



SOCHUM
TOPIC BULLETIN

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CHAIRS

Contents:

Letters from the Chairs 3

Introduction 4-5

Topic A: Environmental Racism 6

 Topic History 6-8

 Current Situation 8-10

 Country Policy 10-13

 Questions to Consider 13-14

Topic B: (Human Rights Violations in China, DPRK, and the
Philippines 15

 Topic History 15-18

 Current Situation 18-21

 Country Policy 21-22

References 22-24



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Hello Delegates,

My name is Michelle and I am currently a senior in the Academy for Medical Science Technology at BCA.

I am excited to be your co-chair for the SOCHUM at AMUN XXII this year. Before high school, I had no MUN experience but I was intrigued and excited about the idea of addressing global issues in a diplomatic setting. As a result, I joined the BCA MUN club my freshman year, but I became more active my sophomore year. I have chaired at BCA's JAMUN, chaired at last year's AMUN, and have attended WAMUNC as well as PMUNC. Outside of MUN, I enjoy writing for the school newspaper and volunteering with kids who have mental and/or physical disabilities. During this conference, I am hoping to see some enthusiasm, creativity, and diplomacy in your approach to this committee. Feel free to email me if you have any questions. Once again, I am excited to meet all of you in February and see all of your innovative solutions.

Good luck!

Happy researching,
Michelle Kim, Co-Chair SOCHUM
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Greetings Delegates,

Allow me to welcome you to AMUN XXI. I'm Justin, and I will be your co-chair for SOCHUM. I'm currently a senior in the Academy for Medical Science Technology, aka AMST, at BCA.

We hope that you enjoy the committee we have prepared for you. This means that we will do our best to make this committee go smoothly for everyone regardless of experience level. MUN is a learning experience, and we hope that no delegate is held back from being able to completely engage in committee by their experience. Keep in mind that the most important aspect of MUN, and SOCHUM especially, is cooperation with your fellow delegates to address global issues. Be creative and, most importantly, have fun in the committee. Though MUN can be competitive and stressful at times, it is important to remember to enjoy the experience.

Have fun researching. I look forward to seeing you all!

Best of luck,
Justin Zhong, Co-Chair, SOCHUM
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Introduction

SOCHUM, the Third Committee of the General Assembly, was established in 1947 to discuss humanitarian issues, human rights, and social affairs. A key aspect of the committee is its focus on human rights issues, especially those of refugees, discriminated groups, and children.

Human Rights are defined by the United Nations as “rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.” These rights include freedom of expression and opinion, freedom from being enslaved or tortured, the right to life and liberty, the right to work and education, and many others. In order to be able to more effectively protect these rights, the UN has defined a wide range of international rights which span the social, political, cultural, and economic categories. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created by the UN General Assembly in 1948 as a standard measure of human rights,

describing fundamental ones which must be indiscriminately protected. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights followed closely afterwards in 1976 and outlined the right to work, the right to social protection, the right to education, and the right to enjoy cultural freedom and scientific progress. Along with the aforementioned Covenant came the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1976 which outlined rights such as the right to freedom of movement, equality before the law, fair trial, presumption of innocence, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, association, participation in public affairs and elections, protection of minorities, freedom from torture or cruel punishment, freedom from slavery, freedom from forced labor, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, freedom from war propaganda, and freedom from discrimination. These two Covenants and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



formed the International Bill of Rights

Human rights violations occur when a country encroaches upon the standards outlined within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants, or the overall International Bill of Rights. Within China, the Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea), and the Philippines, such human rights violations can be seen. Within China, constant surveillance and internet censorship have allowed for the Chinese Communist Party to easily look for and quell any dissent. The creation of the Chinese surveillance state has allowed for the CCP to facilitate its oppression of Muslim groups including the Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and others. Within the DPRK, forced labor, censorship, class systems, cooperation with China on preventing refugees from escaping, and cruel punishments all constitute violations of human rights despite North Korea ratifying international human rights treaties. Within the Philippines, President Duterte, and his crackdown on

drugs have led to numerous unjust killings within impoverished areas by police which largely go unpunished. Further attacks against political activists, racial groups, and the press have occurred.



Topic A: Environmental Racism

Topic History

The true origins of environmental racism can be derived from the arrival of the Europeans approximately 500 years ago and their displacement of the Native Americans who had already inhabited the land. However, the concept of environmental justice was first conceived in the United States in the mid-1980s, which was several years after the Civil Rights Movement had taken place. The fight for racial inequality overlapped with the fight for environmental justice as people of color experienced the environmental racism in their communities. Grassroots organizations and campaigns arose from these social movements, bringing more attention to environmental racism in legislation and policy making.

