



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

FMSMUN 14

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Ensuring Global Human Rights for Future Generations

Contributors: Alicia Bolton, Isaiah Sloan, Ricardo Fernandez
Updated October 2023

Introduction

Human rights are central to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals “seeks to realize human rights for all and aims for a world of universal respect and dignity of the human person.”¹ This plan follows the principles and standards outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This document, created in 1948 by the United Nations, lists the basic rights that every person should have. It is like a guide for how people should be treated, and it is still used today as a basis for international law.^{2 3}

One organization that continues the UDHR’s legacy is the UNDP’s Rule of Law and Human Rights Global Programme (ROLHR). In 2022, the ROLHR created the 2022-2025 Report that talks about what the UNDP is doing to promote justice, security, and human rights. They are also working on Phase IV, focusing on preventing and responding to crises worldwide. They are tackling significant changes, building resilience, and ensuring no one is left behind in areas like gender, environment, and digital justice.⁴ Other plans, like the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aim to protect everyone's rights. However, there are still challenges. The UNDP, the UN, and international groups must team up and overcome obstacles. Delegates need to identify challenges and create agreed-upon goals to ensure human rights are respected in the future.

Call to Action

In a world where severe problems like hate speech, exclusion, and even genocide are happening, a positive change is needed to help future generations. In 2020, the Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, launched a Call to Action for human rights. This call focuses on seven critical areas to improve things like sustainable development, equality for women, and climate justice.⁵ The Secretary-General says: “Human rights are universal and indivisible. We must see human rights with a vision that speaks to every being and encompasses all rights: economic, social, cultural, civil, and political.”⁶

Sustainable Development at the Heart of Ensuring a Better Future

Sustainable development is a relatively new concept. The term was originally coined at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment but gained momentum following the 1987 Brundtland Report. This report introduced the need for integration of economic development, environmental protection, and social justice and inclusion.⁷ The Brundtland Report has since cemented sustainability into the foundation of today’s leading frameworks for international cooperation- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁸

¹ 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

² “Human Rights.” UNDP, Accessed 12 Dec. 2023. <https://www.undp.org/rolhr/human-rights>

³ United Nations. (n.d.). *Universal declaration of human rights*.

⁴ “UNDP Rule of Law and Human Rights Annual Report | 2022.” *UNDP Annual Report*, <https://rolhr.undp.org/annualreport/2022/index.html>

⁵ United Nations. “Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights. www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml

⁶ Guterres, Antonio. “The Highest Aspiration.” 2020. https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf

⁷ A.N . “Quick Guide to Sustainable Development: History and Concepts.” March, 2015.

⁸ International Institute for Sustainable Development. “Sustainable Development.” *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2022, www.iisd.org/mission-and-goals/sustainable-development

Sustainable development, defined by the Brundtland Report, “is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁹ Sustainable development considers environmental issues, economic concerns, and social problems – all entwined together. There are three pillars of sustainability in development: environmental, social, and economic sustainability:

Environmental sustainability is the ability to protect and preserve the environment over time through appropriate practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the availability of resources in the future.¹⁰ Some main factors include pollution, climate change caused by human activity, loss of biodiversity, and the overexploitation of natural resources.

Social Sustainability focuses on the well-being of the people- encompassing the promotion of equity, human rights, and access to health and decent work. To achieve social sustainability, the world must overcome poverty and socioeconomic inequality, discrimination and prejudice, insecurity and conflict, and poor governance.

Economic Sustainability is the approach in which economic activities are conducted to preserve and promote long-term economic well-being. Factors that influence economic sustainability are the responsible management of resources, financial stability at a macro level, and international cooperation.

Environmental Sustainability

Climate change is a powerful force causing many issues. Human activities such as the usage of fossil fuels, overconsumption, and deforestation are to blame. Actions have been taken to stop the issue where it stands, such as the Paris Agreement (2015-16) and the endorsement of clean energy. However, much remains to be done to defeat it.

Colombia faces climate challenges despite low carbon emissions. Melting glaciers, extreme weather, deforestation, and shifting rainfall patterns impact agriculture and threaten survival. In 2020, Colombia pledged to cut emissions and invest \$200 million in zero net deforestation and clean energy by 2030. Economic incentives, like payment for conservation and agricultural agreements, aim to protect land and benefit over 70,000 people. With USAID support, Colombia developed the first free emissions accounting tool in Latin America to monitor progress.

China, the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter, released 12.7 billion tons of CO₂ in 2019 due to its rapidly growing economy. Despite a 46% drop in carbon intensity since 2005, it remains higher than the global average. China leads in eco-friendly infrastructure and proposed a global clean energy partnership before COP 27. In October 2021, China committed to carbon neutrality by 2060 and a 65% reduction in carbon intensity by 2030.

