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Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to SRMUN Atlanta 2019 and the United Nations' (UN) General Assembly Third (GA 3rd) Committee. My name is Hannah Cake, and I will be serving as your Director for GA 3rd. This will be my third conference as a SRMUN staff member. Previously, I served as the Director for the Security Council at SRMUN Atlanta 2018 and as the Assistant Director for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at SRMUN Atlanta 2017. I recently graduated from Florida State University with my Bachelor of Science in Political Science and International Affairs. Our committee's Assistant Directors will be Sonia Qureshi and Meera Patel. Sonia is currently a senior at Georgia State University (GSU), pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Sociology, and this will be her first year on SRMUN Atlanta staff. Meera graduated with honors from Flagler College in December 2018 with a degree in Criminology and Law, and this will be her first year serving on SRMUN Atlanta staff. Meera currently plans on beginning law school next year.

As one of the six main committees of the UN General Assembly, GA 3rd focuses primarily on social, humanitarian, and human rights issues. Additionally, GA 3rd considers questions concerning the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, and social development issues as they pertain to the youth, families, persons with disabilities, and racial minorities.

By focusing on the mission of the GA 3rd, we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss and work together to develop meaningful solutions:

      I. Implementing and Improving Infrastructure Development in Cities for People with Physical Disabilities
     II. Addressing Challenges to Freedom of Expression and Information in the 21st Century

The background guide provides a strong introduction to the committee and the topics and should be utilized as a foundation for the delegate's independent research. While we have attempted to provide a holistic analysis of the issues, the background guide should not be used as the single mode of research for the topics. Delegates are expected to go beyond the background guide and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own. The position papers for the committee should reflect the complexity of these issues and their externalities. Delegations are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies and recommendations on each of the two topics. Delegates should visit srmun.org for more detailed information about guidelines, formatting, and the position papers. *All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, November 1, 2019 by 11:59 pm EST via the SRMUN website.*

Sonia, Meera, and I are enthusiastic about serving as your dais for GA 3rd. We wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you in the near future. Please feel free to contact Deputy Director-General Ryan Baerwalde, Sonia, Meera, or myself if you have any questions while preparing for the conference.

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History of the General Assembly Third Committee (GA 3rd)

During the final stages of World War II in 1945, the United Nations (UN) was formed as a measure for Member States to maintain international peace and security by creating a global forum discussing a variety of issues covered by the UN Charter.[1] Many issues discussed in the General Assembly (GA) are taken to smaller settings and discussed in the GA's six main committees.[2] The issues on their agenda are discussed, then debated, and corresponding resolutions are voted on and then moved to the GA Plenary for a final decision.[3] It is the responsibility of the GA 3rd, also known as the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM) to discuss agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs, and human rights issues that affect people all over the world.[4] This committee specifically discusses matters such as social, humanitarian and cultural affairs, and the mandate has evolved to include issues revolving around human rights including issues dealing with advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous rights, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self- determination.[5]

GA 3rd has considered over 60 draft resolutions, more than half of which were submitted under the human rights agenda item alone, including issues related to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous rights, and more.[6] The committee also discusses important social development questions related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.[7] The roles and functions of GA 3rd include: considering reports from the Security Council and other UN organs; discussing questions relating to international peace and security and making recommendations on them; suggesting non-binding solutions and initiating studies to promote international political cooperation; the development and codification of the international rule of law; the realization of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms; and international collaboration in the economic, social, cultural, humanitarian, health, and educational fields.[8] During the 67th session of the GA, SOCHUM considered 59 draft resolutions under the human rights agenda.[9] In addition, an emerging theme in the GA 3rd is to connect the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with human rights and labor standards in the resolutions created by this committee.[10] GA 3rd continues to strive with a central role in mind providing a forum of discussion for all aspects of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues.[11]

The planning, budgeting, and evaluation cycle of the UN has evolved over time.[12] The budget of the UN is collectively decided by a formula every three years called "scales of assessment" that cohesively outlines every Member State's contributions to the organization's regular budget and peacekeeping operations.[13] The Committee on Contributions is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the quantum of contribution.[14] The Committee on Contributions uses estimates for each Member State's gross national product (GND) with percentage shares ranging

[1] "Maintain International Peace and Security," Welcome to the United Nations, Last modified January 7, 2019, https://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/maintain-international-peace-and-security/.

