Arizona Model United Nations 64

General Assembly (GA)

Background Guide

Committee Introduction and Purview:

My name is Olivia Hardway and I am currently a sophomore at the University of Arizona and I will be your chair for this committee! My majors are Political Science and Law B.A and I am majoring in East Asian Studies. I joined Model United Nations last semester because I wanted to know more about how the UN worked, to be more involved on campus, and to meet new people and make new friends. I wanted to be a part of the General Assembly (UNGA) because I think it plays a major role in the United Nations system and is very interesting. The General Assembly is a unique opportunity to engage in a wide range of topics that focus on different issues. During this conference I hope to see delegates come prepared with research that demonstrates their knowledge on each topic. I also hope to see respectful and constructive debate that works in a collaborative way to develop policy solutions.

The United Nations General Assembly works as the central policymaking body of the United Nations. Composed of 193 Member States, the General Assembly offers a representative platform for international discussion, with each state holding one vote regardless of size or power. It was established in 1945 and has served as a key venue for addressing a wide range of global concerns that are outlined in the United Nations Charter. The responsibilities of the General Assembly are vast and apply in every area across the United Nations's work. The Assembly convenes in regular session every year, typically from September to December, and may hold emergency or special sessions when circumstances require. Through formal debate and passage of resolutions the General Assembly issues recommendations that help guide international cooperation and policy development.

The scope of the United Nations General Assembly is broad and covers political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal issues of global importance. While the Assembly is not about to enforce resolutions its work is of great significance. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly shape international expectations, influence state behavior, and contribute to the development of international law and global norms. As a General Assembly body, this committee operates under AZMUN's General Assembly rules. Debate is conducted through structured speakers' list, moderated and unmoderated caucasus, and the collaborative drafting of resolutions. Delegates are expected to remain within the committee's instruction and propose solutions that show cooperation of the United Nations.

Topic 1: **Promoting Peace and Sustainable Cooperation in Outer Space**

The urgency to promote peace and sustainable cooperation in outer space has increased alongside the rise in space activity, including seventeen astronauts orbiting Earth in May 2025 and a surge in robotic spacecraft missions to the Moon and Mars. This reflects the normalization of sustained human and robotic presence in orbit and beyond. Space is becoming increasingly integrated into economic development and scientific research.

In recent years, artificial intelligence has become a central driver of space innovation, powering autonomous navigation, satellite monitoring, and debris detection, while also contributing to global efforts to combat climate change and enhance disaster resilience. AI-driven satellite systems are increasingly relied upon for climate observation, disaster response coordination, and real-time Earth monitoring, expanding the applications of Earth observation technologies.

However, growing competition among spacefaring nations and the rise of private actors risk undermining shared goals. The commercialization of space and the entry of private companies into launch services, satellite deployment, and exploration activities have complicated existing governance structures that were originally designed for state-led programs.

Delegates of the UN's Fourth Committee have expressed concerns about space militarization, debris proliferation, and unequal access, with nations such as Pakistan and Cuba emphasizing the need to prioritize technology transfer and capacity-building to empower developing nations. These concerns reflect broader Global South perspectives that, without inclusive access, space development risks reinforcing existing geopolitical and economic inequalities.

Although efforts have been made to reduce inequality in space exploration, such as the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) promoting peaceful cooperation through initiatives like the "Space2030" Agenda, and the UN Office for Outer Space

Affairs expanding support for regional space centers and legal training, significant disparities persist. Progress has been uneven due to inconsistent funding, limited technical capacity in developing states, and political divisions among spacefaring nations.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned, it is essential that outer space remains a shared domain governed by transparency and equity. Maintaining outer space as a global commons requires renewed commitment to multilateralism and adherence to internationally agreed norms of responsible behavior.

Strengthening multilateral agreements such as the Outer Space Treaty and the Artemis Accords, while ensuring greater stakeholder inclusion, is a crucial step toward maintaining outer space as a domain for peaceful and sustainable development.

Major spacefaring nations and developed states emphasize maintaining freedom of access to outer space, protecting satellite infrastructure, and managing congestion through guidelines and technical standards. Many developing nations and emerging space actors prioritize equitable access, technology transfer, and capacity-building to ensure that space benefits all states. Members of the Global South stress that outer space should remain a shared domain and warn that increasing commercialization and militarization risk deepening existing inequalities.

The United Nations may consider emphasizing responsible behavior in outer space, encouraging transparency and confidence-building measures among states, and supporting capacity-building initiatives for emerging space actors. Broader efforts may focus on reinforcing existing frameworks and promoting greater cooperation among governments, international organizations, and private stakeholders.

Question to consider

1. In what ways can international space law be changed or expanded to respond to new

technologies, increased commercial involvement, and the growing number of objects in Earth's orbit?

2. How can the United Nations help ensure that outer space remains a peaceful environment amid the rising strategic competition and concerns over militarization?

3. What approaches can be taken to reduce barriers developing countries face when seeking access to space technologies?

4. How can cooperation between the United Nations and other space organizations be improved to encourage responsible use of outer space?

5. What actions can help promote international cooperation in space while preventing the military misuse of space technologies?

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Topic 2: **Addressing the Global Water Crisis**

Water scarcity is a global challenge that creates widespread inequality and threatens long-term security for future generations. Increasing water demand from unsustainable farming practices and population growth has outpaced available water resources. Rapid urbanization and industrial expansion have further strained existing freshwater systems, particularly in developing regions where infrastructure is limited. Climate change amplifies these challenges by altering hydrological systems through droughts, floods, and glacier melt, placing food security at great risk and increasing displacement. These climate-related disruptions have made water availability more unpredictable, resulting in increased competition over shared water sources.

