



The Winchester School Jebel Ali

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 3

Agenda1- Developing future-proof strategies to sustainably address the
refugee issue

Letter from the Chairs

Dearest Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure and a great honour that we welcome you to the committee of the United Nations

General Assembly Third Committee. We consider it our privilege to be appointed as your chairs for this conference, and are extremely joyful to be moderating this conference of GA3. During the days of the committee sessions, we would essentially be deciding the fate of international or politics during times where intervention is required, especially while talking about these topics.

The agenda's slated for discussion are

-Developing future-proof strategies to sustainably address the refugee issue

-Protecting sites of cultural importance in conflict zones

Please note that this background guide does not provide you with all the research that you'll require for the duration of the conference. It gives you a meaningful insight into the topic and sets a base for your personal research, and guides you to start your preparations. Therefore, it is up to you to find out more about the agenda at hand and draft innovative and productive solutions. As part of the chairs of this committee, we expect the utmost professional behaviour and respect from all the participants in this conference. We believe that each and every delegate possesses the potential to bring in excellent ideas and different perspectives to the table, and hence, we look forward to witnessing an unprecedented level of debate and discussion. We hope to see you all there!

Warm Regards,

Falaa Fatima, Keisha and Arya

Vocabulary-

1. **Refugee:** An individual forced to leave their country due to well-founded fears of persecution, conflict, or violence.
2. **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Individuals forced to flee their homes but remain within the borders of their own country.
3. **Repatriation:** The voluntary return of refugees or IDPs to their country of origin.
4. **Resettlement:** The transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another country that has agreed to admit them and grant them permanent residence.
5. **Push and Pull Factors:** Factors that either force individuals to leave their homes (push factors) or attract them to a new location (pull factors).
6. **Statelessness:** Lack of citizenship or nationality, leaving individuals without legal protection.
7. **Durable Solutions:** Enduring measures to resolve the plight of refugees, typically through voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement.

Introduction to Agenda

A total of 36 million people have fled their homelands to flee war or persecution by the year 2023. People fleeing continue to risk their lives due to a lack of safe-legal routes, solidarity, and life-saving assistance. Refugees are not migrants voluntarily and have valid reasons to leave their homes. Since 2010, the global refugee crisis has grown enormously. Increasing sociopolitical, economic, and environmental uncertainty can make any country unsafe. Therefore, every country is responsible for providing secure environments for asylum seekers.

The right to seek asylum is recognised by international law, but states have no obligation to provide it. Nations may provide 'temporary protection' when faced with a large influx of people, resulting in their regular asylum systems being overwhelmed. In such instances, people can be quickly admitted to safe countries, but there is no guarantee of permanent asylum. Thus, in certain situations, 'temporary protection' is beneficial to both governments and asylum seekers. However, it only supplements, not replaces, the broader protection measures provided by the Refugee Convention.

Generally, refugee protection and assistance organisations advocate three "durable solutions" to the fate of refugees:

- 1-Voluntary repatriation: Refugees are able to return to their countries of origin as their lives and liberty are no longer threatened;
- 2-Local integration: host governments permit refugees to integrate into their first country of asylum.
- 3-Repatriation is unsafe, and the country of origin refuses to allow local integration.

Background of the Agenda-

The refugee issue has deep historical roots influenced by a variety of factors. Throughout history, forced displacement has been a consequence of wars, political upheavals, and socio-economic inequalities. Key events like World War II, the Balkan Wars, and the Cold War era have significantly shaped the global movement of people.

Beyond direct conflicts, challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses have contributed to the complexity of the refugee crisis. Recent decades have witnessed a shift, with a notable increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to civil unrest and regional conflicts.

Exploring these historical patterns equips us to construct pragmatic and effective strategies in addressing the contemporary challenges associated with forced migration.

As representatives of respective nations, you must engage in thoughtful dialogue, propose innovative solutions, and collaborate to shape policies that benefit both refugees and host communities. You must work together to develop future-proof strategies that uphold human rights, foster resilience, and build a more compassionate world.

Remember, the decisions you make here have far-reaching consequences. Let us rise to the challenge and create pathways toward sustainable solutions for the refugee crisis.

Key Stakeholders-

Host Countries:

These nations play a pivotal role in providing refuge to displaced individuals. Their policies, resources, and capacity to integrate refugees significantly impact the overall response. Host countries face challenges related to infrastructure, social services, and public opinion. Balancing humanitarian obligations with national interests is a delicate task.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):

As the leading UN agency responsible for protecting and assisting worldwide, the UNHCR plays a critical role. It coordinates international efforts, advocates for refugee rights and provides critical support to host countries. The UNHCR's expertise informs policy decisions and ensures a rights-based approach.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):

NGOs, community-based groups, and faith-based organisations actively engage in refugee assistance, advocacy and awareness campaigns. CSOs provide essential services such as healthcare, education and livelihood support. Their grassroots efforts bridge gaps and amplify voices of refugees.