[2] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," Welcome to the United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/ (accessed August 12, 2019).

[3] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[4] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[5] "The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All," UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, https://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/UNDA_BW5_Final.pdf, (accessed August 12, 2019).

[6] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[7] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[8] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[9] "Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its 67th session," United Nations, https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/67 (accessed August 12, 2019).

[10] "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform," United Nations, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld, (accessed August 12, 2019).

[11] "General Assembly Debate Focuses on Central Role of United Nations in Global Problem-Solving," United Nations, https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/ga10160.doc.htm, (accessed August 12, 2019).

[12] "UN Documentation: Regular Budget (2004-2019)," United Nations, https://research.un.org/en/docs/budget (accessed August 12, 2019).

[13] "Financing the United Nations, "ACUNS | The Academic Council on the United Nations System, https://acuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Financing_the_United_Nations.pdf (accessed August 12, 2019).

[14] "Financing the United Nations," ACUNS | The Academic Council on the United Nations System.

from a minimum of 0.001 percent to a maximum of 22 percent.[15] Specifically for GA 3rd, if the secretariat identifies costs that have not been included the regular biennial budget (the programme budget), a programme budget implication (PBI) is prepared, and an individual report outlining the PBI is issued for each resolution.[16] The Proposed programme budget for the biennium is prepared by the Secretary-General adopting one or more resolutions after its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Fifth Committee, and GA Plenary.[17]

The goal for a committee the size of GA 3rd is to strive for consensus, and it is an achievable goal for this committee. In fact, approximately 70 percent of resolutions in the 60th and 70th sessions were adopted by consensus.[18] Over the course of its sessions, GA 3rd Member States negotiated a number of resolutions on a range of topics, engaged in interactive dialogues with UN human rights experts, and held a number of discussions on its agenda items.[19] GA 3rd has maintained its dedication to addressing humanitarian issues through adopting numerous resolutions ensuring peace and security for all Member States.[20] All UN committees report to the General Assembly Plenary, meaning that at the end towards every GA 3rd session, all the resolutions adopted are considered drafts and are included in a report to the Plenary.[21] One of the most notable and long-lasting works of the GA is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed in 1948, which provided a foundation for the definition of human rights and highlighted the importance of the international community in upholding these rights.[22] All of these resolutions prove to not only be relevant to the constantly growing and evolving humanitarian crises facing the international community, but more specifically to the topics that GA 3rd will be addressing.[23]

In January 2018, GA 3rd adopted multiple resolutions based on a report it produced, which highlighted issues including human trafficking, persons with disabilities and urban development.[24] Furthermore, GA 3rd drew attention to the plight of women and girls with disabilities, urging Member States to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.[25] GA 3rd continues to perform a central role within the UN, providing a forum to discuss a wide variety of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues and as the largest representative body for setting human rights norms.[26] The majority of the work on human rights is carried out by GA 3rd exclusively in conjunction with the Human Rights Committee (HRC).[27] The remainder of its work relates to issues such as social development, the advancement of woman, refugees and other topics.[28] Social development

[15] "Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund - Committee on Contributions - UN General Assembly," United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/budget.shtml (accessed August 12, 2019).

[16] "Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund - Committee on Contributions - UN General Assembly," United Nations.

[17] "Fifth Committee Recommends $5.4 Billion Budget for 2018-2019 Biennium as it Concludes Main Part of Seventy-Second Session," United Nations, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gaab4270.doc.htm (accessed August 12, 2019).

[18] "Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly: A Practical Guide for NGOs," International Service for Human Rights, https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/ishr_3rd_com_handbook_eng_web.pdf (accessed August 12, 2019).

