

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY STUDY GUIDE

Southern Colorado Model United Nations Conference 2021



Hosted by the Adams State University Model United Nations Team

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Table of Contents

Message from the Secretary General and Chairs.....	3
Introduction to the Committee.....	4
Links for Overall Research.....	5
Topic A: Countering False and Misleading Information.....	6
The Digital Age.....	7
Countering the ‘Infodemic’ During COVID-19.....	8
Freedom of Expression.....	9
Significant Documents.....	10
Guiding Research Questions.....	10
References.....	10
Suggestions for Further Research.....	11
Topic B: Combating all Forms of Violence Against Indigenous People.....	11
Women and Children.....	12
Recognizing the Rights of Indigenous People Across the Globe.....	13
Indigenous Participation.....	
Significant Documents.....	14
Guiding Research Questions.....	15
References.....	15
Suggestions for Further Research.....	16

This study guide serves three purposes: (1) to give you insight on how SoCoMUN 2021 will be run on the virtual scale, (2) to give you background information on the debate topics, and (3) serve as a guide for your own personal research. Please read through this study guide thoroughly so we can all be as prepared as possible. (*Thank you to Nicolas Centeno for authoring this introduction*)

Message from the Co-Secretary Generals & Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the fourth annual Southern Colorado Model United Nations conference hosted by Adams State Model UN. We are so excited for all of you to be joining us and looking forward to a successful conference. We urge you to look into the many sources available in preparation for this conference. It is key to look into your country's position on these topics to accurately represent and advocate for your country.

Message from your Co-Secretary Generals

Delegates, we are very excited to have you all participate at this year's conference. We want to stress the importance of Model United Nations, especially during such turbulent times in world affairs. Each topic and committee are essential for delegates to understand, as we watch, for now, the United Nations attempt to address such crucial topics. Despite our young team, we can assure you that we have been working since the closing ceremonies of SoCoMUN 2020 to ensure that SoCoMUN 2021 runs smoother and that you all experience and learn more about the UN and the ongoing international issues. Please, if you have any concerns or questions at any time, do not hesitate to contact us at southerncoloradomun@gmail.com

Co-Secretary Generals Benjamin Key and Zoe Serrano

Introduction to the Committee

Welcome to the General Assembly! The General Assembly is often referred to as the “**GA**”. The GA is one of the main bodies of the United Nations, responsible for reporting to the Security Council, making decisions on peace, security, budgets, and adding new members. It is unique because unlike other UN bodies, all 193 countries of the world (**Member States**) are represented and have an equal vote. See the Links for Further Research section to see a list of all member states.

- The General Assembly provides a space for discussions between all nations on various issues concerning international cooperation, such as environmental issues, cultural topics, and social issues. It has been described as a global town hall.
- The GA was created in 1945 by the **United Nations Charter**. There were 51 founding members, including the United States.
- South Sudan is the UN’s newest member state. Its application for membership was accepted in 2011.
- The GA convenes September-December at the New York City Headquarters and after that for special sessions when needed.
- Other than general debate about the world’s most important issues, the General Assembly has other responsibilities as one of the main organs of the United Nations.
 - To elect the non-permanent members to the Security Council and other UN bodies;
 - To appoint the secretary general based on the Security Council’s recommendation;
 - To examine reports from the other UN organs;
 - To complete the crucial task of setting the budget for the United Nations;
 - To review the financial stability of member states.
- The GA consists of 6 main sub-committees that tackle different issues:
 - Disarmament and International Security (DiSec)
 - Economic and Financial (ECOFIN)
 - Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SoCHum)
 - Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SpecPol)
 - Administrative and Budgetary
 - Legal

Special thank you to Mariah McDermott for writing the introduction to this committee.

Links for Overall Research

The United Nations Charter

<https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/udhr.pdf>

List of Member States

<https://www.un.org/en/member-states/>

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

UN-General Assembly Resolutions

<https://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/>

UN-Security Council Resolutions

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions>

Topic A: Countering False and Misleading Information

There are many issues that have arisen due to the nature of modern technology. One issue in particular has caused uneasiness among the general population; this is false and misleading information. Countering false and misleading information is something that we must find a solution to by working together. However, countering false and misleading information may vary according to each member state. The best way to find a solution is to work together to find a structure that best addresses the problems without interfering with the sovereignty of each individual member state.

Some topics that will be discussed in this section of the study guide are: how the digital age has influenced the rise of false and misleading information, countering misinformation during the COVID-29 pandemic, and the importance of protecting freedom of expression and opinion of both the individual and the journalist. Each of these topics has a major influence in the way member states can discuss countering false and misleading information to protect their citizens from false information.

