

UN General Assembly – First Committee

Disarmament and International Security

The UNGA First Committee is one of the most influential and consequential international organizations that exist today. The guidelines and rules that it creates set the frame for the way future conflicts do or do not take place. Its ultimate goal is to prevent the breakout of war by providing a forum for countries to ensure their own security and the security of other countries through non-military means.

Overall Background

The first General Assembly resolution ever passed came from the First Committee, and it has continued to pass important resolutions since. The following section gives two examples of and describes important actions of the First Committee so that members may have an idea of what their solutions will look like over the course of their debates.

[Resolution 1\(I\) – Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy](#)

As evidenced by the name, this resolution provided for the creation of a commission that would set guidelines for the use of nuclear energy following the

events of World War II, including the first use of nuclear weapons. This is the aforementioned first resolution ever passed by the United Nations General Assembly, and set an important precedent as to what powers the First Committee and the United Nations as a whole could wield.

[Resolution 1378 \(XIV\) – General and Complete Disarmament](#)

The first unanimously passed resolution of the United Nations, this resolution called upon member nations to fully disarm in order to promote peace to the fullest extent possible. A resolution calling for general and complete disarmament has appeared in every session since.

Topic 1: Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

Space is well known as the final frontier of human exploration. But with that exploration comes the dangers of competition; over land, over resources, and over influence. One of the most vital missions for the United Nations GA first committee is to ensure that whatever form the future of outer space takes, it will be peaceful to the greatest extent possible, and does not lead to a buildup of arms.

History

One of the most influential documents regarding the international cooperation and guidelines of space is the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, better known as the **Outer Space Treaty**. While this agreement includes a number of important articles, the two most relevant to the mission of the committee are Articles III and IV. Article III states that all uses of space by nations must respect the current international framework that exists on earth, while Article IV bans the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space. This treaty has been signed by a number of

nations, most vitally by the United States, Russia, China, India, and most members of Europe, countries that currently have the most advanced space capabilities.

Another foundational document for space the use of space is the 1975 Registration Convention, known as the Convention on the Registration of Objects launched into Outer Space. This convention requires that all space capable nations must keep a log of the objects that they launch into space, and that they must report any launches to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This convention makes it more difficult for states to covertly build up arms in orbit.

Each year, the First Committee passes a resolution titled Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. This resolution affirms the committee's commitment to ensuring peace, and to creating an overarching treaty that covers the broad issues of space weaponization. While these resolutions meet nearly unanimous support (with the exceptions of the United States and Israel) they have yet to result in the type of treaty described.

The Problem

While certain guidelines are in place that impose restrictions on the use of arms in space, many feel that the rules are not comprehensive enough. One of the most common complaints is that while the Outer Space Treaty does specifically ban nuclear weapons in space, there are no international documents that prevent other types of offensive capabilities, such as cyber or conventional weapons. This has led to ambiguity in their regulations, which may be exploited in order to disrupt the peaceful status quo.

There are currently no known weapons in outer space. However, there are reasons to believe that this situation will not be permanent. Militaries have a long history of using space technologies in auxiliary roles, chiefly the use of satellite monitoring and navigation. While these are certainly not inherently offensive roles, many fear that this precedent could lead to the placement of weapons in space, whether they be space-to-ground or space-to-space technologies. Additionally, nations such as the United States and China have been developing satellite defense capabilities, ostensibly to protect their own space objects from missile attacks. However, due to the nature of these systems, they could easily

be modified to destroy the satellites of other nations.

Space weaponization also poses a unique risk because of the threat of space debris. It is difficult to predict where space debris might fall to the earth, causing problems that would likely be burdened by third party nations. It would also be likely that a proliferation of space debris would cause collateral damage to other objects in space.

What should resolutions address?

A successful resolution will be one that addresses the problems in the previous sections, namely the issues of non-nuclear weaponry, the existing nature of space, and the consequences of space warfare should it occur.

One of the chief obstacles to an arms race treaty is the argument that because there is not yet an arms race in space, the UN should not act, especially considering it does not know what form a potential arms race may take. A successful resolution must take into account the ambiguity of the future, and the controversial nature of legislating something that does not yet exist.

A type of resolution that could play an important, though not fully comprehensive, role would be a Transparency

and Confidence-Building Measure, which would increase the transparency of actions in space and would in doing so lessen the probability of a covert arms race.

Additional Resources (You should really check these out!)