During the 1980s, the environmental justice movement in the United States was gaining increasing traction, especially among people of color. At the same time, researchers, policymakers, and activists began to truly



investigate the connections between race and exposure to environmental hazards, which was dependent upon the geography of the neighborhood.

Outside of the United States, the notion of environmental racism arose from the patterns of treatment toward Romani communities. Particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, socialist governments favored industrialization rather than environmental protection. In these states, policymakers focused on economic development and privatization of the nation. Moreover, in the time period of the 1980s and the 1990s, social restructuring in this region of the world was also dramatically taking place. In Central and Eastern Europe, communities that were home to low-income Romani people became the target of environmental marginalization.

In 1989, in Africa, the costs for waste disposal were approximately forty dollars per ton, which was four to twenty-five times less than the amount in Europe and twelve to

thirty-six times less than the amount in the United States. Cheaper costs for waste disposal in Africa, only made it easier to perpetuate dumping in developing nations. As a result, African leaders began to call for an end to the dumping of hazardous wastes in their communities, referred to as “toxic terrorism.”

Subsequently, in 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the United States began to investigate the higher environmental risk that minorities bore. Moreover, in 1992, the first official governmental body to address environmental justice was established: the Office of Environmental Justice. From then on, there have been many legislative actions taken in the United States intended to combat environmental racism and discrimination. As a result, to this day, the United States has the most advanced legislative systems when it comes to recognizing and addressing environmental inequalities.



With regard to the United Nations' involvement in this issue, in 2007, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was introduced to the General Assembly. This declaration brought to light the indigenous people's relationship to their environment. The Special Rapporteurs, who are independent human rights experts have been conducting such acts of environmental racism and discrimination through the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Current Situation

The impacts of climate change and other environmental hazards are not borne equally or fairly, whether that is between the rich and poor, women and men, older and younger generations, and non-POC communities and POC communities. According to the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment conducted in 2005, the primary cause of global environmental degradation

in the modern era is the unsustainable consumption of environmental resources by the most economically privileged, the majority of whom inhabit the global North. While the economically privileged continue to reap the benefits of economic activity that is environmentally unsustainable and hazardous, the burdens of resource depletion, land degradation, and pollution are disproportionately borne by the most vulnerable communities, especially in the global South, including indigenous peoples, racial and ethnic minorities, and the poor.

Ergo, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Human Rights, which was established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly has, over the past decade, been working on recommendations to address the intersectionality issues of human rights and climate change. During the second UPR meeting on May 11, 2015, recommendations regarding water protection of indigenous lands as well as the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples were brought to



the attention of the involved member states.

Moreover, the international community has gradually accepted the undeniable connection between human rights and the environment. In October 2016, the International Human Rights Clinic, a group that has been proposing international mechanisms to address climate change and humans rights for minorities, refugees, and indigenous peoples, organized a conference, “Climate Change Displacement: Finding Solutions to an Emerging Crisis,” which brought together experts from all around the world to discuss challenges with governance in the context of the displacement of certain communities caused by climate change.

Recently, human rights violations that have been associated with environmental degradation and resource depletion have been formally and officially recognized by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural

Rights (ICESCR), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the American Convention on Human Rights despite the fact that there are actually no clear and explicit environmental human rights guidelines within the aforementioned treaties.

Furthermore, during the United Nations General Assembly’s High-level Meeting on the Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generation in March of 2019, Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland stated that, “thanks to the recent marches, strikes, and protests by hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren, we have begun to understand the intergenerational injustice of climate change,” underscoring her belief in the importance of youth in this movement to combat environmental racism and advocate for environmental and climate justice.

Subsequently, in the opening statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



Michelle Bachelet at the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council that took place in September 2019, Bachelet focused her speech on the urgency of combating the intersectional issues of climate change and human rights. Due to the increasing international recognition of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment for all, in over 100 national and regional laws, there needs to be effective climate action from all communities, protection of those who defend the environment, and the acknowledgement of the fact that those who are most affected by and vulnerable to environmental racism are those who are leading the way towards climate justice. However, at the same time, with reference to the Caring for Climate Initiative, hosted by the United Nations Global Compact and United Nations Environment, the importance and necessity of participation from businesses and companies around the world was underscored.

Environmental racism, which has consistently been occurring globally

within marginalized communities has only been amplified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has taken the lives of POC at higher rates than their white counterparts. Ethnic minorities have been faced with poorer health outcomes due to environmental racism. Consequently, higher levels of pollution in such communities have been associated with lower levels of education, lower levels of access to healthcare and environmental services. As such, environmental racism is also concerned with impacts on health as well as other societal issues.

