

Background Guide
General Assembly 1
Global Food Security



I. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and is the organization's central deliberative body. Established in 1945 in the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly has served a central role in international diplomacy for seventy-five years. The General Assembly, along with the Security Council, is headquartered in New York City on extraterritorial grounds, affirming the special nature of the Assembly as an international forum dedicated to peace, cooperation, and understanding. The General Assembly is mandated to consider "any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter" and to make resolutions addressing those concerns.¹

As such, the General Assembly both oversees and exercises advisory duties over the other organizations and bodies existing within the UN system. The issues brought before the Assembly range from concerns regarding sustainable development to international disputes over territory, and to some degree also global security concerns, though these typically fall under the purview of the United Nations Security Council. Every one of the 193 members of the United Nations has a seat in the General Assembly, though there are also several non-member observers including the Holy See, State of Palestine, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Each full member is allocated one vote on issues brought before the Assembly and no vote is weighed more heavily than any other. The Assembly's role as an advisory body allows it to recommend courses of action and to refer matters to other United Nations organizations, offices, programs, and commissions.² Resolutions passed by the General assembly are legally non-binding but provide a powerful framework for global change and cooperation.

The General Assembly's ability to create subsidiary organizations and delegate responsibility for the management and implementation of international agreements is the foundation of enacting positive change on an international level. The GA First Committee is one of six specialized committees by the GA and largely focuses on disarmament, global challenges, threats to peace that affect the international community, and solutions to challenges affecting international security.³ Article 11 of the UN Charter authorizes the GA First Committee to consider "the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments," and empowers it to make recommendations based on these principles to member states and the Security Council.⁴

II. Statement of the Issues

The 1974 World Food Summit held in Rome defined food security as "availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices."⁵ The UN Committee on World Food Security also defined food security as "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and

¹ United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*. Ch. I, Art. 10.

² *Ibid.*

³ UN General Assembly, *About the General Assembly First Committee*.

⁴ United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*.

⁵ "Introduction- Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Issue". United Nations

economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.”⁶

Over the coming decades, a changing climate, growing global population, rising food prices, and environmental stressors will have significant yet uncertain impacts on food security.⁷ According to the World Bank, “as of August 2022... both maize and wheat prices are 2 percent higher compared to January 2022, while rice prices are about 6 percent higher.”⁸ Compared to the January 2021 average, maize and wheat price indices are 20 percent higher, while the rice price index is 16 percent lower.⁹ The war in Ukraine has also had a negative impact on food security.

Following the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, trade-related policies imposed by countries have impacted global food supplies. The global food crisis has been partially made worse by the growing number of food trade restrictions put in place by countries with a goal of increasing domestic supply and reducing prices. As of August 11th, 2022, at least 23 countries have implemented 33 food export bans, and at least 7 have implemented 11 export-limiting measures.¹⁰ The COVID pandemic has also made food security nearly impossible to achieve.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the unfolding crisis has affected food systems and threatened people’s access to food via multiple dynamics.¹¹ The pandemic has caused a major disruption to food supply chains in the wake of lockdowns and resulted in a major global economic slowdown. These crises have resulted in lower incomes and higher prices of some food.¹²

III. History & Past UN Action

For decades, the UN has called upon nations to gather to solve food insecurity. In 2015, member states created and adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.¹³ These goals are a part of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the goals.¹⁴ Food Security falls under SDG 2: Zero Hunger and according to the UN, current estimates show that nearly 690 million people are hungry, or 8.9 percent of the world population.¹⁵ The world is not on track to

⁶ “Food Security,” International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI.org), accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.ifpri.org/topic/food-security#:~:text=Food%20security%2C%20as%20defined%20by,an%20active%20and%20healthy%20life.>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Food Security Update,” World Bank (World Bank Group, August 15, 2022), [https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update.](https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ “Impacts of Covid-19 on Food Security and Nutrition,” Committee on World Food Security High Level Panel of Experts (CFSHLPE, September 2020), [https://www.fao.org/3/cb1000en/cb1000en.pdf.](https://www.fao.org/3/cb1000en/cb1000en.pdf)

¹² Ibid

¹³ “The Sustainable Development Agenda - United Nations Sustainable Development,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed August 30, 2022, [https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/.](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/)

