Letter from Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 NIRAMUN high school conference. My name is Kara Rolle and I will be your chair for the Security Council 1: “Addressing the Vulnerability of Conflict-Affected Regions Amidst the Novel Coronavirus.” I am from the beautiful islands of the Bahamas and am currently enrolled in my junior year at NSU, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Public Health. I attended my first Model United Nations conference at the age of 15 at a conference in Washington D.C. After attending this, I decided to join the Nova’s MUN team my freshman year which allowed me the opportunity to compete in Gainesville, Florida and Montreal, Canada. In addition to this, I am now the secretary of Nova’s visionary MUN team.

I particularly enjoyed creating the background for this topic and I hope that each of you are able to relish in the dissection of crucial points of this topic and the research of additional information. The guide is quite extensive, please review it thoroughly and if you have any questions feel free to contact me by email at “kr1409@mynsu.nova.edu”This will be the first time in NIRAMUN history that we conduct a MUN conference online, be engaged, make your mark and make the most of this opportunity. Assisting me in chairing this committee is former NIRAMUN President Varsha Gopaulchan who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies in 2020 and is very excited to be a part of the first virtual NIRAMUN conference. Her email is [varshagopaulchan@gmail.com](mailto:varshagopaulchan@gmail.com) for any further questions on the guide.

In this Security Council session, we will be covering a current and globally prominent event. This topic is meant to be thought-provoking. But due to the relevance and recency of this topic, individual preconceived notions may already exist. Nonetheless, it is your role as a delegate to act and speak on behalf of the designated delegation and not personal opinion. Everyone will be expected to treat others with respect and have fun! We, the NIRAMUN team, are super excited to meet each of you and undergo this unique virtual experience, together. Happy researching and once again, welcome to NIRAMUN 2020!

Yours sincerely,

Kara Rolle

NIRAMUN Secretary & Security Council Chair

*Introduction to the Committee*

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

An international treaty known as the Charter of the United Nations binds its 189 Member States to settle disputes peacefully in order to ensure that international peace, security and justice are not compromised. This Charter lists the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as one of the six main organs of the United Nations and empowers the Council to impose the binding obligations on the UN Member States to maintain peace. Unlike the other organs of the UN whose powers are limited to recommendations, Member States of the United Nations are required to accept and carry out the decisions made by the Security Council.

The charter specifically cites many functions and powers of the United Nations Security Council, including but not limited to investigating disputes which could lead to international friction, recommending methods of adjusting disputes, determining the existence of a threat to peace and recommending what action should be taken, calling on Member States to apply economic sanctions and the right to military action against aggressors. Article 42 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that the United Nations Security Council “has the authority to take action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.

*Structure of the Security Council*

The Security Council is composed of 15 Members, five permanent Members and ten non-permanent Members which alternate every two years. The five permanent Members withhold a particularly coveted privilege known as veto power due to their prominent role in the establishment of the United Nations. Typically, a resolution or decision is passed by a majority of nine votes in favor, except in cases where veto power is invoked. This veto power reserves the country the right to have a resolution or decision denied regardless of the vote count. However, permanent Member States also reserve the right to abstain from the voting procedure without affecting the validity of the procedure. 

At the time of writing, the current Members of the Model United Nations Security Council are as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| **Permanent Members** | **Current Rotating Members** |
| China\* | Belgium (2020) |
| France\* | Dominican Republic (2020) |
| Russian Federation\* | Estonia (2021) |
| The United Kingdom \* | Germany (2020) |
| The United States of America\* | Indonesia (2020) |
|  | Niger (2021) |
|  | Saint Vincent and Grenadines (2021) |
|  | South Africa (2020) |
|  | Tunisia (2021) |
|  | Viet Nam (2021) |

\*An asterisk is placed next to countries with veto power

*History of the Committee*

The Security Council first convened on the 17th of January 1946 at Church House, Westminster in London. The Council, in likeness with the United Nations as a whole, assembled after the global havoc of the second World War. The Council permanently resides at the UN Headquarters in New York City and requires representatives of the Council’s Member States to be present at all times so that the Council can meet when there is an urgent matter

The UNSC originally consisted of 11 Members, the five permanent Members and six non-permanent Members which were elected by the United Nations General Assembly for two-year terms. In 1965, Article 23 of the UN’s Charter was amended to enlarge the UNSC from 11 to 15 Members and Article 27 was amended to increase the required number of Security Council votes to pass a resolution from seven to nine. The efficiency of the Security Council was challenged during the Cold War due to a rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union which led to continual disagreement . However, the esteem and prestige of the Council began to grow in the early 21st century partly due to the surge in peace keeping organizations enhancing the UNSC’s global presence. Between 1948 and 1978 only 13 UNSC missions had been authorized, between 1987 and 2000 about three dozen operations were approved in countries including but not limited to, Angola, Haiti, Balkans, Liberia and Somalia.

