

Vancouver Youth Model United Nations Conference



United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC)

Director – Alessandra Harkness

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Dear Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at the Vancouver Youth Model United Nations 2011. We, your dais staff, have been working diligently over the past few months to ensure that the conference is a huge success.

The UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within the UN made up of 47 States responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights globally. Created by the UN General Assembly in 2006 as the successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UNHRC's main purpose is to address situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. Furthermore, the committee encourages people to realize their rights, and ensures that rights are upheld for all people. A variety of approaches are employed by the UNHRC, which contains an Advisory Committee, a Complaints Procedure, and a Universal Periodic Review which assesses human rights situations in all the 192 member nations of the UN General Assembly.

Due to the economic turmoil, political instability, and environmental destruction facing our world today, we believe that it is vital that human rights be upheld and promoted by a body such as the UNHRC. For VYMUN 2011, the UNHRC will explore the various human rights violations faced by refugees. A refugee is a person who is forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or a natural disaster. In 2010, there were 15.4 million refugees around the world, of which 80% were women and children. Over the course of the weekend, we will specifically focus on three topics: the protection of refugees of the drought in East Africa, the displaced Columbians due to the in-going civil war, and economic refugees in Europe. All of these pressing issues have and are affecting millions of people everyday, worldwide.

We hope to provide delegates with an intellectually enriching experience and further your knowledge of Model United Nations and more specifically, the issues which we will be discussing. Whether this is your first experience with Model United Nations, or your tenth conference, we are confident that you will find the discussions enthralling and riveting. We hope you are looking forward to participating in this rare opportunity to delve into global issues and truly understand the plight of refugees worldwide.

Sincerely,

Your Dais Staff
UNHRC 2011

Topic 1: Refugees Affected by Drought in East Africa

Introduction

A severe drought affecting the entire East Africa region, said to be the “worst in 60 years”, has caused a major food crisis across Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The drought is threatening the lives of over 13.3 million people.

Refugees from Somalia have fled to neighbouring countries of Kenya and Ethiopia, only to find crowded, unsanitary conditions in refugee camps.

The condition of the camps, combined with malnutrition, has led to a large number of deaths. Countries surrounding the Horn of Africa, including Sudan, South Sudan, and parts of Uganda, have also been affected by a food crisis.

Countries in the Horn of Africa



Background

With no rainfall in Kenya and Ethiopia this year, and no rainfall in Somalia for the last two years, crops have failed and there has been a widespread loss of livestock. The head of the United States Agency for International Development stated that climate change has also played a role in the severity of the crisis. The hotter and drier conditions in sub-Saharan Africa have reduced the resiliency of communities.

Current Situation

In July 2011, Antonio Guterres, the head of the UN Refugee Agency, called the drought in Somalia the “worst humanitarian disaster” in the world. It was the first time a famine had been declared by the UN in almost thirty years. Dadaab, Kenya is now considered

the largest refugee camp in the world. The refugee camp was built in 1991 to house a total of 90,000 people, however, there are over 420,000 refugees currently at the camp, with up to 2,000 new refugees arriving per day. The level of malnutrition has been recorded as 50 percent, assisting in the high mortality rate of over 50 deaths per week. Due to the over crowding of the camp, lack of sufficient food supplies, and crime, the Kenyan government has agreed to open a new camp. However, this does not solve the problem within this refugee camp. In August, the UN declared famine in three other

Refugee crisis



regions of southern Somalia, citing worsening conditions and inadequate humanitarian response. The UN has conducted multiple airlifts of supplies in addition to on-the-ground assistance to refugees. However, humanitarian aid has been hindered by a major lack of funding from the international community as well as security issues in the region. The crisis is expected to worsen in the coming months, peaking in August and September. Major assistance will be necessary until at least December 2011. The famine in East Africa will worsen in the coming months, and rains are not expected to come until October.