Country Policy

Asia:

Within the Philippines, the National Human Rights Institution is in the process of an inquiry into the human rights duties of 47 corporations who are responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions at a national and global level. The adverse human rights effects of these emissions affects



the majority of the poorer communities of the Philippines.

In China, there is a large e-waste hub located in Guiyu, which has resulted in the lead poisoning of young children within the region. This practice of collecting scrap computer parts is dangerous to the health of the people as it contaminates the local water supply. The people who partake in collecting these are often those who are poor and live in rural areas. The Chinese government has yet to address this practice in their environmental policies.

North America:

In Canada, its government has pledged to donate funding towards a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat Indigenous Peoples Focal Point in the support for the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. There is also progress towards addressing the environmental racism within Nova Scotia's Africville community with the passing of Bill 111.

In the United States, one of the most prominent policies was

President Bill Clinton's 1994 Executive Order 12898, which directed government agencies to develop a strategy that advocated for environmental justice. Every federal agency has yet to fulfill this order.

Within the US, the changes within municipalities have worked to reduce environmental racism. As large cities experience prominent environmental racism and geographic segregation, any health epidemic or natural disaster has the worst impacts in Black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

Moreover, the Native American reservations have been the target for waste disposal and illegal dumping by the US and other multinational companies. Likewise, issues like the Dakota Access Pipeline further emphasizes the longstanding environmental racism that Native American communities have been facing.

Latin America:

In Latin American nations such as Colombia, indigenous peoples as well as those of Afro-descendant communities have been receiving



assistance from the UN to ensure the sustainable management of and longevity of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. A Colombian government decree currently protects this ecosystem, including the sacred sites that have been acknowledged.

Perhaps most importantly in Latin America, the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest alongside the fires within the rainforest definitely plays a large role in global warming. However, the worst impacts of deforestation of the Amazon are experienced by the communities living adjacent to the rainforest. Among these men, women, and children are an overwhelming majority of indigenous peoples. Authorities in Latin America, especially Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil have yet to develop long-term environmental policies and systems for the sustainable management of their natural resources.

However, the Latin American Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Justice in Environmental

Matters, also referred to as the Escazu Agreement has been a step towards improvement and change. This agreement primarily focuses on guaranteeing the right of all persons to access a healthy environment and sustainable development.

Moreover, the Human Rights Committee made a decision in *Portillo Caceres v. Paraguay* regarding the death of people due to the uncontrolled and unlimited use of pesticides. This decision set a precedent in establishing that member states have responsibility within the realm of international human rights law to conduct investigations into actions and that perpetrate environmental harms and are expected to provide reparations to the victims.

Europe:

France and the United Kingdom have been called out by multiple action groups for the waste disposal of hazardous materials in developing countries. As a result, the respective governments have begun to support NGOs that address environmental inequalities



such as Friends of the Earth and Capacity Global.

Within Central and Eastern Europe, the environmental racism that the ethnic group, the Romanis face is especially prominent. The Romani people often live in slums that are below the poverty line and are exposed to harmful toxins due to their proximity to waste dumps and industrial plants. They are also refused environmental assistance such as clean water and sanitation. Nations such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary have attempted to implement initiatives for the Romani population within their nations with regard to environmental protection. However, the governments of these nations have failed to address the conditions that Roma people face.

Africa:

The impacts of climate change have severely impacted the African nations. In May of 2019, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators for Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger emphasized food shortages stemming from severe drought, caused by climate change,

would eventually, without any intervention, endanger the future of the next generation.

Furthermore, the initiative between the G5 Sahel (G5S) countries, an institutional framework for issues within west Africa, has yet to address the necessity for a large amount of investment in addressing environmental threats and dealing with inequalities.

Questions to Consider

Marginalized communities do not have the socioeconomic means to fight against large companies who partake in environmentally racist practices that can have fatal effects on human health. How can the UN play a role in building sustainable communities and systems of legislations to combat this?

How can current legislation on environmental racism and climate justice be changed to better address environmental racism internationally?



While environmental racism in developed countries does definitely exist, developing countries have no infrastructure to acknowledge and combat it. How can developed countries work together with and aid developing countries who are also experiencing environmental racism?

How can the United Nations leverage and support grassroots initiatives, modern activism, religious support and youth action in the context of environmental and climate justice?



Topic B: Human Rights Violations in China, DPRK, and the Philippines

Topic History

China

In the past, China has suppressed the freedom of expression through the harassment and arrest of journalists who attempt to expose the human rights issues within China. This suppression has also been shown through the expansion of the Chinese censorship system in which content which is deemed inappropriate by the Chinese government is simply removed from the internet. Furthermore, China has even censored books and academic articles that they deem to be “wrong” and has punished the authors of this material.

