



UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Racial Issues When
Combating Poverty

GLOBAL CLASSROOMS DC
SPRING 2022 MODEL UN CONFERENCE



INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE: UNHRC



The **UN Human Rights Council** (UNHRC) was founded in 2006 to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms across the globe. Member states are responsible for discussing all human rights concerns. This also includes addressing charges of systematic human rights violations against United Nations member states and providing recommendations. Under the human rights umbrella, the council also addresses issues such as **freedom of assembly**, freedom of religion or belief, women’s rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, **freedom of expression**, and the rights of racial and ethnic **minorities**.¹

The UNHRC comprises of 47 member states, elected through the General Assembly, with decision-making capabilities. Collectively, they are known as the Human Rights Council. This intergovernmental agency was created under resolution 60/251 in 2006.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Eradicating Poverty

As the first Sustainable Development Goal, **poverty eradication** is at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Agenda. The UN has prioritized poverty eradication since the General Assembly implemented the first Decade for the Eradication of Poverty in 1997. This served as a blueprint for decade-long efforts that focused on national, regional, and international poverty eradication and has informed action in second and third decade iterations.

Despite the UN’s ongoing commitment, progress on reducing poverty world-wide has been uneven across regions and racial identities. Some regions have seen reductions in poverty, while for many others, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, poverty has been on the rise.²

Most recent estimates in 2015 indicate that roughly 10% of the world’s population, or 734 million people, live below the **International Poverty Line (IPL)** established by the UN.³ The IPL is derived from the national poverty line adopted by the world’s poorest countries. Therefore, the UN’s measurement of global poverty reflects the number of people living in **extreme poverty**.⁴

In 2020, prior to the COVID pandemic, global poverty rates were reduced by more than half since 2000. Before the pandemic, it was predicted that the percentage of the world population living in poverty would reduce to 6% by 2030, still falling short of SDG #1’s target. However,

¹ “HRC Home.” OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Home.aspx>.

² “The number of poor people continues to rise...” World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/number-poor-people-continues-rise-sub-saharan-africa-despite-slow-decline-poverty-rate>.

³ “Ending Poverty” United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty>.

⁴ “Global poverty in an unequal world...” Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/higher-poverty-global-line>.

disruptions caused by COVID have caused poverty rates to rise for the first time in 20 years.⁵ The pandemic is likely to increase global poverty rates by as much as 8%.⁶ Regional disparities in poverty rates are also further widening as a result of the pandemic.⁷

One of the primary challenges to eradicate poverty eradication is establishing a consistent measurement for global poverty. For example, the poverty line in the US is defined as living on less than 21.70 USD per day in comparison to Brazil’s national poverty line, which is defined at less than 3.05 USD per day.⁸

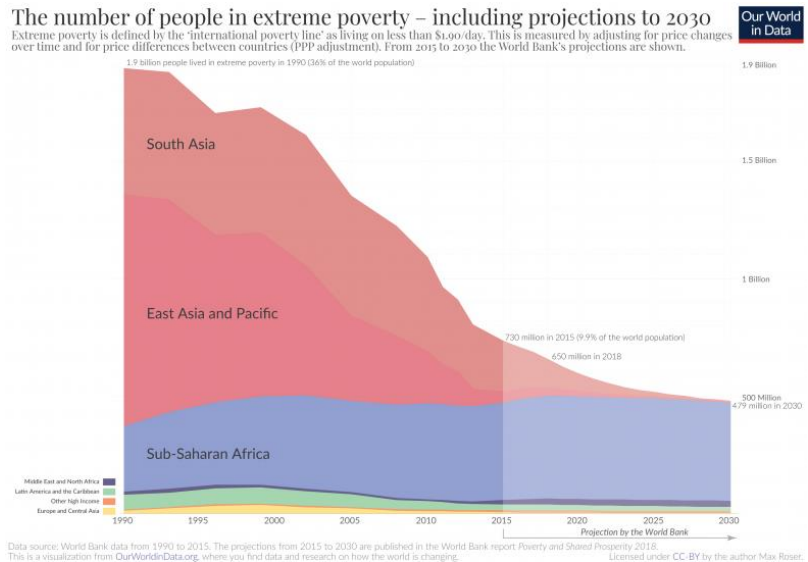
To complicate matters further, international institutions also differ in how they choose to measure poverty. The

European Union and the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and**

Development (OECD) use **relative poverty lines**, defining poverty as 50% or 60% of **national median incomes**, whereas the UN and the **World Bank** have used an **absolute poverty line** - the IPL, which is set at 1.90 USD income per person per day, in 2011 PPP dollars.⁹ PPP dollars capture the ratio of prices in national currencies of the same goods and services in different countries, eliminating the difference in price levels between countries.¹⁰

Racism

Racism is the belief that one group of people is superior to others due to skin color, national origin, place of origin, or facial features, among many others. Racist beliefs can lead to **prejudice, discrimination**, and hostility towards certain groups.¹¹ To understand how race intersects with global poverty and other development goals, the UN General Assembly created a framework in 2003 for understanding **racism** with the ratification of the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**. The landmark resolution defines racial discrimination as:



⁵ “Poverty” The World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>.

⁶ “Ending Poverty” United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty>.

⁷ “The Pandemic Stalls Growth...” Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/03/18/the-pandemic-stalls-growth-in-the-global-middle-class-pushes-poverty-up-sharply/>.

⁸ “National poverty lines vs. GDP per capita” Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/national-poverty-lines-vs-gdp-per-capita>.