Children, one of the most vulnerable groups among those affected, are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has airlifted emergency nutrition supplies into the region. Over half a million children in Somalia are malnourished and in urgent need of aid. Southern Somalia is the most affected area, with approximately 80 per cent of all malnourished children living there.

According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), the poor health care system in drought-ridden areas in the Horn of Africa, lack of immunization coverage, lack of clean drinking water, and poor sanitation have left people more vulnerable to diseases. According to the WHO spokesperson in Geneva, Tarik Jasarevic, the health sector was under-funded even though the need to improve emergency health care to sick and malnourished children was imminent. UNICEF and WHO are preparing to work together to launch a vaccination campaign along the Somali-Kenya border and in refugee camps.

Humanitarian agencies have requested \$2.48 Billion (USD) to address the crisis. As of August 1, less than half of that amount has been secured.

Bloc Positions

European Union

The European Union announced that it would provide €5.67 million to help the millions of people affected by the drought. The United Kingdom alone pledged £52.25 million on top of £38 million which it pledged earlier that month.

Canada

On July 23, the Canadian government pledged \$50 million on top of an earlier commitment of \$22 million.

Middle East

Saudi Arabia announced in August that it would donate \$60 million to aid to help those in drought-affected regions. Iran dispatched convoys of humanitarian supplies to areas affected by famine. Bahrain donated \$3 million to the campaign. Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar have also sent supplies.

Questions to Consider

1. What is your country's position on this issue? How has your country contributed to the crisis?
2. What immediate and long-term solutions can be created to address the issues as a result of the drought?
3. If your country is located in close proximity to the region of the crisis, would your country be willing to take in refugees?
4. If your country is directly affected by the crisis, how do you want other countries to help?

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Topic 2: Refugees Displaced by the Colombian Civil War

Introduction

The Colombian Civil War started in the 1964 and is still continuing on today¹. This war is fought between the Colombian government and the guerrillas, the two most known groups being the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The conflict started during a period of fighting called La Violencia, which was stemmed from the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala. Since the start of the conflict, tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions have been displaced. In 1965, the Leftist National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL) were founded and in 1966 the FARC was set up². Each group claims to be fighting for different things. The FARC and similar guerrilla groups all have claimed they are fighting for the rights of the poor and to provide them with social justice. Whereas the government in combating them says it is fighting for peace and stability, to protect its people, and allow for foreign companies to come into Colombia and do business without being attacked (ex. Occidental Petroleum). Another left-wing group, the M-19 was set up in 1971 as well³. These groups have made their money from the immense drug cartels that are in Colombia and since 1978⁴ Colombia and many other countries (namely the USA) have been fighting to stop this illicit drug trade.

Current Situation

Colombia is the worlds largest producer of cocaine and the majority of this cocaine gets sold to western developed nations, specifically the United States of America. The United States in its War on Drugs program has created a segment to combat drugs in Colombia, called Plan Colombia, in which hundreds of millions of dollars a year go toward combating the drug trade and training Colombian government soldiers to do so as well. However there have been issues with this program and many blame the US for human rights violations as well as destroying the livelihoods of many average Colombians. For example the aerial herbicide application, in which chemicals are sprayed over the jungle to kill drug crops, also kills all of the innocent farmers crops and the farmers are exposed to these harmful chemicals that can cause disease and birth defects. This again has caused many people to be uprooted from there homes.



¹ BBC news- Colombia timeline <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1212827.stm>

² BBC news- Colombia timeline <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1212827.stm>

³ BBC news- Colombia timeline <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1212827.stm>

⁴ BBC news- Colombia timeline <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1212827.stm>- Year President Turbay began to fight against the traffickers.

Most of the money the US gives (78.12% in 2000⁵) goes to the Colombian military, while the other money from places such as Japan, Canada, Latin America and many European nations focuses on social development.

Over the past 20 years, the Colombian government has put in fairly strict regulations against drug trafficking and the amount of drug production has dropped, many estimate by about 60%. However due to this decrease in production the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have also called on North America and Europe to decrease their countries demand for illegal drugs, as the United States is the highest user of illicit drugs in the world, as one in six citizens professed to trying cocaine at some point in there life.

