

*Background Guide*

**Economic and Social Council**  
**Ethiopian Drought and Conflict**



# JACKRABBIT MUN VI

L.B. POLY - MAY 25th, 2024

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# CHAIR LETTER

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Hello delegates!

I am delighted to be your chair at Poly's sixth annual Jackrabbit MUN conference in the Ethiopian Drought & Conflict room! I am a senior in Poly's PACE program and I joined Model UN in my junior year to better my public speaking skills, as well as my confidence during speeches, and learn more about international conflicts because we are so often wrapped up in our own country's politics. Being in Model UN has helped me with collaboration, debating, and negotiation which are all important skills I will take with me to college!

After reading this background guide, it is my hope that you will be able to come up with innovative ideas that will contribute to a collaborative resolution during committee and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me with the email provided below!

Sincerely,

Ildah Reid

ECOSOC Ethiopian Drought/Conflict| Chair

ildahreid@gmail.com



# POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

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- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 19th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through the google form:
  - <https://forms.gle/9Y2CJygwoAwKXPmw7>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
  - Country Name
  - First Last
  - School Name
  - ECOSOC
- Papers should be submitted as a PDF file
  - Please name the file [Committee\_Country]
    - Ex. **ECOSOC\_United States**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
  - Background & UN Involvement
  - Position of your Country
  - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.



# COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

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## **ECOSOC At a Glance**

*The Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. The UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.*

## **Coordinating Humanitarian Action**

*ECOSOC's Humanitarian Affairs Segment is a unique platform that brings together UN Member States, UN organizations, humanitarian and development partners, the private sector and affected communities through meetings each June.*

## **Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

*The contribution of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to conflict prevention and peacebuilding emerged in the early 1990s when there was a shared recognition by the Security Council, the General Assembly and ECOSOC itself of the need for a comprehensive approach to these issues and for coordinated support to countries emerging from conflict. The entire 2030 Agenda provides the framework to address the root causes of conflicts and reversals into conflict. ECOSOC's work at the intersection of peace and development is essential for achieving the SDGs.*



# TOPIC SYNOPSIS

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In 2022, the UN addressed its concern for the estimated 35 million Ethiopians who are expected to face difficult humanitarian circumstances. Ethiopia is still experiencing its worst drought in 40 years and is heading towards its sixth consecutive failed rainy season which could prolong a drought already affecting 24 million people. Ethnic and regional conflicts across the country are simultaneously disrupting lives and preventing humanitarian organizations from delivering aid. One investigation found that over 7,000 metric tons of wheat and 215,000 liters of food oil had been looted by the various warring factions. In addition to theft, bureaucracy, and violence have blocked aid from reaching people in need. In 2021, a UN food aid convoy ventured into Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region with 445 trucks. Only 38 returned, as one of the warring parties allegedly seized 407 of the vehicles.

The humanitarian response to the drought in Ethiopia is insufficiently funded, even more so than in East African countries facing a similar crisis. If Ethiopia doesn't receive aid and stabilize their government, its people will begin to starve as prices for food rise and they are struck with violence . \* Delegates will represent leaders from both sides of the conflict and citizens of our international community to negotiate toward a viable solution. Delegates must also seek to install political stability in not only the devastated Tigray region, but establish unity among government entities in the Horn of Africa.



# BACKGROUND

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## History of Drought

Over 40 million Africans have been affected by drought in East Africa. These recurring droughts commonly cause food insecurity and famine, weakening children and adults' immune systems, making them more vulnerable to disease. Ethiopia has been fighting drought since the 1980s. The factors that led to severe damage in the country were food and water scarcity, and disputes in the North where they were the most heavily affected. This was one of the worst droughts in history leading to over 1 million deaths and shifted the world's attention, specifically the United Nations, to ending starvation across the globe and promoting humanitarian policies.



Since then, Ethiopia has faced several droughts with the most recent beginning in 2015. Farmers in Ethiopia rely on the Belg rainy season that falls from February to May, but in 2015 the rain came late and the country suffered through a harsh El Nino. This was determined to be a rare event said to happen in certain regions of the country once every few centuries, however, Ethiopia is now heading to its sixth consecutive dry season.

## Rise of the TPLF

The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was founded in 1975 when millions across Africa and the Middle Eastern regions called for uprising and liberation. This party began in the northern region of Tigray inspired by Marxist-Leninism and



utopian ideals. Following the murder of the last emperor of Ethiopia a year prior, Marxist army officers established an authoritarian regime that the people were not in support of. The TPLF grew steadily throughout the 70s and by 1980 they had around 4000 fighters. Led by Debretsion Gebremichael, they viciously took down rival groups in Tigray and allied with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) to take control of Addis Ababa, the country's capital, on May 28, 1991.