⁹ “A richer array of international poverty lines” World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/richer-array-international-poverty-lines>.

¹⁰ “Purchasing Power Parities” OECD Data. <https://data.oecd.org/conversion/purchasing-power-parities-ppp.htm>.

¹¹ “Racism facts for kids.” Kiddle. <https://kids.kiddle.co/Racism>.



“any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”¹²

Notably, the convention recognizes the different ways racism can take place. As the international community works to end racial discrimination through UN conventions or national anti-discrimination rulings around the world, racism has become more latent -- it may not be as explicit in written policies, but in how policies are implemented and enforced. **Systemic and structural inequalities** have long deprived people of racial minorities equal fundamental freedoms. As a result of these policies, people of color often experience high rates of poverty due to discrimination in employment, access to housing, and the right to quality education and professional training.

In this committee, delegates will need to address the economic disadvantages faced by communities of color. To do so, countries will need to focus on how racial discrimination affects the UN’s economic and social pursuits relating to poverty eradication by drawing on the history of the issue, while also bringing new ideas to the conversation.

HISTORY OF IMPERIALISM

Race is not always the first factor that comes to mind when people think of a country’s poverty rate. Prominent research argues that factors like geography, political structures, and elected leaders play the largest role in determining a country’s economic prosperity.

The **imperial** histories of developing countries are often overlooked, yet they can be an important reason for their lagging economic growth.¹³ Colonial history is deeply rooted in racism and is characterized by seeing colonized peoples, often people of color, as inferior. The colonial narrative maintains harmful ideas such as the “**white man’s burden**”, which argues that white colonizers or Christian missionaries have a moral duty to “civilize” the colonized peoples.¹⁴ This forces colonized people to conform to western ideals and culture while abandoning their own, emphasizing the belief that one race is superior to another.

Between the 16th and 18th century, **mercantilism** was a popular economic philosophy in the British, Spanish, and Dutch **colonies**. The theory held the belief that the true measure of a nation’s success was through its amount of wealth. As a result, empires enforced trade restrictions on their colonies and dried out many of the colonies’ resources. The Triangular Trade between the Americas and West Africa is the most prominent example of this practice. Colonies

¹² “Dimensions of Racism” OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/dimensionsracismen.pdf>.

¹³ “The economic impact of colonialism” VOXEU. <https://voxeu.org/article/economic-impact-colonialism>.

¹⁴ “White Man’s Burden” Fordham University <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/kipling.asp>.

in the Americas, Indochina, Latin America, and Africa would produce and ship raw materials, as well as slaves in the case of Africa, to supply their **parent nation**, where those same resources were used to produce finished goods. These finished goods were then traded throughout the parent country, spurring economic development while the colonies were stripped of their resources.¹⁵



Image via Fortune

Decades of Western domination led to dependency and economic underdevelopment as colonies witnessed their resources rapidly deplete and go abroad. The social and economic disparities instituted by European colonial projects magnified over time into structural and institutional differences. Colonialism ultimately shaped **economic and political institutions** around the world.¹⁶

Not only were many colonized countries left weak by the effects of colonization and lacked the capacity to build strong institutions, but they

were forced to set up their institutions according to Western models. These models often did not fit with the local context or their traditional way of organizing their society. As a result, these institutions failed to function how they are meant to and these “improvements” by colonizers ended up hurting the society more than helping it.

For example, Spanish colonizers instituted a system of forced labor for indigenous peoples based on racial hierarchies in Peru to mine silver in the 1570s. It was not until the 1820s, when Peru became independent, that this system was explicitly abolished.¹⁷ Yet, the tradition of **coerced labor** in Peru continues today in different forms. Over 200,000 people in Peru are estimated to be trapped in modern day slavery through work in factories, warehouses, the logging and fishing industry, and gold mines.¹⁸ This system continues to disproportionately affect and discriminate



Image via Hope for Justice

¹⁵ “Transatlantic Slave Trade Causes and Effects” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Transatlantic-Slave-Trade-Causes-and-Effects>.

¹⁶ “Transatlantic Slave Trade Causes and Effects” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Transatlantic-Slave-Trade-Causes-and-Effects>.

¹⁷ “The economic impact of colonialism” VOXEU. <https://voxeu.org/article/economic-impact-colonialism>.

¹⁸ “Peru cracks down on slavery...” Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-peru-humantrafficking/peru-cracks-down-on-slavery-after-deadly-factory-fire-exposes-forced-labor-idUSKBN1AA2FF>.



against indigenous people, reinforcing the hierarchies that Spanish colonizers established in the 16th century.¹⁹

THE NEW IMPERIALISM: SANCTIONS AND EMBARGOES

Poverty is both a cause and a product of human rights violations. In 2021, there were 490 million people in Africa living in poverty, which is around 40% of the entire continent's population. The continent of Africa has a long history with imperialism and the poverty we see today is largely a result of this. The highest concentration of poverty is in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically within Nigeria, DRC, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar.²⁰

While the legacies of colonialism are still felt today, there are also new avenues for Western nations to assert political and economic control. This is known as “new imperialism” and often takes place in the form of **sanctions** and **embargoes**. Sanctions and embargoes are economic tools that discourage the spread of dangerous weapons, improve human rights, end terrorism, promote market access, protect the environment, and replace governments.²¹ While these actions seemingly come with good intentions, they also have harmful consequences for affected nations.