The CCP has also suppressed the freedom of religion as the government restricts religious practices to five official religions. Any other religious groups are seen as evil cults, and the members undergo abuse at the hands of the government. Unauthorized teachings about religion are banned. The government has demolished churches, as can be seen in their crackdown on



Christian churches, and has removed Islamic and Arabic signs from streets.

Other instances, such as China's involvement with Hong Kong, Xin Jiang, and Tibet, have displayed the CCP's assault on human rights. Within Hong Kong, the attack on free expression, association, and political participation has increased. Democracy and self-determination have been suppressed, and peaceful protests have been met with hostility by the government. Within Xinjiang, discrimination against those of Uyghur identity by Chinese authorities has been justified as a necessary response. Such discrimination includes mass arbitrary detention within reeducation camps and other facilities, the usage of constant surveillance and restrictions on personal life. Within Tibet, religious freedom, free speech, movement, and assembly are all restricted by Chinese authorities.

DPRK

North Korea has been condemned for their human rights violations in

the past. In 2014, a UN report on human rights concluded that the DPRK had committed crimes against humanity. The UN Security Council believed that the situation was best referred to the International Criminal Court, but the North Korean government has denied these findings. In 2017 and 2018, the UN GA adopted a resolution to condemn the North Korean government's actions against human rights. In 2019, the UN HRC adopted a resolution to prosecute North Korean government officials for crimes against humanity. North Korea previously ratified 5 human rights treaties despite having its own human rights issues be the subject of discussion within the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly as a treaty to international peace and security. North Korea has refused to cooperate with the UN officials assigned to address its human rights issues.

North Korea has involved itself with discrimination on the grounds of gender and political classes. This discrimination begins at childhood,



where males are favored. Females are systematically discriminated against in gaining higher education, becoming a member of the military, or joining the Worker's Part of Korea. Females have little to no protection against abuses committed by authorities. Furthermore, North Korea discriminates based on a class system which corrupt officials usually manipulate.

North Korea has also forced its citizens to work for free. A majority of North Korean citizens have done unpaid labor at a point in their lives. Prisoners are also forced to work within labor camps. These prisoners undertake inhumane amounts of labor in dangerous conditions. The government has also forced many to join labor brigades in which they essentially perform forced community service. Many who attempt to leave North Korea are sent to these labor camps. The government views attempts to leave as traitorous to the nation. These prisoners not only face forced labor, but also violence, torture, and general inhumane treatment. While those

fleeing to places such as China would generally be protected, the Chinese government's return of such refugees is a noted failure of China to fulfill its obligations.

Philippines

The Philippine government's war on drugs has expanded and caused the death of at least 22,983 deaths. The exact number of fatalities is unknown as the government has not disclosed official documents pertaining to this war on drugs. The number does not include unidentified gunmen who appear to be working in conjunction with the government to kill thousands of people. These killings are extrajudicial and unjustified by the government. Such killings have extended to children and are classified as collateral damage. Despite this, many killings are carried out in an execution like manner. Due to an expanded policy of unannounced drug tests starting in the fourth grade, it is feared that children will be directly targeted as a result of the war on drugs.. The Philippine government has also moved to suppress dissenters who



attempt to investigate the killings occurring as a result of the drug war through their arrest and subsequent jailing on drug charges.

The administration has attempted to stamp out any dissent by media outlets by charging those who speak out against the government with crimes such as tax evasion following months of attacks and harassment. Further regulations allowed for the government to ban reporters who go against the government. Other journalists are killed with 6 being murdered in 2018 alone.

Discrimination against those with HIV due to the rapidly growing HIV pandemic in the Philippines is widespread. Workers with HIV are unlawfully fired, forced to resign, and prevented from being hired in some cases.

Current Situation

China

China currently operates as a surveillance state, with its constant monitoring of its citizens a vital

part of its ability to oppress them. While China has always desired to monitor any forms of dissent within the country, increased technological capabilities have allowed for an increased ability for mass surveillance. In particular, this system of surveillance has been used in the Xinjiang region as a way of oppressing Muslims living within the area. China has also mobilized around a million party officials to visit and stay in the homes of Muslim families as a method of monitoring them. The data collected through this surveillance is the determining factor in who will be detained and “reeducated.” Around one million Muslims have been placed in detention centers so far to be indoctrinated. Within these centers, detention in which China claims is voluntary, Uighurs and other Muslim groups undergo inhumane conditions. The camps are similar to high security prisons as Chinese officials are under orders to never allow escapes, severely punish those who violate rules, promote transformation of the prisoners’ beliefs, make Mandarin learning a top priority, and ensure that the entire



compound is completely surveilled and free of blind spots. Prisoners are referred to as “students,” and they are given a controlled routine with which to live their everyday life. Every action they make is monitored and controlled. The “students” are awarded for transforming their beliefs. Their children are treated with this reeducation procedure as well through schools and state-run orphanages.