[Reaching Critical Will – Outer Space](#)

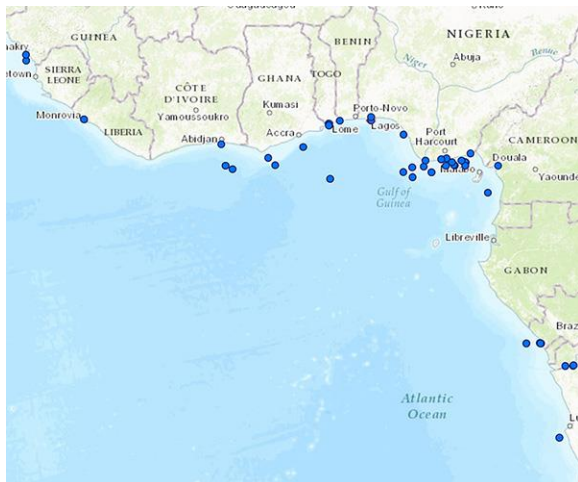
[Outer space, Geneva and the Conference on Disarmament: Future directions](#)

[The need for a United Nations space policy](#)

Topic 2: Piracy

It may not seem like it, but maritime piracy remains a critical issue for the United Nations to address in the coming years. While the well-publicized cases of piracy off the coast of Somalia have largely subsided in recent years, two major hotspots of piracy, each of which pose unique international challenges, still must be addressed: The Gulf of Guinea and the Strait of Malacca.

The Gulf of Guinea



Reported Attacks in 2015

The Gulf of Guinea, off the coast of West Africa, has become one of the most problematic regions in the world with regards to piracy. As a global source of oil and gas, pirates have found numerous targets in the region, and the large number of bordering states (Liberia, Ivory

Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Gabon) make international co-operation difficult. While a number of the attacks do occur in the territorial waters of some of these states, and therefore do not qualify as piracy by the rules of the United Nations, many of them occur in the Exclusive Economic Zones of those states, which fall under international jurisdiction.

International cooperation is vital not only for preventing the effects of piracy in the region, but also for ensuring that piracy does not spread from the area. Single state responses, while politically and logistically easier to implement, mean that pirates can rebase to nearby nations and continue their actions.

The Strait of Malacca



Reported Attacks in 2015

The Strait of Malacca, between the island of Sumatra and the Malaysian peninsula, is the most active site of piracy in the world. Despite having a reported incident rate of “close to zero” in 2011, piracy in the area has risen to new heights.

The Strait of Malacca, as a key route between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, is one of the busiest waterways in the world. About one-fourth of the world's traded goods pass through the strait, including 80% of Chinese and Japanese imported oil. While many countries throughout the region are impacted by this piracy, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand border the strait, and so are most directly responsible for its security. While there exists a degree of international co-operation between these

nations, multiple challenges remain to be faced.

Past Efforts

Efforts to reduce piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and Strait of Malacca, as well as in Somalia should guide the committee's decisions in the coming conference.

The decline of piracy near Somalia comes down to a number of factors, some of which are replicable and some of which are not. Some of the key reasons include use of armed security onboard vessels and the operations of numerous international task forces. Difficulty with these tactics lie in the interests of the nearby nations. Nigeria has a policy of detaining and arresting ships with armed guards not provided by the Nigerian Navy. In the strait of Malacca, Indonesia and Malaysia have consistently opposed intervention by foreign task forces.

Actions have been taken by the international community to lessen the effects of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Regional summits, such as ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) and the GCC (Gulf Coast Countries) have met to coordinate laws and national responses to pirate attacks, but international action is still not a reality. Meanwhile, the United States Navy has been engaging in training exercises with

some Gulf Coast countries to increase the effectiveness of naval responses.

In the Strait of Malacca, international intelligence sharing organizations have emerged, including ReCAAP (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia) and the IMB (International Maritime Bureau) have made it easier for countries to organize information, which has helped mitigate the number of attacks in recent years.

Challenges

Any efforts to take action or create resolutions for the issue of piracy must balance the often conflicting interests of the nations in the affected regions. Because the majority of piracy in international waters is nevertheless in the Exclusive Economic Zones of various states, any nearby country may be hesitant to give up any autonomy.

Some resolutions may call for an international agreement on best shipping practices that cut down on the ability of pirates to target vessels, or for international cooperation by affected countries. However, a challenge often faced by nations hoping to implement anti-piracy measures is that of corruption. Corruption and graft cut down on the efficacy of any adopted policies, and

while it may be outside the scope of this committee to effectively deal with corruption in government, resolutions should consider its effects.

Resolutions should also strive to be generalizable, not only to the two regions discussed here, but to future piracy hot spots, and other current minor regions like the Persian Gulf, the Caribbean, and Falcon Lake

Additional Resources

[Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for Protection against Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea Region](#)

[The Most Dangerous Waters in the World](#)

[Combating Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea](#)

The State of Maritime Piracy 2015

- [West Africa](#)
- [Southeast Asia](#)