

## **General Assembly Third Committee: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural**

### **Welcome**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to BUSUN 2010! As the chair of the SOCHUM committee, I hope to make your conference experience at Brown a memorable one. My name is Jessica Faiz and I am currently a junior pre-med student and a human biology concentrator. I am originally from New Jersey and participated in Model UN throughout high school, attending various university conferences. I had the opportunity to chair the SOCHUM committee last year at BUSUN and was the director of a crisis committee two years ago. I am very excited to meet and work with you in the fall and hope to have a successful conference and productive committee!

I am sure you are all aware that the world today is faced with numerous conflicts surrounding human rights issues. It is so important, especially for students of our generation, to be aware of these problems and the obstacles that the international community faces in working toward resolutions. The three topics that we are addressing in the SOCHUM committee this year are just a few of these real-world issues: the Illicit Organ Trade, Post-Natural Disaster Humanitarian Aid to Nations, and the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers. I have provided a background guide for each of the topics to aid in your preparation for committee session and ask that you submit a one-page position paper on each of the three topics. In addition to background information, I have also given you links to sources that may be useful in your research.

I urge you to step outside of the box, keep up with current events, and do anything you feel

necessary to be ready to participate enthusiastically in committee session! SOCHUM, being a General Assembly committee, is typically one of the largest committees of the conference, but I hope to maintain a welcoming, suitable atmosphere for debaters of all skill levels. I hope that over the course of the conference you learn more about the issues, Model UN debate, and of course, enjoy yourselves!

Please feel free to e-mail me at [sochum@busun.net](mailto:sochum@busun.net) with any further questions before the conference about position papers or the topics themselves. Having just finished my sophomore year, I would also be happy to answer any questions you have about college life and life at Brown!

I wish you the best of luck in your preparation for the conference and look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Jessica Faiz  
[sochum@busun.net](mailto:sochum@busun.net)

### **Committee History/Background**

The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), also referred to as the Third Committee of the General Assembly, is a United Nations body designated to deal with issues regarding the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. All member states of the UN are represented in this committee, providing a forum of diverse viewpoints and positions for the discussion and negotiation of important human rights issues. SOCHUM acts to defend the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and collaborates with other United Nations bodies and organizations to implement

the General Assembly's resolutions, such as the United Nations Children's Fund, UN Development Program, UN Environmental Program, World Health Organization, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

As its name suggests, SOCHUM strives to promote the social, humanitarian and cultural welfare of the international population. In the past, SOCHUM has dealt with issues in social development, the prevention and combat of human trafficking, international drug control, and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

## Topic 1: The Illicit Organ Trade

### Background

The rise of globalization in today's world has led to an increased ease in international communication and transportation, along with more exposure to the opportunities available in other parts of the world. Consequently, the prospect of working and building a life outside of one's home country has become more appealing, and more importantly, more feasible. This has caused a rise in the trafficking of humans for a number of reasons, some of which include labor and sex work. However, with advances in biotechnology, human trafficking has evolved to contribute to another facet of the illicit global economy – the illicit organ trade.

Transplant stories are usually told from the recipient's perspective, portraying the organ donor as altruistic and selfless. Likewise, transplant surgeries typically draw forth images of the transplant surgeons as lifesaving and heroic figures. However, there is also the donor's perspective, recently explored in the ethnographies of Nancy Scheper-Hughes, a professor of medical anthropology and the director of Organs Watch. Her work uncovers

the profit-driven side of the transplant process and its effects of global inequality. Interestingly, the global market for human organs often combines the faces of both the upper strata of biomedical practice along with the lowest reaches of the criminal world. Transplant surgeons are often oblivious to the larger picture and humanize the recipients' situations, not considering where the transplanted organs come from or how they were obtained.

Generally, the circulation route of kidneys moves from the Global South to North; from poorer to more affluent bodies; from black and brown bodies to white ones; and from females to males. While some "voluntarily" give up their organs, others have been tricked into believing that they are getting legitimate jobs, and are instead lured away from their villages into organ harvesting by local kidney hunters and used for. There is also the question of whether there is such thing as truly "volunteering" to give up one's organs. In these situations, the bodily integrity of the most vulnerable populations are at stake. Organs are removed from cadavers without consent, such as from executed prisoners in China, and poverty forces people to resort to desperate measures. Some become living donors, claiming that they will sell any organ that will not cause immediate death. This leads one to question the ethics of organ sales, including the rights of donors and the influence of the proliferation of organ transplantation on the culture of societies, particularly those that primarily participate in organ donation without benefiting from transplantation.

