



Dear delegates,

My name is Valeria Mondragón de la Cruz, and it is an honor for me to welcome you to the honorable committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as your president. I am thrilled to share this learning experience with all of you, and I hope you enjoy it immensely. We are also joined by our moderator, Ximena Muro, and our conference officer, Regina Romero, who are just as excited as I am to see all the wonderful ideas, skills, and special qualities you have to share with the committee. Together, we can create a beautiful experience for everyone.

To tell you a little more about myself, I am 16 years old and a second-year high school student at Universidad La Salle Cancún. I really enjoy reading, cooking, going to the beach, and my favorite artist is Taylor Swift. Above all, I love dancing; I am part of a high-performance multidisciplinary dance company where we train to become professionals. I aspire to study a degree in contemporary dance, but I also want to pursue psychology, so I plan to study both sequentially. My first Model United Nations (MUN) experience was last year, where I participated as a delegate and won the Best Position Paper award. I remember how passionate my MUN teachers were at the time, which filled me with excitement to learn and participate in this model. I love MUN because it offers a great opportunity to learn new things and challenge yourself to improve as a student and as a person.

For me, it is very important to serve as the president of this committee, and I would love for our resolutions to emphasize the crucial role that the UNHCR plays in the lives and safety of refugees. I also hope we can highlight the importance of teamwork, dedication, and the effort from everyone to create a memorable experience. I know I will learn a lot from each of you, so please don't forget to showcase how amazing you are by contributing your research, ideas, and knowledge. Most importantly, remember to have fun and enjoy every moment while reflecting on how we, as students, can be incredibly insightful. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at the committee's address.

I can't wait to meet you all and share this experience together!

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COMITTEE DESCRIPTION

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution. Established in 1950 by the UN General Assembly in the wake of World War II, UNHCR aims to assist millions of displaced individuals. Operating in 136 countries, we provide critical support such as shelter, food, water, and medical care to those in need. We advocate for their right to safety and assist them in finding a home to rebuild their lives. Long-term, we collaborate with nations to enhance refugee and asylum laws, ensuring that human rights are respected. For 73 years, UNHCR has prioritized the involvement of refugees in all initiatives, placing those affected at the heart of planning and decision-making. Currently, over 117.3 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced.

“Preventing Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Humanitarian Contexts: Strengthening Protection and Accountability Mecanisms”

INTRODUCTION

Sexual exploitation and abuse are serious violations that disproportionately affect refugees and displaced persons, who are particularly vulnerable in humanitarian contexts. In situations of crisis, the breakdown of social structures and the absence of stable governance leave these populations exposed to multiple forms of exploitation. Refugee camps and other areas where displaced people are housed often lack sufficient protection and oversight, creating opportunities for exploitation. Women and children, especially unaccompanied minors, are among the most at risk. They may face pressure or coercion to engage in transactional sex in exchange for access to basic needs such as food, shelter, or medical care. The lack of adequate resources and the power imbalances between aid providers and recipients further increase the risks of exploitation. Reporting incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse is also challenging. Victims may fear retaliation from perpetrators, stigmatization within their communities, or a lack of confidentiality, which discourages them from coming forward. Additionally, inadequate reporting mechanisms and the limited ability of many humanitarian organizations to properly investigate and address these claims leave many cases unresolved. Given these circumstances, there is a critical need to strengthen protection measures and ensure accountability within humanitarian operations. By addressing these gaps, the international community can work toward preventing further exploitation and abuse of vulnerable refugees and displaced persons in crisis situations.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian contexts have been longstanding issues, particularly in situations where vulnerable populations, such as refugees, displaced persons, and survivors of natural disasters, are most at risk. Humanitarian crises often create environments of power imbalances, where perpetrators exploit their authority over those in desperate need of aid. The international community has recognized this problem as a severe violation of human rights, and