[19] "Human Rights Day 10 December," United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday (accessed August 12, 2019).

[20] "General Assembly Adopts 4 Resolutions Aimed at Strengthening Coordination of Humanitarian, Disaster Relief Assistance," United Nations, https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12106.doc.htm (accessed August 12, 2019).

[21] "Research Guides: UN Documentation: General Assembly: Main Committees." United Nations, https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/committees (accessed August 12, 2019).

[22] "History of the Document." Welcome to the United Nations. Last modified October 31, 2017. https://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html.

[23] "Peace and Security." Welcome to the United Nations. Last modified January 15, 2019. https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/.

[24] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[25] "Situation of Women and Girls with Disabilities and the Status of CRPD | United Nations Enable." Welcome to the United Nations. Last modified September 15, 2017. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/news/dspd/women-and-girls-with-disabilities-crpd.html.

[26] "UN General Assembly - Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural," United Nations.

[27] "Human Rights Committee Annual Report to the U.N. General Assembly, U.N. Doc. A/49/40," University of Minnesota, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/hrcommittee/hrc-annual94.htm (accessed August 12, 2019).

[28] "Human Rights Committee Annual Report to the U.N. General Assembly, U.N. Doc. A/49/40," University of Minnesota.

includes questions pertaining to the world's social situation, youth, ageing, disabled persons and literacy for life and the items being debated in session remain similar year to year.[29]

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[29] "Third Committee Opens Session Amid Calls for Governments to Design Comprehensive Social Development Policies, Empowering Youth, Tackling Illiteracy" United Nations, https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4226.doc.htm (accessed August 12, 2019).

I. Implementing and Improving Infrastructure Development in Cities
for People with Physical Disabilities

Introduction

Improving access and mobility in cities for people with physical disabilities is crucial to infrastructure development. Though awareness of these issues is growing within the international community, a lack of practical solutions continues to inhibit accessibility to all populations.[30] The United Nations' (UN) Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 1994, served as an international stepping-stone representing a strong moral and political commitment to the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities.[31] Fifteen percent of the world's population live with physical disabilities and live in an environment that does not accommodate their needs.[32] Infrastructure, such as pathways to public buildings, further marginalizes this population by failing to accommodate to their needs and ultimately creating a dangerous environment.[33] As cities continue to develop, it is important to keep those with physical disabilities in mind to supplement the process of urban development and further implement infrastructure for vulnerable groups.[34] All individuals, regardless of physical impairments and other limitations, have the right to affordable and equitable access to cities.[35]

History

Over the course of its session, the General Assembly Third (GA 3rd) Committee's members have negotiated several resolutions, engaged in interactive dialogues with UN human rights experts, and held discussions on its agenda.[36] Due to a lack of accessibility, people with disabilities continue to face disadvantages causing them to experience disproportionate rates of poverty and deprivations.[37] According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States (US), persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty compared to persons without disabilities averaging to 21.6 percent compared to 12.8 percent.[38] The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, a long-standing international policy framework guiding disability inclusive developments, views accessibility as an essential means to further its goals of full participation and equality.[39] The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities identifies accessibility of the physical environment and of information and communication as target areas to ensure equalization of opportunities.[40]

Along with other developments, the UN High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development, in A/RES/68/3, stresses the importance of ensuring fair inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development in

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[30] "World Report on Disability," World Health Organization and World Bank, https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf, (accessed July 16, 2019).

[31] "Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Enable," United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/standard-rules-on-the-equalization-of-opportunities-for-persons-with-disabilities.html.

[32] "World Report on Disability," World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/, (accessed July 16, 2019).

[33] "Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)," General Assembly of the United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/ (accessed August 12, 2019).

[34] "About Us," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us.html (accessed August 13, 2019).

[35] "Goal 9: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Accessed July 16, 2019. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg9.

[36] "World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/world-programme-of-action-concerning-disabled-persons.html (accessed August 13, 2019).