Donor Countries and International Aid agencies:

These stakeholders contribute their financial resources and technical expertise to address the refugee crisis. Donor countries fund humanitarian programs, development initiatives and emergency responses. International aid agencies collaborate with host governments and NGOs to ensure effective aid delivery.

Key Issues -

1. The UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent global commitments to address various challenges, including poverty, inequality, and climate change. However, progress has been uneven due to factors such as inadequate funding, political inertia, and bureaucratic obstacles. Historically, international agreements often lacked effective mechanisms for implementation, leading to fragmented efforts and insufficient coordination. This was also the case with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To address these issues, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was introduced, emphasising integrated approaches and accountability. National governments established SDG implementation committees, aligned policies, and monitored progress through the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Despite these efforts, an implementation gap persists.
2. Climate-induced displacement is escalating due to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity. Throughout history, environmental changes have forced migrations—droughts, famines, and natural disasters have displaced communities. The Paris Agreement (2015) recognized climate-induced migration, and the Nansen Initiative (2012) focused on disaster-induced displacement. Countries developed National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to address climate risks. The Global Compact on Refugees (2018) emphasised the protection of climate refugees, and regional cooperation frameworks, such as the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security, emerged. As climate change intensifies, the number of climate refugees grows. Effective policies must integrate climate adaptation, foster international cooperation, and protect climate refugees.

3. Financing sustainable development is a critical challenge, especially for developing countries. Historical inequalities persist, with colonial legacies perpetuating economic disparities. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015) emphasised financing for development. Developed countries committed to allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Climate finance, such as the Green Climate Fund, and public-private partnerships aimed to mobilise resources. Bridging the resource gap requires fair burden-sharing, technology transfer, and domestic resource mobilisation. Ensuring adequate funding for sustainable development remains an ongoing challenge.
4. Balancing Interests: Refugee protection intersects with national security concerns. Throughout history, refugee crises (e.g., World Wars, Cold War conflicts) strained host countries. The 1951 Refugee Convention established refugee rights, but security-focused policies emerged post-9/11. Delegates must uphold refugee rights while addressing security imperatives. Evidence-based policies, regional cooperation, and equitable burden-sharing are ongoing imperatives. Balancing humanitarian obligations with security considerations remains complex. Refugee crises persist globally, necessitating collaborative solutions and a delicate equilibrium between protecting vulnerable populations and safeguarding national interests.
5. Refugee Resilience and Self-Reliance: Refugees, often enduring protracted displacement, face a critical challenge; maintaining resilience and self-reliance. Historically, humanitarian responses prioritised short-term relief, inadvertently perpetuating dependency. However, sustainable solutions demand a shift toward empowering refugees. Education, vocational training, and language skills are

essential investments. Local integration, engaging host communities, fosters sustainable livelihoods. Innovations such as digital platforms, entrepreneurship, and microfinance can enhance self-sufficiency. A rights-based approach recognizes refugees' agency and dignity, ensuring their active participation in shaping their futures.

By addressing these challenges, we can create future opportunities for refugees.

Questions to consider

- What can we do to persuade governments to expand their resettlement programmes?
- How can we ensure refugees' access to health services, housing, and work opportunities?
- What existing UN programs or frameworks could be improved or altered to improve educational opportunities for refugees without dramatically increasing funding requirements?
- How can states be persuaded to recognise refugees who have lived in their countries for a long time?

Past UN Actions

The United Nations has been at the forefront of addressing the global refugee crisis, with several key initiatives over the years. The foundation of the UN's work in this area is the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, established in 1951 and 1967 respectively. These documents define 'refugees' and outline their rights and the international standards of treatment. They have been instrumental in shaping the global response to refugee crises.

In the 1960s, UNHCR intervened in Africa's decolonization-related refugee crises. Over subsequent decades, it addressed displacement crises in Asia, Latin America, and Europe (such as the Balkans wars). Today, with over 82 million forcibly displaced people due to conflict or persecution, UNHCR's work remains crucial.

In 2016, the UN made significant strides with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. This declaration reaffirmed the importance of the international refugee regime and contained a wide range of commitments by Member States to protect people on the move. That same year, the UN held a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to specifically address the large movements of refugees and migrants.

The year 2015 saw the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity, which also seeks to strengthen universal peace. It recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees. This is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing. It recognizes that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation.

The Global Refugee Forum, a key feature of the Global Compact on Refugees, is the world's largest international gathering on refugees. Held every four years, it brings together states, refugees, host communities, development actors, the private sector, civil society organisations, and others who have a role to play in supporting refugees.