Despite the global effort, much remains to be done. Temperatures have continued to rise, with September 2023 being the warmest month in 174 years. The world’s global surface

⁹ United Nations. *Our Common Future- Brundtland Report*. United Nations, Oct. 1987.

¹⁰ Enel. “The 3 Pillars of Sustainability: Environmental, Social and Economic.” *Enel*, 15 June 2023, www.enel.com/company/stories/articles/2023/06/three-pillars-sustainability.

temperature was the warmest on record at 1.10 degrees C above average.¹¹ Rising surface temperatures closely connect to warmer ocean temperatures, harming marine life, coastal ecosystems, and coral reefs. To ensure a better future, global leadership and multinational companies need to work together to ensure a greener future.

Social Sustainability

Poverty, though widespread, hits the developing world hardest. Influenced by historical factors, some areas struggle with sustainable development. Urbanization is on the rise globally, with 57% of people living in cities as of 2022.¹² This migration leads to overcrowded cities, pushing some into slums with inadequate services. Established during apartheid, Khayelitsha's planned population of 200,000 grew to an estimated 2.4 million by 2021.¹³ Overcrowding, limited formal job opportunities, and affordability challenges force residents into informal settlements, contributing to high unemployment and crime rates. Initiatives like a liquor ban during lockdown aim to curb crime, while local governance works on upgrading settlements and engaging with communities. Similar challenges are seen globally in cities like Sao Paulo, Calcutta, Neza, and Jakarta. Self-help programs aim to empower residents through tenant rights groups, credit unions, and political movements, working towards inclusive development. Transforming living conditions in informal settlements requires a commitment to community empowerment, targeted interventions, and inclusive development for a resilient and equitable urban landscape.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is a vital part of overall sustainable development, attempting to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity.¹⁴ Achieving this requires careful resource management, inclusive economic policies, technological innovation, and long-term planning. Germany stands out as a sustainable industrialized nation, aligning with the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. Its robust economy, driven by a strong manufacturing sector and emphasis on innovation, positions Germany as a global leader. The focus on small to mid-size enterprises and a social market economy addresses social inequalities, with 42% of German startups owned by women as of 2022.¹⁵

Economic sustainability is a complex concept considering economic, social, and environmental factors. It is essential to ensure that future generations enjoy the same privileges we have today.

Digital Justice and Censorship

In the digital age, new tools can be used to help protect human rights, but there is also a risk of control and censorship. Balancing open access to information with protection against

¹¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Topping the charts: September 2023 was Earth's warmest September in 174-year record." 13 October 2023,

¹² Szmigiera, M. "Urbanization, by Continent 2019 | Statista." *Statista*, Statista, 2019, www.statista.com/statistics/270860/urbanization-by-continent/

¹³ "About Khayelitsha." *Sikhula Sonke Early Childhood Development*, www.sikhulasonke.org.za/about-khayelitsha.html#:~:text=Today%20Khayelitsha%20is%20home%20to

¹⁴ Prysmian Group. "Economic Sustainability: What Is It? | Prysmian Group." *Www.prysmiangroup.com*, www.prysmiangroup.com/en/insight/sustainability/economic-sustainability-what-is-it#:~:text=Economic%20sustainability%20offers%20to%20practices.

¹⁵ Orth, Martin. "Why Is the German Economy so Strong?" *Deutschland.de*, 16 Mar. 2023, www.deutschland.de/en/topic/business/why-is-the-german-economy-so-strong-seven-reasons.

harmful content is vital. Companies like Facebook and Twitter have attempted to block harmful content but have faced backlash for silencing marginalized people. To ensure the rights of future generations, we need rules for online content that balance free expression and privacy while preventing harm. Collaboration between tech companies, governments, and others can help create fair rules, keeping human rights in mind. By keeping human rights in mind, we can promote digital justice without losing freedom. The internet can share knowledge and empower future generations if managed wisely.

Human Rights Under Fire

Despite the United Nations' commitment to lofty ideals of dignity, justice, and equality through the Sustainable Development Goals, the reality for many worldwide is far from this vision. Since 2020, human rights have deteriorated across the world. Since 2020, human rights have worsened globally. The COVID-19 pandemic provided cover for repressive policies, limiting civil liberties. Wars and conflicts, such as in Ukraine and Israel-Palestine, contribute to severe human rights abuses. Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and discrimination persist globally, with hate crimes increasing.

