



33rd Annual

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

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Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to the 33rd annual Brigham Young University Model United Nations Conference (BYUMUN). As delegates representing a variety of Member States, you represent the voices of diplomacy and group initiative. I admire your decision to work towards global development and a more sustainable future for all.

My name is Brendan Armstrong, and I am thrilled to be your director for the United Nations General Assembly. I am currently a Junior at BYU majoring in economics with minors in Spanish and political strategy. After graduating, I hope to attend law school and eventually work my way into state and federal politics. In November of 2021, I represented the Netherlands on the General Assembly First Committee at the National Model UN (NMUN) conference in DC, and in April 2022, I represented Panama on the General Assembly Third Committee at the NMUN conference in NYC. Having worked on two General Assembly committees, I understand how important of a role the GA has in global projects. You will find that the research you conduct, the speeches you give, and the policies you implement will all play a major role in the development of your Member State and the world.

This year, the topics before the General Assembly are as follows:

- I. Preserving Press Freedom
- II. Eliminating Gender-based Violence

The GA is the main policy-making organization of the United Nations. The organization is composed of all. The resolutions passed by this committee ensure that plausible solutions will be enacted to serve every individual across the world. This background guide will serve as a launching point for your research, not as a document that will replace it. As you develop innovative solutions, ensure that they align with the motives of your individual Member State and remember to keep them simple and inclusive. Each Member State will have different methods of addressing these complex topics, and it is important that each voice is heard. Please don't hesitate to contact me at the following email with any questions or concerns that may arise.

All the best,

Brendan Armstrong
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SECRETARIAT

Spencer Shields
Security Council

Brendan Armstrong
General Assembly Third Committee

Megan Tanner
Economic and Social Council

Katherine Jolley
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Parker Carlquist
World Health Organization

Tania Carrillo
Organization of American States

Marie Kulbeth
Alix Hess
Executive Directors

DAVID M. KENNEDY
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Cory Leonard
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Kelly Russell
MUN Instructor

Committee Background

“I am here to sound the alarm. The world must wake up. We are on the edge of an abyss and moving in the wrong direction. Our world has never been more threatened or more divided... A surge of mistrust and misinformation is polarizing people and paralyzing societies. Human rights are under fire and science is under assault... We need to act now to bridge the great divides and save humanity and the planet. With real engagement, we can live up to the promise of a better and more peaceful world. That is a driving force of our common agenda.”

- António Guterres, Secretary-General, UNGA 76th Session

Introduction

Founded in 1945, the United Nations (UN) facilitates multinational investigation of global issues, development of solutions, and participation in diplomatic processes. It is currently made up of 193 Member States and is divided into several bodies, including the General Assembly (GA), the Security Council (SC), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. Member States represent a variety of political, social, and economic backgrounds.

The GA is the main “deliberative, policymaking and representative organization of the UN”. It is also the only body within the UN that is represented by each Member State, compared to other bodies of the UN which are only made up of a select number of Member States. Additionally, each Member State in the GA has an equal vote in committee despite the size of the Member State. The work of the GA requires swift and careful action because the items that are discussed include issues that are currently affecting individuals across the globe. For the purposes of this conference, you will be working in the GA, rather than a specific committee within the GA (like GA1 or GA3). Nonetheless, the topics might fall more closely under work performed by GA3, which explores social, humanitarian, and cultural topics, so you might find some helpful information there.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

It is important to understand the mandate, functions, and powers of the GA in order to most effectively develop solutions that address the topics presented at this conference. The GA lacks the authority to make or enforce laws on a global, national, or local level but suggests actions that Member States can take. Those suggestions aren’t entirely binding, but Member States know that it is often in their best interest to follow them, which makes those resolutions quite powerful. The resolutions were made in attempts to solve the issues presented before the GA, so those that are dealing with those specific issues ought to know that the resolutions are backed by international cooperation and aid. Examples of this include the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which “reflected the commitment of Member States to reach specific goals to attain peace, security, and disarmament, along with development and poverty eradication; to safeguard human rights and promote the rule of law; to protect our common environment; and to strengthen the United Nations.”

Written in the Charter of the United Nations, the GA has the ability to initiate studies, discuss or make recommendations to other organs of the UN, consider reports from other organs of the UN, and make general recommendations for the purpose of international peace and development. These will be some of the most important actions that you will recommend in committee. Additionally, given the magnitude and size of the GA, there is overlap in subject matter with many non-government organizations (NGOs). The World Bank estimates that over 15 percent of overseas development aid is channeled through NGOs, meaning that they play a large part in research conducted by the GA. Their influence is abundant and increasingly important. Nonetheless, they don't have the ability to vote in the GA and are only allowed for consultations when matters are discussed concerning their areas of competence. As of 2017, there were 4,665 NGOs working with the UN.