Lastly, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations in September 2016. It contains historic and wide-ranging commitments that reaffirm the commitment by Member States to respect the human rights of refugees and migrants and to support the countries that welcome them.

Possible Solutions-

1-Strengthening International Cooperation: Enhancing collaboration between nations to share responsibilities in hosting and supporting refugees.

2-Long-Term Integration Plans: Developing strategies for the long-term integration of refugees into host societies, ensuring their economic, educational, and social well-being. Should work towards establishing a universal standard for equal access to work, education, healthcare, and development programs. Defining these programs as successful refugee integration

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Protecting sites of cultural importance in conflict zones

Vocabulary

- 1) **Heritage Destruction**: Deliberate or incidental damage to cultural sites during armed conflicts, including looting, vandalism, and intentional destruction.
- 2) **UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)**: A specialised agency of the United Nations that works to promote international collaboration in the fields of education, science, and culture, including the protection of cultural heritage.
- 3) **Collateral Damage**: Unintentional harm or destruction to cultural sites as a result of military operations targeting other objectives.
- 4) **Restitution**: The return of cultural artefacts or treasures to their country of origin, often after being unlawfully removed or displaced.

Introduction of the Agenda

During war times, protecting such cultural heritage as the Bamiyan Buddhas, the Mostar Bridge, the Timbuktu libraries and Palmyra supposedly is a priority on the international public policy agenda, but government responses so far have been limited to deploring such destruction.

Attacks on sites of cultural importance in conflict zones, often referred to as cultural heritage destruction, involve deliberate acts that cause harm to monuments, museums, archaeological sites, religious structures, and other cultural assets. These attacks have significant consequences, as they erode the shared history, identity, and cultural legacy of a community.

As evidenced by the incidences in Syria and Mali, global cultural heritage faces a threat during conflict. Beyond the broader devastation caused by conflict, parties involved often intentionally target cultural heritage to undermine communities and assert dominance. Conversely, the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage can play a role in fostering reconciliation and peacebuilding. Nevertheless, there is a pressing need to enhance international focus, collaboration, and resources dedicated to protecting cultural heritage in conflict and crisis zones.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) are all involved in the implementation of international conventions on cultural heritage.

Background of the Agenda

In the past, there have been several instances of cultural destruction as a result of conflict or war. Protecting sites of cultural importance - particularly in conflict-ridden zones - is a matter of utmost importance that is often overlooked by governments. These sites are a culmination of the collective history and shared belonging of the people of that country. Several instances in the past have been proof of the deliberate or accidental destruction of such sites during conflict times. Such instances include:

Palmyra, Syria:

- The ancient city of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, faced severe destruction during the Syrian Civil War. The Islamic State (ISIS) deliberately targeted and vandalised archaeological treasures, including the iconic Temple of Bel and the Arch of Triumph. The devastation at Palmyra symbolised an assault not only on Syria's cultural heritage but also on the world's shared history.

Bamiyan Buddhas, Afghanistan:

- In 2001, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan deliberately destroyed the colossal Bamiyan Buddhas, which had stood for over 1,500 years. These monumental statues were significant symbols of cultural and religious diversity in the region. The destruction highlighted the vulnerability of cultural heritage during times of conflict and the need for international efforts to prevent such irreparable losses.

Timbuktu, Mali:

- During the conflict in Mali, armed groups targeted the cultural heritage of Timbuktu, a city known for its ancient manuscripts and historic mosques. The intentional destruction of mausoleums and manuscripts underscored the threat posed to the preservation of invaluable cultural artefacts. The international community, including UNESCO, responded by condemning the actions and working toward restoration and protection.

Aleppo, Syria:

- The city of Aleppo, with its historic Old City, faced extensive damage during the Syrian Civil War. The Umayyad Mosque, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, suffered significant harm. The destruction of Aleppo's cultural heritage not only resulted in the loss of architectural gems but also disrupted the continuity of a city that had thrived for millennia.

Hatra, Iraq:

- Hatra, an ancient city in Iraq, was targeted and partially destroyed by ISIS in 2015. This UNESCO World Heritage Site contained well-preserved ruins that reflected the blending of various cultural influences. The intentional destruction of Hatra illustrated the broader ideological motives behind attacking cultural heritage and the urgency to strengthen protective measures.

Key Stakeholders

War affects and destroys hundreds of lives. The agenda of protecting cultural sites in conflict zones involves a diverse range of stakeholders, each playing a crucial role in safeguarding our shared heritage. These stakeholders contribute in various ways to address the challenges posed by armed conflicts and to promote the preservation of cultural sites. Here are key stakeholders in this agenda:

1. National Governments:

Governments of countries where cultural sites are at risk have a primary responsibility to establish and enforce laws and regulations for the protection of cultural heritage. They are often instrumental in implementing emergency measures, coordinating restoration efforts, and collaborating with international organisations.

