

**Social, Humanitarian and Cultural  
Committee  
MADMUN XIV**



**SOCHUM**

### **Letter From the Chairs**

Welcome delegates to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee! SOCHUM was founded in 1945, after the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This committee focuses on the rights for all people whether it be based on gender, race, citizenship status, and more. SOCHUM also discusses topics such as criminal justice, accessibility for those with disabilities, and drug control.

For this conference, we'll be focusing on the issues of overpopulation and lack of resources in third-world countries, and the imbalance of men and women in positions of power. It is important to speak in a respectful manner about the topics because these are real issues, and we want to be conscientious of delegates' personal experiences. As with any Model UN committee, it's also important to be respectful of other delegates, especially because this committee will have a lot of beginners. With this in mind, please keep an open mind about other delegates and their positions, remembering that they are representing the government of an assigned country and not their personal standings.

As this is a beginner committee, this may be the first time that some of you are going to be at a conference. This may seem to be a stressful situation, but remember that everyone else is a beginner too. While chairing is a new experience for both of us, we both have been to other conferences and are always willing to help out. Please feel free to reach out to us any time you want to, and we will do our best to help you in any way possible. Our goal is to make sure that everyone is enjoying this conference, and that you'll be able to grow your public speaking and debate skills through this experience. It's also a great opportunity to meet new people in your community.

If you have any committee specific or general questions about Model UN, please reach out to us! We're here to help :)

Sincerely,

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## **Topic A:**

# **Overpopulation and the Lack of Resources in Third-World Countries**

### **Introduction:**

Recently, our global population has hit the landmark of 8 billion people, which brings up the question, how many people is too many? Overpopulation is generally defined as a population exceeding the carrying capacity of their environment, and therefore causing a lack of resources for the community as a whole. When applying this idea to humans, it brings up a world of complicated ethical and moral difficulties. On one hand, an individual's freedom is of high value; however, if we continue to allow a person's right to have as many children as they choose, could the growing population introduce more issues than we can shoulder?

### **Background:**

For a long time it's been clear that having too many people creates dire situations for a community. When there's too many competitors fighting for a common resource, most of the time the result is death. Overcrowding can also lead to an increase in the spread of disease which again has dire consequences. While this is the case, overpopulation isn't much of a concern in developed countries. As more resources arise, and healthcare advances, people feel less inclined to have an abundance of children because they're less likely to die. However, in places lacking the proper resources to provide for their population, families become larger in hopes of having more survivors, but that can easily cause overpopulation. More people can mean better hopes for advancement, but with the lack of resources such as healthcare, food, shelter, and education, it can be difficult to further the community's development. So how can we help countries in situations such as these, to get the help they need to balance the fertility and mortality rates to better their overall livelihood?

### **Effects of Overpopulation:**

In places where overpopulation remains an issue, an abundance of issues can emerge. Most noticeably, the population of those in poverty rises and the financial gap between the wealthy and poor widens. When this combines with the lack of enough resources to provide for everyone, living conditions can become dire. In accordance, the excess of people creates a need for more shelter, but by providing more shelter natural resources become lessened. Overpopulation also has a large impact on climate change. More energy usage, gas emissions, and buildings all cause increased temperatures. To add on, crowded cities are more likely to experience epidemics as viruses can easily move between people. For example, in 1854 London, cholera spread like wildfire. Since this was a waterborne disease, the infected water pump, a town favorite, began to unleash the virus amongst people. The poor sewage systems and close proximity allowed it to further move throughout the neighborhood.

### **Previous UN Action:**

In 1994 the United Nations held a meeting on the topic of addressing overpopulation. Their decision came down to primarily focusing on women's reproductive rights and the healthcare that goes along with it. They also generalized this to focusing on general women's empowerment, realizing that these were related

issues that affected more than just women. This programme of action focuses on intertwined problems such as child marriage, education, ending gender-based violence, contraceptive access, and preventing maternal deaths when possible. Though some of these measures have had an impact, it's not as much as they had hoped. For example, "Preventable maternal deaths have declined by 40 per cent, but the world is still miles from the ICPD Programme of Action's target to reduce maternal deaths to fewer than 75 per 100,00 live births." According to Reliefweb's article titled "Explainer: What is the ICPD and why does it matter?" However, even when these numbers aren't hitting the goals, the actions of this meeting have helped move us in the right direction, but an extra push for furthering these implementations might lead us to a better outcome.