Sanctions and embargoes often promote the domination of Western liberal capitalism by forcing countries to open up their markets, deregulate the economy, and privatize industries. This reinforces the hegemonic position of the West while creating dependence and economic decline in developing countries whose economy and state is not developed in a way that can sustainably use these policies and benefit from them. Capitalism does not benefit developing nations in the way it benefits the US, for example, because this system breeds competition between countries, ultimately increasing the economic success of developed nations at the top of this system while perpetuating poverty in developing nations.²²

¹⁹ “Consolidating and Disseminating Efforts to Combat Forced Labour in Brazil and Peru” ILO. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/projects/WCMS_320415/lang--en/index.htm;

²⁰ “Africa’s (Modern) Slavery Problem” Global Security Review. <https://globalsecurityreview.com/africas-modern-slavery-problem/>.

²¹ “The number of poor people continues to rise...” World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/number-poor-people-continues-rise-sub-saharan-africa-despite-slow-decline-poverty-rate>.

²² “Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing” Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/>.

²² “The Effects of Capitalism on Impoverished Nations” Borgen Magazine. <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/the-effects-of-capitalism/>.



Through sanctions and embargoes, the US often takes advantage of their strong financial system at the expense of economically weaker countries, pushing them deeper into poverty.²³ For example, sanctions against Haiti increased their economic suffering and poverty and triggered an expensive migration of Haitians to the US. More generally, sanctions have the unintended effect of producing coercive, authoritarian regimes through the creation or increase in **scarcity** which allows the government to have better control over the distribution of goods, preventing public access to necessary resources.²⁴

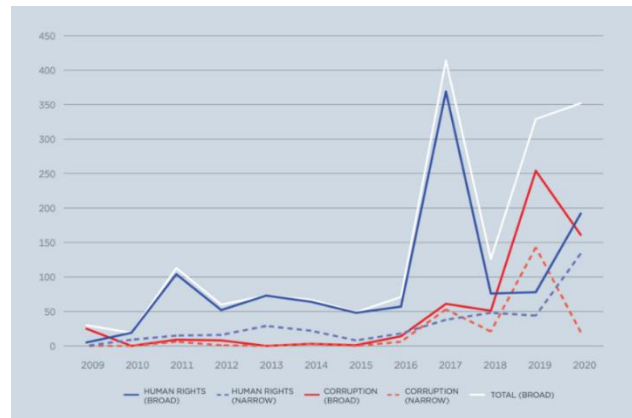


Image via Center for New American Security

The US, especially in recent years, has significantly increased their usage of these restrictions, particularly against Russia, China, Latin America, Iran, and North Korea. These restrictions are imposed for political, economic, and social reasons, such as a desire for **regime** change, spread of the Western liberal economic order, and human rights violations, respectively.

The desire for more universal human rights policies is an especially significant reason for this new brand of imperialism. The **UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted in 1948, is meant to serve as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations."²⁵ Since the declaration is not legally binding, it is hard to enforce. As a result, the US, as well as other developed nations have taken it upon themselves to utilize sanctions as a method of enforcement to decrease human rights abuses, particularly in countries such as Syria, China, Iran, and Venezuela.²⁶

While sanctions strive to improve situations where human rights are, they can often make the citizens worse off. Sanctions that are imposed as a result of widespread issues such as terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and human rights abuses have failed to adequately stop these issues.²⁷ Additionally, these sanctions are often applied unilaterally (done by one country)

²³ "Opinion: America's excessive reliance on sanctions will come back to haunt it" Washington Post.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/americas-excessive-reliance-on-sanctions-will-come-back-to-haunt-it/2020/08/27/e73a9004-e89c-11ea-970a-64c73a1c2392_story.html.

²⁴ "Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing" Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/>.

²⁵ "Human Rights and Economic Sanctions: The New Imperialism" Fordham International Law Journal.

<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1596&context=ilj>.

²⁶ "Sanctions by the Numbers: Spotlight on Human Rights and Corruption" CNAS. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-human-rights>.

²⁷ "Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing" Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/>.

and unevenly making them less effective as it imposes greater costs to the country doing the sanctioning, making them less likely to follow through with the ruling.²⁸

In 2019, the Human Rights Council expressed concern at the recent imposition of unilateral sanctions on Cuba, Venezuela and Iran by the United States, saying the use of economic sanctions for political purposes violates human rights and the norms of international behavior. They explained that such action may precipitate man-made humanitarian catastrophes and is not the way to bring about real change.²⁹ While some sanctions have been proven to be beneficial and many have good intentions, they often cause more harm than good and push countries deeper into poverty, particularly for less developed and historically marginalized countries.

POVERTY AND RACE

Many who live in extreme poverty are also victims of discrimination and inequality on the grounds of race, birth, etc. People in the **Global South** are suffering disproportionately from the effects of poverty and discrimination. Patterns of discrimination and exploitation of minorities have existed for centuries through imperialism in many countries. As a result, they are ingrained in the norms, systems, and laws of societies making them difficult, yet not impossible, to overcome. Since the 1990s, there has been a decline in income inequality *between* countries, but income inequality *within* countries has risen.³⁰ For a clearer image on the connection between poverty and racism, it's helpful to look at racial disparities within countries.

RACIAL DISPARITIES WITHIN COUNTRIES

Racial minorities face inequalities in household wealth, the economy, education, job market, housing, and more. All of which have connections to poverty through reinforcing impoverished conditions while preventing opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty.