## Ethiopia-Eritrea Tensions

Following a 17 year long civil war (1974-1991) where the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (a left wing nationalist group seeking independence from Ethiopian rule) and Tigrayan People's Liberation Front joined forces and took down the Ethiopian Derg regime, resulting in Eritrean independence and TPLF taking political power in Ethiopia, their complex differences began to cause tensions that would create a hostile relationship to date.

On May 6, 1998, a town on the two countries' borders called Badme was wanted by



both sides. This land dispute led to thousands of lives lost and would be known as the deadliest border war on the continent. Two years later, Ethiopia and Eritrea established a Boundary Commission to solve the dispute and the final ruling awarded Badme to Eritrea. When Ethiopia failed to accept this ruling without further negotiations, Eritrea refused to speak until they comply. In





December of 2005, Ethiopia withdrew some of its forces from the Eritrean border to maintain peace and a few weeks later a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled that Eritrea broke international law by beginning the attacks on May 6, 1998. However, Eritrea believes that because Ethiopia failed to accept the ruling of Badme becoming Eritrea territory, they broke international law. How can two countries resolve land that they both believe is theirs?

## **Growing Tensions**

In 2018, the two countries seemingly resolved the conflict with a joint declaration on July 9th, opening the borders and restoring diplomatic relations. However, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed recently claimed that Ethiopia should control a port in the Red Sea already seeded by the 2018 peace. Abiy made a public speech in October 2023 stating that because of its history, Ethiopia is tied to the Red Sea, and should therefore have links to it through a port. Although Abiy stressed that this shall be resolved through peaceful negotiations, in November he claimed that “a failure to resolve the issue through negotiation could lead to conflict”. With tensions rising and dissent from surrounding countries, Abiy reassured peace through signing a defense memorandum of understanding.



## **Tigray War**

The 2018 peace quickly resurfaced in 2020 as the roots of this deal was an alliance between Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and Asmara, the capital of Eritrea to contain and take down the TPLF. This war lasted until November 2022 and thousands of lives were lost. Civilian structures in towns in Tigray, including hospitals,





schools, factories, and businesses, were shelled, looted and destroyed by Ethiopian federal forces and regional militias, and by Eritrean armed forces. Millions were affected by the war and many fled to surrounding countries such as

Sudan. Similar to the civil war, the differences of the allied got the best of them and hostility grew. Prime Minister Abiy made peace with the TPLF in November of 2022 through a Pretoria Agreement and Eritrea has begun to more closely align themselves with Kenya and Somalia, shifting away from Ethiopia. Both countries are in no condition to entertain conflict as they simply don't have the funds but creating and maintaining peace is what many hope to see in the near future.

# UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

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## **International Pressure**

Due to the misuse and wide-scale theft of aid by almost all of the parties involved in the conflict, the UN halted humanitarian aid to Ethiopia in March of 2023.

Internationally, many countries began pulling money out of their budget that funded the UN's humanitarian aid despite experts' calls for increased humanitarian aid in Ethiopia. Thus, there has been a notable lack of pressure by the international community to support Ethiopian civilians as the drought and conflict continue to draw out over several decades.

## **UN Statements**

On November 2, 2022, Ethiopia's Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front signed a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. In deep concern over its complete implementation, an independent body of the UN called the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) established in 2021 investigated the actions committed in the war by several forces involved in the conflict. In their most recent Chairperson's Statement at the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly, they found that the regional forces, including the Ethiopian National Defense Force and Tigray People's Liberation Front, committed numerous atrocities. The Ethiopian National Defense Force, Tigray People's Liberation Front, and other regional forces were all found to have committed war crimes including: mass killings, systemic rape and violence against women and girls, deliberate starvation, forced displacement, large-scale arrests without cause, destruction of property, looting, extrajudicial killings, and drone strikes.

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In the statement, the Chairperson outlined multiple reasons for the escalation of the political conflict and recommended addressing them as focal areas for finding an initial solution. Some of the causes include the prevalence of hate speech, restrictions on the internet and telecommunications, a weak government that prevents accountability for serious violations, and human rights activists and journalists facing reprisals like detention.

### **Developing Ethiopia’s Government**

Beginning in 2018, the UN began to work closely with Ethiopia to help them strengthen their government to become a more effective and just institution. For example, helping to generate and manage data to inform decision-making policies thanks to the support of the UN’s National Statistical Development Strategy II. Ethiopia has complied by participating in the National Review report on the SDGs to measure the effectiveness of the current efforts to restore stability. However, amid the current conflict, Ethiopia wants power restored to them while the Tigrayan ethnic group demands more political authority and representation in government. While the UN doesn’t support any type of coup or transfer of power—risking further instability—the UN has tried to implement more equity for ethnic groups and other groups at risk by supporting the SDGs.