The severity of this crisis is evident, yet global governance remains fragmented, with no coordinated international framework for water management. Over 2 billion people worldwide

do not have access to safely managed drinking water, and approximately 3.6 billion lack access to safe sanitation facilities. This leads to serious health risks, including cholera and other waterborne diseases. Water insecurity also contributes to economic instability and reinforces cycles of poverty, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

The United Nations has taken action by recognizing water and sanitation as a human right in 2010 and introducing initiatives such as the Water Action Agenda in 2023; however, significant progress is still needed to address these challenges.

Organizations such as UNICEF address these challenges through multi-level interventions, including identifying new water sources, rehabilitating urban water systems, promoting water reuse, and advancing climate-resilient technologies such as solar-powered pumping and rainwater harvesting. These approaches aim to improve both immediate access to water and long-term sustainability.

They also work to change behaviors by educating communities on the value of water and advocating for national water planning. Community engagement and education are critical for ensuring that water solutions are locally supported and maintained over time. Addressing the global water crisis requires coordinated international governance, sustainable funding, gender-sensitive policies, climate resilience efforts, and community engagement. Without strong global cooperation, existing inequalities in water access will worsen as demand increases.

European and other developed regions are increasingly recognizing water scarcity and investing in infrastructure resilience. In response, stakeholders are committing large investments to protect water resources and improve water infrastructure. In contrast, many developing regions focus on improving basic water access and infrastructure. Countries in regions such as Africa prioritize basic access and international support, while regions facing extreme water stress, such as the Middle East

and North Africa, emphasize cooperation over shared resources and climate resilience.

The United Nations may consider broad approaches to addressing the global water crisis, including enhancing international cooperation on water governance, encouraging sustainable and climate-resilient water management practices, and supporting financing mechanisms for water and sanitation infrastructure. Additional efforts may focus on promoting equitable access to clean water, improving information and data sharing between countries, and encouraging community-based and gender-sensitive water policies.

Questions to consider

1. In what ways does limited access to water place a greater burden on marginalized communities and how can policies address these inequalities?
2. Why do many developing countries continue to struggle with providing safe drinking water and sanitation, and how can international cooperation help to close these gaps?
3. How can governments and international institutions support sustainable financing for water infrastructure and climate-resilient water systems?
4. What forms of regional or cross-border cooperation can help countries share water resources in fair ways and help prevent conflict in water-stressed areas?
5. How can the United Nations help strengthen global water governance and promote water as a shared and protected resource for all nations.

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Topic 3: **Ensuring Global Digital Access and Privacy Rights**

As the world becomes increasingly digitalized, ensuring equitable global access to digital technologies while safeguarding privacy rights is of the utmost importance to the protection of fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression and access to social and economic opportunities. Digital technologies shape nearly every aspect of life, from education and employment to political participation and access to public services. However, the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure has been uneven, leaving many communities without reliable or affordable access to the internet. This digital divide threatens to increase global inequality, especially between developed and developing nations.

At the same time, the growing use of advanced digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and mass data collection has created serious challenges for privacy rights. Government surveillance programs, often justified on the grounds of national security or law enforcement, have expanded considerably in recent decades. In countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, widespread data collection and communications interception have raised concerns regarding transparency, oversight, and accountability.

The international community has taken steps to address these issues through various United Nations resolutions, including recent Human Rights Council resolutions affirming that the same rights individuals enjoy offline must also be protected online. These resolutions emphasize that any interference with privacy must meet the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality. They also call on both states and private companies to respect international human rights standards when collecting, processing, and storing personal data.

Civil society organizations and human rights groups play a crucial role in advancing digital rights protections. Organizations such as Human Rights Watch advocate for stronger legal safeguards and increased oversight of surveillance practices. They support frameworks like the International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance, which stress that surveillance should be lawful, targeted, transparent, and subject to independent oversight. Without meaningful reform and cooperation, unchecked surveillance and unequal digital access risk undermining trust in

digital systems and weakening democratic institutions worldwide.

Without urgent and coordinated action, the digital divide will continue to grow, and the protection of human rights will remain a major challenge for the international community. Balancing innovation, security, and human rights will be crucial to ensuring that digital technologies serve as tools for inclusion rather than control.

Many developed countries, including members of the European Union, emphasize data protection frameworks, cybersecurity, and innovation. Developed states also highlight the use of surveillance measures while maintaining legal privacy protections. In contrast, developing countries prioritize expanding affordable digital access and closing the digital divide, while raising concerns about unequal control of data and technology by powerful states and corporations. Authoritarian governments often stress control over digital spaces, while democratic states emphasize transparency, accountability, and the protection of individual privacy rights. These differing regional and political perspectives are likely to shape debate within the international community.

The United Nations may consider promoting cooperation on digital governance, encouraging states to align surveillance practices with international human rights standards, and increasing efforts to expand secure and affordable internet access worldwide. Strengthening data protection, increasing transparency and oversight of surveillance practices, and fostering cooperation among governments, private technology companies, and civil society organizations are essential steps forward.

Questions to consider

1. What actions can governments take to improve affordable and reliable digital access to communities in developing and rural areas?

2. How do technologies such as artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and large-scale data collection affect the protection of individual privacy rights?
3. In what ways can states address national security and law enforcement needs while still respecting privacy and human rights obligations?
4. How can international human rights standards be better held to protect privacy in the digital environment?
5. What role should the United Nations play in reducing the digital divide while promoting responsible and rights-respecting use of digital technologies?

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