
HIXSMUN 2024

1-3rd February 2024

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African Union (AU)

Combating Desertification & Ensuring Water Security

Letter from the Secretariat



Dear Delegates,

We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to the inaugural edition of HIXSMUN, where we explore a theme deeply rooted in the universal essence of uncertainty and peril.

Throughout history, humanity has faced moments of great peril, often standing at the precipice of existential threats. From nuclear standoffs to ecological crises, the countdown to midnight on the metaphorical doomsday clock has served as a stark reminder of our shared vulnerability. Today, the threats may have evolved, encompassing global pandemics, artificial intelligence dilemmas, and climate emergencies, but the sense of urgency and the need for decisive action remain constant.

The theme for HIXSMUN, "A Minute to Midnight," pays homage to this iconic symbol of humanity's vulnerability. However, it also signifies hope and resilience, reminding us that we have the power to turn back the clock, to reset our course, and to confront the challenges that loom on the horizon.

At HIXSMUN, we invite delegates to embody this spirit of hope and resilience as they would navigate the crises of the past, confront those of the present, and anticipate those of the future. We challenge you to come together as global leaders, crisis solvers, and visionaries to move the doomsday clock away from midnight.

To facilitate this endeavor, HIXSMUN combines the best elements of MUNs from around the world, offering a unique and immersive experience. Delegates will have the opportunity to rewrite history, steer nations through moments of turmoil, and shape a future where humanity prevails.

Join us in this collective effort to reset the clock, to rewrite the narrative, and to redefine the potential of Model United Nations. We look forward to welcoming you on the 1st of February 2024, as we embark on a journey to rediscover the power of diplomacy and determination.

Sincerely,

The Secretariat | HIXSMUN24

Letter From the Executive Board



Dear Delegates,

We are beyond excited to meet you and are eager to welcome you to two days full of productive and stimulating debate. For us, Model United Nations have become an integral part of our lifestyle; we view it as educational as much as it's empowering to have the ability to construct opinions on global issues through the eyes of several different countries. We hope that as soon as you join the committee session you learn something new and that hopefully by the end of the conference you have grown in one way or another; whether it's your ability to overcome your fear of public speaking or your ability to lead large groups of people.

If this is your first Model United Nations Conference, then don't worry too much and feel free to approach any of us at any point in the conference if you need any form of support. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any member of the Secretariat or Executive Board and even your fellow delegates if you have any concerns.

Sincerely,
The Executive Board

Rules & Procedures

1. The session will begin with a Roll call wherein you have to mark your presence. Remember, there is no concept of PRESENT AND VOTING in this forum.
2. Post the roll call, the committee will enter into the round of Opening Statements. The default time for opening statements shall be 90 seconds. Opening statements are speeches which are used to clarify your stance on the agenda at hand.
3. Opening statements are recommended to be given by everyone, though not obligatory. Opening statements will be done at once, unlike the GSL which never exhausts.
4. For a moderated session, I would recommend you people to decide the sub-agendas beforehand so that we do not waste time in forming a consensus via unmoderated session and voting.
5. Moderated sessions will be used to discuss sub-agendas pertaining to the main agenda.
6. Unmoderated session will be a lobbying session which can either be done on the video platform itself or even the WhatsApp group may be utilized for the same.
7. SEBI does not have a mandate, hence documentation shall not be necessary. However, if time permits, we may move for a Press Release, which again does not have a specified format.
8. If at any point of time any crisis is introduced then, directives will be allowed.

Points

All four points will be considered in the forum:

- Personal Privilege – any audibility or clarity issue – to be raised via writing in the ‘chat’ option in the menu
- Enquiry – any question from the executive board – to be raised via writing in the ‘chat’ option in the menu
- Order – any factual error correction – to be raised verbally at the end of every speech
- Information – any question in context of the speech

Additional information

- POIs (verbal) may be entertained in the moderated sessions depending upon the time left in the speech
- Opening statements will have a mandatory POI (verbal), can be more than one if more time left
- Equal recognition will be ensured
- Substantive intervention on the discretion of the participating members
- Try not speaking out your name/point when you are being recognized, just raise your hand so as to avoid chaos.

Tips for the Committee Duration

1. Always be active – whether by note passing or by contributing in caucuses.
2. Always be as detailed as you can in directives; this will increase the chances of seeing it succeed, as well as make sure you do not lose time responding to the crisis directors asking for more detail afterwards.
3. Warning: If a crisis comes which will come eventually, crisis staffers often seek to exploit weaknesses in a note. Specify every detail in an important directive, and try thinking of possible loopholes before sending any request.
4. If directors/chair tell you there is nothing suspicious about a delegate, this does not mean you should clear this delegate of any suspicions. Rather, this could mean the directors do not wish to have the person uncovered yet.