### **Conclusion:**

In many countries today the issue of overpopulation is still prominent. While this is an issue that can and has sorted itself out in some situations, it's important for us to still discuss what more we could do to relieve the effects that overpopulation has on many people across the world. In order to keep enough resources to provide for the global population, we must again ask ourselves—how many people is too many?

### **Guiding Questions:**

- 1: *Is or has your country been affected by overpopulation? How so?*
- 2: *What actions has your country taken in order to prevent or decrease overpopulation? Were these actions effective?*
- 3: *Is additional UN action necessary for this issue? What steps should be taken if so?*
- 4: *Should actions be implemented worldwide or only in currently affected areas?*

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## **Topic B:**

# **Imbalance of Men and Women in Positions of Power**

### **Introduction**

If you take a look around many governments in our modern world, it can be clear to see that women are underrepresented. Less than one third of all UN countries have ever had a female leader, and currently, only 13 out of 193 UN member countries are being led by a woman. Efforts have been made to increase women's political participation, with varying degrees of success. Equal representation for women is imperative to help our society progress, but data shows that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and that achieving gender equality in the political world may take some time.

### **Current Situation**

Although only 13 UN Member States currently have a female leader, 2023 has had 15 total, with two women resigning in January and February. The number of countries who have had a female head of government keeps growing, with the total for this year being 59 UN Member States who have ever had a female leader. Women make up less than 23 percent of parliamentarians, with an average of 18 percent in the Arab region, while men make up more than 77 percent. News like this can be quite shocking, but the current situation is much better than it was several decades ago because of many years of dedication. In lower or single houses, 25.6 percent of parliamentarians are women, which is far higher than the 11 percent in 1995. It is widely recognized that peace and prosperity in societies cannot be achieved without half of the world's population. Women continue to be sidelined in decision-making, and are marginalized from political and public life. They continue to face structural, socioeconomic, institutional and cultural barriers, preventing them from taking part in political life. Attitudes toward women candidates are still largely characterized by deeply ingrained stereotypes, and political opponents will often use those stereotypes to question women's capabilities, even though there is growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes can improve these functions and the welfare of the population.

### **Past UN Actions**

Throughout the years, the UN has made significant progress with gender equality. One of the most notable resolutions made was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a resolution signed at the Fourth World Conference On Women. This resolution was created to be an agenda for the empowerment of women. Even today, after over 35 years, it remains the most comprehensive blueprint for action, and is a current source of inspiration to realize gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, everywhere. Several years before the Beijing Declaration was adopted, the UN General Assembly instituted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, which is commonly known as an international bill of rights for women. This convention was the basis for equality between men and women by ensuring women's equal opportunities in political and public life - including the right to vote and to stand for election; as well as education, health and employment. In July 2010, the UN General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. With this, UN Member states took a leap forward for

the UN's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women was created to address the challenges that women face, like the lack of access to decent work; facing occupational segregation and gender wage gaps; denied access to basic education and health care; suffering from violence and discrimination; and being under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes. This UN entity has been crucial to promoting equality for women, but there is still more to be done. The UN founded the Sustainable Development goals in 2015, to be completed by 2030. Even though these goals do not only pertain to gender equality, it is clear that Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life is essential to reaching these Global Goals.

### **Conclusion**

Much has been done to promote gender equality in politics and other aspects of life. There is definitive proof that these methods are working, since the number of countries with female leaders are rising, and more women are participating in government bodies. Women have a far larger chance to become elected in leadership positions today than they did 20 years ago, but there is still such a disparity between the role men and women have in government. Change is coming, albeit quite slowly. It makes us ask this question: Have we done enough?

### **Guiding Questions**

- 1: *Even in the 21st century, why is there such a disparity between gender equality?*
- 2: *Though we do not yet have gender equality in politics, what instances are there of complete gender equality? How did we achieve it?*
- 3: *How can we incentivise women to become more politically involved?*
- 4: *Is this a localized problem, or worldwide?*
- 5: *Has the UN done enough?*
- 6: *What UN action made the most significant impact on gender equality?*

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