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

meet Zero Hunger by 2030. If trends continue, the number of people affected by hunger would surpass 840 million by 2030.¹⁶

The UN has also created the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945 as an agency to help combat food insecurity. The FAO is a specialized agency of the UN that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Their goal is to achieve food security for all and to make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active and healthy lives. The FAO is comprised of 195 member states, working in 130 countries worldwide.¹⁷ The FAO conducted the first World Food Survey in 1946 and has continued to conduct surveys to better understand the state of nutrition in the world.¹⁸

In 1963, the FAO and the UN General Assembly adopted parallel resolutions that established the World Food Program (WFP) to deliver urgent food aid in real time to affected areas.¹⁹ The World Food Program is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.²⁰ The WFP works in over 120 countries and territories to bring life-saving food to people displaced by conflict and made destitute by disasters.²¹

IV. Latest Developments

The UN approved a resolution in April of 2016 that calls upon the FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) to serve as the lead agencies in regarding the implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) in collaboration with the WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the UN Children's Fund, and to identify and develop a work program based on the Rome Declaration and its Framework for Action.²² The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is a commitment by UN member states to undertake 10 years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programs and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its' forms, everywhere, leaving no one behind.²³ Unfortunately, due to the COVID 19 pandemic progress towards the goal of Zero Hunger has stalled. The WFP calls 2022 "a year of unprecedented hunger."²⁴ As many as 828 million people go to bed hungry every night; the number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared – from 135 million to 345

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ "About FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), accessed September 1, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/about/en/>.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ "Who We Are: World Food Programme," UN World Food Programme (WFP), accessed September 1, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/who-we-are>.

²¹ Ibid

²² "Food Security and Nutrition - A Global Issue," United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library (United Nations), accessed September 1, 2022, <https://research.un.org/en/foodsecurity/un-milestones>.

²³ "Decade of Action on Nutrition," United Nations (United Nations), accessed September 1, 2022, <https://www.un.org/nutrition/>.

²⁴ "A Global Food Crisis: World Food Programme," UN World Food Programme (WFP), accessed September 1, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis#:~:text=2022%3A%20a%20year%20of%20unprecedented,on%20the%20edge%20of%20famine>.

million – since 2019. A total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the brink of famine.²⁵

V. Problems That Resolutions Should Address

The issue of food security has expanded over decades as climate change, conflict, the COVID pandemic, growing global population, limited resources, and rising food prices increases the number of people that are food insecure. Several interrelated issues need to be addressed while addressing food insecurity.

In your research and position paper, delegates are encouraged to consider the following questions:

- How has global food security been impacted by the following: COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change?
- What steps has your respective country's national governments taken to address local food insecurity?
- How can the private sector, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and charitable organizations best coordinate their actions and funding to prioritize addressing global food insecurity?

VI. Helpful Sources

- World Food Program <https://www.wfp.org/>
- Food Agriculture Organization <https://www.fao.org/home/en/>
- Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

²⁵ Ibid.

Endnotes

1. United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*. Ch. I, Art. 10.
2. Ibid.
3. UN General Assembly, *About the General Assembly First Committee*.
4. United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*.
5. "Food Security and Nutrition - A Global Issue," United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library (United Nations)
6. "Food Security," International Food Policy Research Institute
7. Ibid
8. "Food Security Update," World Bank (World Bank Group, August 15, 2022),
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11. "Impacts of Covid-19 on Food Security and Nutrition," Committee on World Food Security High Level Panel of Experts
12. Ibid
13. "The Sustainable Development Agenda - United Nations Sustainable Development," United Nations (United Nations),
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15. Ibid
16. Ibid
17. "About FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
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19. Ibid
20. "Who We Are: World Food Programme," UN World Food Programme (WFP)
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22. "Food Security and Nutrition - A Global Issue," United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library (United Nations)
23. "Decade of Action on Nutrition," United Nations (United Nations)
24. "A Global Food Crisis: World Food Programme," UN World Food Programme (WFP)
25. Ibid

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“Home - United Nations Sustainable Development.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>.

“Impacts of Covid-19 on Food Security and Nutrition.” Committee on World Food Security High Level Panel of Experts . CFSHLPE, September 2020. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb1000en/cb1000en.pdf>.

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