Committee Introduction

OAU was established on 25th May 1963, when 32 heads of independent African States signed the OUA Charter in Addis Ababa Ethiopia on May 1963 for the establishment of Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This initiative was taken as a pan-Asian vision for a united and free Africa with a major focus on the freedom, justice, equality and dignity of the African people. The main objective of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was to eradicate the African states from colonization and to promote unity and solidarity.

On 9th September 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) called for the establishment of an African Union through the Sirte Declaration to enable the role of Africa in the global economy. Therefore, the African Union (AU) was officially launched in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa.

Visions of African Union (AU)

Re-launching of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as the African Union was done to realize the potential of Africa to fight against colonization with a major focus towards increased cooperation and integration of African states for economic development.

AU is guided by its vision of a peaceful, prosperous and an integrated Africa representing a dynamic force in the global economy and is driven by its own citizens.

Objectives of African Union (AU)

The objectives of AU were laid by the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

1. Achieving greater unity and solidarity among the African countries and the people.
2. Defending the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the 55 Member States.
3. Accelerating the political as well as the socio-economic integrity of the African continent.

4. Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples
5. Encouraging international cooperation and promoting peace, security, and stability of the continent
6. Promoting the popular participation and governance of the continent including democratic principles and institutions
7. Development and promotion of common policies related to trade, defence and foreign relations strengthening its negotiating positions.
8. Invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union.
9. Protect human rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
10. To provide sustainable development of the continent at the social, economic and cultural levels.
11. Development of the continent through the advancement in the field of science and technology

Land Degradation and Desertification

Definitions

Land degradation is a reduction in biological or economic productivity which results in food insecurity, reduced incomes, and loss of vital ecosystem services (UNCCD 1994). Desertification is the degradation of productive land in drylands (Adams 2008, 202). The difference between degradation and desertification is geographic. Land degradation is a reduction in biological or economic productivity of land in any region. It can occur in drylands or in densely populated tropical zones (Vries 2013, 354). Desertification is land degradation in drylands, that is, arid, semi-arid, or dry sub-humid regions (IPCC 2019, 89). Land degradation is caused by human activity. Changes that result from natural processes such as volcanic eruptions are not considered land degradation (IPCC 2019, 817).

Desertification is not the same thing as expansion of deserts, and it is not the same thing as drought (ibid., 107). The Earth system is dynamic, and like many geographic features such as wetlands and lakes, deserts come and go over geologic time. A drought is a dry period; when it is over, ecosystems and economic systems that depended on them, although impacted, can eventually return to their former state because of buried seed and deep-rooted trees (Adams 2008, 218). Desertification, however, often brings about permanent state changes in ecosystem and human communities. Desertification is a human-caused decline in which formerly fertile land becomes desert.

Drivers of land degradation

This long-term decline in ecosystem function and productivity results from three primary drivers: soil erosion, deterioration in the health of the soil, and long-term loss of natural vegetation (Chabay et al. 2016, 254; UNCCD 1994). Natural vegetation binds soil particles together and contributes to organic

matter that maintains soil fertility. Without it, soil becomes too poor to support crops and soil erosion accelerates.

Soil erosion, declining soil quality, and loss of natural vegetation are caused by overexploitation of land. Agriculture and land-clearing for food and fiber have been the primary drivers of land degradation for millennia (IPCC 2019, 349). They do not result in degradation when sustainably practiced. However, when human activities result in activities such as overgrazing and degradation of soils by tillage, land loses productivity (Adams 2008, 257). Overexploitation can happen as a result of harvesting wood for fuel, tilling of marginal land, irrigation, and livestock farming. Climate change is a contributor, too, as heavy rains and flooding in drylands magnify erosion.

Human activities can also result in an intensification of natural salinization processes. Dryland soils naturally tend to be salty because evapotranspiration pulls out more water than rainfall brings in, so there is not enough water to leach out salts in the soil (ibid.). Diverting water for irrigation or for dams further intensifies salt accumulation. Salinization is one of the processes that leads to desertification (ibid.).

