

8th Annual Conference
13th-15th February

GA1

BACKGROUND GUIDE



Wesgreen International School
Model United Nations

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WELCOME NOTE

Dear delegates,

The General Assembly The First (GA1) chairs Maryam Jandali, Youssef Aboualy, Amr Mohamed are delighted to extend a warm welcome to all attendees of WESMUN 2025, particularly the delegates who are members of the GA1 committee. The GA1 Chairs would be happy to extend an invitation to eager delegates and provide them the opportunity to speak on behalf of their nations while addressing and arguing about world issues. We hope that you will have a better understanding of the GA1 committee and be motivated to participate in committee sessions by attending our engaging committee meetings.

The Committee of the General Assembly the first focuses on important issues like disarmament, global challenges, and peace risks that impact everyone around the world. Its main goal is to find solutions to problems affecting international security. This committee looks at all matters related to disarmament and international security that fall under the UN Charter or relate to the responsibilities of other UN bodies. It also sets general guidelines for working together to maintain global peace and security, as well as for regulating disarmament and armament. Additionally, it promotes cooperative agreements and initiatives to help stabilize regions by reducing the levels of armament.

The General Assembly The first Committee collaborates closely with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament based in Geneva. It's the only Main Committee of the General Assembly that has the authority to create verbatim recordings of its discussions.

The GA1 committee chairs are once again thrilled to welcome the delegates, serve as the committee's chair, and hope that each delegate will participate in the lively debates that will occur during committee meetings. Please use the following email address to communicate any concerns you may have with the GA1 chairs,
(ga1.wesmun2025@gmail.com)

Your sincerely,
Chairs of GA1

TOPIC 1:

Enhancing Global Response Mechanisms to Prevent Genocides

Introduction:

The need to prevent genocide and punish those responsible has been of concern to the international community since the end of the Second World War, during which more than 6 million people were systematically murdered by the Nazi regime for reasons of their ethnicity, sexuality or other characteristics.

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (known as the “Genocide Convention”) defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group (The Convention has been ratified by 153 States):

- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group the conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

International cooperation to prevent mass atrocities and genocide is crucial. When multiple countries work together, they can better influence key actors and prevent violence in high-risk areas. This teamwork also makes preventive actions more legitimate, especially if they challenge a country's sovereignty.

In today’s environment of reduced spending and foreign policy focus, collective efforts help share the costs and responsibilities, which can make it easier to maintain public support for these efforts.

Despite the clear benefits of international cooperation to prevent mass violence, it remains difficult to achieve. While there are strong global condemnations of crimes like genocide, these have not led to effective systems to prevent them. The United Nations (UN) illustrates this challenge. While its large membership gives it legitimacy to promote global norms against violence, it can be slow to act when urgent action is needed—especially when it conflicts with the interests of member governments, many of which are the perpetrators of such crimes. In the UN Security Council, the veto power of the five permanent members (P-5) often leads to disagreements about interference in a country's internal affairs, making decisive action difficult in cases of mass atrocities.

Similar challenges exist in other UN forums, where groups of countries work against more proactive members to protect sovereignty or counter perceived dominance by stronger states. Additionally, the UN Secretariat has limited resources for atrocity prevention and tends to be cautious, often deferring to member states.

Analysis

Genocide often occurs in societies in which different national, racial, ethnic or religious groups become locked in identity-related conflicts. However, it is not the differences in identity per se that generate conflict, but rather the gross inequalities associated with those differences, in terms of access to power and resources, social services, development opportunities and the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. Given that no country is perfectly homogeneous, genocide is a truly global challenge. Genocide may occur in times of peace, where groups are intentionally subject to long term policies affecting their ability to exist as an identity group as well as in the context of both intrastate and inter-state conflict.

If the root causes of genocide revolve around inequalities between identity-groups, preventing genocide begins with ensuring that all groups within society enjoy the rights and dignity of belonging as equal citizens. Early prevention therefore becomes a challenge of good governance and equitable management of diversity. That means eliminating gross political and economic inequalities, and promoting a common sense of belonging on equal footing.

As stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit, the duty to prevent and halt genocide and mass atrocities lies first and foremost with the State. However, the international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility, and to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the UN Charter.

The Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has developed an Analysis Framework which it uses to determine whether there may be a risk of genocide in a given situation. The Office encourages other institutions and organizations to adopt this framework in their analysis of the risk of genocide. The following eight factors cumulatively increase the risk of genocide:

- §Tense inter-group relations, including a record of discrimination and/or other human rights violations committed against a group;
- §Weak institutional capacity to prevent genocide, such as the lack of an independent judiciary, ineffective national human rights institutions, the absence of international actors capable of protecting vulnerable groups, a lack of impartial security forces and media;
- §The presence of illegal arms and armed elements;
- §Underlying political, economic, military or other motivation to target a group;
- §Circumstances that facilitate perpetration of genocide, such as a sudden or gradual strengthening of the military or security apparatus;
- §Acts that could be elements of genocide, such as such as killings, abduction and disappearances, torture, rape and sexual violence, ‘ethnic cleansing’ or pogroms or the deliberate deprivation of food;
- §Evidence of the ‘intent to destroy in whole or in part’;
- §Triggering factors, such as elections

Genocide is not something that happens overnight or without warning. Genocide requires organization and constitutes in fact a deliberate strategy and one that has been mostly carried out by governments or groups controlling the state apparatus. Understanding the way genocide occurs and learning to recognize signs that could lead to genocide are important in making sure that such horrors do not happen again. On 7 April 2004, the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan outlined a five-point action plan for preventing genocide:

1. Prevent armed conflict, which usually provides the context for genocide;
2. Protect civilians in armed conflict, including through UN peacekeepers;
3. End impunity through judicial action in national and international courts;
4. Gather information and set up an early-warning system; and
5. Take swift and decisive action, including military action.

History:

In 1994, as the international community watched, more than 800,000 Rwandans, mostly ethnic Tutsi, were massacred by Hutu militia and government forces over a period of just 100 days. The killings began the day after a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down as it prepared to land in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The presidents were returning from peace talks aimed at shoring up a fragile peace agreement and ending the conflict between the largely ethnic Hutu-dominated government and the largely Tutsi rebel army. The crash re-ignited the war. Retreating government forces joined ethnic Hutu militia in inciting civilians to kill ethnic Tutsis.

They alleged that civilians were helping the Tutsi rebels and used this to justify the mass targeting of innocent peoples. A small peacekeeping force which had been sent by the United Nations to monitor the peace accord was not authorized to intervene. A warning that genocide was planned was not acted upon.

Today, the effects of the genocide in Rwanda are still felt in many different ways both inside the country and in neighboring states, including in the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where large areas of South Kivu province are still controlled by Hutu militia from Rwanda and their local allies. Alongside other fighters in the Congo war, they continue to commit serious human rights violations, including abductions, killings and rape. Sexual violence, particularly against women and children, is widespread.

In April 1992, Serbia set out to “ethnically cleanse” Bosnian territory by systematically removing all Bosnian Muslims, known as Bosniaks. Serbia, together with ethnic Bosnian Serbs, attacked Bosniaks with former Yugoslavian military equipment and surrounded Sarajevo, the capital city. Many Bosniaks were driven into concentration camps, where women and girls were systematically gang-raped and other civilians were tortured, starved and murdered.

In 1993, the United Nations (UN) Security Council declared that Sarajevo, Goradze, Srebrenica and other Muslim enclaves were to be safe areas, protected by a contingent of UN peacekeepers. But in July 1995, Serbs committed the largest massacre in Europe since World War II in one such area, Srebrenica. An estimated 23,000 women, children and elderly people were put on buses and driven to Muslim-controlled territory, while 8,000 “battle-age” men were detained and slaughtered. The so-called safe area of Srebrenica fell without a single shot fired by the UN.