[37] "World Report on Disability," World Health Organization and World Bank.

[38] "Common Barriers to Participation Experienced by People with Disabilities," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-barriers.html (accessed August 12, 2019).

[39] "About Us," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us.html (accessed August 13, 2019).

[40] "About Us," United Nations.

accordance to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[41] This document ensures a level of tolerance that follows a Universal Design approach, which removes barriers on physical environment, transportation, and employment to achieve accessibility for all people through modifying items, procedures, and systems to meet the needs of the disabled.[42] The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006, continued to strengthen existing international framework by including strategies and policies for urban planning and development.[43] This convention served as an instrumental tool in reinstate the fundamental freedom of people with disabilities to ensure protection to the vulnerable population through social development solutions.[44]

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) have worked together to promote accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities by organizing DESA Forums that initiate dialogue on disability-inclusive urban developments and intergovernmental processes.[45] Along with other initiatives, many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are geared toward inclusivity for disabled persons by building inclusive learning environments to guarantee an equal and accessible education.[46] Specifically, SDG 8 promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market.[47] With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, 165 Member States have committed to advance accessibility.[48] In the international community, there is an emerging focus on the social, economic, and political inclusion of persons with disabilities. There is also a growing understanding that inclusion is crucial to creating accessible cities and water resources, affordable and sustainable transport systems, and providing universal access to safe and green public spaces.[49]

Current Situation

As the international community builds innovative and technologically advanced smart cities around the world, they often struggle to remain inclusive of all populations. Among the neglected populations are individuals facing physical disabilities.[50] Leaders at all levels lack the training and knowledge necessary to include marginalized populations, additionally, policies and law tend to hinder the physically disabled by excluding them from the process.[51] While there is no universally accepted definition of a smart city, the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) adopts the definition offered by the International Telecommunications Union

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[41] "PART 1: MAIN TOPIC: A. The Transformative Commitments for Sustainable Urban Development," Habitat III, http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/preparatory-process/urban-dialogues/urban-dialogue-on-the-draft-new-urban-agenda-prepcom3-surabaya/part-1-main-topic-a-the-transformative-commitments-for-sustainable-urban-development/

[42] "Disability and Health Inclusion Strategies," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-strategies.html, (accessed August 12, 2019).

[43] "Overcoming Youth Marginalization Conference Report and Policy Recommendations," Columbia Global Policy Initiative and The Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, March 2014, https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Columbia-Youth-Report-FINAL_26-July-2014.pdf.

[44] "Article 25 – Health," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-25-health.html, (accessed July 17, 2019).

[45] "DESA DSPD Forum on Disability and Development," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/desa-dspd-forum-on-disability-and-development.html, (accessed July 17, 2019).

[46] "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Disability," United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability.html, (accessed July 17, 2019).

[47] "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Disability," United Nations.

[48] "Countries Agree to Accelerate Action to Fully Implement Historic Plan on Population and Development, Emphasising Importance to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goal." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Accessed August 12, 2019. https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/commission-on-population-and-development52.html.

[49] "Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for, and with Persons with Disabilities," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2018/12/Executive-Summary-11.29-2.pdf (accessed August 13, 2019).

[50] "Discover How Accessible ICT Benefits Smart Cities," Smart Cities for All, https://smartcities4all.org/#about-us (accessed June 7, 2019).

[51] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion." Smart Cities for All. https://smartcities4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SC4A_Vision-Six_Strategies_XT.pdf, (Accessed August 10, 2019).

