



**Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN 2010)
Third Committee of the General Assembly; Social,
Humanitarian, and Cultural
Background Guide**

Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2010 Montessori Model UN and especially to Third Committee of the General Assembly; Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that we will be debating at MMUN 2010. Please note that this guide will only provide the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information that you can on the topic and how it relates to the country that you represent. The more information that you have and learn about, the more you will take from debate and the whole MMUN experience.

I encourage you to learn all that you can about what your country is doing in regard to the selected topics.

Enjoy and see you in New York!

Montessori Model United Nations 2010 Secretariat

The Birth of the United Nations

The first half of the 20th century is remembered as a period of change and turmoil. After the First World War many people believed that it was necessary to create a world organization capable of keeping peace and preventing the horrors of war. The League of Nations was founded immediately, consisting of 42 countries, 58 at its largest point. Its goal was to preserve peace by solving international conflicts peacefully and promoting cooperation between nations in economic and international affairs. However, the Second World War unfolded and proved that the League had not accomplished its goal.

In 1944 representatives of China, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Russian Federation (In that moment USSR) meeting at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, prepared a blueprint for a new and stronger international organization. Towards the end of the war, representatives of 51 countries gathered in San Francisco in 1945 to prepare the final text that would lay the foundations of international cooperation. Most of the ideals and structure of this new organization were the same as the League's.



The difference was that now, the organization had the support of the most powerful countries of the world. The UN came to exist officially when the Charter of the United Nations was supported by the five permanent members of the Security Council (the United States, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, China, and France) and a majority of all other signatories on October 24, 1945.

The purpose of the United Nations is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well being of all people. It affords the opportunity for countries to balance global interdependence and national interests while addressing international problems. Currently, 192 countries are United Nations Member States. Representatives from these nations meet in the General Assembly, which is the closest event to a world parliament. Each country, large or small, rich or poor, has a single vote.

The United Nations Today

The United Nations is an international organization committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards, and human rights. Due to its unique international character, and the powers vested in its founding Charter, the Organization can take action on a wide range of issues, and provide a forum for its 192 Member States to express their views, through the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and committees.



The work of the United Nations reaches every corner of the globe. Although best known for peacekeeping, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance, there are many other ways the

United Nations and its System affect our lives and make the world a better place. The Organization also works on: sustainable development, environment and refugees protection, disaster relief, counter terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, promoting democracy, human rights, governance, economic and social development and international health, clearing landmines, expanding food production, and more, in order to achieve its goals and coordinate efforts for a safer world for this and future generations.

About the General Assembly

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly is the most democratic organ of the United Nations and operates as the main chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 192 Members States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full range of international issues in the world.

Committees of the General Assembly

Because of the variety of topics, the work of the General Assembly is divided in 6 main committees, then draft resolutions and decisions for consideration are presented to the plenary meeting of the Assembly for voting. The six main committees are:

1. **First Committee (Disarmament and International Security Committee)** is concerned with disarmament and related international security questions;
2. **Second Committee (Economic and Financial Committee)** is concerned with economic questions;
3. **Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee)** deals with social and humanitarian issues;
4. **Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization Committee)** deals with a variety of political subjects not dealt with by the First Committee, as well as with decolonization;
5. **Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Committee)** deals with the administration and budget of the United Nations; and
6. **Sixth Committee (Legal Committee)** deals with international legal matters.

The **Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee)** focuses on the examination of human rights questions, including reports of the special procedures of the newly established Human Rights Council. The Committee also discusses the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the promotion of the right to self-determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and drug control.

At MMUN, the **Third Committee of the General Assembly (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee)** will debate the following topics:

Topic 1: Protection of Human Rights including new approaches for improving the freedoms for all, particularly women, children and minority groups.

Topic 2: Rights of Indigenous Groups, especially women and children in Latin America.

Topic 1: Protection of Human Rights including new approaches for improving the freedoms for all, particularly women, children and minority groups.

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

Human rights are "basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled." Examples of rights and freedoms include:

- Civil and political liberties
- The rights to life and liberty
- Freedom of expression
- Equality before the law
- Economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to participate in culture
- The right to food and shelter
- The right to education
- The right to work

Although these things may sound basic, many people around the world don't have access to any of these rights. Every day, many people's rights are violated, specially people in minority groups, and women and children, since these are weaker groups in society and have no channels to voice their discontent. Many times, these groups don't know their rights are being violated due to lack of education and family pressure.