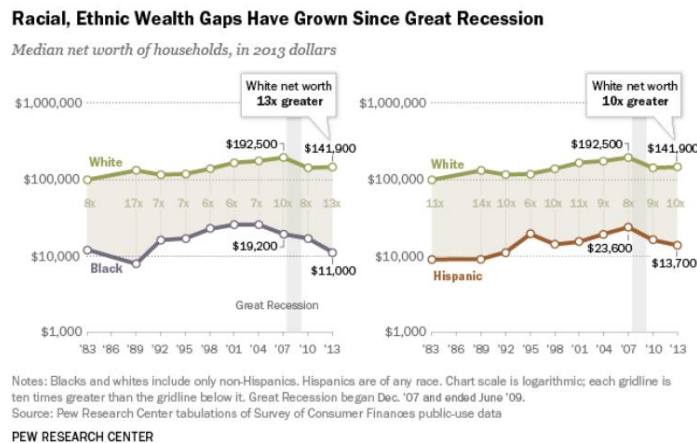


Image via Pew Research Center

Wealth and Economic Disparities
Systematic racism has created race-based gaps in many aspects of the economy, the largest of which can be found when measuring household wealth. As a result of historical patterns, it is difficult for certain racial groups to achieve **economic security**, meaning they have enough money and resources to maintain a good standard

²⁸ "Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing" Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/>.

²⁹ "US sanctions violate human rights..." OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24566>.

³⁰ "Inequality - Bridging the Divide" UN. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide>.



of living now and in the future.³¹ Inequalities between majorities and minority groups along racial lines have only increased in recent decades as the richer get richer and the poorer get poorer.

According to research from Pew Research Center, the economic hardships of the 2008 financial crisis in the United States have only widened the wealth gap between white households and minority groups such as Black and Hispanic households. For example, the median household income difference between white and Black Americans has grown from \$23,800 (1970) to \$33,000 (2018).³² The median wealth gap widens over time as people grow older through intergenerational transmissions of wealth, including inheritances and family support. This trend makes it even more difficult to combat poverty.

Housing Disparities

Many countries have a history of **segregation** of races, such as the United States and South Africa. Segregation is a result of policies that keep different races separate, particularly with the goal of giving one race better resources than the other. Segregation became institutionalized in the United States after the Civil War when Black people were no longer enslaved but were still not given the same opportunities as a result of the **Jim Crow Laws**.

In the housing market, the most evident example of segregation is **redlining**. The U.S. government in the 1930s would sponsor housing programs designed to provide better housing to white, middle-class families, while people of color were pushed into poorly funded urban housing projects.

As a result of redlining policies, marginalized racial groups, such as African Americans, were denied mortgages and their communities lacked public investment to improve their living conditions. Families in these neighborhoods often did not have the ability to simply move out of these neighborhoods because they did not have enough money to do so. These policies prevented them from living in other areas, and so these communities had little opportunity for upward mobility and wealth accumulation through their homes, making it very difficult for families to move out of poverty.³³

³¹ "Racial Economic Inequality" Inequality. <https://inequality.org/facts/racial-inequality/>.

³² "6 facts about economic inequality in the U.S." Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/07/6-facts-about-economic-inequality-in-the-u-s/>.

³³ "A 'Forgotten History' of How the U.S. Government Segregated America" NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>.

As a result, Black people today are disproportionately found in low-income housing areas while White people are found in wealthier areas, often with better access to resources and wealth, as well. Washington DC presents an example of this divide. As the graphic to the right shows, the areas on the left are the wealthier neighborhoods and contain largely white people whereas the neighborhoods on the right are low income and contain a predominantly Black population.

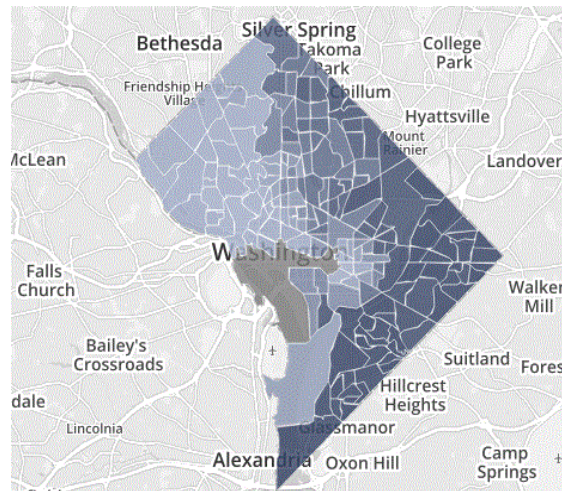


Image via The Washington Post

In South Africa, although **Apartheid** was abolished in 1994, its legacies can still be felt today. Apartheid forced hundreds of thousands of Black South Africans into informal housing far outside of the city where job opportunities were few, there was a lack of infrastructure to meet basic needs such as water and electricity, and homeownership was almost impossible. Meanwhile, the white minority lived in wealthier areas that had access to these resources.



Image via Al Jazeera

In post-Apartheid South Africa, 2 million new homes for Black South Africans were built, but they were developed in the same segregated neighborhoods, reinforcing the inequalities that they faced and the resulting poverty. The legacy of apartheid urban planning has left land divided cleanly on racial lines and has led to 2,700 informal slums, making it difficult for Black South Africans to access government services, transportation, and job opportunities. Black South Africans struggle to accumulate wealth due to their lack of resources and adequate housing.

