

Hilton 2024 Chair Letter

ECOSOC - United Nations Economic and Social Council

Committee Overview

Discussing the regulation of Social Media
Addressing the international decline in birth rates
Countering cartels illegal economic activities in Mexico
Combating Uganda's alcohol epidemic

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate write at least one position paper on a topic, as it will be necessary to be considered for an award. Position papers must be emailed to the chairs through personal emails two days before the start of the committee, or can be turned in at the start of the committee as well.

All delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. United Nations Economic and Social Council, it is imperative that delegates keep in mind that their purpose is to promote economic and social justice without infringing upon national sovereignty. Above all, remember that Model UN is not a competition, so get to researching and try to have fun!

ABOUT US:

Crystal Chen

Hello delegates! My name is Crystal Chen, I'm a senior at Ithaca High School. This will be my first time chairing but my third year participating in MUN. Outside of MUN I do Mock-Trial, attend Geopolitics club, and love debating. I'm excited to see everyone's solutions to these issues! Don't hesitate to email Aditya or me with any questions.

Email: crystalchen646@gmail.com

Aditya Shaligram

Hi delegates! My name is Aditya Shaligram and I am a junior at Brighton High School. This is my first time chairing but my third year participating in Model UN. Outside of MUN I run the FBLA club at my school, play tennis, and enjoy various other activities. If you have any questions, please feel free to shoot either of us an email.

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Topic 1: Discussing the regulation of Social Media

The world is going through a new era of technological and social advancements and nothing stands out more than the massive boom of social media. Social media is a platform for online communication that can be used to establish communities or groups and share thoughts, ideas, information, and more through messages, videos, and pictures.

Its creation began a couple of decades ago to connect the world for social, educational, and professional reasons. Platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram emerged, changing the landscape of social media. Social media's international success with an user base of 2.6 billion active users, but many grave concerns come with this large number and with social media in general.

When taking a look at the benefits of social media, one of its largest contributions has been its impact on small businesses. Originally, many local businesses were reliant on directories and regional newspapers to advertise their products and services. With social media, these businesses can now advertise more efficiently while also easily connecting with their clients. This advantage has become crucial for local businesses ever since the internet has grown and become used worldwide.

However, serious issues of social media must be addressed such as privacy concerns, increase in scamming, and censorship of social media. An individual's personal information should be kept secure anywhere, especially on media platforms where it's easily accessible. Social media companies can collect user information to sell to advertising agencies.

Data breaches have also become a real concern as feeble cyber security allows cybercriminals to install malware, blackmail users, or even steal users' identities. Protecting users from these cybercriminals is crucial as scamming schemes have become more elaborate and harder to detect.

There is another issue that concerns the public: the censorship of social media is a concern that balances the protecting of users from harmful content without repressing user opinion. With countries like China and Iran already banning globalized social media platforms, a question arises about whether countries should censor these platforms, or continue access to these platforms as they are currently.

How can the UN protect user information from being possessed by cybercriminals? What actions can be taken to prevent harmful content from reaching users without interfering with their views? How can the UN work with media platforms to find a compromise regarding the usage of user information?

"The Impact of Social Media on Local Businesses":

<https://www.impactplus.com/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-local-businesses>

"6 Common Social Media Privacy Issues":

<https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/feature/6-common-social-media-privacy-issues>

"Internet Censorship 2024: A Map of Internet Censorship and Restriction":

<https://www.comparitech.com/blog/vpn-privacy/internet-censorship-map/>



Topic 2: Addressing the international decline in birth rates

The global average total fertility rate (TFR) has halved from around 5 in the 1960s to around 2.3 in today. The replacement rate of fertility, the rate of fertility a population needs to maintain itself, is an average of 2.1 children per woman. Around half of all countries already had fertility rates below the replacement level in 2018. By 2050, researchers predict that roughly three quarters of countries will have TFRs lower than the replacement rate.

Countries are steadily losing people every generation, with African countries being an exception. Africa boasts an average TFR of 4.1, which is significantly higher than all other continents. That said, the TFRs of African countries have also been decreasing, and are likely to continue decreasing.

A shrinking fertility rate translates to a shrinking labor force. This is a problem because there are fewer workers available to support the larger aging population, increasing pressure on public healthcare, social security, and social welfare programs in general. As the working population decreases, there are also fewer people paying taxes, which paired with the greater need for social welfare programs will result in federal deficits.

It is important to note, raising children is a large financial burden that many families today can't afford. Despite total wealth growing, wages have remained stagnant. The replacement of manual labor with machines has made it more difficult for people with less economic opportunities to remain employed. Additionally, the inflation of goods caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden surge in housing prices have made it difficult for low to middle-income families to afford raising children.

The US, Germany, UAE, and many other countries saw a growth in population despite having a TFR below the replacement rate. This population growth is caused by immigration. However, immigration is only a short-term solution because mass immigration of a country's citizens stunts a country's economic growth. Additionally, immigrants could be exploited for their labor and socially isolated.

How can the UN encourage families to have more children? What actions can be taken to reduce the financial burden of raising children? How can this committee encourage more open immigration while protecting immigrants from being exploited?