(ITU) in E/CN.16/2016/2 as "an innovative city that uses information and communication technologies (ICTs) and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social, environmental as well as cultural aspects."[52] Furthermore, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) defines ICTs as "information-handling tools - a varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information."[53] Smart cities capitalize on the use of ICTs by using several of the above listed tools to create a "networked world" consisting of "interconnected telephone services, standardized computing hardware, the Internet, radio and television, which reaches into every corner of the globe."[54]

The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) argued that the discrimination and barriers faced by disabled persons prohibits their inclusion in society and deprives them of the right to be "included in the general school system, to be employed, to live independently in the community, to vote, to participate in sport and cultural activities, to enjoy social protection, to access justice, to choose medical treatment and to enter freely into legal commitments such as buying and selling property."[55] According to the OHCHR, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was intended to serve as a blanket treaty outlining human rights for all populations.[56] Yet those suffering with physical impairments have been routinely side-lined in debates over their rights and are consequently deprived of their right to "enjoy the full range of human rights."[57]

Keeping this in mind, the "Smart Cities for All" initiative addresses the limitations faced by those with physical disabilities, in order to implement practical solutions.[58] With a global strategy developed through a partnership between The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict) and World Enabled, "Smart Cities for All" focuses on ensuring cities across the globe who are advancing infrastructure and technology do not neglect marginalized populations.[59] On November 14, 2017, G3ict and World Enable partnered with Microsoft and publicized their intentions at the Smart City Expo World Congress 2017 in Barcelona, Spain, to make the Smart Cities for All Digital Inclusion Toolkit "available in five additional languages: Arabic, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, and Marathi, in addition to English, Portuguese, and Spanish."[60] Since then, the organization has added two more languages: Hebrew and French.[61]

In addition to creating a widely accessible and applicable toolkit, G3ict and World Enabled encourages the implementation of six interrelated strategies to combat the divisions to digital inclusion faced by smart cities.[62] The Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion begins by addressing six "Barriers to Smart City Accessibility" consisting of: a lack of awareness by city leaders and information technology (IT) professionals of the limitations existing infrastructure poses for physically disabled individuals; a lack of policies and laws requiring accessibility for all in Smart Cities; a restricted budget and resources to provide services for marginalized groups; a deficit of data regarding persons that can be used to create solutions; an inadequate leadership "across all sectors" (local, national,

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[52] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Convention 2, *Smart cities and infrastructure*, E/CN.16/2016/2, February 26, 2016, https://undocs.org/E/CN.16/2016/2.

[53] United Nations ICT Task Force, *Tools for Development: Using Information and Communications Technology to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, December 2003, http://www.itu.int/net/wsis/stocktaking/docs/activities/1103056110/ICTMDGFinal.pdf.

[54] United Nations ICT Task Force, *Tools for Development: Using Information and Communications Technology to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*.

[55] "Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/Pages/DisabilityIndex.aspx (accessed July 13, 2019).

[56] "Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

[57] "Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

[58] "Discover How Accessible ICT Benefits Smart Cities." Smart Cities for All. https://smartcities4all.org/#about-us (accessed June 7, 2019).

[59] "The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs," G3ICT, https://g3ict.org/ (accessed August 13, 2019).

[60] "Smart Cities for All Toolkit Is Now Available in Eight Languages," G3ict, November 14, 2017. https://g3ict.org/news-releases/smart-cities-for-all-toolkit-is-now-available-in-8-languages (accessed June 7, 2019).

[61] "Discover How Accessible ICT Benefits Smart Cities." Smart Cities for All. https://smartcities4all.org/#about-us (accessed June 7, 2019).

[62] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion," Smart Cities for All, https://smartcities4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SC4A_Vision-Six_Strategies_XT.pdf (accessed June 7, 2019).

and global); and a shortage of ICT accessibility-trained professionals who can provide specialized knowledge on implementing solutions to combat the existing challenges.[63]

In response to previously listed obstacles, the plan continues by identifying ten "Priority Steps for Increasing Accessibility," including involvement from individuals with disabilities in the program design and compliance with "international ICT accessibility standards."[64] These steps are then integrated into the overarching plan consisting of six steps: "providing [expert] technical assistance to smart cities to educate local, national, and international leaders; expanding tools and resources available to smart cities; evangelize ICT accessibility at a global scale to reach developing countries; increase capacity through training and knowledge sharing and overcoming the current lack of awareness; drive accessible technology innovation in smart cities solutions; change the global narrative to encourage inclusion of all populations, included those with physical disabilities."[65] Identifying the problem, increasing available knowledge, using a global network of experts, and a defined strategy, G3ict and World Enabled have taken monumental steps towards building "more inclusive and accessible smart cities."[66] By tackling the issues faced by the disabled population as a global community and implementing effective solutions, G3ict and World Enabled have partnered with Member States to work towards accomplishing the SDGs and will leave the world one step closer to ensuring smart cities are accessible to all.[67]