Meanwhile, the white minority lives off wealth accumulated under apartheid’s policies, insulating them from government economic failures.³⁴

Education and Job Market Disparities

Historically, certain racial groups were excluded from educational institutions or lived in areas that lacked adequate educational opportunities. Redlining has contributed to this by forcing people to live in low-income areas with less access to well-funded sources such as education. Even though educational opportunities have expanded in recent years, legacies of the past still play a role in education today. Around the world, students are denied educational opportunities

³⁴ “Why South African opposition’s policy on racial inequality is out of sync with reality” The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/why-south-african-oppositions-policy-on-racial-inequality-is-out-of-sync-with-reality-146690>.

based on discriminatory beliefs and practices, and sometimes, governments institute these beliefs as policies by separating children into different education systems based on race. Discrimination often leads to dropouts, or lower-school performance and certain racial groups fall behind.³⁵

Discriminatory education policies can lead to further disparities among racial groups in the job market. For example, many people cannot afford to attend college which automatically disqualifies them from numerous higher-paying jobs, forcing them to take lower-paying jobs that fail to bring them out of poverty.



Image via The Guardian

Unfortunately, racial discrimination does not stop in the workplace. Companies with 15 employees or more are obligated to follow equal employment opportunity laws that prohibit employers from discriminating against existing or potential employees based on characteristics of race/color, national origin/ethnicity, religion, age, sex, medical history, etc.³⁶

However, implicit and individual **biases** can get in the way of ensuring that employers are genuinely allowing equal opportunity in the workplace. For example, 33% of the complaints filed to the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** involved workplace discrimination due to race.³⁷ This reveals that despite formal policies against it, racial discrimination can continue. Like the lack of job options, discrimination faced in the workforce by racial minorities also works to keep people in poverty as it prevents them from accessing high-paying career opportunities or promotions.

RACIAL TENSIONS IN CONFLICT-RIDDEN COUNTRIES

More than 40% of the global poor live in economies affected by conflict and violence. This number is expected to rise to 67%.³⁸ Additionally, eight out of 10 of the world's poorest countries are suffering, or have recently suffered, from large scale violent conflict. These wars are major contributors to poverty, underdevelopment, and ill health in these poor countries. Many of these conflicts are due to long-standing racial and ethnic tensions. Poverty and war have a two-way relationship in that poverty often causes war but also war causes poverty.³⁹

For example, many groups of people who fight together perceive themselves as belonging to a common culture (ethnic or religious), and part of the reason that they are fighting may be to

³⁵ "The Education Deficit" Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/09/education-deficit/failures-protect-and-fulfill-right-education-through-global>.

³⁶ "EEO guidelines: Everything you need to know to be an equal opportunity employer" Workable. <https://resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/eo-equal-opportunity-employer>.

³⁷ "Types of Discrimination in the Workplace" The Balance. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/types-of-employment-discrimination-with-examples-2060914>.

³⁸ "Poverty" The World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1>.

³⁹ "Root causes of violent conflict in developing countries" NCBI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1122271/>.

maintain their cultural autonomy. However, people have multiple identities and sometimes even maintain identities that have been “invented” by colonizers for political purposes, as in Africa, for example.

Examples of major conflicts that had racial/ethnic undertones are tensions between the Nazis and Jewish populations in Germany, the **Hutus** and **Tutsis** in Rwanda, and the **Dalits** in India today. The conflict resulting from these tensions makes it exceedingly difficult for people to overcome racial issues and move out of poverty as their state fails to function properly and economic opportunities are limited.



Image via AP Images

Some ways to reduce the likelihood of war and reduce further poverty is to create policies that address unemployment, promote inclusive development, and reduce inequalities between racial and ethnic groups.⁴⁰

RECENT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In recent years, populations across the globe have spurred movements to address systemic inequalities. The **Dalit movement** has been an ongoing fight in India for over a century to bring about justice and equality for Dalits, who are treated poorly in India due to their **caste**.⁴¹ While laws in India have forbidden explicit discrimination against Dalits and the 1947 constitution abolished the practice of **untouchability**, there is still a stigma against them from the caste system’s long history. At the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, Dalit activists demanded that the 2000-year-old caste system be included in the deliberations, but the Indian government fought against this saying that the caste system is an internal matter.

⁴⁰ “Root causes of violent conflict in developing countries” NCBI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1122271/>.

⁴¹ “Dalits: Past, present and future.” Google Books. <https://books.google.com/books?id=fZXgDAAAQBAJ&pg=PT52#v=onepage&q&f=false>.



Image via Velivada

Today, Dalits are discriminated against in their access to schools, political positions, housing, and job opportunities, though the affirmative action-like reservation system has helped to a point. Dalits continue to face violence with an estimated 50 incidents recorded throughout the country each day.⁴² As a result, they are becoming increasingly assertive in their fight for equality but are having trouble making concrete progress due to a lack of strong leadership for the movement and an increasingly repressive government.⁴³ The protests and political parties of Dalits still operate in a caste-based system and have failed up to this point to become a full political movement of deprived classes.⁴⁴

In the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement has been working for several years to fight against the systemic injustices reflected in US institutions and policies and for greater equality for Black Americans. However, it wasn't really until the summer of 2020 and the wrongful death of George Floyd that concrete action started being taken. That summer, Black Lives Matter became a stronger global movement that attracted more followers than ever before. Words finally resulted in actions as state legislatures reallocated policing funds and banned violent practices such as chokeholds.⁴⁵ This movement has also been successful in its ability to get people from varying backgrounds, races, ages, and socioeconomic statuses which has played a significant role in how the Black experience is talked about in America.

CURRENT UN ACTION

The UN has made ending poverty a core part of its mission and has recently concluded the Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017).⁴⁶ Recent economic growth has reduced poverty and improved standards of living during this decade. However, many people, particularly in Africa and least developed countries, still live in poverty, creating a need for the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027).⁴⁷ As part of the Sustainable Development Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals #1 and #10 address ending poverty and reducing inequalities, respectively. However, progress is not where it needs to be. Africa, the continent with the highest poverty rates, is not on track to meet its SDG goal. Currently, roughly

⁴² "Indian Caste System Under Attack: The Dalit Movement" Encyclopedia.com. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/energy-government-and-defense-magazines/indias-caste-system-under-attack-dalit-movement>.