The Digital Age

According to a Pew Research case study in the United States, “64% of adults believe fake news stories cause a great deal of confusion and 23% said they had shared fabricated political stories themselves – sometimes by mistake and sometimes intentionally” ([Anderson et al 2017](#)). Technology has impacted the way people consume information and has made it easier to spread false and misleading information. Citizens are becoming aware of the problem of false and misleading news, some even using them to their advantage. Member states are encouraged to discuss possible frameworks that can be used across the world to prevent this issue, as well as in their own countries if applicable.

- **Advertisements:** Misleading advertisements can be considered one of the most obvious



reasons as to why false and misleading information is a growing problem. It seems that in the age of social media, false advertising has moved beyond the food and cosmetic industries and developed into a tactic used in political campaigns to influence the general public.

[\[Image Source: False Advertising\]](#)

- **Political Elections:** False and misleading information has had a significant impact on how normal citizens view political elections. Some politicians have used false and misleading ads to convince citizens that they are the best person to vote for. One example of this described situation is the United States presidential election in 2016. A study done by Ohio State University, “ suggests that about 4 percent of President Barack Obama's 2012 supporters were dissuaded from voting for Clinton in 2016 by belief in fake news

stories” ([Blake 2018](#)). While more research must be done about the topic, misleading



advertisements, especially during political elections must be considered in simulation.

- Some social networking sites have taken action against false and misleading posts but some may believe that this is still not enough to

counter this issue. While this example was set in the United States, there are many countries that have encountered the same issue. It is up to delegates to best represent their assigned country’s interest.

Countering the ‘Infodemic’ during COVID-19

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the United Nations has taken on a role to counter misinformation about the pandemic. The UN stated, “from misinformation about the use of disinfectants to combat the coronavirus, to false claims that the virus can spread through radio waves and mobile networks, unreliable information is hurting the global effort to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic” ([United Nations 2020](#)). In the article cited, the UN listed five ways it is countering the COVID-19 “infodemic.”. These steps include producing and disseminating facts and accurate information, partnering with businesses, working with media and journalists, mobilizing civil society, and speaking out for rights. The steps the UN are currently taking to fight against misinformation during the pandemic are a good starting point for delegates’ research. [[Image Source: UNESCO](#)]

Freedom of Expression

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that all individuals have the right to enjoy the freedom of expression and belief. Member states are encouraged to keep this declaration in mind when discussing ways to counter false and misleading information.

- **Protecting the Rights of Citizens:** As guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people are entitled to freedom of speech. While discussing false and misleading information, one must consider whether or not the rights of citizens are being protected. There is a fine line between protecting citizens from false and misleading information and censoring the media citizens are consuming.
- **Safety of Journalists:** Journalists play a large role in countering false and misleading information. Unfortunately, they are often targets. According to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “ [the] OHCHR has observed a rise in the scale and number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers, as well as of incidents affecting their ability to exercise freedom of expression, including threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access and failure to investigate and prosecute crimes against them” ([2021](#)). When researching, determine whether or not your state is protecting journalists as they publish their work.
- As mentioned previously, one way the United Nations have worked to counter the issue of misinformation is by communication with the media and journalists. A possible solution to this problem is to suggest to member states that they become more collaborative with their news outlets. Collaboration between governments, activists, and media can be a step in the right direction to counter false and misleading information.

Significant Documents

- UN General Assembly [A/75/L.68](#) “Global Media and Information Literacy Week”
- Human Rights Council [A/HRC/44/L.18/Rev.1](#) “Freedom of Opinion and Expression”

Guiding Research Questions

This is a complex topic. You, as a delegate, might choose to explore the different ways countries participate in preventing the spread of false and misleading information.

1. How can member states encourage their citizens to fact check news articles they may come across?
2. Are there any laws placed in my/your assigned country meant to counter false and misleading information?
3. How is my/your assigned country protecting the rights of journalists? Consider whether or not my/your assigned country has ratified any proposed resolutions meant to protect people who are reporting current events.

References

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- Blake, Aaron. 2018. “A New Study Suggests Fake News might have Won Donald Trump the 2016 Elections.” *The Washington Post*, 3 April 2018.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2021. “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SafetyOfJournalists/Pages/index.aspx> (September 16, 2021).
- United Nations. 2020. “Five Ways the UN is Fighting ‘Infodemic’ of Misinformation.” <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/five-ways-united-nations-fighting-%E2%80%99infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation> (September 16, 2021).

Suggestions for Further Research

[UN Department of Global Communications](#)

[United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#)

[UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)

[OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#) (Check latest reports and publications)

Topic B: Combating all Forms of Violence Against

Indigenous People



According to the United Nations, “Indigenous peoples today, are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now

recognizes that special measures are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life” ([2021](#)). While there are many issues that must be addressed when it comes to protecting the Indigenous population, combating all forms of violence against Indigenous people will be discussed in this simulation.

