Change the World MUN
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Associazione Diplomatici

BACKGROUND GUIDE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THIRD COMMITTEE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN &
CULTURAL ISSUES

CHANGE THE WORLD ACADEMY

The Biggest Model United Nations in the World

Distinguished Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 Change the World Model United Nations (CWMUN).

As your committee Dais, we are looking forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas about how to solve international problems.

The United Nations (UN) depends on the cooperation and goodwill of its 193 member States. Because each State has unique interests and concerns, it is challenging to write, negotiate and pass resolutions. Every stage of the process demands creativity and diplomacy.

By reading this Background Guide, you are taking the first step in a journey that goes far beyond preparing for a conference. Over the coming weeks, you will analyse one of the most pressing global challenges of our time, understand how governments and international organisations respond to it, and learn how diplomats transform ideas into international action.

This guide is not meant to provide all the answers. Its purpose is to help you ask better questions, because diplomacy is not about knowing everything. It is about making responsible decisions with the best information available.

Remember: every solution begins with informed leadership.

You will be discussing this topic:

The AI Brain Drain and Global Labor Redistribution: Preventing Intellectual Exploitation and Securing National Human Capital in the Global South

While we may all lead different lives and face different struggles, we have to bear in mind that we all share the same world and the same resources. Whether it is environmental problems or political unrest, what is happening in the world concerns all of us. Only through mutual understanding, unity, and collaboration can we lay the foundations of a worthier world.

As your committee Dais, we will work to keep the committees running smoothly. We will do our best to help you understand the procedures and to ensure that the perspectives of all delegates are heard and respected.

Sincerely,

The CWMUN Staff Board



What is this activity about?

The Change the World Model United Nations is a role-playing game. Your task is to impersonate a diplomat of the assigned Country and present the perspective of this Country's current government.

What should you do before the Simulation?

Before the Simulation, you should:

- Create your handbook, a collection of relevant UN resolutions, reports, academic studies, and news from reliable media.
- Write the Position Paper, describing the position of your country on the topic you have been assigned to.
- Prepare some topics for Moderated Caucus debates, *i.e.* short formal debates which cover narrow aspects of each topic. For example, within the topic "Violence against women"; delegates can hold a caucus with the subtopic "Ways of preventing genital mutilation".
- Think about some ideas for the Resolution, at least two or three clauses that your State would like to include in the main body of the Resolution.
- Learn and practice the Rules of Procedure.

Why this Background Guide Matters?

The strongest delegates are not those who memorise the greatest number of facts, but those who understand the issue from different perspectives.

As you read this guide, challenge yourself to think critically: ask why different countries defend different positions, identify competing priorities, question assumptions, and begin developing your own strategic understanding of the topic.

Remember: You are not preparing to pass an exam; you are preparing to participate in an international negotiation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this experience, you should be able to:

- Understand the international context surrounding the topic
- Explain your country's official position
- Develop evidence-based policy proposals
- Negotiate with other delegations
- Build consensus
- Translate ideas into diplomatic action

Think like an analyst, not just a reader.

Tips (!)

Before attending the simulation, go beyond this Background Guide. Explore official UN documents, government statements, reports by international organisations, academic research, reliable news sources. Ask yourself: has the situation changed since this guide was written? Real diplomacy requires continuous learning.

Learn about your Country from the official website of your State's permanent mission to the United Nations, and from other government websites (for example, the website and social media profiles of the Royal Family or President, Prime Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs...). Make sure to know as much as possible about the foreign relations of your Country! Consider that at the United Nations, Countries generally lean towards their own geopolitical blocs: Western, Former Soviet, African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American... Consider also organisations such as the European Union (EU), the African Union, the Arab League, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Union of South American Nations (USAN)...

REMEMBER!

Your task is to present the official position of your assigned Country. Misrepresenting this position and/or representing your private views is against the rules, even if you do not agree with your Country's position. In any case, you must not hyperbolise nor satirise the position of your Country. Humour, and especially sarcasm, is generally not typical for formal writing or formal debates. Although MUN welcomes wit and smart puns, please always be extremely considerate when using humour

Think Like a Diplomat

As you prepare for the conference, do not ask only: "What does my country think?", but also ask: "Why does my country think this?". And even more importantly: "How can different countries move from disagreement to cooperation?".