⁴³ "Yet another challenge to the Dalit movement" The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/yet-another-challenge-to-the-dalit-movement/article32072789.ece>.

⁴⁴ "The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today" Economic and Political Weekly.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261889967_The_Political_and_the_Social_in_the_Dalit_Movement_Today.

⁴⁵ "Research: Why Was Black Lives Matter So Successful" University of Denver. <https://www.du.edu/news/research-why-was-black-lives-matter-so-successful>.

⁴⁶ "A/RES/72/233" United Nations General Assembly. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/233>.

⁴⁷ "Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty 2018-2027" UN DESA.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/third.html>.

2.6 people escape poverty every minute. To reach the target, there needs to be a rate of 1.6 people every *second*.⁴⁸

The UN Charter operates on principles of dignity and equality and has made it clear that it will promote human rights and freedoms for all without distinction to race. As a result, in 1965 all Member States pledged to take joint and separate action to achieve this through the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**. The resolution prohibits any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin.⁴⁹



Image via UN Office of Legal Affairs

The **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** is a body of 18 independent human rights experts that monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discriminations. All involved parties are required to submit regular reports to the Committee and in response, the Committee will share their concerns and recommendations.⁵⁰

In addition to the ongoing work of CERD, the **Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council** also monitors this topic through working groups. Over the years,

the UN has also held multiple conferences, such as the “World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance” or the **Durban Conference** in 2001. This conference established that racism, along with other forms of discrimination, worsens poverty. The Conference developed the **Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** to encourage state policies that eradicate poverty through a racial justice lens and work to close the wealth gap between those facing racism and those who are not.⁵¹ Additionally, a similar conference was held in Brazil in 2006 with the same goal.⁵²

Multiple publications and statements have been made on the connection between poverty and racism. Robert Cuellar, Director of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, explains that poverty is inextricably linked to human rights, acting as both a cause and effect of human rights. Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Lousie Arbour, states that poverty and

⁴⁸ “African countries continue to have the highest poverty rates in the world” Development Aid. <https://www.developmentaid.org/#!/news-stream/post/84943/highest-poverty-rates-in-africa>.

⁴⁹ “Dimensions of Racism” OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/dimensionsracismen.pdf>.

⁵⁰ “Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cerd/pages/cerdindex.aspx>.

⁵¹ “Durban Review Conference - Geneva 2009.” UN. https://www.un.org/en/durbanreview2009/pdf/InfoNote_06_Poverty_and_Racism_En.pdf.

⁵² “Poverty and Human Rights: Reflections on Racism and Discrimination” UN Chronicle. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/poverty-and-human-rights-reflections-racism-and-discrimination>.



discrimination create a reoccurring source of the deprivation of rights.⁵³ In a report to the UN General Assembly in November 2013 UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere, shared that “the issues of poverty and racism are inextricably linked.”⁵⁴

More recently, in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death, who was killed in the United States as a result of police brutality, the **UN Human Rights Committee** (UNHRC) held an urgent debate on the issue of “racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality, and violence against peaceful protests.”⁵⁵ The debate resulted in **Resolution 43/1**, requesting the **High Commissioner of Human Rights** to present a report on the human rights violations faced by Africans and people of African descent.

In her report, the High Commissioner calls for states to reckon with the past and account for the impact of their actions on the lives of people of African descent by apologizing to people of African descent, teaching about racism, and giving various forms of **reparations**, among other responses⁵⁶ The resolution also calls for an evaluation of government responses towards anti-racism peaceful protests, particularly with regards to the use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders, and journalists.⁵⁷

Although the UN has worked towards achieving racial justice and poverty alleviation globally, there are still many gaps. For example, member states of the UN do not all equally enforce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights abuses across the world, including those with racist backings, persist without international condemnation.

Furthermore, the UN has internal issues it needs to confront. Despite being an organization working towards the furthering of human rights and equality, racism is common within the organization. A survey conducted by the United Nations People of African Descent (UN-PAD), 52% of 2,857 respondents stated that they had experienced some form of racism at the UN.⁵⁸ Therefore, despite public discussion, declarations, and resolutions on race and poverty, it’s unclear how much actual progress has occurred.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does racism affect the pursuit of eradicating poverty worldwide?
- What is an example of an economic policy that discriminates against a particular race in your country?

⁵³ “Poverty and Human Rights: Reflections on Racism and Discrimination” UN Chronicle. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/poverty-and-human-rights-reflections-racism-and-discrimination>.

⁵⁴ “Poverty and racism inextricably linked, says UN expert” Social Watch. <https://www.socialwatch.org/node/16324>.

⁵⁵ “Agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality.” OHCHR.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/Pages/Implementation-HRC-Resolution-43-1.aspx>.

⁵⁶ “UN rights chief: Reparations needed for people facing racism.” AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-death-of-george-floyd-racial-injustice-race-and-ethnicity-government-and-politics-8fa368dced6c7e34af4e4ecc3fdbccb4>.

⁵⁷ “Human Rights Council adopts 14 resolutions, including on excessive use of force by law enforcement officers against Africans and people of African descent.” OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25981&LangID=E>.

