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**DISMUN 2025 | UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
STUDY GUIDE 2025**

DISMUN 2025



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BACKGROUND GUIDE 2025

Dear Delegates,

Dear Delegates, Welcome to the 2025 Diyafah International Model United Nations Conference (DISMUN- Abu Dhabi)! We are pleased to welcome you to the UNHRC. This year's chair is **Nezar Shakra**, who is currently in Year 13. This year's Deputy Chair is **Pranav Pradeep**, who is currently in Year 10.

The topics under discussion for the Human Rights Council are:

Ensuring the Right to Clean Water and Sanitation for All

The Human Rights Council serves as the core international forum for discussions on human rights issues. The international community has faced a number of human rights-related issues; we hope to see the resolutions in this committee take into consideration how these impacts have shaped views on human rights.

We hope our delegates can utilise this background guide, as it introduces the topics for this committee. We urge you all to recognise that this guide is not meant to replace further research. We applaud and highly encourage in-depth research into your countries' policies.

On the [DISMUN](#) webpage, you will find two resources that are essential to your preparation for the conference and as a reference during committee sessions. The [DISMUN Handbook](#), explains each step in the delegation process, from Pre-Conference research to the Committee Debate and resolution drafting processes. *Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session*, we urge our delegates to be respectful of this request.

In addition, please review the mandatory [DISMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the DISMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. DIS wants to emphasize that any instances of *discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, religion, age, or disability* will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact Communications.DISMUN@diyafahinternationalschool.com

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Chair **Nezar Shakra**
Deputy Chair **Pranav Pradeep Kanth**

Overview

Committee History

Introduction

Evolution

HRC Authority and Power

HRC Committee Sessions

Conclusion

Committee Overview

Committee History

“All victims of human rights abuses should be able to look at the Human Rights Council as a forum and a springboard for action.”

Introduction

The **United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)** was established in 2006 by General Assembly resolution 60/251, as the primary body within the United Nations (UN) with the mandate to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, to handle cases of human rights violations and make recommendations to the international community on ways in which to remove barriers to the full realization of human rights. A range of human rights instruments guide the work of the United Nations system generally, and the HRC specifically, on human rights, including, notably, the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)***, and the ***Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)*** alongside the core human rights treaties.

Evolution

The mandate of the HRC is reflected in the ***Charter of the United Nations (1945)*** which recognizes that human rights need to be protected by the rule of law. One of the first committees established within the United Nations, the ***United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR)***, the predecessor to the HRC, was created in 1946 to consider a wide range of human rights challenges and set standards to govern the conduct of Member States. This was also the platform for Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights defenders to express their concerns. With the adoption of the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)***, fundamental freedoms and human rights were elevated as global norms and ideals which all people should enjoy, further guiding the work of the CHR, and eventually the HRC to this day.

With the adoption of **General Assembly resolution 60/251** of 3 April 2006, the HRC replaced the Commission with a broadened mandate to *“promote universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all”* and to *“address situations of violations of human rights... and make recommendations.”*

Among other responsibilities, the HRC and its subsidiary committees receive periodic reports on the situation of human rights from members states who are party to the core human rights treaties. This function, alongside other key periodic monitoring system of the human rights situations in all UN Member States, an Advisory Council which provides advice and guidance on human rights thematic issues and a complaint process for individuals and organizations to report human rights violations. The HRC also has Special Procedures composed of independent human rights experts; they submit reports and provide recommendations to its members on a range of country-specific or thematic topics.

The Special Procedures are a central element of the UN’s pursuit of human rights and freedoms for all addressing civil, cultural, economic, political and social issues. The Special Procedures has a wide array of duties including conducting country visits, sending communications to countries, conduct studies, raise awareness and conduct advocacy. As of April 2013, there are 36 thematic issues and 13 country mandates.

HRC Authority and Power

The ***Convention on the Rights of the Child*** was adopted in 20 November 1989 as resolution 44/25. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is one of the bodies of independent experts that work with the Human Rights Council. The Committee monitors the implementation of the ***Convention on the Rights of the Child*** and, through the third Optional Protocol, children are allowed to submit individual complaints of specific violations of their rights. The committee also publishes reports to the HRC for discussion as part of the thematic issues being discussed by the HRC. The Institution-Building Package adopted through HRC resolution 5/1 guides the work and procedures of the HRC.

Based at the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland, the council is composed of 47 elected UN Member States. The General Assembly elects its members and candidacy is based on contribution to the promotion of human rights and voluntary pledges and commitments. Members serve a three-year term and cannot serve to consecutive terms in a row. The regional breakdown for the Council is as follows: African states (13 seats), Asian states (13 seats), Latin America and Caribbean states (8 seats), Western Europe and other states (7 seats) and Eastern European states (6 seats). The Bureau of the council has one representative from each of the regions and consists of one President and four Vice-Presidents.