Decisions made by the GA drive the progress of the UN and its programs, contributing to the goal of carrying on the work of the Assembly. The GA is allowed to call special sessions and emergency special sessions, and it has convened 32 times for special sessions and 11 times for emergency special sessions. Additionally, Article 22 of the UN Charter states, "the GA may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions," although this isn't always recommended. There are a myriad of organizations and UN organs that are already intact and more cost-efficient that can cause lasting impact. The lasting impact of the GA is, and will continue to be, monumental.

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Adopted by UN Member States in the year 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a monumental document describing a variety of important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This agenda will be very important in your research because it guides a large portion of current research on topics assigned to your committee. For example, SDG 16 seeks to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development" which relates to topic 1, the preservation of press freedom. SDG 5, which promotes gender equality, and SDG 10, which strives to reduce inequalities within and among countries, pertain to Topic 2, the elimination of gender-based violence. As a motivator, the SDG Progress Report from 2022 found that significant efforts must be strengthened regarding all SDGs in order to achieve them by the year 2030.

During the 76th, or current, Session of the General Assembly Plenary Session, the GA adopted 51 resolutions ranging from issues in decolonization to the dissemination of international law. Additionally, the assembly adopted five other resolutions covering a variety of topics like: promoting a culture of peace, preventing armed conflict in Ukraine, protecting the world's oceans and fish stocks, and addressing climate change. An example of action that occurred regarding climate change included Resolution A/76/497 which gave the International Solar Alliance observer status in the GA, following the context of the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference. This was important in terms of working towards SDG 7 which ensures access to affordable, sustainable and modern energy for all, and SDG 14, which conserves and sustainably uses the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Specific to Topic 1, World Press Freedom Day was established by the GA in December 1993, following the recommendation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) General Conference. Since then, every 3rd of May is celebrated as World Press Freedom Day. The establishment of this holiday served for the betterment of democracies across the world for almost 30 years and the fruits of those efforts by millions of individuals. Each year, there are different themes associated with this day and most recently the theme was "Journalism under Digital Siege." The digital era's impact on freedom of expression, the safety of journalists, and access to information and privacy were discussed.

More recently, media experts raised alarm over Russia's media censorship and how that impacted current events. Calling for the GA's involvement in this war isn't new given the events that occurred most recently. With that, the UN is working with the GA as well as other UN organizations like the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) to develop solutions to this undertaking. The full scope of the GA's abilities will become evident certainly in this year's plenary session as well as the next few months as the war continues.

Specific to Topic 2, since 2000, the GA adopted numerous resolutions to address violence against women and requested the preparation of reports on various forms of this violence. In 2006, the GA adopted Resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Since then, a variety of resolutions were passed by the GA regarding trafficking of women and girls, all forms of violence against girls, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and domestic violence. Thus, it is evident how one initial resolution to more carefully address violence against women created a plethora of resolutions that continually seek the betterment of women's lives across the globe. Nonetheless, there is still work to do.

Conclusion

Nigerian human rights activist Hafsat Abiola wrote, "Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are." Every Member State is represented equally within this body and thus, each part of the globe is recognized and heard. Not a single voice in the UN is diminished in this committee. With that, successful delegates will understand that they must work cooperatively, listen to those around them, and research carefully in order to ensure that the solutions provided leave a mark in every corner of the Earth. Member States won't always agree on how to proceed, but the GA is known for producing resolutions that the international community can effectively implement.

Annotated Bibliography

Economic and Social Council. (n.d.). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal*. Retrieved June 19, 2022, from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29858SG_SDG_Progress_Report_2022.pdf

This document is very helpful in understanding the current state of where the SDGs are and how they are being implemented. It is helpful particularly in relation to SDG 5, 10, and others that are deemed necessary by the delegates. This ought to be used as a basis of research and motivation for developing important resolutions.

General Assembly. (n.d.). *2005 World Summit Outcome*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/documents>

This is resolution GA/60/1 which contains the 2005 World Summit Outcome. I used this as evidence of the function and mandate of the GA.

General Assembly. (n.d.). *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/documents>

This is resolution 55/2 which contains the UN Millennium Declaration. I used this as evidence of the function and mandate of the GA.

***Inventory of United Nations activities to end violence against women*. General Assembly of the United Nations. (n.d.). Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://evaw-un-inventory.unwomen.org/en/intl-policy-framework/general-assembly-of-the-united-nations#traf>**

This is an extremely useful article regarding violence against women. It provides links to all the resolutions that were passed by the GA recently regarding the safety of women. Delegates should use this resource to understand what actions were taken and what policies need to be put in place to better ensure that women are safe from endangerment.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Allocation of agenda items for the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/documents>

This document was used to show what the agenda for a GA session looked like and how it took place. This is the official allocation of agenda items for the 76th Session, so it contains useful information regarding how the session works and in what order it takes place.