### Current Situation/Status

While there are certainly aspects of the organ trade which involve the obtaining of organs from deceased bodies, the ethical debates surrounding transplant surgery mainly involves the conditions of living donors. Bioethics has

offered little resistance to the growing markets in human body parts. Some argue that the “do no harm” promise is not being violated by surgeons who perform kidney transplants, since paying for a kidney donation can be viewed as a potential “win-win” situation, as the recipient’s life is enhanced, prolonged, or saved by the organ of the donor, whose livelihood is enhanced by their monetary compensation. Do live donations of “duplicate” organs truly uphold conceptions of bodily integrity and human dignity? Or is this promoting a type of “neo-cannibalism” in which people are greedily eyeing others’ body parts to preserve their own bodies?

#### Questions to Consider

- What rights should be guaranteed for those wishing to donate organs? Should those who are economically disadvantaged be allowed to donate in the first place?
- Should an international open organs market be considered? What would the advantages and disadvantages of an open market be?
- How can organ-importing countries ensure the safety and respect of foreign donors?

#### Bloc Positions

##### United States

Participation in the illicit organ trade is not only attributed to less developed nations. Often transplants using illegally obtained organs are performed in U.S. hospitals. The number of people in need of a transplant in the U.S. has tripled over the past ten years, but the number of deceased organ donors has not notably increased. In light of recent cases involving brokered transplants in cities such as New York and Philadelphia over, hospitals are looking to tighten regulations to ensure better oversight of foreign donors and recipients. However, it is estimated that the average wait time for a kidney will be almost ten years by 2010, indicating that it will be difficult to stop those

fighting for their lives from resorting to desperate measures.

##### European Union

European states mainly follow an “opt-out” system of organ donation, meaning that organ donations are done only with deceased donors with presumed consent. Only 7% of all kidney donations in France are done with living donors. In parts of Europe like Portugal and Spain, asking living people for organ donations is not favored, as it is considered improper to give up one’s body parts. Presently, 20% of all organ transplants in the EU involve organs exchanged between countries.

In May 2010, a directive was adopted by the European Parliament (EP) to increase the safety and quality of organ transplants in the EU. The EP is looking to establish tougher measures to prevent citizens from traveling abroad to receive illegally acquired organs. The EU opposes any kind of organ tourism, and the new initiative looks to ensure that all donations are “altruistic, voluntary, and unpaid.”

##### Latin America

Human organ trafficking is a major problem in Brazil, as poor, unemployed men living in the slums are often tapped for fresh organ donors. In Latin America, Mexico, and Brazil, human organ trafficking has been practiced for decades. Latin America also has the worst record of child abuses in organ transplants. Widespread cultural resistance to using organs from cadavers or dead bodies may also contribute to a rise in living donors.

Though buying and selling organs is a crime in Brazil, the organ trade flourishes in the black market, leaving one to wonder whether a regulated market in human organs would be a better alternative.

##### Asia

Due to some cultural beliefs and practices, organ donation may not be looked down upon in some Asian nations. For example, the use of prisoners' organs can be seen as a social good, a form of public service, and an opportunity for them to redeem their families' honor. In India, organ donations have also been used as dowries for "extra" daughters in the family. It is important to consider the livelihoods of the people willing to donate their organs from less developed Asian nations as well as cultural implications when determining how to best manage the illicit organ trade. The health and safety of donors, especially in main organ-exporting nations, should also be taken into account.

India has been noted as a major organ-exporting country. While the Human Organ Transplantation Act of 2004 banned the organ trade, slightly lowering the number of foreign organ recipients, the illicit market in human organs still exists. Consequently, the number of foreign recipients, especially in other Asian countries like Pakistan and the Philippines, has . China is notorious for the use of organs from executed prisoners. On the other hand, countries like Japan net importers of organs, like the United States.

#### Middle East

Iran is the only country in the world that has a regulated kidney sales program for buying and selling kidneys domestically. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman are major organ-importing countries. At the same time, organ donation rates in Israel are among the lowest in the developed world. As a result, the illicit market there has surged with brokers relying on donors from countries in Europe like Moldova, Romania and Russia. Governmental committees in the Middle East have been established to chase organ brokers, unfortunately just driving the trade further underground.