HRC Committee Sessions

The HRC convenes three times a year for three weeks each time to discuss ongoing thematic topics and also, global issues related to human rights. The Council also looks at reports and country situations, which includes submissions by non-governmental organizations such as ***Human Rights Watch, International Disability Alliance*** and the ***Association for the Prevention of Torture***.

At the 23rd regular session, held in May 2013, the Council discussed annual report topics related to discrimination against women, violence against women, the negative impact of corruption on human rights, and the situation of housing in Mali. The Council also reviewed themes related to the promotion of rights such as the right to education, and the freedom of opinion and expression. The human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories was also discussed.

The HRC also looks at external factors that may impact human rights such as climate change. In 2008, under resolution 7/23, the Council recognized that “*climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world*.” In February 2012, the HRC held a seminar on human rights and climate change to bring further awareness and enhanced understanding of the issue. Furthermore, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights encouraged Member States meeting at the **Rio+20 Conference** to balance green economies with human rights.

In 2010, under resolution 15/23, the HRC created the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. The intent of the working group is to eliminate laws that are discriminatory towards women. The working group works closely with other UN bodies such as ***UN Women*** and the ***Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*** to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Conclusion

Since its inception in 2006, the HRC has taken significant steps to address human rights. Countries are now held accountable through annual reporting to the Council, complaints can be submitted to the Council for review and special groups have been set-up to investigate and review potential human rights violations. By working with stakeholders such as NGOs and experts in the human rights field, the Council is able to gather from a wide variety of resources in order to proceed with its work. The Council has also made contributions and partnerships with other international frameworks such as UN Women and Rio+20 in order to strengthen their work in the protection and strengthening of human rights.

Ensuring the Right to Clean Water and Sanitation for All

Introduction

Throughout the world, 884 million people do not have access to clean sources of drinking water, while 2.5 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation facilities. Four of ten people lack access to even a simple pit latrine while two of ten people lack any source to a safe form of drinking water. Unclean drinking water and poor sanitation are, when combined, the second largest killer of children. Drinking contaminated water accounts for most outbreaks of faecal-oral diseases, such as **cholera**, **typhoid**, **diarrhoea**, **viral hepatitis A**, and **dracunculiasis**. Some of these diseases spread through water via microorganisms that spend part of their lifecycle in water, spread quickly through water-related vectors, and are caused by chemicals running off into drinking water sources. Ninety percent of sewage and seventy percent of industrial waste run off into water sources without treatment and ultimately pollute useable water supplies in developing countries.

The human right to water, when realized, will ensure sufficient, safe, acceptable and accessible water for both personal and domestic use be provided for all. The criteria for measuring the provision of clean water and sanitation for all consists of factors such as accessibility, quality, acceptability, and affordability. The right to water also contains freedoms and entitlements. These freedoms include ensuring that personal security is not threatened when accessing supplies, banning unlawful pollution of water sources, protection from illegal disconnections, non-discrimination in access to safe drinking water and sanitation regardless of land or housing status, and non-interference with access to existing water supplies.

The entitlements associated with the right to water includes access to the minimum amount of safe water to sustain life and health, access to safe drinking water and sanitation in detention, and participation in water and sanitation related decision-making at national and community levels. The Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation states that 20 litres per capita per day is the minimum quantity required to be considered meeting the requirement for access to safe water but in order to achieve full realization of the right, states should aim to provide 50 to 100 litres per day per person.

International Framework Overseeing the Right to Water and Sanitation as a Human Right

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) is one of the main documents guiding international human rights law protects the right under Article 25 which ensures the right to an adequate standard of living to protect the health and overall well-being. The right to water and sanitation is an essential part of protecting one's overall health and well-being because many deaths can be linked to illnesses caused by poor hygiene and lack of proper drinking water. Another important agreement is the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)**, which in Articles 11 and 12 calls for states to protect an adequate standard of living for all and also provide all with the opportunity to achieve the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health.

Through **General Comment No. 15 (2002)**, the role in protecting water and sanitation rights was expanded in greater detail by **ECOSOC** by providing a legal basis for its protection as a human right and defining how the right to water is a part of basic human rights. **General Comment No. 15** also lists state obligations which are: to respect the right to water by not infringing on its full enjoyment through direct or indirect means, to protect by not letting any third-party groups impede on the right to water, and also to fulfil the right by taking necessary measures to help both individuals and communities enjoy the right to its full realization.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), Article 14, specifically calls on states to protect the rights of rural women by protecting their right to enjoy

adequate living conditions and take into account their important roles as economic providers for their families.

One of the most well-known plans of action protecting the right to water and sanitation is the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, with particular attention paid to Target 7c, which calls for the international

community to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.”

