Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Model United Nations Conference XI
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Boston, Massachusetts
Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MITMUNC’s Security Council! We cannot wait to meet you all during our conference, and watch as you tackle some of the biggest issues facing modern society. As co-chairs for UNSC as well as co-chairs of IMF for MITMUNC X, we hope to foster progressive debate and discussion on two exciting topics, and hope that you will take away an enriching model UN experience.

Griffin Ansel: Here at MIT, I study Computer Science, Economics, and Data Science. I play varsity football, am in the Kappa Sigma fraternity, and am on the Mock Trial, Model UN, and Debate teams. Last summer, I worked for the Oakland Athletics baseball team in Data Analytics in Player Scouting and Development and will work at Ford Motor Company this summer in self driving cars.

My debate/MUN experience: I was all-American in Model UN my junior and senior years in high school. In debate, I primarily did Public Forum, and placed in the top 15 at the National Championships, as well as top 8 in California. I now coach both debate and model UN for various high schools.

Anagh Tiwary: Here on campus I study civil engineering and finance, am involved with the Sloan Business Club, play saxophone with the MIT wind ensemble, and have done research with the MIT International Center for Aviation as well as the Sloan School of Management. I work on Wall St. for Morgan Stanley, in their Global Infrastructure Investment Fund (a $13 billion dollar private equity fund that makes buy side equity investments). I'm really passionate about finance and investing, have done internships in the field not only in the US but in Europe and Singapore, and have gained exposure in international finance. In high school I did Model UN for four years, partaking in conferences all over the east coast, including MITMUNC my sophomore year. My personal favorite experiences include my first conference at Dartmouth as a freshman, and being North Korea my senior year. If you have any questions about myself, my experiences, this committee or life in general please don’t hesitate to reach out!

Please keep in mind that you are expected to prepare opening speeches of one minute each and email position papers on each topic of about one page in length to mitmunc-unsc@mit.edu. Good luck with your research!

We wish you luck as you begin researching your positions!

Griffin Ansel and Anagh Tiwary

Chairs, UNSC
Topic 1: Food Insecurity in East Africa

Statement and History of the Problem

Since early 2017, East Africa has been in a severe drought, causing crops to die, rivers and lakes to dry out, and general food and water shortages. According to Stephen O'Brien, the UN humanitarian chief, the situation in East Africa was the world’s largest humanitarian crisis since the United Nations was founded in 1945. However, in early 2018, the situation seemed to be improving. Rainfall across the East African region increased, and soon reached above average levels. That’s when disaster struck. The land, dry and brittle from the year of heat and drought, couldn’t absorb enough water to prevent flooding. What few crop fields had survived the massive drought were soon washed away, and the housing and infrastructure built during the crisis was damaged or destroyed. Millions fell back into starvation. To make matters worse, the little food that was being produced was either taken or destroyed by al Shabaab, the regional terrorist group attempting to take control of South Sudan and neighboring countries. Taking advantage of the international community, al Shabaab stole food and water aid, and used it to find new recruits and enlarge their fighting force. Many aid organizations have stopped sending aid to East Africa due to al Shabaab’s frequent interception of supplies, and the people who need aid are dying. Thompson of the Guardian writes that the situation in East Africa is becoming dire. 16 million people are on the brink of starvation and are desperately in need of food, water, and medical treatment. If we don’t act now, they will go past the breaking point and starve to death.

Current Situation

Across East Africa, food insecurity remains a problem. The primary factors contributing to food insecurity in the region remain the unstable and inefficient drought recovery process, flooding, and regional conflict, including domestic terrorism. This problem is expected to continue through most of 2019, and large segments of the East African community are expected to remain in Crisis Level or Emergency Level. There remains a risk of the crisis escalating once more to the level of a Famine, the worst possible scenario for the region, if no humanitarian assistance reaches the population. Countries affected by this issue are Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, among others. South Sudan is particularly plagued with in fighting, and is losing a battle with the African terrorist group, al-Shabaab, for control if its major cities and farmland.
The conflict between the governments of the region and al-Shabaab has displaced many East Africans, causing decreased access to food and income. Those people displaced by the conflict are expected to face famine-like or crisis-like conditions in the absence of humanitarian aid. In addition, refugees in Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi face dangerous outcomes even in the presence of humanitarian assistance. A report prepared by Lucas Wolf from Tetra Tech for USAID in 2012 notes that most of East Africa’s zones of armed conflict and instability today are concentrated near border areas, affecting about 20 million residents. These borderlands have the highest unemployment rates, limited natural resources, and the greatest levels of conflict. Unfortunately, governments in the region don’t have the capacity or political will to deal with the violence and terror in the borderlands, which are now “sanctuaries for combatants and nurseries for recruits.