The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. This principle, as first emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, has been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions. The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, for example, noted that it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.

All States have ratified at least one, and 80% of States have ratified four or more, of the core human rights treaties, reflecting consent of States which creates legal obligations for them and giving concrete expression to universality. Some fundamental human rights norms enjoy universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations.

Human rights are inalienable. They should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law.

Interdependent and indivisible

All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as



Roma Children in Kolonia Gjakove/Djakovica in Kosovo

the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.

Equal and non-discriminatory

Non-discrimination is a cross-cutting principle in international human rights law. The principle is present in all the major human rights treaties and provides the central theme of some of international human rights conventions such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The principle applies to everyone in relation to all human rights and freedoms and it prohibits discrimination on the basis of a list of non-exhaustive categories such as sex, race, and color and so on. The principle of non-discrimination is complemented by the principle of equality, as stated in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Magna Carta for all humanity

Some 50 years have elapsed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948. The Declaration was one of the first major achievements of the United Nations, and after 60 years remains a powerful instrument which continues to exert an enormous effect on people's lives all over the world. This was the first time in history that a document considered to have universal value was adopted by an international organization. It was also the first time that human rights and fundamental freedoms were set forth in such detail. There was broad-based international support for the Declaration when it was adopted. It represented "a world milestone in the long struggle for human rights", in the words of a UN General Assembly representative from France.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration stems in large part from the strong desire for peace in the aftermath of the Second World War. Although the 58 Member States which formed the United Nations at that time varied in their ideologies, political systems and religious and cultural

backgrounds and had different patterns of socio-economic development, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represented a common statement of goals and aspirations -- a vision of the world as the international community would want it to become.

Since 1948, the Universal Declaration has been translated into more than 200 languages and remains one of the best known and most often cited human rights documents in the world. Over the years, the Declaration has been used in the defense and advancement of people's rights. Its principles have been enshrined in and continue to inspire national legislation and the constitutions of many newly independent states. References to the Declaration have been made in charters and resolutions of regional intergovernmental organizations as well as in treaties and resolutions adopted by the United Nations system.

The year 1998 marked the fiftieth anniversary of this "Magna Carta for all humanity." The theme of the fiftieth anniversary--"All Human Rights for All"-- highlights the universality, the indivisibility and the interrelationship of all human rights. It reinforces the idea that human rights--civil, cultural, economic, political and social--should be taken in their totality and not disassociated from one another.

Challenges still lie ahead, despite many accomplishments in the field of human rights. Many in the international community believe that human rights, democracy and development are intertwined. Unless human rights are respected, the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development cannot be achieved. The world is still plagued with incidents of ethnic hatred and acts of genocide. People are still victims of xenophobic attitudes, are subjected to discrimination because of religion or gender and suffer from exclusion. Around the world, millions of people are still denied food, shelter, access to medical care, education and work, and too many live in extreme poverty. Their inherent humanity and dignity are not recognized.

The future of human rights lies in our hands. We must all act when human rights are violated. States as well as the individual must take responsibility for the realization and effective protection of human rights.

Committee Directive

Consider these questions when investigating your country's position:

1. Does your country have issues with human rights?
2. Do women in your country have the same rights as men? Are there women in powerful positions in government or business?
3. What is the literacy rate in your country? What is the difference in literacy for women and men?
4. Does religion play an important role in your country? Does religion influence how women and men are treated in your country?
5. What has your country done to defend human rights for girls and women?

6. What are some new ideas your country can propose to defend human rights for women and girls worldwide?

7. Does your country receive help from other countries in human rights issues?

Topic 2: Rights of Indigenous Groups, especially women and children in Latin America.



Indigenous Peoples worldwide count between 300-500 million people, and embody and nurture 80% of the world's cultural and biological diversity, and occupy 20% of the world's land surface. The Indigenous Peoples of the world are very diverse. They live in nearly all the countries on all the continents of the world and form a spectrum of humanity, ranging from traditional hunter-gatherers and subsistence farmers to legal scholars. In some countries, Indigenous Peoples form the majority of the population; others comprise small minorities. Indigenous Peoples are concerned with preserving land, protecting language and promoting culture. Some Indigenous Peoples strive to preserve traditional ways of life, while others seek greater participation in the current state structures. Like all cultures and civilizations, Indigenous Peoples are always adjusting and adapting to changes in the world. Indigenous Peoples recognize their common plight and work for their self-determination based on their respect for the earth.