The Responsibility to Protect – known as R2P – is an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The concept emerged in response to the failure of the international community to adequately respond to mass atrocities committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The International Committee on Intervention and State Sovereignty developed the concept of R2P during 2001.

However, It is debated that R2P is inherently problematic, due to the fact that it allows states to pick and choose where and when to intervene based on their own self-interest as it's an international norm and not legally binding. As a result of this, states do not intervene for the primary purpose of preventing or halting human suffering, but rather use it as an excuse to intervene in order to achieve a strategic objective, while hiding it under the veil of R2P, a true exemplification of realpolitik within the international system. Therefore, once a state intervenes and achieves their strategic objective within a country, they have no obligation to stay and help rebuild, and thus can leave the country in even worse shape than prior to intervention.

An example of this is when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened in Libya after the UNSC adopted Resolution 1973, with abstentions from, China, Germany, India, Russia, and Brazil- who are part of the R2P- to authorize all measures necessary to protect civilians, including authorizing military action, enforcing an arms embargo, an asset freeze in order to remove Muammar Gaddafi from power and to prevent a potential genocide. However, in achieving their strategic objective, NATO dismantled Libya's state apparatus and left the country in a more vulnerable position than it was under Gaddafi sparking debates about the risks of military intervention under R2P.

On the other hand, Syria has been a major failure in the application of R2P. Despite killings of 500,000 innocent civilians After eight years of crisis and 11 vetoes in UNSC, the world community has so far failed to not only find a peaceful solution to end the conflict but also to protect the civil population of Syria from mass atrocities. Rather than finding a solution to this crisis, former Cold-War rivals; United States and Post-Soviet Russia, have made Syria their “power-projection ground”; At one side, the government of the Syrian president Bashar Al Assad backed by Russia has been accused for dropping barrel bombs on the rebel held areas and using chemical weapons against innocent civilians. On the other hand, United States and allies are being accused for backing Anti-Assad forces in violation to the sovereignty principle of UN Charter.

More recently, genocide has not been relegated to the past. Ongoing atrocities in Myanmar, where the Rohingya Muslim population has faced mass killings, forced displacement, and other crimes against humanity, have drawn global condemnation. Similarly, in China, the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, which includes mass detentions in camps, forced labor, and other forms of repression, has been labeled as genocide by some international bodies. In Syria, the brutal civil war has resulted in the targeted killing of civilians, including ethnic and religious minorities, through chemical weapons attacks, sieges, and massacres, constituting clear signs of genocidal acts against certain groups.

These examples highlight that genocide is not merely a tragic chapter of the past but an ongoing crisis in various parts of the world. Despite international laws and conventions designed to prevent such atrocities, including the United Nations' Genocide Convention, the global community continues to struggle with effectively intervening to prevent or halt these genocides. The persistence of such violence underscores the importance of continued efforts toward international cooperation, stronger enforcement of international law, and a commitment to preventing future genocides.

Subtopics:

- Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Genocide Prevention
- Engaging in Post-Conflict Reconciliation and Peacebuilding
- Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Genocides
- Contributions of NGOs in prevention and response.
- Developing Early Detection and Rapid Response Systems

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TOPIC 2:

Combating Illicit Trade and Its Impact on Global Security

INTRODUCTION:

Drug trafficking, arms dealing, illicit wildlife harvesting, and human smuggling are major threats that go beyond the loss of tax revenue, across international borders. This Globalisation allows for movements of goods and services across borders as well as movements of people, which makes it easier for criminal enterprises to operate. Technological developments, notably in e-commerce and the dark web, allow criminals to work with increased sophistication and anonymity, making it more difficult to combat these. Apart from financial loss, the illegal trade also jeopardises public health and safety and ultimately system stability. Counterfeit and undeclared goods are harmful to both the people and the legitimate industry and public awareness campaigns are key to educating consumers on the risks of illicit trade and gaining their support for licit trade.