However, Claudia Williamson from the Appalachian State University in 2009 writes that where aid is needed in the Borderlands, it is unhelpful because the necessary institutions are lacking. Distribution centers for aid are destroyed, and governments have become less likely to even attempt to aid their citizens due to the conflict. In fact, Wolf furthers that East African governments don’t expend public resources in the borderlands because there is very little economic return, effectively causing residents of the borderlands to be stateless.

While humanitarian aid can help feed people today, it does have its limitations. As explained by the Washington Post in 2017, droughts are common in East Africa but do not always result in famine. The common link between the famine of 2011 and the famine today, when compared to droughts that have not resulted in famine, is the continued presence of al-Shabab. Chronic violence and political instability undermine food security and make populations more vulnerable to harsh environmental conditions such as droughts. According to the Center of Strategic International Studies in 2017, it is no coincidence that while drought can affect a wide region of Eastern Africa, famine has primarily occurred in Somalia and South Sudan. The authorities in neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya possess enough bureaucratic competence to ensure that emergency supplies can be transported to the majority of those who need it, preventing the crisis of the drought from becoming a famine within their borders.

In order to solve the famine, there are two things that need to be addressed. The immediate need of the East African people is food and water. The United Nations, many individual countries, and many non-profit organizations (NGOs), have attempted to send aid to East Africa. However, that aid often doesn’t get there. Thus, counterterrorism operations and aid protection remain a priority.
Proposed Solutions

I do not want to impede your ability to creatively solve this issue, so I will not provide proposed solutions past the obvious. Here are a few:

1. The United Nations (or individual countries) sends peacekeeping soldiers to protect crops and humanitarian aid. Those soldiers ensure the aid reaches the people and countries that need it.
2. The United Nations (or individual countries) begins counterterrorism operations in order to prevent al-Shabaab and other terror groups from stealing humanitarian aid and destroying crops.
3. The United Nations (or individual countries) send humanitarian aid (in various forms, such as food, water, medicine, education/medical training) to the countries affected by the crisis.
4. The United Nations (or individual countries) send military aid to the countries battling terrorism. This aid could be money, weapons, training, or any other suitable option.
5. The United Nations (or individual countries) assist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders in assisting those who need aid or medical attention.

Sources
http://fews.net/east-africa/food-security-outlook/march-2018
Topic 2: Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis

Statement and History of the Problem:

In 2011, successful uprisings known as the Arab Spring toppled the governments of Tunisia and Egypt, removing their presidents who were in power. These actions ended up giving hope to pro-democracy activists in Syria, and that March peaceful protests started occurring in Syria. These protests were ignited after 15 teenage boys were detained and tortured for graffiti which supported the arab spring. The government of Syria, which was led by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad responded by killing hundreds of the peaceful protestors and imprisoning hundreds more. In July of 2011, military defectors formed the Free Syrian Army, a rebel group which aimed to overthrow the government, causing Syria to slide into a civil war.

The armed conflict raised tensions between different religious groups as well. Most Syrians are Sunni Muslims, but the President of Syria’s armed forces are dominated by the Alawi sect of Islam, including which the President of Syria is a member. Protesters demanded an end to the authoritarian practices of the Assad regime, in place since Assad’s father, Ḥafiz al-Assad, became president in 1971. In his public statements, Assad sought to portray the opposition as Sunni Islamic extremists in the mold of al-Qaeda and as participants in foreign conspiracies against Syria. The regime also produced propaganda stoking minorities’ fears that the predominantly Sunni opposition would carry out violent reprisals against non-Sunni communities.

Environmental crisis also played a role in Syria’s uprising. Between 2006 and 2010, Syria experienced the worst drought in the country’s modern history. Hundreds of thousands of farming families were reduced to poverty, causing a mass migration of rural people to urban shantytowns.

By the summer of 2011 Syria’s regional neighbors and the global powers had both begun to split into pro- and anti-Assad camps. The United States and the European Union were increasingly critical of Assad as his crackdown continued, and U.S. Pres. Barack Obama and several European heads of state called for him to step down in August 2011. An anti-Assad bloc consisting of Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia formed in the last half of 2011. The United States, the EU, and the Arab
League soon introduced sanctions targeting senior members of the Assad regime. However on the pro-Assad side, Iran and Russia continued their prolonged support, which included an October 2011 veto by Russia and China of a UN Security Council Resolution which would have condemned the crackdown of Assad.

By September 2011, organized rebel militias started regularly fighting against the Syrian government in armed conflicts. The summer and fall of 2012 saw a string of tactical successes for the rebels. Government troops were forced to withdraw from areas in the north and east, allowing the rebels to control significant territory for the first time. By early 2013, though, the military situation appeared to be approaching stalemate. Rebel fighters kept a firm hold on northern areas but were held back by deficiencies in equipment, weaponry, and organization. Meanwhile, government forces, weakened by defections, also seemed incapable of making large gains.