United Nations. (n.d.). *General Assembly adopts 51 resolutions, 13 decisions forwarded by fourth, sixth committees | meetings coverage and press releases*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12394.doc.htm#:~:text=Taking%20up%20the%20Fourth%20Committee's,space%20matters%2C%20among%20other%20topics>

This website provides information regarding the most recent Plenary Session of the GA. It discusses the resolutions that were passed forward, provides a general synopsis of the session, and provides context for future events. It is quite helpful in understanding the current priorities of the GA.

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

This website contains the 17 SDGs and a briefer version of what the 2030 Agenda is and how it operates. It is brief and provides a helpful reminder of what is to be accomplished. It also contains the history of the SDG goals and the implementation of them.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development | department of economic and social affairs*. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

This website provides a word for word copy of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Pondering it carefully will provide a sense of its importance as well as why it is necessary for future development all across the world. It is something that should be referenced often when conducting research and will be helpful in understanding social impacts.

United Nations. (n.d.). *UN rights experts raise alarm over Russia's 'choking' media clampdown at home | UN news*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113762>

This article discusses the implications of Russia's censorship and how that is playing out with the war in Ukraine. It is meant to be shown as evidence of how the GA will respond to this act and what actions will be taken in the future to meet these civil rights violations.

United Nations. (n.d.). *United Nations, main body, main organs, General Assembly*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>

This page contains the general working of the UNGA. It explains what it is, what it is allowed to do, and also provides access to links that take you to more pages that explain more inner workings of the GA.

United Nations. (n.d.). *United Nations, main body, main organs, General Assembly*. United Nations. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

This page is an inside link from the main page that describes the main committees of the GA, subsidiary organs of the GA, regional groups, special sessions and emergency special sessions, and the importance of carrying on the work of the assembly. It provides a greater understanding into the work of the GA, as well as the work of the UN in general.

United Nations. (n.d.). *United Nations, main body, main organs, General Assembly. United Nations.* Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml>

This website addresses what exactly an emergency special session and why that would be sued in the context of the GA. It also provides information regarding the past 11 emergency special sessions including when they were and what they were about. It helps in understanding the mandate of the GA.

United Nations. (n.d.). *United Nations, main body, main organs, General Assembly. United Nations.* Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/special.shtml>

This website addresses what exactly a special session is and how the GA can use it. It provides information regarding all of the past 32 special sessions including when they occurred and what they were about. It can help in understanding the mandate of the GA and what types of events take place within it.

United Nations. (n.d.). *World Press Freedom Day - en. United Nations.* Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/observances/press-freedom-day>

This website provides information regarding World Press Freedom Day. This is important in understanding the theme for 2022, being “Journalism under Digital Siege.” It also talks about the history of the holiday, which was enacted by the GA and shows the scope and ability of the committee to function as a whole pertaining to this topic.

I. Preserving Press Freedom

“Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy.”

- Walter Cronkite, American Broadcaster

Introduction

The invention of mechanized printing in the 15th century led to the expansion of newspapers, books, and various other written publications. Despite the excitement of the time due to an expansion of ideas and knowledge, there was a surge in the censoring of various religious or political writings that were deemed “inaccurate” by some authoritative figure of that time. It wasn’t until December 2, 1766, that the first set of laws governing the freedom of the press and the freedom of information was put into place by the Swedish Parliament, emphasizing the fundamental importance of non-censorship. Since then, various other nations followed suit in establishing laws governing the freedom of the press.

Five million people have access to the internet today and the rate of internet users grows at a rate of 4% annually. That number might even be higher now, due to ongoing effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Concurrently, trends across the world indicate that the majority of people receive their news online, rather than in physical print. The importance of these statistics lies in the fact that more and more people will be receiving their information online as demand increases. There is greater accessibility to information because more individuals are becoming involved in local, national, and international affairs, and it is important that the information they receive is accurate with freedom of the press.

Trust in the government grew, on average, 6% in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In a number of countries, particularly those with strong public service media, there was greater trust from the general public towards their respective news outlets. Even more interesting was the fact that 74% of people said that they prefer news that reflects a range of views, allowing them to decide what to think. Most (66%) also thought that news stations should attempt to be neutral when discussing issues to ensure accuracy and unbiasedness. The statistics are clear that the majority of people worldwide feel they deserve fair and honest press that provides them with accurate information.