Because diplomacy is not about defending positions. It is about building solutions.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Historical background and Establishment of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The establishment of the United Nations General Assembly was the result of the international community's desire to prevent another global conflict after the Second World War and demonstrated the need for a strong international organisation. During the preparatory negotiations held at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944) and later at the Yalta Conference (1945)[1], the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China designed the framework of the future United Nations, while France joined as one of the sponsoring powers before the San Francisco Conference.[2] At the United Nations Conference on International Organization, held in San Francisco between April and June 1945, representatives of 50 states negotiated and adopted the Charter of the United Nations.[3] The General Assembly was established as one of the six principal organs of the Organization, embodying the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States by granting each state one vote.[4]

One of the main challenges during its creation concerned the balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council. While smaller states advocated for a stronger and more democratic Assembly, the major Allied powers insisted on assigning primary responsibility for international peace and security to the Security Council, including the veto power of its five permanent members.

[1]United Nations. (n.d.). Preparatory Years: UN Charter History. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un/preparatory-years
[2]United Nations. (n.d.). The San Francisco Conference. United Nations; United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un/san-francisco-conference
[3] United Nations. (1945). UN charter. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter
[4] United Nations. (2025). History of the United Nations. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un

The General Assembly is now composed of all 193 Member States of the United Nations, and it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion on the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It also plays a central role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

The Assembly regularly meets from September to December each year (main part), and thereafter, from January to September (resumed part), as required, including to take up outstanding reports from the Fourth and Fifth Committees. During the resumed part of the session, the Assembly also considers current issues in high-level thematic debates organised by the President of the General Assembly. During that period, the Assembly traditionally also conducts informal consultations on a wide range of substantive topics towards the adoption of new resolutions[5].

As hinted before, the UN GA has six Standing Committees, which all discuss specific topics:

I. Disarmament and Security
II. Economic and Financial
III. Social, Humanitarian and Cultural
IV. Special Political and Decolonisation
V. Administrative and Budgetary
VI. Legal

Each of the 193 Member States in the Assembly has one vote. Votes taken on designated important issues – such as recommendations on peace and security, the election of Security Council and Economic and Social Council members, and budgetary questions – require a two-thirds majority of Member States, but other questions are decided by a simple majority.

[5] Functions and powers of the General Assembly

Mandate, structure and core functions:

The Assembly makes recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has also taken actions across all pillars of the United Nations, including concerning political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal matters. In September 2015, the Assembly agreed on a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals[6], contained in the outcome document of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (resolution 70/1 entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). In 2022, the Assembly held a series of meetings to discuss the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Our Common Agenda"[7], an agenda of action, designed to strengthen and accelerate multilateral agreements – particularly the 2030 Agenda – and make a tangible difference in people's lives.[8]

According to the Charter of the United Nations[9], the General Assembly may:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament
- Discuss any questions relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organs of the United Nations

[6]United Nations. (2015). The 17 sustainable development goals. United Nations. https://sdgs.un.org/goals
[7] Our Common Agenda | United Nations
[8] Letter from the President of the General Assembly – Final OCA Summary | General Assembly of the United Nations
[9] United Nations. (1945). UN charter. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter

- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields
- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situations that might impair friendly relations among countries
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs[10]

Although the General Assembly plays a central role in global governance, its powers are subject to legal and political limitations. Unlike the Security Council, the Assembly generally cannot adopt legally binding decisions for Member States on matters of peace and security, and it cannot impose sanctions or authorize the use of force. Its resolutions are mostly recommendatory and derive their effectiveness from the political support and voluntary implementation of Member States.