In 2010, Target 7c, regarding access to safe drinking water, became the first MDG to be met by exceeding its goal by one percent and declaring that now 89% of the world's population now had increased access to improved water sources. From 1990-2011, access to improved sanitation facilities was increased for 240,000 people daily which has improved the situation for many, but shows that more work in protecting sanitation rights needs to be done.

The sanitation goal of 75% in Target 7c is still below expectations at 67%, almost 10% less than the goal for worldwide sanitation access. In July 2013, the **United Nations General Assembly (GA)** adopted resolution 67/291, titled **Sanitation for All**, which calls on states to take the necessary steps to end open defecation and also draw attention to the issue by declaring November 19th World Toilet Day, in which further public awareness on sanitation will be spread throughout Member States through education and activities.

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has also been involved in improving this right through their **Water, Sanitation, and Health (WSH)** program that is broken down into six core activities: drinking water quality management, water supply and sanitation monitoring, cholera surveillance and prevention, water and sanitation in different settings, water resources management, and activities such as climate change, economic factors, and MDGs. WHO also works closely with **the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** through their **Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP)** in which reports are conducted every two years to see the progress being made in achieving MDG Target 7c.

Through their joint working relationship, WHO and UNICEF use oral rehydration therapy to help counteract the deadly dehydration effects of diarrhoea on children throughout the world. In addition to publishing these reports through the JMP, WHO has also published other reports such as *Securing Sanitation* in conjunction with the **Swedish International Water Institute** which investigates the economic benefits of investing in sanitation, which could reach as high as 65 billion USD annually, and considered ways in which progress could be increased.

In June 2013, the **Water Integrity Forum**, a joint effort of the **Water Integrity Network**, the **Water Governance Centre** and the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**, was held to show the importance of good governance in ensuring water rights. This became the first international forum on water integrity. The Water Integrity Forum brought together NGOs, government officials, members of the private sector, and water professionals and aimed to address the importance of tackling corruption issues in achieving water rights while identifying the main challenges and approaches that were needed to overcome the major problems with corruption and a lack of integrity.

Increased transparency, accountability and participation can be achieved through avenues such as improved consumer awareness and public expenditure tracking. At the end of the conference, it was decided that participants would work to use and expand already existing networks, and awareness would continue to build for the issue by working to integrate water integrity as part of the post-2015 development agenda.

Role of the Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) is committed to protecting the right to water and sanitation for all and in 2008 established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. Under HRC resolution 7/22 (2008), the role of the Special Rapporteur is to conduct research and reports on various themes to present to the HRC and the GA, conduct country missions

to investigate progress made, receive allegation about violations and enter a working dialogue with governments to fix these violations, advise all parties in realizing the right to water and sanitation for all, and issue public statements and events regarding the issues. One of the great contributions the Special Rapporteur has made in the fight for water and sanitation as a human right is her publication highlighting good practices titled. *On the Right Track: Good practices in realizing the rights to water and sanitation*. Since the violation of the right to water can impede on nearly all other human rights, HRC resolution 12/24 on the *Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development* protects water and sanitation rights under the state's obligation to ensure the highest attainable standards for physical and mental health. In HRC resolution 18/1, explicit guidelines are set forth for states to follow, including the need to create and implement short term targets for helping those who have not yet realized the basic target goals to achieve them before focusing on improving those that have already met said goals.

Water and Sanitation, the HRC, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The Human Rights Council is also involved in developing the post-2015 development agenda by emphasizing the human rights portion of working towards achieving an agenda that focuses on freedom from want and fear, and overcoming discrimination through stronger accountability mechanisms. The Special Rapporteur has also taken up the responsibility of utilizing working papers to help guide the role of water and sanitation in the post-2015 development framework, through feasible means and addressing the root causes of inequalities that cause a lack of access outside of the obvious economic inequalities. In *The Future is Now*, the Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of paying attention to these inequalities and the need to address them separately by using the example of a statistic on a South-East Asian country with an open defecation rate for the majority group of 37%, while the minority group in the same country had an open defecation rate of 70%. While focusing on the human rights aspect of the post-2015 development agenda, the HRC is emphasizing the importance in all states developing a national social protection scheme with all people in all states having access to these social protections by 2030, with water and sanitation falling under the social protection category of access to basic services.

Marginalized Groups Affected by the Right to Water and Sanitation

One of the main issues in protecting water and sanitation rights is addressing the needs of the marginalized groups, such as women, children and those with disabilities, which are often neglected in achieving full realization of these rights.