There are various written constitutions across the globe guaranteeing freedom of the press, but there are multiple areas surrounding this topic that still need to be improved. Global concerns about false and misleading information demonstrate that more and more Member States are moving to tackle the issues, particularly in regards to misinformation on the Covid-19 Pandemic, national elections, and journalistic fraud. UNESCO and the GA are working hard to ensure that digital communications are trusted and that they are accurately able to represent information. If they don’t, then they don’t gain the trust of the public and they lead to the spreading of misinformation, which in many cases can have deadly impacts.

Current Circumstances

The 2022 Theme for World Press Freedom Day was “Journalism Under Digital Siege.” UNESCO, along with the Republic of Paraguay, held a global conference providing an opportunity to “journalists, civil society representatives, national authorities, academics and the broader public to discuss emerging challenges to press freedom and journalists’ safety, and to work together on identifying solutions.” They focused specifically on the digital era’s impact on the safety of journalists, freedom of expression, media viability, and public trust. The conference cited the report, “Threats that Silence: Trends in the Safety of Journalists,” which found that perpetrators get away with nine out of every 10 murders that are committed on journalists. The study also found that between the years 2016-2020, UNESCO reported 400 killings of journalists across the world, which is a twenty percent decrease from the previous five years. If individuals are to receive reliable information, they need to receive it from journalists who don’t have to fear for their lives when reporting.

The 20th World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders, found that there was an increase in media polarization within countries and between countries at the international level. Additionally, the Index measures the state of journalism within 180 countries and territories. The situation was marked as “very bad” in 28 countries including Belarus and Russia with only 8 countries reporting to be in “good” conditions. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia reflects the effect of a propaganda war on physical conflict and ultimately reflects why Russia scored so low. Examples of successful press freedom efforts are found in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, where the democratic model of freedom of expression thrives.

More Generally, UNESCO, in their 2021/2022 report, found that press freedom generally is declining in the world. As stated, over the past five years, over 85% of the world has experienced a decline in press freedom. They also recognized key trends across Member States including new laws that restrict press freedom, a slowing in the closure of the gender gap across newsrooms, and a massive surge of misinformation that provides declining trust in media worldwide. The Covid-19 Pandemic demonstrated a need for the people to understand events taking place across the world, yet the pandemic was used as a method to restrict press freedoms in 96 out of 144 countries. These issues will persist unless careful action is performed by the GA and the governments of individual Member States.

Regional Efforts

The African Union (AU) continues to spearhead issues of press freedom through their court system, enforcing the need for states to follow the guidelines set forth. An example of this occurred in the case of Lohé Issa Konaté v. Burkina Faso, providing a binding interpretation on the state's obligations under Article 9 (freedom of expression) of the Banjul Charter. The Court held that imprisonment for defamation was not an acceptable penalty and that any penalties for exercising the right to free speech should be proportionate. In an earlier judgment in 2014, in the case of Zongo and Others v. Burkina Faso, “the Court held that the Respondent State’s failure to properly investigate and prosecute the perpetrators in the case of the killing of investigative journalist Norbert Zongo constituted a violation of its obligations under both Article 7 (fair trial) and Article 9.” Cases like this serve as examples for what the African Union is doing to ensure a safe working environment for journalists, proper investigations, and proportionate sanctions for speech offenses.

Additionally the AU has produced key treaty provisions in regards to freedom of expression like the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,” “African Commission Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa,” and “African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms.” Additionally, many African Member States actively work to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” are upheld.

On May 15, 2009, 48 editors-in-chief and leading journalists from 19 countries adopted the “European Charter on Freedom of the Press.” The charter was monumental in that it formulated principles for the freedom of the press from government interference. This included a journalist's right to safety from surveillance, electronic eavesdropping and searches of editorial departments and computers, and to unimpeded access for journalists and citizens to all domestic and foreign sources of information. The charter essentially sought free reign of information to ensure that the public was not being deceived and that it was up-to-date on current events. The charter was meant to be adopted into the European Union (EU) and was handed over to the European Commission in Brussels on June 9th 2009 and to the Council of Europe in Luxembourg on October 26th 2009. Nonetheless, the document remains non-binding.

Currently, all countries in Southeast Asia sit in the bottom half of the World Press Freedom Index. The issue lies in the fact that there is no presumption of a right to publish in these countries. It isn't banned, but it simply isn't encouraged. Additionally, the threat of danger places a great toll on journalists and leads to unsatisfactory productions that aren't representative of current affairs. There are two problems that cause issues including vaguely worded laws open to abuse and politically-motivated prosecutions. Politicians are then those that are able to control what gets out and what stays in. Nonetheless, despite the lack of work achieved in this region of the world, there are still movements and efforts by the international community seeking to solve the issues there.