The full potential of solutions to underlying causes will not be realized until health, education, and economic opportunities are addressed in a way that undermines illicit economies for those reliant on them. By working together comprehensively, we can combat the threat of illicit trade and its effects on global security and economic stability. Rapid globalisation, technological advancements, and innovation in criminal methodologies are intensifying the threat of illegal trade. With globalisation enhancing the flows of goods, services and people across borders, the opportunities for underground trade are numerous.

The increase of e-commerce and the dark web, has allowed more delicate and anonymous comm issues to occur, making it more complex to counter them. Illicit trade poses economic losses, but its implications reach beyond public health, safety, and overall societal stability.

The ISHT is particularly relevant to businesses in sectors where consumer health is at risk, such as the pharmaceutical industry, where the WHO estimates 1 in 10 medical products in low- and middle-income countries is substandard or falsified. Fake electronics and automotive equipment may cause life-threatening accidents, significantly damaging consumer trust and confidence in legitimate markets. To deal with it correctly, international cooperation, strict regulations, and increased public awareness should work.

Legal and law enforcement mechanisms have to be strong enough to prevent him from committing fake activities. Consumer-facing public awareness campaigns are essential to inform consumers about the hazards of illicit trade and to motivate them to support businesses with legitimacy. Such investment must centre on the underlying drivers of illicit trade, including development displacement, economic opportunities, and social programs that ultimately dissuade actors from economically disadvantageous engagement. By adopting a holistic, coordinated response, we can address the challenge of covert trade and its consequences on global security and economic prosperity.

ANALYSIS:

Smuggling poses many challenges to global security. It undermines the rule of law, fuels corruption, and constitutes a major source of revenue for transnational criminal organisations. These types of criminal organisations tend to take part in monetarily beneficial bad practices, like drug trafficking and human trafficking as well as plans-tied criminal activity. Illicit trade is a double-edged sword, as the destabilising effects can provoke a political crisis and an impediment to potential economic growth. Illicit trade is a major driver of funding for terrorism and organised crime. Many terrorist organisations finance their operations on proceeds from illicit trade. As stated by the report of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) ratings, dishonest trades (especially the counterfeit) have turned into a significant wellspring of money for psychological militant gatherings. The illicit trade in antiquities, for example, has been associated with the funding of terrorist groups operating in more recent war zones such as Syria and Iraq.

Similarly, organised crime groups reinvest proceeds from illicit trade to further their operations, corrupt officials and sustain violence and instability. Illicit trade carries its own economic costs as well. An illegal trade that hurts legitimate businesses and distorts markets costs billions in tax revenues to governments. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) says the annual world cost of counterfeiting exceeds \$500 billion.

Unsanctioned; consumers get subpar products, harming their health and safety. The growing intrusion of counterfeit medicines, he said, not only is a public health threat, but undercuts trust in systems that are supposed to protect patients. Illicit trade is not just a money transfer up the chain; its impact on long-term sustainable economic growth is dangerously systemic when dirtiest trade of all is reducing government revenues, discouraging investment and breeding corruption on a grand scale. The illegal trade has negative environmental implications as well. Illegal logging, mining and wildlife trafficking which leads to environmental destruction and loss of biodiversity. The worldwide illegal wildlife trade is worth billions of dollars each year, and contributes to biodiversity loss as one of six drivers of extinction of species. Illegal logging, accounting for up to 30% of the share of timber traded on Earth according to the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), leads to deforestation and habitat destruction. These three environmental crimes threaten ecosystems and contribute to climate change and sabotage conservation efforts. At the same time, a more coordinated response is necessary to tackle illicit trade at scale, including governments, all relevant industries and businesses, and through international platforms and coordination. Organisations like the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) provide outreach to help mitigate the economic and social damages of illicit trade through stronger enforcement and to raise awareness.

While end stages of illicit trade are often crushed, governments become the frontline enforcers. These are some of the things we have to do, such as increasing penalties for offenders, stronger border security and investing in technology to prevent and detect illicit activities, etc. The criminals that the law enforcement agencies must deal with have too many sophisticated ways and hence the need for adequate resources and training for the law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, governments must enforce comprehensive laws that act as a deterrent to illegal trading. Illicit trade is a global problem that needs international coordination.