Actions Taken by the United Nations

On December 13, 2006, the UN headquarters in New York held the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which led to the drafting of the Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106).[68] Sponsored by 82 Member States with another 44 Member States as signatories respectively, the Convention made history by containing the highest number of signatories in the history of a UN convention's opening day.[69] After spending decades changing overall attitudes towards persons with disabilities, the Convention demonstrates a turning point as "the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century."[70]

As the first monumental step towards equality for those with disabilities, the Convention paved the way for future efforts, including the adoption of the New Urban Agenda.[71] The significance of this document lies in its role as a global initiative, created by the UN, that recognizes the need for sustainable and accessible urban development over a 20-year period.[72] This plan was adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Ecuador, on October 20, 2016.[73] Three days later, it was promoted by the UNGA at the 71st session.[74] Currently, the New Urban Agenda has been translated into over 30 languages to reach over 80 percent of the global population.[75]

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[63] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion," Smart Cities for All.

[64] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion," Smart Cities for All, https://smartcities4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SC4A_Vision-Six_Strategies_XT.pdf (accessed June 7, 2019).

[65] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion," Smart Cities for All.

[66] "A Global Strategy for Digital Inclusion," Smart Cities for All.

[67] "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld. (Accessed August 10, 2019)

[68] "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-.html. (accessed August 10, 2019)

[69] "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability.

[70] "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability.

[71] "The New Urban Agenda," United Nations Habitat III, http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/ (accessed June 7, 2019).

[72] "The New Urban Agenda: Key Commitments." United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, October 20, 2016 https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/newurbanagenda/

[73] "The New Urban Agenda," United Nations Habitat III.

[74] "The New Urban Agenda," United Nations Habitat III.

[75] "The New Urban Agenda," United Nations Habitat III.

The New Urban Agenda begins with the "Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All" and the "Quito Implementation Plan for the New Urban Agenda."[76] Written by heads of state and government, ministers, and high representatives around the world, the Quito Declaration directly addresses the lack of awareness, policy and leadership concerns limiting inclusivity for all as the primary step to overcoming the challenges faced by marginalized populations.[77] The document contains input from "subnational and local governments, parliamentarians, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector, professionals and practitioners, and the scientific and academic community."[78] By emphasizing involvement from previously omitted populations, such as local community members with disabilities and local leaders, the Quito Declaration lays the foundation for the Implementation Plan. Eradicating all forms of poverty remains the most crucial challenge and a pre-requisite to sustainable development.[79] In an effort to combat the challenges, the Implementation Plan reiterates its transformative commitments through this section and sets its intentions of collaboration among regional and international organizations to increase resources available to marginalized populations, such as persons with disabilities, to strengthen urban policy and increase information and training available to service delivery professionals and local communities.[80]

Additionally, the New Urban Agenda contains a "Habitat III Roadmap" that begins with the Vancouver 1976 Habitat I, where governments first recognized the need for "sustainable human settlement and sustainable urbanization," and progresses to Habitat III in 2016 where urbanization was finally regarded as "a tool for social integration and equity" and, finally, the adoption of the agenda.[81] The roadmap highlights landmark events, such as the "Thematic Consultations" in July 2015 where Habitat II invited all interested individuals to share their concerns and provide innovative solutions to urban issues, before arriving at the final and most recent stop in the journey to a more inclusive and sustainable community.[82] Over the course of 40 years and countless meetings and forums, the UN has continued keep up with the rapid pace at which the global community is advancing.