UN and Global Efforts

Through the years, a variety of UN documents were adopted that played a monumental impact on press freedom, particularly in parts of the world with more developing Member States. The “Windhoek Declaration” was the first of this kind, adopted in 1991, which served as a statement of press freedom principles by African newspaper journalists seeking free, independent and pluralistic press. From this document came the “Alma-Ata Declaration for Central Asia”, “Sana’a Declaration for the Middle East”, and the “Santiago Declaration for Latin America and the Caribbean”, among others. The Windhoek Declaration established a need for governments to actively protect journalists and establish the ability for citizens to exercise freedom of expression. This document had a lasting impact on Member States across the developing world.

In 2021, 30 years after the adoption of the “Windhoek Declaration,” UNESCO adopted another resolution entitled, “Windhoek +30 Declaration,” under the theme of “Information as a Public Good.” As participants in the World Press Freedom Day of that year, they called upon Member States to remember the UDHR Article 19, which states that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

They then called on governments, UNESCO and other intergovernmental organizations, and technology companies to perform a variety of tasks. They called for them to work harder to ensure transparency in publications and cited the need for a greater freedom of expression for all individuals across the globe. In collaborating across these various bodies, the organization found that this form of collaboration would be successful for future efforts.

Additionally, many NGOs are actively working to ensure press freedom throughout the world. Examples of this include Reporters Without Borders, the organization that provides statistics through the World Press Freedom Index. The organization was founded in France in 1985 to advocate for press freedom worldwide. There are a variety of tasks that the organization performs, essentially included in the following:

“Defending imprisoned or persecuted journalists and media personnel; exposing mistreatment and torture of journalists; providing financial aid for struggling media personnel or companies (as well as for the families of imprisoned journalists); and promoting journalists’ safety, particularly in war zones. The organization compiles research and embarks on fact-finding missions to document violations of press freedom. After obtaining evidence of a transgression, RSF pressures governments through publicity campaigns and protest letters. RSF publishes several yearly reports that include rankings of countries around the world by their degree of press freedom.”

The organization posts information that helps in understanding the current wellbeing of journalists across Member States all over the world.

Conclusion

The world, in regards to press freedom, is not performing well, and the lives of both journalists and ordinary citizens are at stake because of it. The GA has the opportunity to fix the negative trends involving safety for journalists, freedom of expression, access to information, and trust in government, ensuring that careful resolutions are passed that actively work to protect these groups of people. In doing so, lives will be spared and greater trust will be developed between peoples and governments.

Questions to Consider:

1. What can NGOs do to promote the expansion of press freedom in areas that don’t have many laws governing those freedoms?

2. How can past resolutions from UN bodies be expounded upon to further press freedom?
3. Why does World Press Freedom Day play such an important role in policy development and what lesson can be learned from past celebrations?

Annotated Bibliography

Bill Hayton Associate Fellow. (2021, July 7). *Freedom of expression under threat in Southeast Asia*. Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/freedom-expression-under-threat-southeast-asia>

This article provides important information about the situation in Southeast Asia regarding press freedom and the lack of action that is taking place therein. It is helpful for Member States in understanding how to work with an international mindset.

Digital around the world - datareportal – global digital insights. DataReportal. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview#:~:text=A%20total%20of%205%20billion,12%20months%20to%20April%202022>

This article provides statistics about the current state of the world in regards to internet usage. It demonstrates why so many people are affected by online news media and the impact it has.

Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *A brief history of press freedom*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/story/250-years-of-press-freedom>

This article provides a brief description of the history of press freedom and what actions were taken by individual nations. It was used in the introduction and in understanding why press freedom became an issue when it did. It is helpful as a starting point in understanding press freedom.

Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Reporters without borders*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Reporters-Without-Borders>

This article explains what Reporters Without Borders is and what their role is as an organization. It will help in understanding the World Press Freedom Index and where it comes from.

European charter on freedom of the press. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php>

This website provides a copy of the European Charter on Freedom of Press. This article creates principles for the freedom of press from government interference. Its goal is to create validity across Europe and make adoption in the EU conditional on agreement to the charter.

Modoux, A., Lister, G., Annan, M. by K., Berger, G., Mayor, F., & Cano, A. M. B. de. (2021, June 8). 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration. UNESCO. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://en.unesco.org/news/30th-anniversary-windhoek-declaration>

This website provides information on the history of the Windhoek Declaration which was massively important on an international scale in regards to press freedom. It established an important foundation for future resolutions.

Newman 23rd June 2021, N. (n.d.). Overview and key findings of the 2021 Digital News Report. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/dnr-executive-summary>

This article provides statistics on how much people trust the government due to news media and how people feel about journalists. It was helpful in understanding that the majority of people favor press freedom and want news outlets to provide information objectively.