The responsibility of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security encompasses a lot more than armed conflict and war. In 2000, Resolution 1308 was passed to address the HIV/AIDS the impact of HIV/AIDS on peace and security. This was the first time in the Council’s history that the met to address a health-related security threat as these topics are usually tackled by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Council has also aided West Africa during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, claiming that the outbreak was a threat to the international community. The UNSC has since passed several resolutions to aid West Africa, including Resolution 2439, which condemns the attacks by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo Jeopardizing Response to Ebola Outbreak.

***Introduction to the Topic:* Addressing the Vulnerability of Conflict-Affected Regions Amidst the Novel Coronavirus**

The novel coronavirus pandemic has been described as an “era-defining challenge to public health and the global economy. On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organization’s Director-General classified the novel coronavirus as a pandemic, a term that he claims should not be taken “lightly” or “carelessly”.  However, the Director-General emphasized the need for countries to “strike a fine balance between protecting health, minimizing economic and social disruption, and respecting human rights.” At the time of this decision 118,000 confirmed cases had been reported globally in 114 countries. As of 13th of August 2020, global confirmed coronavirus cases were 20,405,695 including 743,487 deaths. This virus has infected millions and killed hundreds of thousands causing even some of the strongest global economies to collapse. The global economy is expected to have a 5.2% reduction by the end of 2020. If this forecast is correct, this will be the deepest recession since the Second World War with the largest fraction of economies experiencing declines in per capita output since 1870.

António Guterres, Current United Nations Secretary-General, made the following remarks to the Security Council:

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to profoundly affect peace and security across the globe. Consequences can be seen even in a number of countries traditionally seen as ‘stable.’ But the impacts are particularly apparent in countries already experiencing conflict or emerging from it- and may soon engulf others.”

Guterres describes the impacts of the pandemic as diverse with possible impacts including: tensions rising as a result of the severe socio-economic fallout of the crisis, trust in public institutions eroding, potential for instability and violence increasing, exacerbation of gender inequalities, the derailment of fragile peace processes and conflict actors taking advantage of uncertainty. However, the full spectrum of COVID-19 ramifications has yet to be identified, as it strikes each state differently.       

*Background and History of Emerging Diseases*

2018 marked the 100th anniversary of the Spanish flu, the most severe pandemic in recent history. Between 1918-1920 about 50 million people died after being infected with the Spanish flu with some estimating the death toll to be between 50,000,000 and 100,000,000 people. This number surpasses even the death toll from the First World War. Since then, the international community has experienced many different outbreaks, including H5N1 and SARS, not to mention the unforgettable West African Ebola Outbreak in 2014.  The threat of emerging infectious diseases is increasing at an alarming rate. An emerging, infectious disease is a contagious disease that is newly recognized within populations or involves a recognized pathogen affecting new or larger populations or geographic areas.

“Conflict situations, however, are characterized by war or civil strife in a country or within an area within a country.” Populations affected by conflict may experience defined periods of violence, ongoing or recurring insecurity or long-term consequences of a previous prolonged war. These populations may also be more vulnerable to infection and disease due to higher levels of undernutrition, low vaccination accessibility, long term stress, flight of trained staff, breakdown of health systems, failure of existing disease control programs and destroyed infrastructure. Additionally, corrupt politicians may utilize the pandemic to advance personal objectives despite their exacerbation of domestic or international crises. These conditions amongst many others have been said to favor disease emergence.

*Current Situation*

As the coronavirus continues to plague many of the world’s populations, conflict has been amplified in many marginal or conflict affected populations. During the early stages of the pandemic, the paradigm of violence changed significantly as governments became more likely to suppress their citizens, violent armed groups expanded their active territories, and inter-group classes rose by approximately 25%. In Pakistan, minority Shia Muslims are being blamed for bringing the virus from Iran, thus increasing communal tensions. Libya’s civil war extended its reach into hospitals in different zones of control, as warring parties target each other’s local hospitals, which is detrimental for both COVID-19 and non- COVID related patients.

