevent terrorism?

Helpful Resources

- EU and US draw up plans for new counter-terrorism regime  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/15/european-union-us-obama-counter-terrorism>
- Terrorism Research (Recent news articles related to terrorism)  
<http://www.terrorism-research.com/news/>
- Middle East Terrorism  
<http://science.jrank.org/pages/8111/Terrorism-Middle-East.html>

**Topic 3: The Question of Palestine**Background

Palestine refers to the two discontinuous territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians have been involved in a conflict with Israel since the end of World War II. The UN has attempted to create a lasting and comprehensive peace settlement between the two sides, but no agreement has been made in recent past.

The UN has never accepted Palestine as a member state; however, it has been given a permanent observer status (able to participate but no voting rights).

Current Situation

The two-state solution, which would create a Palestinian state next to Israel, and a one-state solution, which would create a bi-national state consisting of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, have both been discussed. However, negotiations have been slowed by key issues such as the border of Jerusalem and the continued political violence from the part of Palestine.

Currently, the Palestinian National Authority (PA) governs the Palestinian territories. In fact, many countries have started to recognize the state of Palestine as a country governed by the PA. The PA is a subsidiary of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), an organization which has been labeled many times by some countries as terrorist groups; its national charter calls for the destruction of Israel for forcibly occupying Palestine.

Bloc Positions

*United States:* The US has supported Israel since its birth in 1948. President Obama has called for a two-state solution, stating that the major source of tension between the US and many Middle-Eastern governments come from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

*European Union:* The EU has been one of the biggest donors of financial assistance to the Palestinians. Most countries have called for the two-state resolution with an independent, democratic Palestine.

*Middle East:* Israel has recently backed the creation of a Palestinian state, only under the stipulation that Palestine first recognize Israel as a Jewish state. Also, Palestine will not be able to keep an army or have weapons. The Palestinians have rejected the conditions. The Palestinians and other Arab countries have demanded the Right of Return, which would allow Palestinian refugees and their descendents the right to reclaim their land that is now

within the borders of Israel.

### Questions To Consider

1. What is a viable solution to the statehood of Palestine? Should Palestine become an independent country? If so, should the UN allow Palestine to become a member state?
2. What steps can be taken to reduce the tension between Israel and Palestine?

### Helpful Resources

- Israeli PM 'ruins' peace chance  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8101195.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8101195.stm)
- Israel backs Palestinian state ahead of EU talks  
<http://euobserver.com/24/28300>
- Question of Palestine  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/>