Approximately 4.1 million Colombians have been forced from their homes⁶ and there are about 3.2 million displaced people registered in Colombia⁷, the second largest number of internally displaced people in the world after Sudan⁸. Between 370,000-500,000 of these people have fled to neighboring countries, with a majority going into Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama⁹. These countries are not set up to deal with this influx of refugees and the proper documentation has not been given out, leaving many of these refugees to live in squalor. Due to the amount of refugees fleeing Colombia, it has lead to an increase in violence along Colombia's borders including death threats, assassinations and kidnappings. Families are forced to leave their homes for a variety of reasons including, lack of safety, threats, and sexual violence. Many have also had their communities over taken by these guerrilla groups, creating an unsafe and unlawful community. One in ten Colombian refugees have been uprooted due to violence. The substantial majority of these refugees will travel to neighboring countries. Since many of the nations surrounding them have there own poverty issues as well, it has been very difficult for them to help this influx of refugees, most applying for some form of international protection. Most Colombian refugees live in the border towns in these countries because they have had to escape Colombia with only a few belongings through the jungle. It is estimated that about 120,000 to 200,000 Colombians are seeking

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⁵ "Helping Colombia Fix Its Plan to Curb Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Insurgency" The Heritage Foundation. April 26, 2001

⁶ Refugees International: Colombia Overview <http://www.refintl.org/where-we-work/americas/colombia>

⁷ Los Angeles Times- "U.S. aids Colombia program restoring land titles" By. Chris Kraul February 17, 2011

⁸ European Commission: Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection

⁹ Refugees International: Colombia Overview <http://www.refintl.org/where-we-work/americas/colombia>

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The Colombian refugee crisis has been a continuing problem for about 50 years and there are still large amounts of refugees leaving the country and entering into new countries with no status or facilities available to them.

¹⁴ Refugees International: Colombia: Crisis Bubbling Over: Colombians Seeking Refuge in Ecuador and Venezuela
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/colombia-crisis-bubbling-over>

¹⁵ Colombia Reports: UNHCR: 1,000 Colombians seek asylum in Ecuador each month, September 6, 2010
<http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/11694-unhcr-1000-colombians-see-asylum-in-ecuador-each-month.html>

Questions to Consider

Has your country done something to help Colombian refugees (ex. donate money, endorse a program, work with other nations, sending forms of aid etc.)?
Are people in your country purchasing drugs from the illicit drug cartels in Colombia?
Has your country experienced or helped in a situation similar to this and think that the method you previously used could work this time?
How does your country handle its own refugees?
What (if any) affiliations does your country have with Colombia (ex. trade)?

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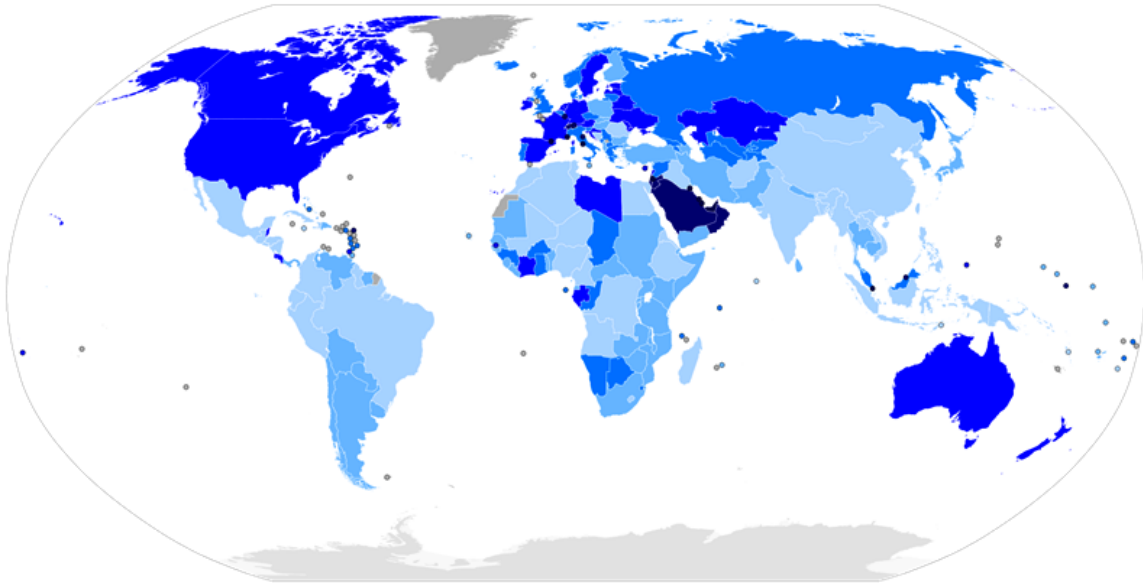
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Topic Three: European Economic Refugees