Despite such extensive diversity in Indigenous communities throughout the world, all Indigenous Peoples have one thing in common - they all share a history of injustice. Indigenous Peoples have been killed, tortured and enslaved. In many cases, they have been the victims of genocide. They have been denied the right to participate in governing processes of the current state systems. Conquest and colonization have attempted to steal their dignity and identity as indigenous peoples, as well as the fundamental human rights.

Despite international recognition and acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the fundamental rights of all human beings, in practice, Indigenous Peoples' human rights remain without specifically safeguards. To this day, Indigenous Peoples continue to face serious threats to their basic existence due to systematic government policies. In many countries, Indigenous Peoples rank highest on such underdevelopment indicators as the proportion of people in jail, the illiteracy rate, unemployment rate, etc. They face discrimination in schools and are exploited in the workplace. In many countries, they are not even allowed to study their own languages in schools. Sacred lands and objects are plundered from them through unjust treaties. National governments continue to deny Indigenous Peoples the right to live in and manage their traditional lands; often implementing policies to exploit the lands that have sustained them for centuries. In some cases, governments have even enforced policies of forced assimilation in efforts

to eradicate Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and traditions. Over and over, governments around the world have displayed an utter lack of respect for Indigenous values, traditions and human rights.

In international discussions on the protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' human rights, some States have argued that a more conscientious application of human rights standards would resolve the issue. On the other hand, Indigenous Peoples argue that such international human rights standards have consistently failed to protect them thus far. What is needed, they argue, is the development of new international documents addressing the specific needs of the world's Indigenous Peoples.



Application of word "Indian" originated with Christopher Columbus when he discovered the American continent and thought that he had arrived in the East Indies while seeking Asia. This has served to imagine a kind of racial or cultural unity for the aboriginal peoples of the Americas. Once created, the unified "Indian" was codified in law, religion, and politics. The unitary idea of "Indians" was not originally shared by indigenous peoples, but many over the last two centuries have embraced the identity. In some regions the indigenous peoples created monumental architecture, large-scale organized cities, chiefdoms, states, and massive empires.

Many parts of the Americas are still populated by indigenous Americans; some countries have sizeable populations, such as Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, and Ecuador. At least a thousand different indigenous languages are spoken in the Americas. Some, such as Quechua, Guaraní, Mayan languages, and Nahuatl, count their speakers in millions. Most indigenous peoples have largely adopted the lifestyle of the western world, but many also maintain aspects of indigenous cultural practices to including religion, social organization and subsistence practices. Some indigenous peoples still live in isolation from Western society.

With the rise to power of Leftist governments in Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, and especially Bolivia where Evo Morales was the first indigenous descendant elected president of Bolivia, the indigenous movement gained a strong momentum in Latin America.

Representatives from indigenous and rural organizations from major South American countries, including Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and Brazil, started a forum in support of Morales' legal process of change. The forum also expressed solidarity with president Morales and his economic and social changes in the interest of historically marginalized majorities including indigenous peoples. The forum rejected the supposed violent method used by regional civic leaders from the called "Crescent departments" in Bolivia to impose their autonomous statutes, and reaffirmed the sovereignty and independence of the presidency. Amongst others, representatives of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, the Chilean Council of All Lands, and the Brazilian Landless Movement participated in the forum.



There has also been recognition of indigenous movements on an international scale, with the United Nations adopting the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**.

Committee Directive

Please consider these questions when researching your country and when writing position papers:

1. Are there indigenous peoples in your country? What percentage of the population is indigenous?

What are their names and traditions? What languages do they speak?

2. With the election of an indigenous person as President of Bolivia, does your country believe Indigenous people in Latin America have a better chance to defend their historical rights?

3. Why do you think indigenous people have less education than the rest of the population in Latin America?

4. What has your country done to defend the rights of indigenous people?

5. What can Latin American countries do to give more opportunities to Indigenous peoples?

Important Links

Video: Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Vol.1

1. Film by Rebecca Sommer for the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2006.

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/multimedia.html>

2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

3. Take the quiz! Test your knowledge on Human Rights

<http://www.knowyourrights2008.org/index.php?nav=declaration&rub=quiz>

4. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>