

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

UNSC



Chair | Aditi Srivatsan

Vice Chair | Timothy Zhang

Topic A: Addressing Regional Instability in the
Sahel Region Resulting from Armed Insurgency

Houston Area Model United Nations 51

February 5 & 6, 2026

Chair Letter

Delegates,

At this critical juncture, nations around the world are meticulously examining treaties, agreements, and a myriad of documents to determine the best diplomatic approach to address the situation at hand: Settlement to the Conflict in the Sahel Region, a crisis where multi-layered issues, including political instability, fragile economies, environmental degradation, and the spread of violent extremism, converge to threaten international peace.

As you navigate the intricacies of this council, I urge you to reflect on previous policy decisions, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses to develop innovative strategies. We expect a resolution at the end of this committee session that addresses both the major and minor nuances of the issues we face, allowing for compromise while upholding key national goals and policies.

- + Note: Do not use the background guide as the only source of information to substantiate any statements, it is meant for research purposes only and does not cover the full scope of debate. Read further on each point in your own time.

Regardless of whether you are a first-timer or a seasoned delegate, we, as your executive board, hope to make this conference engaging, entertaining, and educational for all of you. Good luck to you all.

Yours Sincerely,

Aditi Srivatsan
Chair of UNSC
srivatsanaditi2007@gmail.com



SECURITY COUNCIL



UNSC

Chair | Aditi Srivatsan

Houston Area Model United Nations 51

February 5-6, 2026

2

Committee Information

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

The United Nations Security Council was formed in 1945, following the second world war. It comprises five permanent and ten non-permanent members having a two-year term. The

People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States are permanent members of this council. The UNSC is a prominent organ in the United Nations and its main function regards "action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches

of the peace, and acts of aggression"

(un.org/sections). The council was developed on the basis of having a legitimate effect on international security compared to the failure of the League of Nations. The Security Council has more influence regarding force to induce peace. This intertwines with the purpose of the council, which is to curb and mitigate breaches

of peace. Most efforts of the UNSC have been to mediate conflicts and find peaceful resolutions to said conflicts. The UNSC has utilized its abilities to further prevent conflict on an international scale through military action. An example of this is an action taken against ISIS in which the UNSC acquired a unanimous vote to prevent further attacks.

In the perambulatory clauses of the resolution the UNSC "[reaffirmed] that terrorism in all forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to peace and security". The past of the UNSC has fluctuated from success to failure and calls for both criticism and praise. On a more serious note, the Security Council is the only United Nations institution that has the legal authority to declare war.

MANDATE OF SECURITY COUNCIL

Article 24 of the UN Charter establishes the Security Council's principal mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the UN members. Article 39 provides the Security Council's mandate to determine what constitutes a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression. Chapters VI (on the peaceful settlement of disputes) and VII (on the action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression) provide the Council with its operational guidelines. Together these chapters provide the Security Council with a suite of options for action in the face of events which might endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. This ranges from the investigation of a dispute, enjoining parties to settle their dispute peacefully, recommending the terms of a settlement, establishing compliance measures, imposing sanctions, and taking such action based on the use of force as may be necessary.

In exercising its mandate, the Security Council is required to respect the fundamental international legal principle of non- interference in the internal affairs of member states. In practice, this has come to require the consent of sovereign governments before forces under UN mandate can be deployed 'on the ground'. Despite the apparently broad power of Article 39, for much of the life of the United Nations, the international legal norm has been that threats to peace and security were to be closely defined as military aggression, armed conflict or violence between two or more states. There are some procedural distinctions between the Security Council and General Assembly committees. The most essential ones will be mentioned in this guide. If there are any other small changes, these will be mentioned during the conference.

VETO POWERS IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL

There are five permanent members of the Security Council, known colloquially as the Permanent Five (the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the Russian Federation), who will exercise their veto authority if they vote against something during the voting session. When a P5 delegation exercises its veto authority, the resolution in the issue cannot be passed, regardless of the positive/negative vote ratio.

For the Benefit of the committee, the Veto Power can only be successfully exercised if the permanent delegation provides a valid and competent 90-second speech, mentioning their intentions for using their veto on the resolution.



Relevant International Documents

International law exists to provide order in the world, defining the rights and obligations of states. The Security Council's authority to refer situations to the ICC or the ICJ, and vice versa, makes legal rigor necessary. Knowing relevant clauses is essential, as legal debate is the foundation of our decision-making and legitimacy.

International agreements, conventions and treaties: The Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Geneva Conventions, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties so on and so forth. Documents internationally recognized and ratified by nations involved in the conflict. These are subjective to signature and ratification, the difference of which is rather important. The signature to a treaty indicates that the country accepts the treaty. It commits not to take any actions that would undermine the treaty's purposes. A treaty is signed by a senior representative of a country such as the president or the foreign minister.

The ratification symbolizes the official sanction of a treaty to make it legally binding for the government of a country. This process involves the treaty's adoption by the legislature of a country such as the parliament.

Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949- The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, also known as the Fourth Geneva Convention, outlines protections for civilians during wartime. In the context of the Syrian civil war, the following articles are particularly pertinent:

Article 3: This article outlines the minimum protections that must be afforded to individuals not taking part in hostilities, including civilians.