If the United Nations Development Programme aims to protect human rights for future generations, urgent action must be taken. Though the challenges are complex and daunting, progress requires genuine political will and principled leadership. Political will, principled leadership, and grassroots efforts are crucial to advocate for legal frameworks protecting human freedoms. Individuals and civil society must hold the powerful accountable and demand real consequences for rights violations. Good governance, transparency, and anti-corruption measures are vital. Only through persistent struggle can the U.N.'s human rights declarations become lived experiences, uplifting humanity. The responsibility lies with people of conscience for a more just world tomorrow.

The Time Is Now

Human rights violations continue to occur around the world at an alarming rate. As we approach the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals deadline, real action from the international community is necessary.

Only condemning oppressors is ineffective. Governments and groups violating rights should face sanctions, prosecutions, and accountability through international mechanisms. The UNDP should consider urging the UN Security Council to employ asset freezes, travel bans, and referrals to the International Criminal Court. Regional bodies like the African Union can censure rights-violating regimes and diplomacy and aid should be used to pressure reform. Developing a universal, legally binding definition of human rights ensures consistent protection.

Strengthening global institutions is essential for adequate rights protection. The UN Human Rights Council needs to be less vulnerable to politicization and more resolute against serial abusers. Independent investigations and regional human rights courts can complement the International Criminal Court in prosecuting violators when states fail to act. Ending impunity requires global cooperation to build a rights-respecting world. Concrete steps, not just rhetoric, are needed now to enforce human rights consistently worldwide and protect the lives of millions. The time is now to stand up for the oppressed, restrain oppressors, and enact laws upholding the inherent human rights of all.

RESOURCE REVIEW

United Nations Documents

UN Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations (1997)

<https://bit.ly/UNESCOFUTURE>

This comprehensive UNESCO-drafted declaration delineates the current generation's responsibilities toward protecting future generations' interests and needs. It provides an aspirational framework centered on intergenerational equity that delegates can reference throughout the debate. Specific principles can be cited to argue for air pollution reductions, sustainable use of natural resources, preservation of cultural diversity, etc. When drafting resolutions, delegates may consider reaffirming and expanding on this declaration by calling for national policies aligned with its principles and annual reporting mechanisms.

UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 Agenda 2030 (2015)

<https://bit.ly/UNAGENDA2030>

Central to this ambitious agenda unanimously adopted by UN member states is the concept of intergenerational solidarity and human rights for future generations. Delegates can cite aspects like the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, urgent calls for climate action, reduced inequalities, and good governance as essential building blocks when writing resolutions to uphold rights for future generations. The emphasis on collective long-term thinking makes this agenda foundational, and resolutions should align with and expand on its human rights provisions.

UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25 (1989)

<https://bit.ly/UNGA4425>

Though focused on protecting children's interests, this widely ratified binding human rights convention importantly enshrines children's right to an education that prepares them for an active, engaged role in society. Delegates can argue that extending human rights preparations and capacities to future generations is a natural extension and evolution of this right. Resolutions could include provisions recommending that human rights education be incorporated into school curriculums globally.

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/137 (2011)

<https://bit.ly/UNGA66137>

This declaration emphasizes the critical importance of human rights education and training for empowering all people to contribute to society and enact change. Delegates can connect this to building future generations capable of protecting their own human rights through standardized education and training programs. Calls for member states to achieve this can build on this declaration's framework.

Guiding Questions for Debate

1. What specific human rights challenges do we anticipate future generations might face that need to be safeguarded today? How might technological advances, climate change, population growth, or other factors threaten human rights for future generations?
2. What responsibilities do current generations have to protect the human rights of future generations? Should we view this primarily as an ethical obligation or legal responsibility?
3. How can we balance protecting future generations' rights with policies needed today? For example, if limiting fossil fuel usage today impacts economic growth, how do we weigh those tradeoffs?
4. What new laws or amendments to existing human rights conventions/frameworks are needed to enshrine the rights of future generations? Should rights like a clean environment, digital privacy, etc. be codified?
5. What role can technology play in either enhancing or threatening human rights for future generations? How can technology be guided positively and its risks mitigated?

Guiding Questions for Position Papers

1. What specific human rights issues are most important for your nation to prioritize for future generations? How are these grounded in your nation's values and history?
2. What binding commitments, laws, or constitutional provisions does your nation already have in place that safeguard the human rights of future generations?
3. What concrete policies and programs has your nation implemented or plans to implement to uphold intergenerational human rights? Cite specific examples.
4. How does your nation weigh impacts on future generations when evaluating policies on issues like economic development, environment, technology, etc? What tradeoffs does your nation see between short-term and long-term interests?
5. Is your nation open to proposals for new legal frameworks or amendments to existing human rights conventions to enshrine the rights of future generations? What specific changes would your nation support or oppose?
6. What role does your nation believe technology companies, civil society groups, and other non-state actors should play in protecting human rights for future generations?