The goal of the Chinese government is the removal, from Muslims, of any belief in their religion, any connection to their ethnicity, and any political views they may harbor which would be against those of the Chinese government. This action represents the CCP’s desire to essentially control the way people think so that any potential dissent is quelled before it even develops. The CCP has also expressed directives to arrest Uighurs with foreign citizenship and track Uighurs living abroad. The Chinese government has justified these measures as “safeguards against counterterrorism.”

The CCP has also implemented other systems of controlling its citizen’s behavior such as a social credit system. The Chinese government has also opposed human rights initiatives that condemn specific countries’ human rights violations and has forced them to be reduced. China has also censored foreign voices through the usage of their Great Firewall.

DPRK

The DPRK has continued to prevent its citizens from leaving the country without the permission of the government. North Korea has worked with China in order to facilitate this process by jamming Chinese phone services at the border. Those who communicate with people outside the country are arrested, and the punishments of those caught attempting to escape are severe. Networks which help those who are planning to leave are limited, and the networks which do exist are strictly monitored by the Chinese and North Korean governments. These networks report random checks, electronic IDs, and other methods of



controlling who can leave North Korea. Increased pressure from North Korea on China to track down and send back North Korean escapees has also been reported. North Korea has highlighted these actions as traitorous and promises strict punishments for those who attempt to escape from the country. Those who are returned to the DPRK after attempting to escape are likely to be sent to one of the many North Korean labor camps or detention centers.

Within these camps, prisoners are forced to perform hard labor under inhumane conditions. Many report food shortages among prisoners and back breaking labor. Housing conditions were also terrible as there were sometimes up to 50 people contained within one room. Severe beatings from the guards were ever present. The labor these prisoners are forced to do is sometimes done in dangerous environments with improper clothing. Besides the labor camps, other citizens, who are not prisoners, are forced to perform unpaid labor in order to prove their loyalty to the state. Failure to

perform this labor is punishable by being detained in a labor camp.

North Korea also uses a corrupt system known as the songbun to classify people into varying classes and discriminate against some groups. This system discriminates against females and those of lower classes.

Philippines

The Philippine war on drugs has continued to display signs of many extrajudicial killings. Thousands of suspects were killed in police operations, and thousands more were killed by masked gunmen. Political activists, human rights defenders, and other community leaders were also targets of killings. Security forces killed many of these activists on the island of Negros. While some killings were claimed to have been justified by war on drugs, the vast majority were killings of innocent activists and environmentalists. These killings also spread to other parts of the Philippines. Security forces have been linked to these killings, but the government has not made moves to investigate any of them.



Little to none of any serious investigations that occur have resulted in convictions. Many activists are accused by the government of being members or sympathizers of the New People's Army which results in them being killed later on.

The government has also attempted to restrict the media as attacks on journalists have increased in number and frequency in the past year. Police officials have charged journalists with baseless accusations and imprisoned them on those charges. Other journalists have been shot or seriously injured in attacks by armed gunmen. Many of the journalists face threats of being "red-tagged" and subsequently killed.

The war on drugs has also ruined the lives of many children living within the Philippines. It has caused economic hardships and mental trauma, which the government has not addressed. Many children have been killed in the crossfire, and others have been imprisoned in detention facilities.

Country Policy

China and the DPRK:

China and the DPRK have not complied with UN intervention. Though the DPRK has been condemned many times for its violation of human rights, they have refused to do anything and have denied all allegations. China routinely subverts the UN and has done everything in its power to avoid addressing its human rights issues. Both countries routinely violate human rights and continue to increase these violations.

Philippines:

Though the Philippines has made strides to address some human rights issues, others still remain to be taken care of. The police forces operating within the Philippines as well as the government still suffer from rampant corruption. Little has been done to address this as well as the mass killings and silencing of the media that comes with the corruption.

USA:

The US withdrew from the UNHCR in 2018, and United States



government officials have praised authoritarian leaders. Despite this, the protection of human rights has been a fundamental part of US foreign policy for a while now. The US has promoted freedom and workers rights as well as other protections through the use of diplomacy, foreign assistance, outreach, and economic sanctions.

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