### **Agricultural Transformation Agency**

To address the environmental crisis that has caused famine in Ethiopia, the UN has committed to implementing the mass use of machinery for Ethiopia’s agricultural resource centers. Ethiopia has complied with efforts to modernize its agricultural sector by developing more infrastructure to support the introduction of advanced technology. The agency is focusing on improving the livelihoods of small farm owners



across the country to reach a collective productivity level on par with other countries for key commodities. Prioritizing small farm owners will also help to economically empower minority communities in Ethiopia which may ease political tensions sparked by oppression. Overall, the ATA initiative aims to implement climate-smart, productive agriculture in Ethiopia. Although it can't necessarily end the drought, transitioning agriculture to suit the needs of a drought-ridden environment can help reduce its detrimental impact on food insecurity.

### **Humanitarian Response**

Currently, approximately 28 million people in Ethiopia are in need of some type of humanitarian aid, 20 million of whom are experiencing malnutrition. In 2018, the UN provided aid for 7.8 million people who were affected by the drought. Despite billions of funds used for aid in Ethiopia throughout the years, it has not been very impactful because it wasn't being distributed to civilians properly. According to news reports, the UN World Food Programme has begun to distribute some aid to a few districts in the Tigray region to test new enhanced controls and measures for delivering food. An estimated 5 million internally displaced people (IDP) are affected by the drought and violence, however, no amount of humanitarian aid can sustainably support IDPs without solving political conflict and violence. To address the political instability and war, the Peace and Security Council has urged all parties to cease fire, but that has not been successful as previously stated,



# BLOC POSITIONS

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## **African Bloc:**

The exploitation of natural resources coupled with rapid changes in our global climate has created a recipe for disaster in this bloc, leaving 1 in 3 Africans without access to water. Modern-day African nations now are forced to discover sustainable solutions to improve water treatment, agricultural production, and most importantly ways to persist during times of famine and drought. Since decolonization, African nations and tribal entities alike have found it difficult to recognize one another's boundaries, culture, and ethnic identities. Thus, major conflict among tribal groups has erupted over agricultural land and resources such as water.

## **Asian-Pacific Bloc:**

Asian and Pacific Islander countries are facing major water crises. Urban centers in particular struggle with the distribution and sanitation of water, especially among South and Southeast Asian communities. Rising sea levels due to climate change also pose a threat to valuable water resources in Pacific Island nations, as ocean water may contaminate rivers, and lakes, and damage water treatment facilities. However, there is hope, as industrialized Asian countries serve as role models in protecting, sanitizing, and distributing water to other less affluent countries in this bloc.

## **European Bloc:**

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Most countries in this bloc have access to the proper infrastructure and funds to assist those plagued by water scarcity. Additionally, these countries help by providing shelters for immigrant refugees fleeing droughts and installing sustainable water sanitation systems; however, they still struggle to ensure that monetary funds and agricultural products sent abroad to humanitarian aid are actually reaching their destinations.

### **North American Bloc:**

Like the European bloc, the North American bloc has been able to withstand major water scarcity conflicts in the 21st century. Countries in this bloc should have access to sanitized water resources, environmentally friendly technology, and the economic resources necessary to fund life-saving humanitarian aid abroad. Similar to Europe, money sent by countries in this bloc to drought-plagued nations might sometimes find its way into corrupt embassies or warring rivals instead in the hands of the people.

### **Arab Bloc:**

Due to rapid population growth, an arid climate, and insufficient rainfall, a variety of Arab countries are rapidly losing their water resources. Poor infrastructure and insufficient irrigation have posed a threat to the accessibility of water for various individuals in this bloc. Additionally, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East over the ownership of water continue to pose threats to the already scarce water resources. Those in the Arab world are three times more likely to die from water-borne diseases and scarcity than from war conflict.



## **Latin American and Caribbean Bloc:**

Water is fundamental in nations across the Latin American and Caribbean world. The ways in which water is repurposed in this bloc is unsustainable and puts indigenous, rural, and urban populations alike at risk for water scarcity. Wasteful irrigation systems, deforestation, and severe changes in climate have caused many to experience extended dry periods and famine. Countries in this block are forced to mitigate their water scarcity to meet the commercial and agricultural demands of citizens.





# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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1. How can a stabilized government be achieved? How will delegates be able to acknowledge the interests of the Tigrayan ethnic group and the Ethiopian government?
2. How will UN Delegates encourage peace talks between political rivals, and between ethnic minorities and majorities?
3. What diplomatic actions can be taken to minimize or eliminate the humanitarian crisis? Think about long-term environmental and health-related solutions.
4. How can the currently violent conflict in Ethiopia reach a peaceful conclusion?
5. How does the distribution of land affect international relations and how can peaceful agreements be established with consideration of multiple perspectives/ideals?
6. How will UN Delegates allocate funding to the diverse needs of the Ethiopian country?



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