Press Freedom in Africa, UNESCO (2016) Columbia Law School. UNESCO. Retrieved July 1, 2022, from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/key_treaty_standards_and_caselaw_findings_on_press_freedom_obligations_in_africa.pdf

This study describes what the current state of press freedom is like in the AU and how States can abide by the standards described therein. It also explains what treaties exist and how individual States can abide by regional, national, and international treaties.

Press freedom in times of crisis and transformation. UNESCO.org. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.unesco.org/reports/world-media-trends/2021/en/global-trends>

This website from UNESCO provides information on world trends in freedom of expression and media development. Specifically, it is the 2021/2022 online report and serves to provide statistics and useful information for research on press freedom.

RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom index : A new era of Polarisation. RSF. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://rsf.org/en/rsf%E2%80%99s-2022-world-press-freedom-index-new-era-polarisation-0>

This article provides insight into the World Press Freedom Index and what information can be gathered from it in understanding world and region trends. I used it to assess

different levels of press freedom in different regions of the world. Depending on your Member State, this website will be useful in understanding your region of the world.

Threats that Silence: Trends in the Safety of Journalists. Unesdoc.unesco.org. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379589>

This journal demonstrates what information/statistics were found in the 2021/2022 Global Report. It is extremely useful in understanding current trends and data that is pertinent to your research.

United Nations. (n.d.). *World Press Freedom Day - en. United Nations. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/observances/press-freedom-day>*

I used this article quite often, particularly when writing about World Press Freedom Day and the impact it had in the year 2022. It demonstrated where current information was at and what the priorities of UNESCO and the UN are at the moment. It is helpful in understanding the role that the UN has in protecting journalists.

Windhoek+30 Declaration. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/competency_framework_e.pdf

The Windhoek+30 Article presented here is of utmost importance given that it was made just last year. It provides an important background for research and understanding into the world of press freedom and what is being worked on at the current moment.

II. Eliminating Gender-based Violence

“When we talk as ONE, violence against women comes out from behind closed doors. Violence against women and girls in most societies goes unrecognized and unreported because we are afraid to communicate about it. Violence against women is a public issue and it is a public concern that affects all segments of society.”

- Agnes M Fallah Kamara, Advocate and Radio Producer

Introduction

UNHCR defines gender-based violence (GBV) as “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.” Additionally, gender-based violence can include, “sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private, threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called ‘honour crimes.’” Given the variety of ways that GBV occurs, it is an ongoing crisis, affecting individuals across the world.

UN Women estimates that about one in three women (736 million women) will experience sexual or physical forms of violence in their lifetimes, 30 percent of which are women aged 15 and older. When women are displaced or found in times of crisis, that number increases. UN Women also finds that an estimated one in seven women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband in the past 12 months and globally. It also found that 81,000 women and girls were killed in 2020 with 58% of them being at the hands of an intimate partner or family member. Those numbers disproportionately affect low- and lower-middle-income countries and regions.

Right now, the Istanbul Convention, or the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, is the benchmark for international legislation regarding gender-based violence. It is the first legally-binding document that is focused on “creating a comprehensive legal framework and approach to combat violence against women.” It further urges European countries to exercise due diligence when preventing violence, protecting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators (Article 5). The document is currently signed by all EU Member States and ratified by 21 of them, meaning that it has great international outreach potential. It is a source of inspiration to other countries around the world.

The fact of the matter is that GBV is plaguing the world, and it isn’t decreasing. UNHCR and UN Women are actively working with various governmental and non-governmental organizations in ensuring the protection of women and girls across the world. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring proper economic and social mobility for women so that GBV can be eradicated once and for all.

Target Areas of Engagement

Economic empowerment is one of the greatest tools used to combat GBV. The World Bank finds that around 2.4 billion women of working age aren’t given equal economic opportunity and 178

countries still have legal barriers that prevent their full participation. This is dangerous in that lower economic opportunity leads women to work in low-skilled jobs. By extension, UN Women found that those who participate in low-skilled and precarious jobs are more exposed to physical and sexual violence, particularly migrants. UN Women shows additional benefits to economic empowerment including the achievement of SDGs 5 and 8, growing economies, greater educational attainment for women and girls, and the closure of gender gaps.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) currently is focused on the trafficking of women and girls. In 2018, for every ten victims of human trafficking detected globally, about five were adult women and two were girls. Most of the detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (92 percent) are females. UNODC released an issue, “Global Reports on Trafficking in Persons,” analyzing country profiles regarding human trafficking, a global overview of the issue, and an overall report of what actions are being taken. The issue recommends a greater push by the United Nations Trafficking Protocol’s regional overviews to ensure cooperativity and safety to individuals across the globe.

