



General Assembly

Thirteenth Session

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Sixth Committee – Legal

This group focuses on legal questions. The UN wants all states to agree to international laws. This can happen if they make them together. They also want to make sure people know the laws. This can happen if they are written down and published. This makes it easier for states to work together. It also stops wars from happening. They also ask states to make laws to protect citizens.

Every year the General Assembly gives this group a discussion list. If the legal question is difficult or complex this group asks for help from the **International Law Commission**. This committee has a tradition of consensus. States reach agreement without having to take a vote. This makes sense because if you want everybody to follow a law they should agree it is a good idea.

This group works closely with the **International Law Commission**. They passed resolutions on international terrorism, human cloning, and taking hostages.

Agenda Item 87 – Responsibility of International Organizations

Guiding Questions

In a global world International Organizations will be more and more involved in many aspects of the world. This is because global problems need global partners to solve them. With your fellow delegates you need to find a way to work towards making the following goals a reality.

- How can law decide who is responsible for the negative actions of an international organization?
- What are possible punishments for international organizations that break the law or cause harm to someone?
- How can states make sure that international organizations are responsible and do their best to not cause harm and are honest about their actions?

Background

International organizations are groups of countries that come together in order to solve a problem or bring order to something. Another name for them is intergovernmental organizations. The members are usually countries and together they become a legal entity. They try to solve problems together which they could not do alone. The United Nations is probably the most well-known. The oldest is the *Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine*. The Rhine is a very important river in Europe. This group works to create the same laws all along the Rhine. This means the speed limit of boats is the same along the river. They also work to pass similar environmental laws. It began in 1815 with the membership of Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, and France.

There are many positive things about international organizations. Firstly, they can be

Background

very specific and focus on one issue. They also are the voice of many states and so action can happen on an issue relatively quickly. In addition, they encourage countries to work together and to discuss a problem. However, they make decisions which people of a state did not vote for. A local politician would have trouble changing a rule that an international organization made. Therefore, they can be undemocratic. They can also make issues more complex because countries need to work together to make a change.

Most international organizations have immunity. This means that they cannot be charged with a crime or taken to court. Even if their actions hurt somebody they cannot be held responsible. This can mean that people do not feel they get justice when something bad happens.

Recent Developments

- The reputation of international organizations is very important. Because many of them work with people who are in need, if they are seen as bad or dangerous people might not want to be helped. Sometimes this means they will ignore or not discuss some of the negative things they have done.
 - In 2010 there was a terrible earthquake in Haiti. The UN sent more peacekeepers to Haiti to help the recovery. Less than a year later Haiti had its first case of cholera in 100 years. Over 700 000 people suffered from the effects of cholera. 8 500 people died. The peacekeepers were sent to help but they ended up causing more deaths and problems. This happened because the camp of the UN peacekeepers let sewage into the local water. They brought cholera to Haiti.
 - After many years the Secretary General of the UN offered an apology. He also offered \$400 million to help fight cholera. It was to be paid by donations from member states. Sadly, states have only given 2% of that total.
 - Some people have tried to sue the UN for what has happened. However, the UN has immunity. This means that they do not have to go to court for anything they have done. They cannot be charged with anything. If the UN could be sued it could open peacekeeping up to lawsuits around the world.
 - Interpol is an international organization that works with police around the world. They do not arrest people. They share information in 188 countries. They have done some pretty amazing things. They have helped catch some of the worst criminals in the world! Drug dealers, murderers, and smugglers have all been stopped because of Interpol.
 - Some people think Interpol is not always using their powers for good. If a country wants to catch somebody who committed a crime they tell Interpol. Interpol will put out a red notice and all states will be told that person has an arrest warrant.
 - Some countries misuse the red notice systems. In 2008, the office of the UN High Commission for Refugees said that many refugees were being arrested because of red notices.
 - Research shows that non-democratic states often use Interpol to harass people they do not like. Countries like Russia, China, Turkey and Iran have all ordered red notices on people who did not deserve to be arrested. Some of these people spend months and sometimes more than a year in prison as the police try to figure out what to do with the person.

Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations

- ✓ This is a document passed by the UN in 1946. It gives the UN special status.
- ✓ Do not pay taxes, cannot be charged with a crime, and their territory is protected.
- ✓ Some members of the UN even get a special travel document called a “laissez-passer”. 162 states have signed this agreement.

International Organizations Immunities Act

- ✓ Law passed in the US to help international organizations do their jobs better.
- ✓ The law only applies to international organizations that the US is a part of but sometimes they will make an exception.
- ✓ Most countries have a similar law to protect international organizations in their country.

5 Well-Known International Organizations

Name	What do they do?	Website
NATO	It is a defense pact where each country promises to protect the other.	https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/index.htm
OPEC	A group of countries that produce oil. They work together to keep the price of oil stable.	https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/
European Union	28 European countries that have created a political and economic union.	http://europa.eu/
FAO	An agency of the United Nations that works to end hunger in the world.	http://www.fao.org/home/en/
International Organization for Migration	They research migration and work with members for migration management.	https://www.iom.int/

Research Questions

1. Are there any international organizations based in your country? Is your country part of any international organizations? What do you think are its most important ones?
2. Why do you think some people worry that international organizations have too much power? Why might some states be worried?
3. What actions do international organizations take that are beneficial for people?
4. Have the actions of any international organizations had a negative effect on your country? What about your neighbors?
5. What is an international organization you think your country and other ones would be interested in creating?
6. Does your country give international organizations protected status in your country? Do you think this is important? Why or why not?
7. How can states support international organizations so that they are more answerable to people?
8. Does the problem exist in your community?
9. How does being a delegate from a different country help you understand this problem in your community?
10. How do the choices you make in your life help resolve this problem?

Resources

Source / Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
Harvard Law School	https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/what-is-public-interest-law/public-service-practice-settings/public-international-law/intergovernmental-organizations-igos/	Brief, easy to read overview of international organizations.
The Telegraph	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10801997/Interpol-who-polices-the-worlds-police.html	Article on Interpol, its history and some of its controversies.
Google Special Search Engine	https://cse.google.com/cse?q=&cx=006748068166572874491:55ez0c3j3ey	This is a search engine that ONLY focuses on international organizations.
Weapons Law	http://www.weaponslaw.org/cases/ecthr-behrami-2007	Overview of a court case that had to do with the death of a child in an area that was controlled by an international organization.
NPR	https://www.npr.org/series/130918979/cholera-in-haiti	News articles about the outbreak of cholera in Haiti due to UN peacekeepers.
The Guardian	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/01/haiti-cholera-outbreak-stain-on-reputation-un-says	The Guardian newspaper about how the UN took responsibility for cholera in Haiti...after six years.
Quiz	https://blog.oup.com/2017/03/international-organizations-quiz/	A quiz to see how much you know about international organizations.
International Organizations Yearbook	https://uia.org/ybio/	A list of all 67,000 international organizations in the world.
Penn State University Library	http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/governmental-organizations	Some research links for international organizations.