#### Africa

Egypt is a major site of organ transplantation, where a considerable number of patients from neighboring countries have been found to undergo surgery. South Africa is also a key player in the illicit organ trade, acting as the site for many transplant surgeries using illicitly acquired organs. Once human organ trafficking was brought to light in Mozambique earlier this year, the Attorney General spoke out against the alleged traffickers who had taken organs from children to be transplanted in South African crime rings. The South African Health Minister emphasizes that trafficking human tissue, or charging money to acquire or supply tissue from a living or dead person, is illegal.

#### Helpful Resources

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology*. 41:2 (2000): 191-221.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Parts unknown." *Ethnography*. 5:1 (2004): 29-73.
- NPR - "The International Organ Trafficking Market"  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=111379908>
- Newsweek - "Not just an Urban Legend"  
<http://www.newsweek.com/2009/01/09/not-just-urban-legend.html>
- WHO -"The state of the international organ trade"  
<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/85/12/06-039370/en/>
- New York Times - "The Organ trade"  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/world/organ-trade-global-black-market-tracking-sale-kidney-path-poverty-hope.html?pagewanted=1>
- Epoch Times - "EU to Crack Down on Organ Trafficking and Organ Tourism"  
<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/35989/>

## Topic 2: Post-Natural Disaster Humanitarian Aid to Nations

### Background

Humanitarian aid has two components: humanitarian relief and humanitarian development. Humanitarian relief refers to short-term work, such as refugee camps, clinics in war zones, and digging people out after earthquakes, while humanitarian development is long-term work, like education or micro-finance initiatives.

With the influence of the media, more attention has been given to the short-term relief of humanitarian aid than to long-term development, making it a challenge to prevent the relapse of such disasters in vulnerable areas. A study by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that 85 percent of those exposed to natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tropical cyclones, floods and draughts over the past decade reside in countries with medium to low human development.

Since 1989, all UNDP offices in disaster and emergency prone countries were requested to set up United Nations Disaster Management Teams (UNDMT), which prepare a disaster management plan. This occurs in some cases only after a disaster has struck, while others have been created and become active preceding a disaster. These UNDMT are staffed by members of various UN organizations, depending on the type and extent of the disaster. Representatives of key government bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also involved with these teams.

### Current Situation/Status

One of the most recent natural disasters to spark attention worldwide was the 2101 Haiti earthquake, with an estimated 230,000 people dead, 300,000 injured and 1,000,000

homeless. Soon following, an earthquake also devastated Chile, leaving 1.5 million people homeless, 279 people dead, and more missing. These devastating natural disasters have followed other recent catastrophes, such as the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana in the U.S. and the South Asian tsunami of 2004.

When it comes to post-disaster relief, delays in the distribution of aid are often an issue. This was seen in response to the Haiti earthquake, where supplies were plentiful, but it was difficult to develop a method of ensuring that they reach those who need it. In response to disaster, there are sometimes numerous aid organizations trying to assist in the region, resulting in what is called “competitive humanitarianism,” which decreases coordination amongst aid agencies. Present day advances in communication technology and the Internet have caused monetary aid donations to skyrocket and have also played a role in raising awareness of what supplies are most needed in the affected region. This brings the accountability of aid organizations to a higher level, which is something that the UN may want to address.

The length of time that foreign aid workers stay in the recipient country after aid is delivered has also proven to be controversial. This was the case in the Haiti earthquake response, as Latin American leaders believed that the U.S. was militarily occupying Haiti, and several European states were dissatisfied with the controlling way in which the U.S. relief operations were run.

### Bloc Positions

#### United States

The United States sometimes sets the foundation for disaster relief across the globe, and is a major contributor of foreign aid to relief efforts. The U.S.’s military response to

the earthquake in Haiti, “Operation Unified Response”, included flying in relief supplies, flying out evacuees, dropping supplies around Port-au-Prince, and establishing a field hospital. While the UN expressed approval of these efforts, other members of the international community have disapproved of the way the U.S. relief operations took over, and some believe that they overstayed their welcome.

It is important for the U.S. to consider how to better collaborate with operations from other nations and to assure that they are not overstaying their welcome.

#### European Union

The European Commission on Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) handles the EU’s relief operations. This duty to help is regardless of race, religion, or political beliefs. ECHO coordinates operations to deliver food and equipment and handle emergency programs in conjunction with NGOs, UN specialized agencies, and the Red Cross.

The EU funds operations that last less than six months, making the humanitarian disaster relief efforts strictly short term. To aid in the progression of long-term development, the EU works with partners to put together an exit strategy when leaving disaster-torn areas. The EU’s main focus for emergency operations is the Middle East, Asia and especially Africa. Post-conflict operations are under way in Liberia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Darfur in western Sudan and neighboring areas of Chad. Most EU member states also maintain their own extensive humanitarian relief operations, which work separately from ECHO.