Article 27: This article protects the rights of individuals in occupied territories, ensuring they receive humane treatment and are not subjected to violence or coercion.

Article 33: This article prohibits collective punishments and reprisals against civilians, emphasising the protection of individuals regardless of any actions by others.

The logo for HAMUN (Houston Area Model United Nations) features a stylized red laurel wreath on the left side, with the word "HAMUN" in a bold, red, serif font to its right.

HAMUN

Customary International Law or Customary Law: These are laws that have come to be due to practice and norm. This law is, although not on paper or signed, considered the most binding of its kind due to the scale of practice. Some examples would include the following:

The principle of non-refoulement is the cornerstone of asylum and of international refugee law. Following from the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, as set forth in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this principle reflects the commitment of the international community to ensure to all persons the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and to liberty and security of person. These and other rights are threatened when a refugee is returned to persecution or danger.

Diplomatic immunity, in international law, the immunities enjoyed by foreign states or international organizations and their official representatives from the jurisdiction of the country in which they are present. The inviolability of diplomatic envoys has been recognized by most civilizations and states throughout history. To ensure exchanges of information and to maintain contact, most societies—even preliterate ones—granted messengers safe-conduct. Traditional mechanisms of protecting diplomats included religious-based codes of hospitality and the frequent use of priests as emissaries. Just as religion buttressed this inviolability, custom sanctified it and reciprocity fortified it, and over time these sanctions became codified in national laws and international treaties.

(To research is R2P is customary or codified)

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international norm developed in response to the international community's failures in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The idea began with the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which asserted that sovereignty is not a shield. CISS asserted in its 2001 report that every government has a responsibility to protect its people. Moreover, if a government fails this duty, then the international community has a responsibility to step in and intervene.



Codified International Law: is the set of legal rules that have been formalized and written down in treaties, conventions, or other international instruments. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) is the document that codifies the fundamental rule making treaties binding, with **Article 26** referred as “Pacta sunt servanda- **specifically stating**

“Every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith.”

The UN Charter- The United Nations Charter is a foundational document that established the United Nations (UN) in 1945. It serves as the constitution of the UN. Articles of the UN charter particularly addressing the crisis in Syria include but are not limited to.

Article 1(1): To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

Article 2(4): This article prohibits the threat or use of force by member states against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. It emphasises the importance of peaceful resolution of disputes.

Article 1(3): This article highlights the UN’s commitment to promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, language, or religion.

Article 56: This article calls for all members to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the UN to achieve universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 39: This article empowers the UN Security Council to determine the existence of any threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression, and to make recommendations or take action to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 42: This article provides for enforcement actions by the Security Council, including the use of measures such as sanctions, blockades, or other actions not involving the use of armed force.



The ICJ's relationship with the UNSC-The ICJ has a unique relationship with the UNSC where UN Charter article 36(3) grants UNSC the primary legal tool to push parties toward judicial settlement

UN Charter Article 36(3): It states that in making recommendations for peaceful settlement, the UNSC "should also take into consideration that legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice.

The legal documentation cited in this guide is only the beginning; I strongly encourage all delegates to research additional international law clauses to strengthen their resolutions and speeches.



Challenges and Conflict in the Region

The greatest challenge is **security**. Since the **collapse of Libya in 2011** and the outbreak of **conflict in northern Mali in 2012**, the situation in the Sahel region has given growing cause for concern. The combination of poverty, organised crime, violent extremism and weak institutions is making the region increasingly insecure, unstable and conflict-ridden.

Violent extremists, terrorist groups and criminal networks involved in smuggling people, weapons and drugs have gained a foothold in areas where the authorities do not have a strong presence and government control is weak. Radical groups are using the proceeds of organised crime to provide services, employment and protection to vulnerable local communities. For people in these areas, radical groups may appear to be the best or only alternative as employers or providers of security. The fragility and instability of the Sahel is most clearly visible in Mali and its surrounding areas, and in Libya. Violent extremists are active in large parts of Mali, and have spread their operations to the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger. There is also a risk that their activities could spread to more countries.

The countries in the Sahel region have seen little progress in terms of development. Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad are at the bottom of the UNDP Human Development Index, with low scores on health, education and living standards. There is considerable potential for economic growth in these countries. Poor security is one of the main reasons why this potential is not being realised.

At the same time, the impacts of climate change are creating increasingly difficult conditions for traditional agriculture and animal husbandry. Droughts last longer and harvests are poorer; this is giving rise to seasonal food insecurity and humanitarian disasters, as well as heightening the level of conflict.

Poor prospects for the future are making people leave their homes. The majority move to other parts of their own country, most of them from the north to the south. Others migrate to neighbouring countries in search of work. For example, previously many million West Africans found employment in Libya. As the region has become increasingly destabilised in recent years, irregular migration to Europe – particularly through Libya and Niger – has risen.