All of us need to cooperate, governments (including law enforcement), international organisations, international trade and the private sector must share data, coordinate efforts, communicate and join forces if we want to combat illicit and fishing goods. An international cooperation framework exists (led by initiatives like the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime [UNTOC]). Combating illicit trade is a role for the private sector. Supply chain controls and due diligence for customers and vendors as well as working with law enforcement are critical for organizations to support the identification and prevention of flagged illicit activities. This (where PPPs share best practices) is how we do it. One illustrative example of this is the ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), which wants to set the international rules for how intellectual property is enforced against the collusion of government authorities and business.

Public Awareness The public needs to be more aware of the dangers that are inherent in the illicit trade. Educate consumers about the dangers of counterfeit and smuggled goods While this is unlikely to have an immediate effect, awareness campaigns could eventually change consumers' behaviour, reducing demand. There are reports and awareness campaigns on illicit trade run by various organisations such as INTERPOL and OECD to highlight the extent of what this does to the economy.

HISTORY:

Illicit trade has existed since time immemorial, predating the great ancient civilisations. Smuggling and black markets flourished next to legitimate trade as far back as ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Heavy taxation and stringent regulation on spices, textiles, and precious metals led these goods to be routinely smuggled. Piracy and smuggling were common, and especially so in coastal areas where the government was less likely to bother patrolling. As a formal trade alliance in Northern Europe, the Hanseatic League was a powerful economic organisation, and as such, often struggled against the threat of smuggling and piracy that destabilised trade and regional security. The Age of Exploration increased this trade to a greater scale. European colonial powers set vast trade networks across oceans that enabled both legitimate trade and smuggling.

Such satrapies for instance included the ones with the Spanish and the Portuguese empires, which were plagued by contraband trade in precious metals and spices. The development of mercantilism in the 16th and 17th centuries brought with it increased restrictions on trade, which, in turn, spurred smuggling, as traders sought to avoid monopolistic controls and high tariffs. The 18th century brought the rise of expansive smuggling networks. Massive smuggling rings in the American colonies helped the colonial economy evade British laws on trade as well as contributing to Colonial agitation that led up to the American Revolution. The notorious "Triangle Trade" was the trade that dealt with the exchange of slaves, rum, and sugar among Africa, the Caribbean, and North America.

People might recall the opium trade between British India and China in the 19th century and the ensuing Opium Wars. These were the conflicts that tried the fragile backbone of illicit trade on national sovereignty and public health. During the early 20th century, illicit trade was intertwined with major geopolitical events. For instance, you have the Underground Bootlegging Industry of America caused by the prohibition in the early 1900s. And they didn't only smuggle alcohol; they were also involved in illegal activities of gambling and prostitution.

Additionally, the great depression made the black market grow even bigger because people had to feed their families. The Global Context: The Post-World War II Era The Cold War era highlighted the problem of illicit arms trade, as superpowers funded weapons to a proxy group and insurgents across the globe. The illegal drug trade took off, particularly with the spread of narcotics from Latin America. The rise of drug cartels in the 1970s and 1980s, which posed a national security threat, corrupted political systems and upended entire regions. The nature of illicit trade transformed in the 21st century alongside technology. The internet enabled novel forms of illicit commerce, including cybercrime, online drug markets, and the distribution of counterfeit products. Cryptocurrencies designed to facilitate and hide illegal transactions. Modern supply chains, being global, allowed illicit goods to move more quickly and efficiently, making enforcement difficult.

Subtopics:

- The budgetary impact of Institute on government and legitimate businesses
- The role of emerging technology in monitoring and preventing illicit
- The role of illicit trade in funding, organised crime and terrorism
- Overview of existing laws and treaties, adjusting illicit trade
- The role of international organisations (eg. INTERPOL, UN) in combating illicit trade

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