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

While Latin American states have certainly pledged money and offered aid for disaster relief, their resources are nowhere near those of the U.S. and the EU. This region has

suffered greatly over the past year, as seen in the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. Neighboring countries, like the Dominican Republic in the case of Haiti, are often the first to respond with aid.

The Pan American Development Foundation is the disaster relief sect of the Organization of American States. It was created as an independent nonprofit organization that assists the least advantaged people in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the preparation and response to natural disasters. Many missionaries, of which Latin America has a high concentration, also take action when disaster strikes.

#### Asia

Since 1980, for the majority of disaster-related deaths have taken place in Asia. In May 2010, a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that Asia is most at risk from natural disasters, namely the countries of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, and Pakistan.

Many Asian states also contributed money towards emergency humanitarian aid in Haiti. Israel in particular was applauded for its very quick and effective response to the Haitian earthquake, promptly establishing a field hospital and later establishing more field clinics in collaboration with the Red Cross. Perhaps the mimicry of such a system would be useful in putting together an effective disaster response system at a global level.

#### Africa

African countries that are at extreme risk for natural disasters include Ethiopia, Sudan and Mozambique, with 95% of casualties in these countries attributed to draught. A South African International Disaster Response research report shows that few agreements are in place regarding arrangements on disaster

response and mitigation. Existing agreements are either too broadly or narrowly focused. Overall, the African Union should strive to forge alliances with large NGOs and governments to form effective disaster response plans.

#### Questions to Consider

- Should the UN take a more active role in the organization of a disaster relief force? Or should this be mainly left up to governments with ample resources, such as the United States?
- What steps can be taken to ensure that competitive humanitarianism does not ensue and the benign intentions of those contributing aid remain intact?
- Where does one draw the line between troops stationed to maintain peace and security and a military occupation in countries post-disaster?
- What role can lesser developed nations play in assisting others states subject to disaster? What agreements can be made at the regional level for disaster response management?

#### Helpful Resources

- “Humanitarian Aid Boiled Down”  
[www.whatyououghttoknow.com/docs/humanitarian\\_aid.pdf](http://www.whatyououghttoknow.com/docs/humanitarian_aid.pdf)
- “Activities of the European Union”  
[http://europa.eu/pol/hum/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/hum/index_en.htm)
- “Asia most at risk from natural disasters”  
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89305>
- “Competitive humanitarianism: Relief and the Sri Lankan Tsunami”  
[www.rethinkingeconomies.org.uk/web/d/doc\\_5.pdf](http://www.rethinkingeconomies.org.uk/web/d/doc_5.pdf)

### Topic 3: Preventing the Recruitment of Child Soldiers

#### Background

Hundreds of thousands of children under the age of 18 have been affected by armed conflict around the world, recruited into armed groups such as government armed forces, paramilitaries, and civil militias. While international law prohibits children under 18 from participating in conflict, recruitment takes place either voluntarily in impoverished areas or involuntarily through abduction.

Once recruited, child soldiers are forced to use weapons and assigned dangerous tasks, like laying mines and explosives. They are often killed or injured in combat. In addition, these children live in harsh conditions, having little to no access to food and healthcare, and being physically abused by those holding them captive. Female child soldiers are at even higher risk of sexual abuse and rape. Being subject to these terrors leaves these children physically and psychologically damaged and robbed of their childhood.

The UN General Assembly adopted The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in May 2000, and it came into force in February 2002. This optional protocol sets 18 as the minimum age for recruitment into armed groups, direct participation in hostilities, and be compulsorily enlistment by governments. Safeguards for voluntary recruitment from the age of 16 must have not yet been outlined. While about two-thirds of the world’s countries have ratified the optional protocol, 61 countries have yet to do so.

#### Current Situation/Status

As of 2007, the Human Rights Watch reported that approximately 200,000 to 300,000 children are serving as soldiers for both rebel groups and government forces in armed conflicts in over twenty countries around the world.

In 2009, the EU declared February 12 the “International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers,” reiterating the need to step up efforts at all levels to protect children from the effects of war. This also includes children being abducted to serve as combatants, servants, and sex slaves. While a solid legal protection framework has been established, it has not reduced the impact of war and conflict on children. Children are still victims of abductions and deliberate strikes against schools. Victimized children has also been used as a tool to undermine the morale of war-torn communities.

