

United Nations High Committee on Refugees

President's Letter

Hello Delegates,

My name is Brendan Thompson and I am a Political Science major at St. Bonaventure University. This is my second year chairing in the high school Model United Nations conference and I am very much looking forward to chairing the UNHCR council. I have been a co-chair and a delegate before, so I understand what challenges you face in producing a good debate. I encourage all of you to not be afraid to speak. My chairing style is laid back and I want to create an environment where it is easy and comfortable for everyone to speak many times, as I expect everyone to talk during this conference. A good way to make sure you have good material to talk about is to do research on how your country views a certain issue. I encourage you to do thorough research on your country, which is the only way to make meaningful contribution to the conference. I have given you some sources to research below each topic to address the issue. I do not expect you to know every single rule and I am not going to call you out if you forget a rule. However, I advise you to study the rules and procedures to keep the debate formal and productive. I would like to wish you good luck and I will see you at the conference.

TOPICS:

Addressing Statelessness

Statelessness is a large problem we have in today's world. There are at least 10 million stateless people in the world, and one third of them are children. Statelessness is usually a result of policy decisions that discriminate against religion, ethnicity, and other "undesirable people". Statelessness is still a major problem even with two international treaties in place to stop it. The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness are the key international conventions addressing this issue. They are complemented by international human rights treaties and provisions relevant of the right to a nationality. The UNHCR's goal is to end statelessness within 10 years. The three main goals to accomplish this feat are to:

- Resolve the major situations of statelessness today.
- Prevent the emergence of new cases of statelessness.
- Improve the Identification and protection of stateless populations.

The largest statelessness crisis in the world today is in Myanmar where one million Rohingya Muslims are being discriminated against by their country. In 1982, a citizenship law recognized 135 ethnic groups. However, it completely left out the Rohingya Muslims, which has had a lasting impact on their status in Myanmar. Other countries that have a large statelessness problem are

1. What exactly is statelessness?
2. What are the major causes of statelessness?
3. What countries bear the most responsibility for ending statelessness?
4. What countries need the most help in solving statelessness?
5. Should children and women be the focus on solving statelessness?
6. Should the United Nations intervene?
7. Should there be an international treaty to help resolve this question?

5. Why haven't Gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia or Qatar, received refugees?
6. Has the UN done anything to alleviate the problem?

Sources:

<http://syrianrefugees.eu>

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>

<https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syria-refugee-crisis-faq-war-affecting-children>

Natural Disasters and Refugees

Between the years of 2008 and 2015, 203 million people were evicted from their homes from natural disasters. Climate change, food, water, and resources are all factors that will lead to an increase in the number of displaced people

<https://www.fastcoexist.com/1682141/mapping-the-31-million-people-displaced-by-natural-disasters-so-far>