Impacts of land degradation

Land degradation is a direct threat to food security. It is also a threat to water security because it reduces a soil's ability to hold water so that more water runs off after heavy rains. A degraded area has less vegetation, so there is less evapotranspiration, which reduces the water vapor content in the atmosphere (Chabay et al. 2016, 15), creating a positive feedback cycle.

Erosion accelerates. Deforestation or inappropriate agriculture results in inadequate plant cover for the soil. When rain falls, raindrops have greater impact as they dislodge soil particles. Without roots and other plant matter in the soil to hold it together, runoff water collects into small rivulets, then larger rills which coalesce into larger, deeper channels called gullies. The formation of gullies is a self-reinforcing,

accelerating process that is hard to stop once it begins (Schor and Gray 2007, 14). The result is a landscape known as badlands, with gullies, steep head cuts, flat areas of rock and gravel with poor soil structure, no microbial life, and no vegetation (Chabay et al. 2016, 135).

As the land degrades, large quantities of carbon dioxide are emitted from the soil. Soils of the world contain about 1.8 times more carbon than is in the atmosphere and 2.3 to 3.3 times more carbon than is held in vegetation (IPCC 2019, 366). Thus, land degradation and the resulting soil-carbon loss have a potentially substantial impact on global atmospheric CO₂ concentration.

The regions which are most heavily affected by land degradation are places in developing countries where the majority of people do not have enough money to buy food, and so must rely on subsistence agriculture (Chabay et al. 2016, 18). Over 1.3 billion people are impacted by degraded land (UNCCD 2020). Food insecurity was already an issue in these regions. Land degradation erodes soil, decreases soil quality, and reduces the availability of water, making food harder to grow. These impacts are exacerbated by population growth and rising standards of living in other parts of the world; increased demand makes food and water less available, particularly in drylands.

Conflicts can be triggered as demand increases while land degradation decreases the available land and food supply. Increased competition for scarce resources can lead to rising migration by desperate people, leading to more conflict (IPCC 2019, 518). Conflict is a major threat to sustainable development.

Land degradation often disproportionately affects women. Sixty percent of the world's poor are female (Chabay et al. 2016, 252). Rural women in developing countries are dependent on natural resources and severely impacted by their depletion. Women in these regions also tend to have less decision-making power and less control over issues related to land.

Responding to desertification

Degraded drylands can be restored over time. Restoration strategies include controlling the numbers of livestock, using fencing, reseeded of pastures, and managing the ecology of the land through clearing of bushes and controlled burning (Adams 2008, 225). Unfortunately, these are not strategies that tend to fit the nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralist way of life.

Governments may choose to intervene in rangelands that have experienced desertification. A challenge is that pastoralists in these areas are typically mobile and difficult to find, tax, educate, and provide with services, and government personnel may distrust such nomadic people (ibid.). Policies often focus on formal land tenure and converting pastoralists to sedentary lifeways in a settled economy (ibid.).

Government programs have tended to focus on products from slaughtered animals, such as meat and hides (ibid. 228).

By contrast, Indigenous pastoralists use systems based on products from live animals such as milk, with a diverse mix of livestock species, and movement of herds to maximize survival. Herders must have extensive knowledge of environmental conditions in various areas available to them, together with mixed herds of different species that are adapted to using different types of browse in different ways. Social networks are critical.

Thus, to be successful, government policies need to support diversity and flexibility for pastoralists. It is essential for herders to retain their rights to use important areas of land, which may or may not have included formal private land tenure. Pastoralist systems are often based upon and benefit from communal land tenure arrangements (IPCC 2019, 353). Financial support can include programs for buying animals at reasonable prices during droughts, when prices crash, and for providing communal grain banks to help pastoralists survive rising grain prices during droughts (Adams 2008, 232).

Land degradation neutrality and the UNCCD

Land degradation neutrality is a condition in which the amount and quality of land resources needed to support ecosystem health, ecosystem services, and food security remain stable or increase in a particular location and within a particular time period (IPCC 2019, 817).

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a legally binding international agreement among 197 member states to promote land degradation neutrality, begun in 1994. Its goals are to improve the living conditions for people living in drylands, conserve and restore ecosystem health and productivity, and mitigate the effects of drought on vulnerable populations (UNCCD 1994). One hundred thirteen members of the UNCCD have committed to land degradation neutrality through the *UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework*. This framework aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 15, which focuses on sustainably managing forests, halting and reversing land degradation, and combating desertification (UNCCD 2017, 3). The Convention is committed to a bottom-up approach to reversing desertification and encourages active participation by local people (UNCCD 2020).

Sources

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