However, the Assembly exercises significant influence by adopting resolutions and declarations, promoting the development and codification of international law, establishing subsidiary bodies, approving the United Nations budget and serving as the most representative forum for international dialogue and consensus-building. These instruments enable the Assembly to shape international norms and coordinate global actions, even when it lacks direct enforcement powers.[11]

Major Actions and Historical Impact:

The General Assembly has been passing several resolutions since its foundation in 1946. To pass, GA resolutions need to be voted by a simple majority (e.g. 50 percent of all votes plus one). Some of the most remarkable are:

[10] United Nations. (2015). Functions and powers of the General Assembly. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml
[11] United Nations. (2024). General Assembly of the United Nations. United Nations; United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/ga/

- Resolution 1 (1946): Established the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC)[12] "to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy" and tasked it to "make specific proposals... for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction", among other issues regarding nuclear technology.[13]

- Resolution 96 (1946): issuing the crime of Genocide[14]
- Resolution 100 (1946): establishing the Headquarters of the UN
- Resolution 177 (1947): The International Law Commission was directed to "formulate the principles of international law recognised in the Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal and in the judgment of the Tribunal". This resulted in the creation of the Nuremberg Principles.[15]
- Resolution 217 (1947): Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[16]
- Resolution 1962 (1963): One of the earliest resolutions governing Outer space.[17]
- Resolution 3010 (1972): Adopted to make the year 1975 International Women's Year.[18]
- Resolution 60/7 (2005): designated the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- Resolution ES-11/4 (2022): Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.[19]

Moreover, throughout its history, the General Assembly has significantly contributed to the development of international law, the promotion of human rights and the establishment of global political norms. Among its greatest achievements are the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948[20], which became the foundation of the international human rights system, the endorsement of the 2030

[12] Atomic Energy | United Nations
[13] Resolution 1 (1946) / (un.org)
[14] The Crime of Genocide. (un.org)
[15] Affirmation of the Principles of International Law recognized by the Charter of the Nürnberg Tribunal General Assembly resolution 95 (I)
[16] A/RES/3/217 A - Universal Declaration of Human Rights - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements (un-documents.net)
[17] RES 1962 (XVIII) (unoosa.org)
[18] A/RES/27/3010 - International Women's Year - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements (un-documents.net)
[19] N2263066.pdf (un.org)
[20] United Nations. (1948, December 10). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

Agenda for Sustainable Development[21], and its role in supporting decolonisation and the fight against Apartheid. The Assembly has also demonstrated its capacity to respond to major international crises through Emergency Special Sessions under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, including those concerning Hungary (1956), the Suez Crisis (1956), Afghanistan (1980), and more recently Ukraine (2022).[22]

However, the General Assembly also faces important limitations. Since most of its resolutions are not legally binding, their implementation depends largely on the political will of Member States. This has often reduced its effectiveness in preventing or ending armed conflicts, particularly when major powers have conflicting interests.

Despite these constraints, the General Assembly remains the most representative forum of the United Nations and continues to play a fundamental role in building international consensus, promoting dialogue and influencing the evolution of international law.

Current relevance and ongoing challenges:

There has been a sustained effort to make the work of the General Assembly more focused and relevant. This was first identified as a priority during the 58th session, and efforts continued at subsequent sessions to streamline the agenda, improve the practices and working methods of the Main Committees, enhance the role of the General Committee, strengthen the role and authority of the President and examine the Assembly's role in the process of selecting the Secretary-General.

During recent sessions, the Assembly adopted landmark resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/RES/70/305[23], A/RES/71/323, A/RES/72/313[24], A/RES/73/341[25], A/RES/74/303[26]) and A/RES/75/325[27]), which, amongst other, established an oath of office and a code of ethics for the Presidents of

[21] United Nations. (2015). The 17 sustainable development goals. United Nations. https://sdgs.un.org/goals
[22] United Nations. (n.d.). General Assembly of the United Nations. Www.Un.Org. https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml
[23] ts (F) (un.org)
[24] N1828962.pdf (un.org)
[25] N1927990.pdf (un.org)
[26] N2023117.pdf (un.org)
[27] N2125062.pdf (un.org)

the General Assembly and provided for informal interactive dialogues with candidates for the position of President of the General Assembly.

The practice of convening high-level thematic debates is also a direct outcome of the revitalisation process.[28]
It has become an established practice for the Secretary-General to brief Member States periodically, in informal meetings of the General Assembly, on his recent activities and travels. These briefings have provided a well-received opportunity for exchange between the Secretary-General and Member States.

