

Iowa Youth Symposium on the United Nations

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What should be the U.S. position in the UN on Free and Fair Elections? (Political Topic)

Topic Background

"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives... The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

Article 21, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. **United States Declaration of Independence, 1776**

Elections are the process by which the people of a nation have the opportunity to choose the leaders of their government. Though the forms of government may vary (proportional, direct, parliamentary, republic, etc.), the process through which these governments are chosen, namely, elections, requires a system in which the population voting can have trust in the integrity of the system in order for confidence in the elected government to continue.

The history of elections and the development of the process has taken many turns. From marbles and hand votes, to paper ballots and electronic voting, the essential question remains the same: are the results a true reflection of the "will of the people" or "consent of the governed". What measures need to be in place to insure these results? What are the consequences of these measures not being in place?

Questions to Consider

- What are the essential elements to define a free election?
- What are the essential elements to define a fair election?
- What safeguards should be in place to protect the election process?
- What are the ramifications of not ensuring the election process?
- What is the system in place in the United States?
- Does the United States need a uniform process?
- Are there countries that could serve as models for how to conduct free and fair elections?

UNITED NATIONS

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/electoralassistance.shtml>

<http://www.un.org/undpa/en/elections>

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