Prior to the global pandemic, more than 820 million people were labeled as food insecure- a figure which stands to double at the end of 2020. Food production systems are coming to a halt as outbreaks among staff occur, and border restrictions slow harvesting. Regions already impacted by conflict, such as Eastern Africa, also face a “triple menace” of heavy rainfall and floods, locust swarms, and COVID-19. Harvest season is now being threatened, which increases the likelihood of more food insecurity in the region. Their neighbors in West Africa also face the threat of food security as violence in the Central Sahel looms closer to Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Benin and Togo. These landlocked countries, only divided by porous borders and which cover large national reserves of crop, are difficult to police and protect.

In addition to the costs of human life, as well as economic downfall, COVID-19 is increasing gender inequality. Even though statistically more men than women experience serious symptoms of COVID 19, its indirect impact in conflict affected regions disproportionately affect women through aggravated gender-based violence. Even non- conflict impacted nations saw an increase in domestic violence as UK helplines have reported a 120% increase in the number of calls received since lockdown began earlier this year. This pandemic is also expected to have an intergenerational impact with more than 1 billion children out of school, possibly more than 135 million people on the brink of starvation by the end of this year, routine immunization services disrupted, raising the likelihood of other outbreaks and health-care workers being targeted for attacks.

The realities facing students in conflict afflicted countries are extremely dire as students’ may not be taught amidst school closures, and a lack of both student and teacher access to technology. This further exacerbates an already wide disparity in education and learning opportunities, as well as limits access to nutritious food and psychosocial support programmes for some. There is also an anticipated “ripple effect beyond education” whereby girls no longer attending school are vulnerable to forced marriages and other types of abuse.

*Actions Taken by the United Nations*

On the 25th of June 2020, the UN Secretary General set forward the *UN Comprehensive Response to COVID 19* which focused on policies to help governments address issues like the socio-economic impact of the virus, tourism, education, and universal health among others. These policy briefs outline the financial and health challenges faced by persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, and women during the pandemic, and how governments can best protect these vulnerable groups. Special policy briefs have been formulated for each region, as the Secretary General recognizes that every territory faces their own unique problems

The *Global Humanitarian Response Plan* partially funds this comprehensive report as this plan is the main vehicle for easing the impacts of COVID 19 on 50 conflict- affected priority countries. In addition to the *Global Humanitarian Response Plan,* the *Better Together Fund,* which released USD $45 million to 47 countries, enables governments to execute their COVID response operations, assist non-health ministries in operating without their usual revenue which mitigates the socio-economic impacts, and help in recovery.

The UN has also administered agency-specific responses to the virus, amongst nations already concerned with rising conflict. The *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)* distributed cash assistance to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan after the port explosion in Beirut, as well as sanitation services for camps in Syria. Telemedicine services and home visits have been made available for persons living in Gaza while all health clinics have remained closed during the lockdown period, and the *UNRWA* also updated distributed individualized hygiene kits for persons with disabilities, and the elderly. The *UN Mine Action Service* *(UNMAS)* team in Sudan has also joined the cause by distributing over 25,000 COVID-19 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and hygiene materials to remote areas, and by sterilizing over 90 public utilities.

Some positive results have been achieved as a result of Guterres’ one hundred and eight Member States and one non-Member Observer State having endorsed his call for a global ceasefire.

*Guiding Questions*

* What can be done to protect conflict-affected populations from exposure to the virus?
* What sectors/industries do you think should be targeted in order to address the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic?
* Global cooperation is essential to global health security. What can be done to improve global cooperation and transparency?
* How can Member States ensure easier access to health services during outbreaks?
* How can Member States prevent future outbreaks?
* How can regions work together to prevent cross-border spread of the virus?

*Useful Links*

* [How governments can reduce gender-based violence during a pandemic](https://www.africaportal.org/features/what-must-governments-do-reduce-gender-based-violence-during-pandemic/)
* [International responses and conventions to pandemics historically](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30737-6/fulltext)
* [Priority actions to prevent and diminish the effects of food insecurity during conflict](https://reliefweb.int/report/world/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-food-security-and-nutrition-june-2020)
* [Sensitive responses to COVID-19 in conflict affected areas](https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/covid-19-fragile-settings-ensuring-conflict-sensitive-response)