Today, the General Assembly addresses some of the most pressing global challenges, including armed conflicts, climate change, sustainable development, global health, human rights, migration and the regulation of emerging technologies. However, its effectiveness is often constrained by increasing political polarisation among Member States. Diverging positions between countries frequently make it difficult to achieve broad consensus on sensitive issues such as international sanctions, Security Council reform and the interpretation of international law. These geopolitical tensions have intensified diplomatic negotiations within the Assembly, making consensus-building more complex while reinforcing the importance of the General Assembly as the only universal forum where all Member States can participate on an equal basis. For these reasons, the General Assembly remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary global challenges and promoting cooperation among States.[29]

Future Outlook and Questions for Delegates:

As the main policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly will continue to play a crucial role in addressing global challenges and promoting international cooperation.[30] To strengthen its effectiveness, future reforms could focus on improving the implementation of its resolutions, increasing transparency and efficiency in its working systems and enhancing cooperation with

[28] Revitalization of the General Assembly of the United Nations
[29] Kandt, K. (2017, February 6). UN General Assembly Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform. General Assembly of the United Nations. https://www.un.org/pga/71/2017/02/06/un-general-assembly-intergovernmental-negotiations-on-security-council-reform/
[30] United Nations. (2024). General Assembly of the United Nations. United Nations; United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/ga/.

other organs of the United Nations.[31] In the coming years, the Assembly will face increasingly complex issues such as climate change, global health emergencies, sustainable development, digital governance, artificial intelligence, armed conflicts, and growing geopolitical tensions. To successfully address these future challenges, a renewed commitment from all Member States to the principles of the United Nations Charter should be enacted.[32]

Some guiding questions:

- How can the General Assembly improve the impact of its resolutions?
- Which reforms could make the Assembly more effective in responding to global crises?
- How can Member States strengthen international cooperation while respecting national sovereignty?

[31]United Nations. (2015). Functions and powers of the General Assembly. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml
[32] United Nations. (1945). UN charter. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter

Third Committee

(Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues - SOCHUM)

Historical background and Establishment of the First Committee:

Among the Committees of the General Assembly, we can identify the Third Committee of the General Assembly (also known as SOCHUM), which takes care of Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs.

An important part of the Committee's work is focused on the examination of human rights questions, including reports of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. It also discusses the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, treatment of refugees, promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and the promotion to the right to self-determination.

Another important focus of this Committee is related to issues such as youth, family, ageing, people with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice and drug control.[33]

Mandate, structure and core functions:

The Third Committee of the General Assembly includes in its agenda a multiplicity of questions related to social, humanitarian and human rights issues, highlighting those concerning the advancement of women, the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of indigenous peoples, the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, crime prevention and criminal justice and the world drug problem, among others.

It is also responsible for monitoring the agreed commitments at summits and meetings related to the above-mentioned topics, such as:

1. World Summit for Social Development, attended in Copenhagen in 1995, where the main topics were "the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and reduction of unemployment and the promotion of social integration at an international and national level. This was social policymaking on a grand scale"[34];
2. Fourth World Conference on Women, attended in Beijing, where the "Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action"[35] was born. Nowadays, this document is the key document on gender equality, with a special focus on women's empowerment.[36]
3. Programme of Action of Durban on Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination, defined as the "blueprint to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance globally"[37]

Annually, the Third Committee adopts more than sixty resolutions, half of which revolve around specific issues related to human rights. The Commission also holds annual interactive dialogues with more than fifty Special Procedure Mandate Holders (Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, Working Group Chairs) appointed by the Human Rights Council.