Protecting children from bullying and cyber-harassment continues to be an area of interest for UN officials and global leaders. The Report of the Secretary-General on Protecting Children from Bullying (Resolution A/73/265) offers the first report on protecting children from bullying and what Member States are doing to combat it. More specifically, it provides a report on individual Member States and the specific actions they are taking. Additionally, cyber-harassment remains a difficult problem. One in ten women in the European Union have experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15 and that risk is highest among women aged 18-29. Due to the increasing reach of the internet, both men and women are at risk of higher rates of harassment causing both physiological and mental issues.

Another less evident issue is that of female genital mutilation (FGM). According to UN Women, “At least 200 million women and girls, aged 15-49 years, have undergone female genital mutilation in 31 countries where the practice is concentrated. Half of these countries are in West Africa. There are still countries where female genital mutilation is almost universal; where at least 9 in 10 girls and women, aged 15-49 years, have been cut.” The UN is committed to ending FGM by the year 2030, following the inspiration of SDG 5, which again aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Many countries saw an increase in FGM due to the pandemic, but the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are leading the largest global programme to eradicate it. They create annual reports, like the “2020 Annual Report on FGM: Sustaining the Momentum - The Performance Report” amongst others, which provide information regarding the current state of FGM.

Impact of Covid-19 on Women and Girls

Due to the pandemic, there is strong evidence of an increase in violence against women and girls. Through rapid gender assessments on the impact of Covid-19 on violence against women, the idea of a “shadow pandemic” is confirmed. The study shows:

“Even before COVID-19, violence against women was one of the most widespread violations of human rights. As the pandemic raged on, the threat of a “shadow pandemic” of violence against women emerged. Reports of violence against women, and particularly domestic violence, increased as security, health, and money worries compounded the strains of living in lockdown.”

This information came through investigations in Kenya, Cameroon, Thailand, and Ukraine, and demonstrates a need to better address the issue due to the pandemic. At the Generation Equality Forum in Paris on 30 June 2021, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya demonstrated that he is committed to ending violence against women and girls, including constructing a strong data and evidence base to inform policies and programmes. He wants to insert “a gender-based violence module in the upcoming 2022 Demographic and Health Survey.”

As of October 2021, 52 countries integrated violence against women and girls prevention and response into Covid-19 plans, and 150 countries adopted measures to aid women survivors of violence during the pandemic. The Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker monitors the responses taken by individual countries, providing an accurate measurement of the current situation regarding GBV in their respective countries. The analysis also addresses women’s economic and social security, including unpaid care work, the labour market and violence against women. It is useful in providing guidance for policymakers and evidence for advocates to ensure a gender-sensitive Covid-19 policy response and is also useful in ensuring that gender-based safety measures are met and enforced.

Further UN and Global Initiatives

The UN Secretary General has a campaign entitled, “UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women” (UNiTE), which is a multi-year effort, aiming to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls around the world. It is managed by UN Women and calls on governments, civil society, women’s organizations, young people, the private sector, the media, and the entire UN system to work together in order to address GBV. The campaign dedicated the 25th of each month as “Orange Day”, a day to raise awareness and tackle issues surrounding GBV. The campaign continues to see success in raising awareness. Read the “UNiTE action circular for May-June 2022” for a deeper understanding of the actions they are taking and how the GA can implement them.

The EU and UN are working closely together on the “Spotlight Initiative” to bring a greater focused attention to the issue of GBV, and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The multifaceted initiative responds to all forms of violence against women but focuses more specifically on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, femicide, trafficking of human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation. It fully aligns with the principle of ‘leave no one behind.’

Additionally, UNHCR recognizes that while GBV affects mainly women and girls, it also affects men and boys, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI) and backgrounds. GBV is an attack on human rights overall. UNHCR developed a 9-part “core actions” plan in 2020, that the organization is utilizing now to protect all people. These include,

1. prevention, 2. risk mitigation, 3. response, 4. case management, 5. assessment and monitoring, 6. planning, prioritization, and resource allocation, 7. partnerships and coordination, 8. staffing, and 9. knowledge and capacity. Each step is necessary in ensuring that UNHCR is following a 'Do No Harm' approach that avoids exposing people to further harm through their actions.

Conclusion

GBV remains one of the largest issues plaguing nations across the world. Through increased financial and intellectual investment in the issue, millions of lives will be saved and altered for the better. However, many of the ideas are easier said than done. It is important to understand what actions are currently being taken, which ones are feasible, and what other solutions can tackle the issue. The UN recognizes the impact of GBV and understands the difficulty of addressing the issue due to the reasons mentioned above. Nonetheless, we must work to ensure that each individual is free from GBV and its effects.