In light of several recent humanitarian disasters, it is also important to note the vulnerability of children in impacted areas to being recruited into armed groups.

#### Bloc Positions

##### United States

In October 2008, President Bush signed into law the Child Soldiers Accountability Act, allowing the U.S. to prosecute people in the U.S. who have knowingly recruited or used children under 15 as child soldiers, even if they served outside of the U.S. The Accountability Act also allows for the deportation or denial of entry to the U.S. of individuals who have knowingly recruited child soldiers. Through its actions, the United States has sent an important message to governments and other groups around the world that they cannot recruit children into their forces and seek haven in the U.S. Additionally, the U.S. is looking to pass the Child Soldier Prevention Act, restricting U.S. military assistance for governments that recruit and use child soldiers.

##### European Union

France has helped to place the issue of child soldiers on the Security Council agenda, and believing that the Security Council must adopt

concrete measures that target parties refusing to cooperate with the UN on the issue child soldiers. EU member states are called upon by a 2004 action plan to set up joint cooperation projects in African countries such as Uganda and Burundi to implement guidelines on children in armed conflicts. These guidelines involve education, recruitment prevention and demobilization, sexual violence prevention, humanitarian assistance, and protection. The EU has also taken steps to raise awareness of child soldiers in Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, Sudan, Nepal, and Liberia.

##### Latin America

Rebel movements and government-sponsored paramilitaries in a number of Latin American countries use child soldiers, namely in Peru, Colombia, Paraguay, and Mexico. According to a 2008 report by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the Colombian government does not officially recruit children. Since then, however, captured enemy child combatants have been employed by Colombian military for intelligence gathering, proving to be a loophole in their commitment against recruitment. Additionally, the reintegration of child ex-combatants is a significant problem for post-conflict states such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

In a 1999 Latin American Conference to address child soldiers, there was a call for Latin American and Caribbean nations to act beyond the mechanisms put forth by the UN and International Criminal Court. It put forth programs geared toward preventing the militarization of education, launching campaigns to demonstrate the negative effects on minors of participation in armed conflicts, instituting early-warning mechanisms among vulnerable parts of the population to highlight signs of recruitment of children, adopting programs of demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, and authorizing amnesties for child

soldiers.

### Asia

Lack of transparency amongst governments has made it difficult to obtain information about child soldiers in Asia. However, it is thought that thousands of children are involved in combat forces in both active conflict and ceasefire situations. Myanmar is the only country in Asia in which government armed forces forcibly recruit children between 12 and 18 years of age. Armed opposition groups and factional groups in countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand have also been found to use child soldiers. In order to address the issue of child soldiers, Asian governments must cooperate in the investigations of these armed groups, because while their recruitment may be illegal, it is still ongoing.

### Middle East

Child soldiers are reportedly used in a number of Middle Eastern countries, including Iran, Iraq, Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Yemen. In May 2008, CSUCS reported that in the Iranian section of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, children were used in military attacks and training. It had also been documented that while there was no evidence of systematic recruitment by armed groups of children, suicide attacks in Palestine involved minors. In some Arab states, children are intimidated or blackmailed into acting as informers, which also endangers their lives even though they are not put in combat situations. This brings to light the importance of defining what constitutes “recruitment” and a “child soldier” when drafting solutions to this issue

### Africa

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, up to half of the child soldiers in the world are serving in Africa. They

are being used in armed conflict in the Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Sudan. Child recruitment rose alarmingly in Somalia in May 2010. Immediately, UNICEF and the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict called on all parties to put an immediate end to the practice.

UN organizations like UNICEF try to support African countries in their efforts to solve this serious issue. For instance, in June 2010, a regional conference on the recruitment and use of children in armed forces took place in Chad, organized by UNICEF and the government of Chad. The conference aimed to commit to the participants to end the use of child soldiers and better provide for their care and re-integration into society.

### Questions to Consider

- How can non-governmental groups be motivated to stop the recruitment and use of child soldiers?
- Is there such this as “voluntary” enlistment on behalf of the child? What measures can be taken to assure that children are given other opportunities to prevent them from resorting to armed combat?
- What extra measures can be taken in countries following natural disasters to prevent the targeting of children for recruitment into armed groups?
- What steps can developed nations take to assist conflict-ridden states such as those in Africa in stopping this cruel practice?

### Helpful Resources

- “Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers” <http://www.child-soldiers.org/home>
- “Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers on 12 February” [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/.../106014.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/.../106014.pdf)