[33]UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural. (2025). Un.org. https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/64/

[34] webcoordinator@msd.govt.nz. (2025). The United Nations World Summit for Social Development - Ministry of Social Development. Govt.nz; MSD. https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj04/04-the-united-nations-world-summit-for-social-developemt.html#:~:text=Copenhagen%2C%206%2D12%20March%201995&text=The%20topics%20covered%20by%20the,making%20on%20a%20grand%20scale

[35]United Nations Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, 4-15 September 1995. (n.d.). https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n96/273/01/pdf/n9627301.pdf

[36]Nations, U. (2020). Fourth World Conference on Women | United Nations. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995

[37] Nations, U. (2021). Durban Declaration and Programme of Action | United Nations. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/background/durban-declaration-and-programme-of-action#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20DDPA%3F,xenophobia%20and%20related%20intolerance%20globally

Major Actions and Historical Impact:

There are many important actions and projects in the past made by the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

Among them, we can identify Human Rights Resolutions, concerning the protection of human rights, addressing issues such as freedom of expression, the rights of marginalised groups and the protection of privacy. These resolutions call for international cooperation to promote human dignity and equality.[38]

We can also find the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, which is endorsed by the General Assembly, to evidence the importance of ensuring that new technologies (AI included) respect human rights and ethical standards.[39]

Another important project is Digital Inclusion[40] and Human Rights. The Third Committee has addressed the impact of digital technologies and AI on human rights, promoting resolutions on bridging the digital divide. These actions have called for greater access to technology for all people, ensuring that AI development respects privacy, security and cultural rights.

In 2020, a Resolution on Privacy in the Digital Age[41] was adopted. It calls for the protection of privacy in the digital world, reflecting concerns about data security and surveillance in an increasingly interconnected world. This was an important step in regulating AI's impact on individual rights.

[38]UN Human Rights Resolutions Portal. https://www.universal-rights.org/human-rights/human-rights-resolutions-portal/
[39]Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. (n.d.). Www.unesco.org. https://www.unesco.org/en/ethics-science-technology/bioethics-and-human-rights
[40]Digital Inclusion. (n.d.). https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/general/Definition_Digital-Inclusion.pdf
[41]General, UN. (2020, December 28). The right to privacy in the digital age :: resolution /: adopted by the General Assembly. United Nations Digital Library System; UN,. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3896430?v=pdf

Current relevance and ongoing challenges:

There are several key challenges in the development and use of AI. One of the major issues is the ethical regulation of AI. As AI technologies rapidly advance, the Third Committee must address concerns like algorithmic bias[42], privacy violations[43] and the potential harm to human dignity and cultural diversity. Another challenge is the global digital divide[44], where unequal access to AI and digital tools, especially in developing countries, limits the ability to use AI responsibly. The rise of AI also threatens cultural preservation, with the risk of losing cultural diversity. To protect cultures, global frameworks are needed to prevent homogenization and safeguard cultural identities. Additionally, as AI is increasingly used in surveillance, balancing security with individual privacy becomes more difficult. Addressing privacy concerns while respecting personal rights is a crucial challenge.[45]

In terms of future projects, the Third Committee could work towards creating global AI regulations that prioritise human rights, transparency, and fairness, particularly in areas like privacy and cultural diversity.[46] There may also be a focus on strengthening digital rights protection, ensuring laws are in place to protect citizens from digital surveillance, data exploitation, and violations of freedom of expression. Another important project could involve using AI to preserve cultural heritage,[47] such as digitising historical sites and artefacts to safeguard cultural diversity. Lastly, to address the digital divide, the Third Committee could promote global AI education and literacy,[48] ensuring that everyone, especially marginalised communities, has access to knowledge about their digital rights and the skills to engage with modern technologies.

[42] Simon Fiirs and James Riley, September 29 2024 ;https://hbr.org/2023/09/eliminating-algorithmic-bias-is-just-the-beginning-of-equitable-ai

[43]Sullivan, M. (2023, December). Examining Privacy Risks in AI Systems. Transcend. https://transcend.io/blog/ai-and-privacy

[44]How can we bring 2.6 billion people online to bridge the digital divide? (2024, January 14). World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/digital-divide-internet-access-online-fwa/

[45]Artificial Intelligence and Privacy – Issues and Challenges – Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner. (2020). Vic.gov.au. https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/artificial-intelligence-and-privacy-issues-and-challenges/

[46]Artificial intelligence (AI) and human rights: Using AI as a weapon of repression and its impact on human rights. (n.d.). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/754450/EXPO_IDA(2024)754450_EN.pdf