⁵⁸ “Racism at the UN: Internal audit reveals deep-rooted problems.” The Africa Report. <https://www.theafricareport.com/62757/racism-at-the-un-internal-audit-reveals-deep-rooted-problems/>.



- How might a history of imperialism affect the economic development of a colonized nation?
- What racial economic inequalities exist in your country? What's the reason for this? Do certain groups receive better treatment than others?
- Are there other types of inequalities you notice in your country that exist along race lines?
- How can your country work with other countries to reduce these racial disparities?



GLOSSARY

Apartheid: policies of legal segregation and discrimination of Black South Africans throughout society.

Absolute Poverty Line: based on when a person or household does not have the minimum amount of income needed to meet the minimum living requirements needed over an extended period; does not consider real-world variability.

Biases: feelings or prejudices for or against someone or something

Caste: hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of social status.

Colonies: countries under the full or partial political control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD): the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by its State parties.

Dalit movement: a struggle that tries to counterattack the sociocultural hegemony of the upper castes in India.

Dalits: a name for people in the lowest caste in India, previously characterized as "untouchables"

Discrimination: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.

Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: adopted by the Durban Conference in 2001, includes measures of prevention, education, and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance at the national, regional, and international levels.

Durban Conference: also known as the 2009 United Nations World Conference Against Racism; produced the most authoritative and comprehensive programme for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Economic institutions: responsible for organizing the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services; examples include competitive markets, banking systems, property rights, etc.

Economic Security: the condition of having stable income or other resources to support a standard of living now and in the foreseeable future.

Embargos: an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: a federal agency that was established via the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to administer and enforce civil rights laws against workplace discrimination.

European Union: a political and economic union of 27 member states that are in Europe.

Extreme Poverty: defined by the World Bank as including people living under the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day.

Freedom of Assembly: the individual right or ability of people to come together and collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend their collective or shared ideas.

Freedom of Expression: freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction.

Global South: refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, particularly referring to the low-income countries.

Hutus: Bantu-speaking people of Rwanda and Burundi. Comprised a vast majority of the population but were traditionally subject to the Tutsis.

Imperial: related to empire, control of a particular area

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: UN convention that commits its members to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among all races.



International Poverty Line: the universal standard for measuring global poverty, currently set at \$1.90 a day.

Jim Crow Laws: state or local laws that enforced or legalized racial segregation in the United States.

Minorities: refers to a group of people whose practices, race, religion, ethnicity, or other characteristics are fewer in numbers than the main groups of those classifications.

Mercantilism: belief in the benefits of profitable trading.

National Median Income: the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): an intergovernmental economic organisation with 38 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

Parent nation: the colonizing country.

Prejudice: an assumption or an opinion about someone simply based on that person's membership in a particular group.

Political institutions: the bodies—parties, legislatures, and heads of state—that make up a majority of countries today

Redlining: the systematic denial of various services to residents of specific, often racially associated, neighborhoods or communities, either explicitly or through the selective raising of prices.

Regime: another word for government.

Reparations: the making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.

Resolution 43/1: four-point agenda to end systemic racism and human rights violations by law enforcement against Africans and people of African descent.

Relative poverty lines: based on a level of poverty that changes based on context.

Sanctions: an action that is taken or an order that is given to force a country to obey international laws through a threatened penalty.

Scarcity: state of being in short supply of necessary resources.

Segregation: the enforced separation of different racial groups in a country, community, or establishment.

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council: composed of independent human rights experts mandated to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.

Structural/systematic Inequalities: a system where prevailing social institutions offer an unfair or prejudicial distinction between different segments of the population in a specific society

Tutsi: Tutsi are a Bantu-speaking ethnic group in Rwanda and Burundi. Historically they are from the warrior class and led a campaign of violence against the Hutus in 1994.

UN High Commissioner of Human Rights: a department of the UN that ensures universal enjoyment of all human rights

UN Human Rights Committee: the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by its State parties

UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR): a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: a common standard of achievements for human rights for all peoples and all nations

Untouchability: the practice of ostracizing a group of people regarded as 'untouchables' as ascribed in Hindu literature

White Man's Burden: the task that white colonizers believed they had to impose their civilization on the Black inhabitants of their colonies.

World Bank: a UN institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of low- and middle-income countries to pursue development projects.





EXTRA RESOURCES

In our Extra Resources section, we provide resources for students to use in their research for the Spring Conference. Students are responsible for researching their position for their assigned countries, and these resources help point them in the right direction.

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination:

In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this General Assembly Resolution was signed and ratified in 1965 and went into effect in 1969.

Read it here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD):

This is a group of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (shown above) by its State parties. You can look at the members of the committee, when elections take place, annual reports, and the work of the committee.

Read more here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cerd/pages/cerdindex.aspx>

World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, also known as the Durban Conference

This conference was held in 2001 in South Africa and was inspired by the struggle of South Africans against the institutionalized system of Apartheid. The conferences create the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to encourage countries to eradicate poverty while keeping in mind its connection with racial justice issues.

Read more here: <https://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>

HRC Resolution 43/1

This resolution was adopted in June 2020 following the urgent debate that resulted from the death of George Floyd in the United States. OHCHR released the High Commissioner's report on racial justice and equality in June 2021. The report consists of a 4-point agenda "to end systemic racism and human rights violations by law enforcement against Africans and people of African descent."

Read the report here: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/47/53>

Read the resolution here: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/43/1>



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established 17 goals which are an urgent call for action by all countries. Particularly important for discussed racial issues when addressing poverty are SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Read more here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

People of African Descent & the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This is a briefing that provides recommendations on how the SDGs and the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) present opportunities for concrete action to advance the human rights of this group of people. It discusses the roots causes of inequality such as structural racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia and the importance of the SDGs in focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable.