In October 2016, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the ITU led a teleconference, titled "Smart Sustainable Cities," in the New Urban Agenda: Where We Are and Where We Could Be."[83] In addition, Member States gathered at the UN High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development and reaffirmed their commitments to advance disability-inclusive development, through the adoption the Outcome Document.[84] This document stressed the importance of ensuring accessibility in all aspects of developments including rural areas.[85] Partnering with the UN Framework Convention has provided quality of all while remaining mindful of the economic, social, environmental and cultural needs of current and future generations.[86] Through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the UN maintains focus on creating a safe and inclusive environment for disabled individuals in smart cities around the world. As the UN promotes the New Urban Agenda and Member States adopt it into their respective smart cities, ICTs and other technology alike will no longer be a barrier, but a bridge into an accessible and inclusive community.[87]

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[76] "New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.
[77] "New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.
[78] "New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.
[79] "New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.
[80] "New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.
[81] "Smart Sustainable Cities in the New Urban Agenda: Where We Are at and Where We Could Be," United Nations Habitat III, 16 October 2016, http://habitat3.org/the-conference/programme/all/smart-sustainable-cities-in-the-new-urban-agenda-where-we-are-at-and-where-we-could-be/ (accessed June 7, 2019).
[82] "Smart Sustainable Cities in the New Urban Agenda: Where We Are at and Where We Could Be." United Nations Habitat III.
[83] "Smart Sustainable Cities in the New Urban Agenda: Where We Are at and Where We Could Be." United Nations Habitat III.
[84] "Outcome Document," United Nations, https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/hlmdd/daisy/Sign_Language/index.html (accessed August 13, 2019).
[85] "Disability, Accessibility and Sustainable Urban Development," United Nations, https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/Disability_and_Urban_development.pdf. (accessed August 13, 2019).
[86] "Smart Sustainable Cities in the New Urban Agenda: Where We Are at and Where We Could Be," United Nations Habitat III.
[87] "The New Urban Agenda," Habitat III.

Case Study: Singapore

Over the past 69 years, Singapore's current population, approximately 5.5 million, has experienced rapid urban development.[88] With the anticipation of an increasingly large population of elders in the near future, the Singapore government has worked towards implementing an "aging in place" lifestyle, and ensuring its cities remain accessible to people with disabilities.[89] The "ageing in place" initiative addressed its ageing population through socio-urban policy changes such as inclusive metropolitan area accessibility and integrating an eldercare healthcare system.[90] The overall objective of a user-friendly environment is to adopt the Universal Design, fulfilling the Member States' obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[91] Discussion of the need to remain accessible with urban development during the late 1980s led to the creation of inclusion-based legislation with the Building Control Regulation of 1989.[92] In 2006, Singapore's Building and Construction Authority (BCA) created an Accessibility Master Plan to support and complement recommendations made by the Ministerial Committee on aging issues to create an inclusive environment for the aging and disabled population by providing a safer, easier, and more comfortable way to access the city and other areas.[93]

Singapore's Master Plan is a holistic approach that addresses both accessibility and Universal Design adoption through Four Strategic Thrusts.[94] The Four Strategic Thrusts ensure a smooth transition and are as followed: tackling future challenges through publication of a Universal Design Guide; mitigate existing challenges through encouraging private sector owners to upgrade buildings; maintain accessibility features; and, building capabilities of the industry stakeholders.[95] The study expands on removing existing barriers by a five-year Accessibility Upgrading Programme to support the advancement of key buildings in the private and public sector, and tackling future challenges by creating incentives to recognize buildings and stakeholders that adopt user-friendly philosophy in their designs with the launch of BCA Universal Design Mark Certification scheme.[96] Singapore also successfully amended the Building Control Act in 2007 to maintain accessible features in buildings by requesting a permit to carry out structural work.[97]

Conclusion

Lenin Moreno, Special Envoy on Disabilities and Accessibility, delivered a message at the Forum on Disability Inclusion and Accessible Urban Development in Nairobi, Kenya, stated, "the most difficult barrier to overcome is the human attitude. Attitude of human being make the world inaccessible. Change the discriminatory mentality

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[88] Hassan, Riaz. "Population Change and Urbanization in Singapore," *Civilisations* 19, no. 2 (1969): 169-88, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41231220.