[47] Pansoni, S., Tiribelli, S., Paolanti, M., Di Stefano, F., Frontoni, E., Malinverni, E. S., & Giovanola, B. (2023). ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT OF AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK. The

Future Outlook and Questions for Delegates:

In the years ahead, the Third Committee is likely to remain the General Assembly's main forum for the social and humanitarian dimensions of global change. As artificial intelligence reshapes work, education and daily life many of the questions and debates it raises will fall squarely within the Committee's remit, from the protection of workers and the narrowing of the digital divide to the safeguarding of privacy and cultural diversity. The Committee's task will be to keep the human consequences of new technology - rather than the technology itself - at the centre of the discussion.

A central question for the Committee's future is how far its work can shape outcomes on the ground. The Third Committee adopts a large number of resolutions each year and holds regular dialogues with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, yet its resolutions are recommendations rather than binding rules. Future efforts may therefore focus on turning agreed principles into practical standards, on closer cooperation with bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organization and on ensuring that developing countries have the support they need to benefit from technological change rather than being left behind by it.

On the questions raised by this topic, the Committee's contribution is likely to lie in framing the movement of talent and the conditions of digital labour as matters of human rights and human development, not only of economics. Its future influence will depend on its ability to give the Global South a real voice and to reconcile the protection of individuals with the very different priorities that States bring to debates on technology and sovereignty.

International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences, XLVIII-M-2-2023, 1149–1155. https://doi.org/10.5194/isprs-archives-xlviii-m-2-2023-1149-2023

[48] Using AI in education to help teachers and their students. (2025, January 9). World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/how-ai-and-human-teachers-can-collaborate-to-transform-education/

- How can the Third Committee ensure that the social and human rights effects of artificial intelligence, including on workers and on the digital divide, are addressed alongside its economic dimensions?

- How can the Committee support developing countries in retaining and benefiting from their own human capital in the age of AI?
- What standards should the Committee promote to protect people engaged in low-paid digital work, without limiting the opportunities such work can bring?

The AI Brain Drain and Global Labor Redistribution: Preventing Intellectual Exploitation and Securing National Human Capital in the Global South

Introduction and context of the topic

In 2025 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) devoted its flagship Human Development Report (HDR) to artificial intelligence (AI). Its central argument is a simple one. The effect of AI on people's lives is not decided by technology alone but by the choices that societies and governments make.[49] That argument frames this topic. For many countries of the Global South, AI could become a route to new skills and industries, or a new form of dependence on wealthier States and firms. Which of the two it becomes will depend on decisions taken over the next few years.

Two connected pressures make this choice urgent, and they fall on the same regions. The first is the movement of skilled workers from poorer to richer countries, long known as 'brain drain'. As AI raises the value of technical skill, competition for researchers and graduates has intensified and many developing States struggle to keep the people they have trained. The second is the low-paid digital work on which AI depends, such as labelling data and moderating online content, much of which is carried out in the Global South. Between them, these pressures shape how the benefits and the burdens of AI are divided between countries.

[49] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 2025: A Matter of Choice (People and Possibilities in the Age of AI), UNDP, 2025, available at: https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2025.

These questions sit within long-standing commitments of the United Nations (UN). The Charter of the United Nations pledges Member States to promote higher standards of living and conditions of economic and social progress and to support international cooperation towards those ends.[50] More recently, the Secretary-General has warned that the world must not allow the divide in digital technology to harden into a divide in AI and then into a wider gap in development and sovereignty.[51] For the committee, the task is to help ensure that AI supports human development across all countries and not only the wealthiest.