various efforts have been made to address it through international laws, protocols, and reforms. The issue came to prominence in the 1990s during peacekeeping missions and humanitarian efforts, where reports emerged of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers, aid workers, and military personnel. The most notorious cases occurred during the humanitarian interventions in the Balkans, Rwanda, and later in Africa during the 1990s and early 2000s. In response to the widespread allegations, the United Nations initiated reforms, including the creation of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2009, and the establishment of the "zero tolerance" policy for sexual abuse within UN missions. One of the key frameworks established by the UN to combat sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), which was adopted in 2003. This document set clear guidelines and standards for UN personnel and affiliated individuals, outlining the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse, mandating accountability, and emphasizing the protection of vulnerable populations. In 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse further acknowledged the ongoing nature of the problem, emphasizing the need for comprehensive prevention strategies and stronger accountability mechanisms. Additionally, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which includes UN agencies and humanitarian organizations, developed the IASC Guidelines on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Settings, which call for more robust measures, including improved training for humanitarian workers, better complaint mechanisms, and stronger policies on safeguarding. The international community has also witnessed a surge in the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in combating sexual abuse in humanitarian contexts. Many of these organizations work closely with affected populations to provide support, report abuses, and demand accountability from international agencies. In conclusion, preventing sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian contexts has become a key priority for both the UN and the broader international community. Through various measures, policies, and reforms, substantial progress has been made, but challenges persist. There is a continued need for vigilance, effective implementation of policies, and the creation of a robust protection framework to ensure the safety and dignity of the most vulnerable individuals in crisis situations.

CURRENT SITUATION

Sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian contexts continue to be significant challenges, despite decades of international efforts to address them. The issue came to prominence in the 1990s, with reports emerging of widespread abuse by UN peacekeepers, aid workers, and military personnel during humanitarian interventions in regions such as the Balkans, Rwanda, and sub-Saharan Africa. In response, the United Nations introduced reforms such as the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse in 2003, which established clear guidelines for UN personnel and affiliated individuals, aiming to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in peacekeeping missions. The zero-tolerance policy for SEA, along with the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2009, underscored the UN's commitment to combating sexual

abuse in its operations. Despite these efforts, reports of SEA continue to surface, notably in peacekeeping missions in countries like the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where investigations revealed systemic failures in accountability and a lack of effective mechanisms to protect survivors. In response to the ongoing problem, the UN Secretary-General's 2016 report emphasized the need for stronger prevention strategies, including better vetting procedures, independent investigation bodies, and comprehensive training for humanitarian personnel. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) also released updated guidelines in 2019 to improve prevention, response, and accountability in humanitarian settings, stressing a survivor-centered approach to SEA. Many countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, along with NGOs like Human Rights Watch, have criticized the UN's slow progress in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, pushing for more aggressive action and transparency in handling cases. The European Union has also called for stronger monitoring and increased funding to support victim care, while some donor countries have even threatened to reduce their contributions to peacekeeping missions if reforms are not made. The failure to effectively address SEA has serious consequences, including a loss of trust in the UN and other humanitarian agencies, a continued risk of abuse for vulnerable populations, and a compromised humanitarian response. Without decisive action, the international community risks undermining the credibility of humanitarian organizations and eroding human rights standards. In order to prevent further harm, experts recommend enhancing accountability mechanisms, improving training for all humanitarian workers, ensuring better coordination between international agencies and national governments, and providing adequate resources for the protection and support of survivors. These measures, alongside a more rigorous enforcement of existing policies, are crucial in ensuring that humanitarian missions are safe, effective, and truly supportive of the most vulnerable populations.

COUNTRY BOX

Argentine Republic

Commonwealth of Australia

Dominion of Canada

People's Republic of China

Arab Republic of Egypt

French Republic

Federal Republic of Germany

Republic of India

Republic of Indonesia

State of Israel

Japan

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Russian Federation

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Republic of South Africa

Republic of Turkey

United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

United States of America

GUIDE QUESTIONS

I. What is your country's position on preventing sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian contexts?

II. What actions has your country taken, both domestically and internationally, to address sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian emergencies?

III. What consequences has your country faced due to sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian or peacekeeping missions?

IV. What additional measures does your country consider necessary to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian contexts?

V. How can your country collaborate with other nations and international organizations to improve the response to sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises?

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