According to UNICEF, 300 million children suffer from illnesses that are caused by inadequate healthcare services, poor nutrition and a lack of clean water. In some developing countries, women are often burdened with the task of finding and fetching the water necessary for domestic and personal use for their household, which often results in them walking numerous miles carrying heavy loads of water that is not always safe for use. In India, estimates show that the economic cost of women fetching water results in a loss of 150 million work days a year, which is equivalent to a national income loss of 10 billion rupees a day. This task can often affect young girls' attendance in schools, such as in Tanzania, where data shows that girls' attendance in school were 12% higher for those who lived 15 minutes or less from their water source compared to those who lived one hour or more away from their water source. Lack of sanitation also has negative effects on girls' education, with parents pulling daughters out of school after puberty when schools do not offer them access to separate and adequate sanitation facilities. Cultural norms and a sense of shame and physical discomfort are perhaps the key factors in explaining why lack of proper and private sanitation facilities affect women and girls have a higher impact than they do for men and boys who have more freedom to relieve themselves more publicly.

An estimated one billion people, or about 15% of the world's population, are persons with disabilities, according to the UN. Ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries are unable to attend school because they lack decent access to toilets. Persons with disabilities are exceptionally vulnerable to these problems because in addition to being part of the most impoverished individuals, they

also lack social programs tailored to their needs.

There is also a lack of in-depth data available on how water and sanitation affect those with disabilities specifically, instead of their role as part of the most impoverished populations in developing countries. Access to safe drinking water and well-equipped sanitation facilities is essential for persons with disabilities to live independent lives. Under the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)*, Article 28 ensures the right to an adequate standard of living without discrimination on the basis of disability and should be provided with equal and affordable access to clean water. When individuals with disabilities take an active participatory role in the decision-making processes affecting them, there is increased access; in the case of Tanzania, people with disabilities were able to influence and pick the location of water points that best suited their needs while also participating in awareness campaigns through *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs*.

Mozambique has also seen an increase in water and sanitary conditions with the help of Concern Universal's "Nothing About US Without Us," which aims to improve awareness, advocate for more inclusive programs, and highlight the challenges faced by the country's people with disabilities.

Case Study: Kenya

Prior to reforms, Kenya was having a difficult time protecting the right to water, especially for the poor, due in part to a lack of infrastructure and unprofessional and highly centralized water management practices. Many of Kenya's impoverished people had to pay five to ten times more for water and sanitation services that were not always considered adequate, because these services were coming from informal sources that did not have government support. When pipes burst, it can take anywhere from weeks to months to fix, rendering them an unreliable source of water. The country's main fresh water source, referred to as the "natural water towers," had receded from 11.4 to 4.3 cubic meters due to largescale deforestation. In Kenya's second-largest city, Mombasa, citizens were forced to comply with rationing policies and supplement their water needs by purchasing water from vendors. With all these major problems in water management, Kenya had to develop new strategies at both the national and community levels.

With the help of *the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development*, Kenya was able to adopt water sector reforms that were overseen by the *Ministry of Water and Irrigation*. The water sector reform programs have five components: water sector reform, regulatory authority, poverty fund, water resources management, and scaling up of plot sanitation.¹⁶¹ Through the *Water Services Trust Fund*, 700,000 people are enjoying new access to water with 60,000 people gaining access to sanitation facilities, and by the end of 2013 the number should increase to 11 million new people.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is also promoting the use of *water action groups (WAGs)* to empower those in low-income urban areas. Through the use of WAGs, pressure and accountability are applied to make sure utility demands continue to be met and without such long delays. Through its trial run in 2010, WAGs were able to resolve an outstanding 97% of over 400 complaints. *Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS)* initiatives also helped address the problem of open defecation in Kenya, by increasing the number of defecation-free communities to 1,000 as of April 2011. Before the program, people in low-income urban areas were resorting to defecating in plastic bags or tins that were disposed of in improper landfills that would pollute rivers, contaminate waters, and expose slum dwellers to a wide array of health problems. Through CLTS, dialogue is created between those affected and those implementing policies to try to find lasting solutions to urban sanitation problems as well as teaching community members that lack knowledge on the subject the advantages of using proper sanitation facilities over practicing open defecation.

Conclusion

Protecting the human right to water and sanitation for all is important because of how closely related it is to realizing the full enjoyment of other essential human rights. The financial benefits of increasing the availability of water and sanitation rights to all outweigh the costs associated with making both rights available for everyone from the affluent to the poor. Child mortality rates are highest when this right is not

protected, especially in developing countries. There are many approaches that increase the chances of achieving this right for all, but there is a considerable amount of success shown in countries that develop dialogue with those directly affected by national policies that will be implemented. While MDG 7c has been achieved, there is still a long way to go till the right to sanitation and water for all is realized by all people.

Questions for delegates to consider: What short-term and long-term approaches should be taken to addressing this issue for the world's most impoverished people? What role should the post-2015 development agenda play in ensuring the right to water and sanitation is increased for people around the world? What policies or programs can be implemented to address the unique needs of the marginalized groups and make sure they are not left far behind in achieving these goals?