Root causes and historical development

Neither pressure is new. The loss of skilled workers from developing countries has been debated since at least the 1970s, when the economist Jagdish Bhagwati proposed a tax on the earnings of skilled emigrants to compensate their countries of origin. The idea was never adopted, though the concern behind it endured. The low-paid digital economy has its own roots in the earlier outsourcing of clerical and technical tasks to lower-wage regions. The international community has long recognised the underlying issue. The Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 1986, describes development as a right of all peoples to take part in economic and social progress and to share in its benefits.[52] This reflects a commitment already present in the Charter of the United Nations, which calls on Member States to cooperate in solving international economic and social problems.[53] The UNDP has since tracked these questions across successive Human Development Reports.[54]

[50] Charter of the United Nations, 26 June 1945, Art. 1(3) and Arts. 55 and 56.
[51] United Nations Secretary-General, *Remarks to the Opening of the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance*, 2026, available at: https://www.un.org/sg/en/.
[52] UNGA, *Declaration on the Right to Development*, Resolution 41/128, 4 December 1986.
[53] *Charter of the United Nations*, 26 June 1945, Art. 1(3) and Arts. 55 and 56.
[54] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2025: A Matter of Choice (People and Possibilities in the Age of AI)*, UNDP, 2025, available at: https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2025.

In practice, several structural challenges explain why the imbalance persists. Skilled workers move because the gap in pay, funding and opportunity between countries is large and because the resources that AI research now requires, such as advanced computing power and data, are concentrated in a small number of firms and States. A country may educate talented people only to see the returns captured elsewhere. At the other end of the scale, the digital work that trains AI tends to flow to regions with lower wages and lighter regulation. Long chains of subcontracting sit between the technology firms and the workers, which can blur responsibility for pay and conditions.[55] Where many workers compete for the same tasks, wages stay low and protections remain weak.

Governance has struggled to keep pace. International rules on AI are recent and largely voluntary, and the countries of the Global South often have less influence over them, since they hold less of the computing power and capital involved. Political and practical factors add to the difficulty. States compete for talent, so that one country's gain is felt as another's loss, which makes common rules hard to agree. The firms concerned operate across borders and no single government can regulate them alone. Together, these factors help to explain why a widely shared concern has not yet produced a widely shared response.

In practice, these dynamics create a reinforcing cycle that is difficult to address through existing frameworks alone. Skilled migration, though often beneficial for the individual worker, can weaken domestic capacity in countries that have invested in education but cannot yet match the pay and resources on offer elsewhere. Participation in the lower end of the AI value chain, such as data labelling and content moderation, does not by itself lead to long-term economic advancement or greater technological independence. Because this governance remains fragmented and largely voluntary, it does little to ensure a fair distribution of benefits or consistent labour standards. As a result, the global AI economy risks reproducing existing inequalities. High-value gains stay concentrated in a small number of countries, while much of the labour that supports these systems remains undervalued.

[55] Brookings Institution, *Reimagining the Future of Data and AI Labour in the Global South*, 2025, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/.

These challenges also mark the points where States are likely to disagree. A first tension is between the free movement of skilled workers, which many States value and the wish of origin countries to retain, or be compensated for, the talent they train. A second concerns whether the emigration of skilled workers mainly harms developing countries or can also benefit them, a question on which the evidence is genuinely mixed. A third lies between protecting digital workers through binding labour standards and the fear that stronger rules could push the work to other countries. A fourth is between States that favour AI governance built around national sovereignty and those that prefer lighter, expert-led coordination. These are the fault lines that debate in the committee will need to work through.

Current Situation and Actors

The current picture shows both pressures at work. At the upper end, a large share of the world's leading AI researchers works outside their countries of origin and the flow of international students, a common route into the field, has become less predictable.[56] At the lower end, an estimated 150 million or more people worldwide perform digital 'microwork', meaning small online tasks such as labelling images or reviewing content. Reporting from major hubs, including Kenya, the Philippines and parts of Latin America, describes such work being carried out for a few dollars an hour, well below the pay for comparable work in wealthier countries.[57]

A wide range of actors shapes the issue. Origin States try to keep and attract skilled workers, while destination States and large technology firms seek to secure them. International bodies have begun to respond, among them the UNDP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), which addresses conditions of work and new United Nations mechanisms on AI. Not all analysts view skilled emigration as purely harmful. Some argue that it can benefit countries of origin through the money that migrants send home and the investment and knowledge they bring back, in a pattern often called

[56] New America, *AI Hustle: Human Capital, Sovereignty and the Global South*, 2025, available at: https://www.newamerica.org/.
[57] Brookings Institution, *Reimagining the Future of Data and AI Labour in the Global South*, 2025, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/.