Questions to Consider

1. How can increases in education decrease GBV?
2. What areas of GBV are being addressed now and which areas still need to be addressed?
3. How can Member States build upon existing programs and campaigns to prevent GBV now and in the future?
4. How can Member States cohesively address GBV, given the extent to which the issue plays a role in their individual states?

Annotated Bibliography

2020 Annual Report on FGM: Sustaining the momentum - The performance report. United Nations Population Fund. (8444, January 1). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/2020FGMAR>

This report belongs to the United Nations Population Fund and represents information regarding female genital mutilation. If your Member State decides to pursue this issue, this report will be of importance to you. It has country case studies and six sub reports.

CETS 210 - Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating. (2011). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

This is the actual document containing the Istanbul Convention. An in-depth reading of it will help in understanding what actions European Countries are taking to address GBV and how their efforts are different from those of other Member States across the globe.

Covid-19 global gender response tracker. UNDP Data Futures Platform. (2022, May 4). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

The Global Gender Response Tracker is important in that it tracks the pandemic and what measures were taken to address gender issues. It also shows the impact of the pandemic on GBV.

Emerging data on violence against women confirm a shadow pandemic. UN Women Data Hub. (2021, July 1). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://data.unwomen.org/features/emerging-data-violence-against-women-confirm-shadow-pandemic>

This website defines the shadow pandemic that occurred because of the Covid-19 pandemic in regard to GBV. It is a good read and will accurately describe why the Covid-19 Pandemic played such a monstrous role in GBV.

Facts and figures: Economic empowerment. UN Women – Headquarters. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

This document from UN Women provides facts and figures surrounding economic empowerment of women and how that is helpful in women's progression and the ending of GBV.

Facts and figures: Ending violence against women. UN Women – Headquarters. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

This was the primary document that I used for my research. It talks about various areas of GBV that ought to be addressed right now in order to achieve the 2030 goals. It also is helpful in providing a background for more in-depth research of the topics.

Key facts about the Istanbul Convention. Istanbul Convention Action against violence against women and domestic violence. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts>

The Istanbul Convention is an important landmark treaty that helped advance fights against GBV. This document provides a deeper understanding of that treaty and demonstrates where the history of the issue comes from.

Unite by 2030 to end violence against women campaign. UN Women – Headquarters. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action>

This article provides information on the UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign. This website will be helpful with background research and understanding of what action items have already been taken to address GBV. It can be used as a source of inspiration regarding what areas of research to pursue.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). Gender-based violence. UNHCR. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html>

This is the website I used which describes what GBV is and how the UN views it. It is helpful to ensure that you have a basic knowledge of what the subject is and generally what the UN is doing about it.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). UNHCR policy on the prevention of, risk mitigation and response to gender-based violence, 2020 (PDF). UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, 2020. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unhcr.org/5fa018914/unhcr-policy-prevention-risk-mitigation-response-gender-based-violence>

This document is of extreme importance in understanding what actions the UNHCR is taking to combat GBV. It addresses risk, prevention, and response from the year 2020 and is helpful to ensure that future efforts are successful. Use this document for statistics and information on past efforts.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from https://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf

UNODC provides this report on trafficking of humans, demonstrating why it is so important to address and solve. It is an area of interest for many Member States, helping to end GBV.

United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UNiTE-Campaign-Action-Circular-May-June-2022-en.pdf>

Once more, this powerpoint shows what the UN Secretary General's Campaign, UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women, has been doing. It includes graphics and is more concise.

United Nations. (n.d.). Bullying and cyberbullying | UN special representative of the secretary-general on violence against children. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/bullying-and-cyberbullying-0>

This document helps to understand the current situations regarding violence against children and bullying, which is a special area of interest for many Member States.

United Nations. (n.d.). Ending violence against women and girls - united nations sustainable development. United Nations. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls/>

This article goes into detail about the Spotlight Initiative. It explains what the initiative is and why it is important for movements to end GBV. I think it will be a useful source of background information and will help in creating innovative solutions.

United Nations. (n.d.). International Day of zero tolerance for female genital mutilation. United Nations. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day>

This website provides information regarding International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation. If your Member State decides to pursue this route, you may want to use this website as background for understanding, as it explains why the issue is important and who it applies to.

World Bank Group. (2022, March 8). Nearly 2.4 billion women globally don't have same economic rights as men. World Bank. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/01/nearly-2-4-billion-women-globally-don-t-have-same-economic-rights-as-men>

This document from the World Bank demonstrates the economic status of women compared to men. It basically addresses equal economic opportunity.