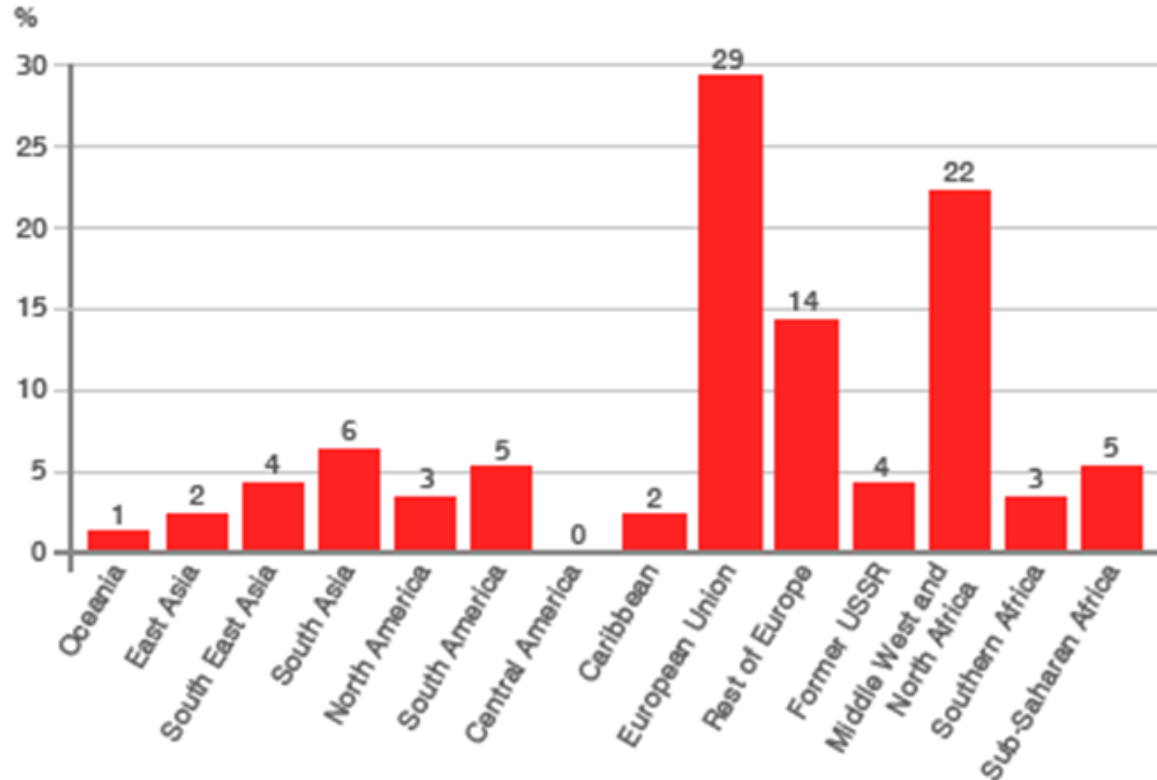
Introduction

Economic refugees have been a growing issue within Western European countries. Due to many financial crises there has been a growing number of industries shutting down and creating a panic of people fleeing their homeland to Western countries. For example, in 1973 there was a major decrease of investment by Western European countries in oil. Therefore, industries were forced to close or relocate in countries with lower wages. Due to the economic dependency of oil, many Third World countries suffered, labour opportunities were lost while the population continued growing and famines worsened. Although, the gap between the wealthy and the poor countries increased this did not prevent the Third World countries' migrants to stop, in fact this gained magnitude. Many economic refugees that entered the countries have been forced to return home while political refugees have been granted permission to stay.

Current State of Topic

Currently there are an estimated 26,000 refugees stranded on an Italian island, Lampedusa. Most of these refugees are Tunisians. The arrival of such a large group has created a fragile