2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

UNESCO is pivotal in setting global standards, providing guidelines, and coordinating international efforts to protect cultural sites. It works to raise awareness, mobilise resources, and facilitate cooperation between nations.

3. The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM):

The ICCROM is an intergovernmental organisation dedicated to the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage worldwide. Established in 1956, ICCROM operates under the auspices of UNESCO.

4. Local Communities:

The communities residing near or with historical ties to cultural sites are essential stakeholders. Their involvement is critical for raising awareness, contributing local knowledge, and actively participating in protection and preservation initiatives. Communities often serve as custodians of cultural heritage.

5. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs):

NGOs specialising in cultural heritage preservation, human rights, and humanitarian assistance play a vital role. They often provide on-the-ground support, advocate for the protection of cultural sites, and engage in activities such as documentation, education, and community empowerment.

6. Armed Forces and Military Commanders:

Military entities engaged in conflict zones are key stakeholders. They can contribute to the protection of cultural sites by adhering to international humanitarian law, avoiding the use of cultural sites for military purposes, and implementing measures to minimise collateral damage.

7. International Coalitions and Alliances:

Collaborative efforts between nations and international coalitions can enhance the protection of cultural heritage. Joint initiatives can involve sharing resources, expertise, and coordinating actions to mitigate risks and respond to emergencies.

Key Issues

Preserving cultural sites in conflict zones is a vital and intricate mission that entails tackling various significant challenges. These issues are intricately connected, demanding a multifaceted strategy that encompasses international collaboration, legal structures, and practical initiatives. The following outlines some key issues encountered in safeguarding cultural sites in conflict-prone areas:

1. Armed Conflict and Destruction:

- a. Direct Targeting: Cultural sites, including monuments, museums, and religious structures, are often deliberately targeted during armed conflicts for strategic or ideological reasons.
- b. Collateral Damage: Even if not intentionally targeted, cultural sites can suffer damage as a result of military operations and the general chaos of conflict.

2. Illegal Trade and Trafficking:

- a. Looting: Conflict zones often witness a surge in looting of cultural artefacts, which are then sold on the black market to fund armed groups or criminal organisations.
- b. Trafficking: The illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts contributes to the loss of cultural heritage and can be difficult to trace and prevent.

3. Lack of International Cooperation:

- a. Coordination Challenges: Effective protection requires international cooperation, but coordination among countries, international organisations, and NGOs can be challenging due to geopolitical differences and conflicting priorities.
- b. Enforcement of International Agreements: There may be difficulties in enforcing international agreements and conventions related to the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflicts.

4. Insufficient Legal Frameworks:

- a. Gaps in International Law: Existing international legal frameworks may not provide adequate protection for cultural sites during armed conflicts, and enforcement mechanisms may be weak.
- b. Domestic Legislation: Some countries may lack or have weak domestic legislation protecting cultural heritage, making it easier for illegal activities to occur.

5. Humanitarian Concerns:

- a. Displacement and Refugees: Conflict often results in the displacement of local populations, leading to neglect and inadequate protection of cultural sites.
- b. Impact on Identity: Destruction of cultural heritage can have profound psychological and social effects on communities, affecting their sense of identity and heritage.

6. Post-Conflict Reconstruction:

- a. Resource Constraints: After conflicts, resource constraints may hinder efforts to rebuild and restore damaged cultural sites.
- b. Balancing Priorities: Post-conflict reconstruction efforts must balance the restoration of cultural heritage with the broader humanitarian and developmental needs of the affected communities.

Questions to Consider

1-How can local communities be actively involved in the protection and preservation of cultural heritage during times of conflict?

2-What educational initiatives and awareness campaigns can be implemented globally and within conflict zones to promote a sense of responsibility and respect for cultural heritage?

3-How can the GA3 promote international cooperation in the safeguarding and preservation of cultural sites in conflict zones?

Past UN Action

Year 2017-

Past resolutions, such as **UN Security Council Resolution 2347**, emphasised the importance of cultural heritage preservation and condemned the intentional destruction of religious and cultural property.

***Delegates are encouraged to conduct additional research on this**

Year 2019-

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO formed a collaboration to safeguard cultural heritage in conflict-affected areas. As part of broader post-conflict recovery efforts, the initiative aimed to assist countries in recovering and safeguarding their rich cultural heritage.

Year 2020-

#Unite4Heritage- this campaign was introduced by UNESCO, a global initiative aimed at mobilising governments, communities, and individuals in order to safeguard cultural heritage from destruction and illicit trafficking, particularly in conflict zones.

UNESCO-

The main UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) actor concerned with conflicts and the destruction of cultural heritage sites is the "Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit," which "coordinates and supports operations related to cultural emergency preparedness and response." However, giving support to these heritage sites and the people present at these heritage sites proves harder in practice, as communication during conflicts is often tough.

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