“Fertility Rate”:

<https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>

“Dramatic declines in global fertility rates set to transform global population patterns by 2100”:

<https://www.healthdata.org/news-events/newsroom/news-releases/lancet-dramatic-declines>

“Global Fertility Rate Continues To Fall: How Governments Could Prepare”:

www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/global-fertility-rate-continues-fall-how-governments-could-prepare



Topic 3: Countering Cartels' Illegal Economic Activities in Mexico

Mexico makes from 35 to 45 billion dollars from the production and distribution of narcotics like marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. To protect their profit revenues, cartels use violence and intimidation to gain power and expand into other illegal activities. Within Mexico, there are 7 main cartels, each with control over a different part of Mexico. Through political murder and drug-violence cartels can overpower the local government and take control.

In recent years cartels have expanded other criminal activities like extortion, fuel theft, and arms smuggling. The police uncovered a scheme forcing residents to pay for expensive internet services. Cartels have repeatedly targeted Pemex, the state-owned petroleum company, costing billions of dollars in theft. Additionally, cartels smuggle a vast arsenal of weapons out of the US to maintain control over their territory. Little is done to address the networks that smuggle firearms across the border annually.

With the expansion of cartel influence over Mexican society, security has become a major concern for citizens. Business owners are faced with high extortion fees and homicide has become a common occurrence. Private security has become a bustling industry. However, not all citizens can afford private security. Furthermore, the lack of economic stability also deters foreign investments. Tourism has also seen a decrease as the Mexican Drug War intensified.



This economic instability results in fewer job opportunities for the youth and encourages youth recruitment into cartels. Cartels target impoverished children, swaying them to join with the promise of economic success and a “sense of belonging.” Becoming a cartel member can also provide a certain degree of safety under cartel protection.

Some politicians are keen on the legalization of drugs because the government's harsh stance against drugs appears to be fruitless. By legalizing drugs the government would be destroying the black market for drugs, bringing down the price and reducing the cartel's economic power. However, legalizing drugs increases access and the number of people using drugs which could negate lower prices. Furthermore, the majority of drugs produced in Mexico are sold in the US, so Mexico legalizing drugs doesn't significantly impact cartels.

How can the UN work towards stopping cartels while respecting national sovereignty? What actions can be taken to protect citizens from cartels? How can this committee prevent the youth from being recruited into cartels?

“Drug Trafficking, Violence and Mexico’s Economic Future”:

<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/drug-trafficking-violence-and-mexicos-economic-future/>

“Mexican Drug Cartels Recruiting Young Men, Boys”:

<https://www.npr.org/2009/03/24/102249839/mexican-drug-cartels-recruiting-young-men-boys>

“Turns Out Mexico’s President Might Well Be Cartel-Corrupted”:

<https://www.nationalreview.com/the-morning-jolt/turns-out-mexicos-president-might-be-cartel-corrupted/>

Topic 4: Combating Uganda's alcohol industry

Alcohol has become integrated throughout the world, culturally and socially. Certain cultural events where it was used symbolically, to bars and parties where it can connect people, and because it is an enjoyable beverage. The issue occurs when individuals start to abuse alcohol, causing them to become alcoholics which can lead to serious societal problems.

According to WHO, Ugandans drink 23.7 liters of alcohol per capita, the worst part being that 89% of consumed alcohol is highly unregulated. Besides the various health-related concerns, the main worry is how the sale of illegal alcohol has become a major source of income for many Ugandan households and how alcohol has impacted families and relationships.



Approximately 29% of all Ugandan households are involved in the production and distribution of illegal alcohol. The most common of alcohols is waragi, a sort of moonshine that is highly addictive, but dangerous. Many Ugandans are attracted to producing alcohol as an opportunity to work. With more distilleries being made, more opportunities to work appear. Furthermore, the cheap price of waragi increases consumption and due to its addictive nature, causes more people to become alcoholics. Also, the consumption of a drink like waragi can cause individuals to become highly unstable, leading to unemployment and ultimately resulting in extreme poverty.

Families have also been greatly impacted by this epidemic. As individuals heavily consume alcohol, they are not only making themselves unstable, but they are also excessively spending. In many cases, this has caused families to be separated, worsening their livelihood. Consequently, high levels of violence against women have prevailed.

There have been efforts to regulate this issue, but many of these seem to either be insufficient or harmful to Uganda's development. The Alcoholic Control Bill was a series of regulations that could've been successful with the restriction of the production and sale of illegal alcohol and consumption of alcohol, but this solution did not take into account farmers who produce raw materials for the production of legal alcohol, and those who produce this alcohol.

How can the UN help Uganda prevent alcoholism? What actions can be taken to restrict the growth of illegal alcohol distilleries throughout Uganda without infringing on national sovereignty? How can this committee work to find more sustainable job opportunities for Ugandans?

“Uganda’s long walk to Alcohol regulation: Will the new Bill bear a toxic free generation?”:

<https://parliamentwatch.ug/blogs/ugandas-long-walk-to-alcohol-regulation>

“Uganda’s ongoing struggle with moonshine”:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/4/1/ugandas-ongoing-struggle-with-moonshine>

“Illicit alcohol, the unchecked silent killer in Uganda”:

<https://observer.ug/index.php/viewpoint/80539-illicit-alcohol-the-unchecked-silent-killer-in-uganda>