Read it here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/RegionalMeetingEurope/AdeOlaiyaENARBriefing.docx>

More info on the International Decade for People of African Descent:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>

CERD's role in supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is committed to creating a connection with the implementation of the Convention and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as it believed that the relationship between eradicating poverty and eliminating racial discrimination is important. A specific focus is put on SDGs 1, 2, 3, and 5.

Read it here:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14579OHCHR_Comm_on_the_Elimination_of_Racial_Discrimination.pdf

The World Bank: Understanding Poverty

The World Bank provides access to important global development data including poverty and its relationship to ethnicity, inequality, and poverty.

Explore more here: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding-poverty>

Pew Research Center: On Views of Race and Inequality



This article discusses race and inequality in the United States to show that Black People and White People do not have access to the same opportunities. This source provides extensive research on this topic and related ones that may be helpful.

Read it here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/06/27/on-views-of-race-and-inequality-blacks-and-whites-are-worlds-apart/>

WORLD Policy Analysis Center

This website provides access to global research, data, and maps on social policies around the world. Information can be found on equal rights, discrimination, and poverty.

Explore here: <https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/>

Relief Web: Global Multidimensional Poverty

This report reveals that disparities in multidimensional poverty among ethnic groups are consistently high across many countries, showing a relationship between poverty and racial issues. This report discusses the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which was produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative in order to measure poverty by examining many types of deprivations.

Read the report here: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-multidimensional-poverty-index-2021-unmasking-disparities-ethnicity-caste-and>

Video by the UNDP here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_LxzxPkUZY&t=4s



GLOBAL CLASSROOMS DC POSITION PAPER OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a short document that outlines a country's opinion on an issue. The paper includes a short summary of what the issue or problem is, explains why the country is interested in the issue, and communicates the country's stance on what should be done to address the issue. A position paper is written as if you were the actual representative of the country stating its position. Your personal opinions on the issue should not be included. A position paper is not a summary of your country's GDP, government, economy, languages, etc. unless directly relevant to the issue. Only one position paper is written per country, per grade school committee; if there are 2 or 3 delegates representing the same country on a committee, they should write the paper together.

Why write a Position Paper?

Writing a position paper will help you organize why an issue matters to your country and what your country wants done on the issue. The first thing you will likely do in committee is present an opening speech about your country's position. You should be able to pull portions of a well written position paper into an introductory speech on your country's perspective. Also, your delegation is not eligible to win best / outstanding delegation without the submission of a position paper. There are separate awards given for best position paper.

How to Write a Position Paper

- (1) Research the Issue. The questions you want to answer are:
 1. How does this issue affect your country?
 2. How does this issue affect your country's neighbors or allies?
 3. Is this a global problem that impacts everyone?
 4. What would your country like to see done on this issue?
 5. Are there countries or groups of people who will be particularly sensitive to addressing this issue?
 6. Are there any conventions or resolutions on the topics that your country has signed or ratified?
 7. What are UN actions on the issue? Has your country supported or opposed these actions?
 8. Keep in Mind: What a country says, and what it actually believes should be done may be different. Also, some countries may believe that no action should be taken on an issue. They may disagree with how others feel or may not want international involvement. It is okay if your position is that the international community should do nothing, but you will need to explain why.
- (2) Brainstorm Specific Actions. Come up with 3-4 specific things that can be done to reach the outcome your country desires. For example: "The United States believes we should send a peacekeeping mission to monitor human rights abuses in Syria and encourage talks between both sides." You will present these ideas in committee as possible solutions to the problem and attempt to pass a resolution which includes these actions.



- (3) Outline Your Paper. Make an outline of what points you want to cover in your paper and the order in which you would like to address them. Remember a good paper should briefly explain the problem, explain why your country cares about the issue, and inform others what your country should like to see done. If you know other countries favor a solution that you will disagree with, make sure to include why your country disagrees.
- (4) Write your Paper. Position papers should be no more than one page long and be written from the perspective of the country you are representing. Rather than being a report on the topic, a position paper should explain what your country wants to see done to address the issue. Start by giving a brief summary of the issue and how it impacts your country. Then explain the specific actions you would like to see taken. Close by summarizing your country’s overall position. Proper grammar and spelling are a must!

Award Criteria and Eligibility

- One position paper award will be given out per committee.
- The ideal position paper will have a clearly defined and summarized topic with your country’s position clearly outlined. Points are also awarded for organization, style and correct grammar.
- GCDC Staff will be fact checking position papers, so be sure to include the most up to date information and a works cited (or list of all the sources you use).
 - Proper source citation: if an idea or quote came from another source, you must provide a footnote / citation.
- Papers will be disqualified if the conference staff has discovered that students did not write their own papers or that content has been plagiarized.
- Make sure your position paper must have the required header below! Do not create any additional title pages - points will be deducted for improper format.
- Formatting Requirements: 500 words minimum, 1,500 words maximum. Times New Roman font, 12-point size
- All position papers must be sent to gcdc@unanca.org by **March 18, 2022 at 11:59 PM EST**.

REQUIRED POSITION PAPER HEADER

Committee:	<i>Examples:</i>	UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
Topic:		Climate Change
Country:		The United States of America
Delegate Name(s) and Grades:		Bob Smith and Jane Doe (gr. 7)
School (Teacher/Coach):		Madison High School (Mr. Jones)

The United States of America believes ...