issue among the European Union. Due to the amount of separation of the 27 bloc countries the EU has to act carefully. Throughout the entire existence of the EU there has never been this much conflict of opinions. Germany and France especially are facing issues with the amount of refugee request, each having received about 40,000 per year. While on the other hand Italy only receives about 6,000 requests a year. Furthermore, Italy claims that the current refugee crisis is an emergency, suggesting suspending the ruling according to the Dublin II Regulation, limiting refugee's to only apply for asylum in the country that he arrives. Recently other political parties besides Malta have not backed Italy. Austrian Interior Minister, Maria

IMMIGRANTS IN EUROPE BY REGION OF ORIGIN 2005

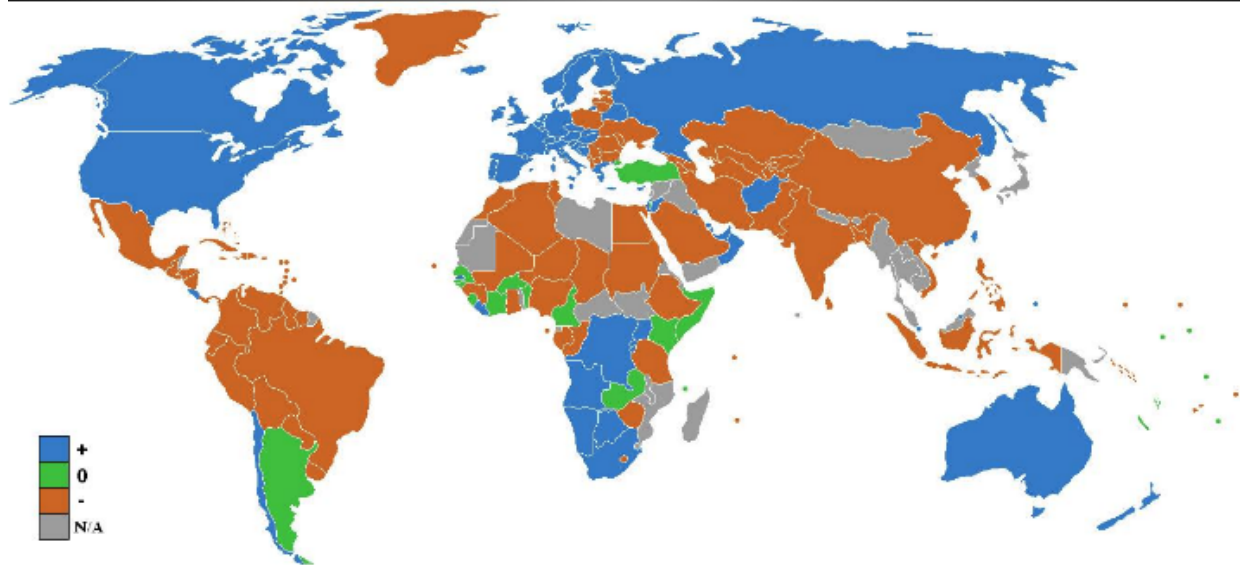


SOURCE: World Bank

Fekter, pointed out that Italy is a big country "and could certainly show a little good will." German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich likewise stood his ground, saying, "Italy has to live up to its responsibility." He added that Rome's plan to issue travel visas violated "the spirit of Schengen."