'brain circulation'.[58] Whether the current balance does more harm than good is itself part of the debate.

For developing States, the practical stakes are high. Building domestic AI capacity requires skilled people and reliable access to computing power and the loss of trained workers makes both harder to secure. At the same time, the digital work available locally is often insecure and poorly paid, so it does little to build lasting capacity. This combination is what gives the topic its urgency for the committee.

International Response and Committee Action

International action is recent and still taking shape. In 2024 the Global Digital Compact, agreed as part of the Pact for the Future, set out shared principles for digital cooperation.[59] In 2025 the General Assembly agreed to establish an Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and a Global Dialogue on AI Governance, intended as the first genuinely global forum on the subject and designed to include the Global South.[60] Proposals for a global fund to widen access to AI skills and computing power are under discussion and the UNDP has placed AI at the centre of its Human Development Report.[61] On the labour side, the ILO has examined conditions on digital work platforms.[62]

These steps are significant, but their limits are clear. The new arrangements are largely voluntary, and States do not yet agree on their direction. Many in the Global South favour rules that protect national sovereignty and share benefits more evenly, while several advanced economies prefer lighter, expert-led coordination. The conditions of digital labour remain largely outside these discussions, even though the right to fair

[58] *High-skilled Emigration and Development*, in Science, 2025.
[59] UNGA, *Global Digital Compact*, annex to the *Pact for the Future*, Resolution 79/1, 22 September 2024.
[60] UNGA, Resolution 79/325, *Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance*, 26 August 2025.
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2025: A Matter of Choice (People and Possibilities in the Age of AI)*, UNDP, 2025, available at: https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2025.
[62] International Labour Organization (ILO), *The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work*, ILO, 2021, available at: https://www.ilo.org/.

and safe working conditions is well established in international human rights law.[63] The result is a widely shared concern that has not yet been matched by binding or evenly balanced action.

Future challenges and possible approaches

The tensions set out above point to where possible approaches lie. On talent, States can weigh whether to focus on keeping skilled workers at home, on building stronger links with their diaspora so that knowledge and investment flow back, or on seeking some form of compensation for the talent they lose. On labour, they can consider extending clear standards to the digital work behind AI, while taking care not to drive that work elsewhere. On governance, they can decide how far new global institutions and any future fund should include and support poorer States. In each case, the aim reflects the Charter's pledge to promote social progress and better standards of life.

These choices divide States rather than unite them. Some place the greatest weight on the free movement of skilled workers and on light regulation, others on the right of developing countries to keep and benefit from their own human capital and others on the protection of workers.

63 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, Art. 23; *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 1966, Arts. 6 and 7.

Annotated Bibliography

Hereafter, you can find some links that we think may be helpful to deepen your knowledge of both the committee and the topic you will be discussing.

- When talking about the UN, its official website is the most inspiring and complete: https://www.un.org/. Their Official Document System (ODS) is useful https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp.

- More specifically for the GA, visiting the assembly's official site will prepare you for the conference. https://www.un.org/en/ga/

- About the Third Committee. https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/

- United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2025: A Matter of Choice (People and Possibilities in the Age of AI)*, 2025. *The central reference for the topic, and the clearest statement of how choices, rather than technology alone, shape AI's effect on development.* Available at: https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2025

- United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development* (Resolution 41/128), 1986. *The founding statement of development as a right of all peoples; useful for framing the fairness of how AI's gains are shared.* Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-development

- United Nations, *Global Digital Compact* (2024) and *Resolution 79/325* (2025). *The main documents on emerging global AI and digital governance, and on the new bodies designed to include the Global South.* Available at: https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/global-digital-compact

- International Labour Organization, *The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work*, 2021. *A clear overview of conditions in online and platform work, useful for the labour side of the topic.* Available at: https://www.ilo.org/

- Brookings Institution and New America, research on data and AI labour in the Global South, 2025. *Accessible analysis of wages, working conditions and talent flows, with recent country examples.* Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/

- United Nations, *The United Nations Blue Books Series*, and the United Nations Publications website at un.org/publications. *Reference volumes and current UN publications useful for background on development and cooperation.* Available at: https://www.un.org/publications