Efforts by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar to fund and arm rebels became increasingly public in late 2012 and 2013. The United States, which had been reluctant to send weapons for fear of inadvertently arming radical jihadists who would someday turn against the West, eventually started a modest program to train and equip a few vetted rebel groups. The Syrian government continued to receive weapons from Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

A motion in the British Parliament to authorize strikes in Syria failed on August 29 2013, and a similar vote in the U.S. Congress was postponed on September 10 2013, after supposed chemical attacks were taken out on civilians by the governmental regime. An international agreement between Russia, Syria, and the United States was agreed to in September of 2013 to place all of Syria’s chemical weapons under international control by June of 2014.

In April 2013 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, declared that he would combine his forces in Iraq and Syria under the name Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS]). In eastern Syria, ISIL seized an area in the Euphrates valley centred on the city of Al-Raqqah. From there, ISIL launched a series of successful operations in both Syria and Iraq, expanding to control a wide swath of territory straddling the Iraq-Syria border.
The United States launched airstrikes in Iraq in 2014 to prevent ISIL from advancing into the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq and to shield Christian and Yazidi communities there. In September 2015 Russia launched its first airstrikes against targets in Syria. Russian officials originally claimed that the air strikes were targeting ISIL, but it quickly became clear that they were targeting mostly rebels fighting against Assad, with the intention of bolstering their ally.

**Current Situation**

While government forces continued to gain ground, Western governments increasingly intervened in the conflict. After a chemical weapons attack was carried out in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017, the United States barraged Shayrat airbase near Homs with 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles. A year later, after the Syrian government used chemical weapons in Douma, U.S., British, and French forces launched more than 100 strikes targeting chemical weapons facilities near Damascus and Homs.

Israel targeted the Iranian military in Syria in 2018. After Iran shelled the Golan Heights in response, Israel launched its heaviest barrage in Syria since the civil war began. Dozens of Iranian military sites were targeted, and Israel claimed to have destroyed nearly all of Iran’s military infrastructure in Syria.

Turkey and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) began in January 2018 a military operation against US-backed fighters in northwestern Syria, and announced the capture of Afrin's city centre in March.

In June 2018, having solidified their hold on the areas around Damascus and Homs, Syrian government forces began a campaign to recapture rebel-held territories in the southwest province of Dar`a, later expanding into Al-Qunayṭarah province. As the success of the government operation became clear, a deal was brokered with the help of Russia that allowed rebels safe passage to the rebel-held province of Idlib in the north in exchange for their surrender in southwest of the country.
Russia and Turkey attempted to de-escalate the situation by agreeing to and implementing a buffer zone between rebel and government forces. The buffer zone required all heavy weapons and fighters to retreat from an area about 9 to 12 miles (15 to 20 km) wide.

The map below shows current the current land controls of the different groups fighting in Syria.

Refugee Situation

As of February 2018, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) had registered over 5.5 million refugees from Syria and estimated that there are over 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDP) within Syria's borders. Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan are hosting most of the Syrian refugees, many of whom attempt to journey onwards to Europe in search of better conditions.

Sources


Proposed Solutions

I do not want to impede your ability to creatively solve this issue, so will not provide proposed solutions past the obvious. Here are a few:

1. The United Nations (or individual countries) sends peacekeeping soldiers to protect Syrian civilians and humanitarian aid. Those soldiers ensure the aid reaches the people and countries that need it.
2. The United Nations (or individual countries) begins counterterrorism operations in order to prevent terror groups and the Syrian government from killing innocent civilians.
3. The United Nations (or individual countries) send humanitarian aid (in various forms, such as food, water, medicine, education/medical training) to Syrian citizens.
4. The United Nations (or individual countries) send military aid to the countries battling on the rebelling side. This aid could be money, weapons, training, or any other suitable option.
5. The United Nations (or individual countries) assist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders in assisting those who need aid or medical attention.

How We Will Evaluate You

We will be using the standard 4-pronged method for evaluation of Model United Nations representatives, written below. We expect all delegates to follow parliamentary procedure throughout committee sessions.

1. Consistency with your country’s policy
   a. Please note that this committee will be held in the present day.

2. Leadership in committee
   a. We will take note of who leads working papers, draft resolutions, and blocs.

3. Speaking ability and amount
   a. While less important, we will notice you more if you speak consistently and convey your points effectively.

4. Writing/Research
a. We will evaluate resolutions, position papers, and amendments, if applicable.

If you have any questions about this guide, you may contact the Dias at mitmunc-unsc@mit.edu.