The German minister announced Berlin's plan to increase scrutiny, particularly in southern Germany. Germany's federal police are even looking into how quickly it would be able to reintroduce regular border controls, even though only about 300 North Africans entered Germany in the first quarter of this year. The Italian interior minister, noting his isolation, said obstinately that he would rather be alone than "in bad company."

Many of the economic immigrants have been wrongfully treated as criminals. Greece being the main door to Europe for refugees has been closely watched by political parties whom disagree with how the authorities have been disregarding the rights given to immigrants under international law. The director of the Amnesty program, Nicola Duckworth, for Europe and Central Asia said asylum seekers and irregular immigrants were not criminals. There have been many case of mistreating's of refugees throughout European countries, all these will hopefully come to an end with the help of the UN.



Bloc Positions

The European Union's Bloc contains 27 members. Due to recent events the Bloc has become more divided than ever before despite the efforts of the Lisbon Treaty.

Western Europe

Western Europe receives a high flow of immigrants from all over the world. As with many migrants around the world, these people seek higher living conditions. However, these immigrants face large amounts of discrimination based on ethnicity.

Economically, the problem is that, while in the short term it is beneficial to the economy, in the mid and long term, the increase causes a significant drop in skilled labourers. Thus, many Western European nations are highly in favour of curbing immigration, though are wary of doing so in fear of being labelled as discriminatory to the global community.

Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe also receives immigrants, though more often sees citizens leaving their nations in favour for more economically developed nations. This is majorly due to the fact that eastern European countries are often less appealing to immigrants as a final destination. Noting this, many Eastern European countries would benefit from immigrants arriving, since it would increase their workforce, and thereby increase their growth potential. In order to increase immigration to these areas however, these nations must become more economically developed, which would encourage more people to move to these nations.

Questions to Consider

Should economic migrants be treated as refugees?

A refugee is a person who has been pushed away from his home due to persecution and seeks refuge elsewhere. Economic migrants are people who move from one region to another to seek employment or improve their lives financially. It is often the case that an economic migrant leaves his country due to unsatisfactory living standards such as poverty or neglect from his own nation. In such a case, where and how do we draw the line between a migrant seeking personal gain versus a migrant who is escaping poverty? Should these migrants be considered as refugees fleeing “financial persecution?”

Should nations increase or reduce the number of economic migrants entering their country?

The number of migrants received by more developed nations is steadily increasing. Studies have shown that a steady flow of immigrants is needed to sustain and maintain economic growth. Contrariwise, each immigrant received places increased strain economically and socially on his respective nation. Will receiving fewer migrants into a country give them more time to find their societal niche, which would thereby increase their effectiveness as a part of society? Is there a more efficient way of receiving migrants while at the same time placing less economic strain on their new home?

How can we integrate economic migrants more effectively into society?

Being an immigrant to a new country is like being a new student in a new school, though at a much more drastic level. One may find that one does not speak the native language or face racial stereotyping previously had not expected. It may take months or even years before a migrant can fully integrate with their society. In these cases, is it up to the national government to support these people or should they be allowed to find their own way? What can be done on a global scale in order to help these people?

Conclusion

Therefore, the Human Rights Committee finds it necessary to defend and respect the rights of the people and countries involved. There have been many economic refugees fighting to flee from their countries and have a chance at a new life in a more stable country. Industrialized countries that rely on other countries for funding usually end up having to compete with others for sponsorship. There will always be people willing to work for cheap creating issues with employment and equality throughout the work environment. Thus, supporting the need to improve work conditions and increase wages. Many countries have suffered severely from economic downfall, because of this many have felt it necessary to search for new work opportunities in Europe and therefore creating the issue of the topic, economic refugees.

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