Women and Children

Women often experience different forms of violence. Some of the most prominent among the Indigenous population are sexual assault, disappearances, and sex trafficking. A good source of information for this section of the study guide is on the UN Women website. [[Image Source: 26th Annual Women's Memorial March](#)]

- **Murder and Disappearances of Indigenous Women:** One of the major steps in addressing the murder and disappearances of Indigenous women is to recognize that not enough attention is paid to, “[t]he unsolved disappearances and deaths of as many as 4,000 indigenous females dating back decades” ([O'Day 2018](#)). According to Professor Annalisa Enrile, an expert on human trafficking believes that Current--belated--investigations may be seen as part of the “global narrative of how many women are missing” due to crime such as trafficking ([O'Day 2018](#)). In order to address this issue, delegates are encouraged to implement strategies meant to educate people about Indigenous issues. In addition, discusses strategies meant to protect Indigenous women, who are often the targets of murder and disappearances.
- Several things to look into are the locations where women often go missing. Are they in cities, rural areas, or on Indigenous land? Is there a lack of protection from the police? Consider these questions when doing research on different countries.
- **Sex Trafficking:** Sex trafficking of Indigenous people often goes overlooked because it is often unreported. Indigenous women and girls are at a high risk of sex trafficking ([O'Day 2018](#)). As mentioned previously, there is a lack of information on the matter because it is often ignored and goes unreported. When discussing ways to prevent all

forms of violence against the Indigenous population, delegates must consider the underlying factors as to why these crimes go unreported.

Indigenous Activists

- With 227 murders, 2020 was the deadliest recorded year for environmental activists ([Global Witness 2021](#)). Attacks occurred around the world, but mostly in the global south.
- Despite the fact that Indigenous people constitute 5% of the world's population, they make up more than 30% of the victims of fatal violence against activists. According to the NGO Global Witness ([2021](#)), “Indigenous peoples were also the target of 5 out of the 7 mass killings recorded in 2020.”
- This number, however, may well be higher given the increasing limits placed on the media and freedom of expression ([Marshall 2021](#)) This relates back to **Topic A**.

Other Forms of Violence

Delegates may also consider other forms of violence against Indigenous people, such as endemic poverty, encroachment on their land and limits on cultural expression--even attempts to destroy cultures. These may be less obvious than physical violence, but their effects can be just as deadly and more pervasive.

Recognizing the Rights of Indigenous People Across the Globe

As discussed throughout this section of the study guide, there is a clear lack of awareness about the obstacles and violations Indigenous populations face, especially in terms of different forms of violence. In [2007](#), the United Nations decided to codify the rights of Indigenous people. A good place to start your research is by looking at the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The United Nations further stresses the importance of having the indigenous population participate in any discussions and resolutions about issues concerning their people. It works to strengthen actions taken by each member state to support Indigenous populations, towards accountability of the people who commit crimes against Indigenous people, and to increase the data available about the issues indigenous people face ([United Nations 2021](#)).

At the moment, these are only ideas the United Nations has. Should member states listen to the recommendations of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders? ([Global Witness 2021](#)) Consider the possibilities of governments balancing the rights of Indigenous peoples with the demands of corporations that may exploit Indigenous labor and land. Delegates are encouraged to discuss ways these ideas can become reality. Indigenous people all over the world have different needs so ways to combat all forms of violence may differ from member state to member state. The best way to meet the needs of Indigenous populations is by including them in the conversation when discussing possible ways to combat all forms of violence Indigenous people face.

Significant Documents

- United Nations [Declaration](#) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- UN General Assembly [A/75/475](#) “Rights of Indigenous Peoples”

- UN General Assembly [A/RES/65/198](#) “Indigenous Issues”
- Human Rights Council [A/HRC/46/72](#) “Annual report of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”

Guiding Research Questions

This is a complex topic. You, as a delegate, might choose to explore the different ways countries participate in combating all forms of violence against Indigenous peoples.

1. Did your country vote to adopt the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*?
If not, why not?
2. Are there any laws set in place that are meant to protect the rights of the indigenous population(s) in your country? Determine whether or not these rights are enforced.
3. Does your country’s economy depend on natural resource extraction (oil, timber, etc.)?
How does this affect Indigenous people?
4. What do the Indigenous population(s) in your country suggest when it comes to combating all forms of violence? Are there any NGOs or advocacy groups?
5. How can/your assigned country raise awareness of the issues the Indigenous population(s) in your country face?

References

- Global Witness. 2021. *Last Line of Defence*.
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- Marshall, Claire. 2021. Record number of environmental activists murdered. BBC.
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United Nations. 2021.” Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples: A Call to Action.”

<https://unsceb.org/building-inclusive-sustainable-and-resilient-future-indigenous-peoples-Call-action> (September 16, 2021).

United Nations. 2021. “Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations.”

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html> (September 16, 2021).

Suggestions for Further Research

[Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations](#)

[Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples: A Call to Action](#)

[UN Women: Elimination and Responses to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse of Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women](#)

[Global Witness: “Last Line of Defence”](#)