Developments in the Sahel and Maghreb are often related, and it is important to view the broader region as a whole. The source of the conflict in Mali is, to a large extent, to be found further north, for example in Libya, which has collapsed. Algeria, on the other hand, has traditionally played a major role in enhancing security and fighting terrorism in the region.

Niger's internal governance and development issues, the presence of Boko Haram, ISIS-West Africa, ISIS-Greater Sahara, and other affiliated extremist groups are the driving forces behind the regional instability.

Challenges and Conflict in the Region

The Food Crisis

Millions of people are at a risk of going hungry in the region. The lives of 18 million people were at risk due to the food insecurity in 2012. Even during the normal years millions of people are threatened with starvation. This can be imputed to persistent droughts that have lead famine episodes. The World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food to 5-6 million people. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) distributed food to 5.2 million people in 2012.

Environmental Crisis

The Sahel region has historically been subjected to erratic climatic variations and sporadic rainfall patterns. The region recorded 20 years of severe drought (1970-1993). Almost 80% of the land is degraded and the impacts of climate change are creating increasingly difficult conditions. The United Nations has recommended cooperation and end of hostilities so that it does not lead to environment induced migration.

Fragile Economies

Agriculture is the main source of income and is completely dependant on the rainfall pattern. The droughts in the region have lead to loss in production capacity. All the countries in the Sahel region perform poorly on UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI). The World Bank suggests that irrigation could be the solution to boosting the agriculture sector.

Political Instability

Political instability was one of the major concerns for some of the countries in the Sahel region. In Mali a coup in 2012 brought to halt 20 years of a stable democracy. The rebels started marching from their Northern stronghold to the southern part of the country in order to take control over the entire country. A French led intervention was able to stop theri advance in 2013. This has lead to the nation's worst humanitarian and security crisis. It has affected the supply routes causing food insecurity in the region. The Sahel region has porous borders which can lead to severe security crisis and pose a threat to the neighbouring countries if there is an internal conflict in one country. These borders are a big advantage to the criminal networks for laundering and trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes has estimated that the illicit trafficking business amounts to 3.8 billion dollars annually. The UNODC recently helped in securing a deal between Mali, Morocco, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Algeria which addresses the problems caused by drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism. The UN security council has approved of a peacekeeping mission for assisting Mali in the rehabilitation process.

Past UN Actions

Delegates, your resolutions cannot be drafted in a vacuum. I urge you to treat past UN resolutions as essential case studies, analyze their successes and failures. Determine which mechanisms worked, which parts stalled, and why. The resolution you draft must be a logical progression, building upon proven strategies and fixing the deficiencies of our history. Let the work of the past inform the effectiveness of future action.

- **Resolution 2056-** Restoration of constitutional order in Mali by supporting the ECOWAS and AU to coordinate with the transitional authorities. Transitional authorities shall help develop a roadmap to ensure the consolidation of institutions of Mali within an inclusive national dialogue.
- **Resolution 2085-** Urged Malian rebels to cut ties with Al Qaida, Urges member states to provide assistance in transition. Authorizes deployment of African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)
- **Resolution 2164 -** Authorizes French forces to intervene in support of MINUSMA upon request of the Secretary-General. Requests France to report to the Council on the implementation of this mandate in Mali.

Urges Malian authorities to launch a negotiation process with armed groups that have cut off all ties with terrorist organizations and committed unconditionally to the Agreement; Welcomes the establishment of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission on 20 March 2014

- **Resolution 2227 (2015)-** Decides to extend the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2016 within the authorized troop ceiling of 11,240 military personnel, including at least 40 military observers to monitor and supervise the ceasefire. Authorizes MINUSMA to take all necessary means to carry out its mandate.



- **Resolution 2295 (2016)**- Improving MINUSMA's intelligence capacities, including surveillance and monitoring capacities, within the limits of its mandate, – providing training and equipment to counter explosive devices, including enhanced support to troop contributing countries. Resolution 2349 (2017)
- **Resolution 2349 (2017)**- welcomes the ongoing multilateral and bilateral military support for the region's counter-terrorism efforts against Boko Haram and ISIL, while urging greater action on underlying instability, specifically by demanding full and equal participation of women in national conflict resolution and counter-terrorism strategies, and calling for the comprehensive implementation of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)
- **Resolution 2337 (2017)**- Urges all Gambian parties and stakeholders to respect the will of the people and the outcome of the election which recognized Adama Barrow as President. Requests former President Jammeh to carry out a peaceful and orderly transition process.
- **Resolution 2349 (2017)**- Strengthen the operational capability of the MNJTF to further the Region's efforts to combat Boko Haram and ISIL, which may include appropriate, logistical, mobility and communications assistance, equipment, as well as training, including on sexual and gender-based violence, gender and child protection.
Urges Governments in the Region to ensure women's full and equal participation in national institutions, welcomes initial efforts in the Region to address women's representation such as the 25% quota for elected offices in Niger.



TOPIC A APPENDIX & SOURCES



Copyright Notice

The contents of this document and any supplementary material are the sole intellectual property of Houston Area Model United Nations.

It may not be reproduced, republished, or used without the express written permission of Houston Area Model United Nations. Please email staff@houstonareamun.org with any questions.