[89] "Accessibility in the Built Environment," Building and Construction Authority, https://www.bca.gov.sg/BarrierFree/barrierfree_buildings.html (accessed July 17, 2019).

[90] "Ageing in Place in Singapore," Ministry of Health Singapore Ageing Planning Office, http://www.gs.org.sg/sg50conference/pdf/s4-1.pdf (accessed August 13, 2019).

[91] "Article 4 - General Obligations Enable," United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Disability, www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html (accessed August 13, 2019).

[92] "Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development," Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social (DESA), https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/desa/good_practices_in_accessible_urban_development_october2016.pdf (accessed July 17, 2019).

[93] "Building and Construction Authority of Singapore," Alliance to Save Energy, https://www.ase.org/profile/building-and-construction-authority-singapore (accessed August 13, 2019).

[94] "Urban Redevelopment Authority," Urban Redevelopment Authority, https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Planning/Master-Plan/ (Accessed July 17, 2019).

[95] "About BCA's Universal Design." Friendly Built Environment. Accessed July 17, 2019. https://friendlybuildings.bca.gov.sg/about-bca-universal-design.html?scroll=content.

[96] "Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development." Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

[97] "Building Control (Amendment) Act 2007," Singapore Statutes Online, https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Acts-Supp/47-2007/Published/20080128?DocDate=20080128 (accessed July 17, 2019.)

toward a culture of inclusion and accessibility is imperative for an agenda of true urban development."[98] The international community has made great strides towards acknowledging the challenges disabled populations face and finding innovative solutions through countless forums and policy changes. Since the UN established its commitment to equally accessible public areas with the UN' Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1994, Member States have continued to show initiative through the adoption of the New Urban Agenda and formation of Habitat III. Furthermore, Member States such as Singapore have used their governmental resources to provide safe, accessible services for those with physical impairments. Taking such initiative demonstrates a continuing commitment to publicly accessible areas for all. The continuous commitment of the international community to advance accessibility and to mainstream disability in development is reflected in the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In recent years, many promising initiatives and good practices have emerged that successfully promote accessibility and the inclusion of person with disabilities, their rights, aspirations, and contributions in the context of urban development, but Member States must not stop there. The international community must stride towards implementing and improving inclusive and accessible infrastructure in both urban and rural regions to combat the existing challenges faced by the physically disabled population.

Committee Directive

The focus of this committee is to create and improve international infrastructure development in cities for people with physical disabilities. GA 3rd can enhance existing framework or develop new framework that would increase access and safety for disabled individuals. What challenges do those with physical disabilities currently face? With technology rapidly expanding around the world, delegates are encouraged to include facilities for disabled persons in rural and smart cities. How can developing Member States implement disability-inclusive frameworks despite lack of resources? What have Member States already achieved in the area of inclusive infrastructure? What ideas can be built upon or borrowed from other Member States? What policies are currently in place that may bar a safe and accessible environment for those with disabilities? In committee, delegates are expected use the UN's Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities as a guideline and expand upon UN initiatives, such as Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda, to explore the previous questions. Doing so will encourage delegates to work towards accomplishing SDG 9, which ensures all individuals, including those with physical limitations, have affordable and equitable access to cities.

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[98] "Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development," Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

II. Addressing Challenges to Freedom of Expression and Information in the 21st Century

Introduction

As highlighted by the United Nations (UN), the protection of the freedom of expression is vitally important, due to its role in the empowerment of the public, via access to factual and unbiased information, the representation of a variety of perspectives, and the ability to communicate freely.[99] Equally important is the freedom of information, which ensures the accessibility of information held by public bodies, promotes transparency, and allows people to make informed decisions.[100] Freedom of information also includes the circulation of information held by nonpublic bodies and the protection of pluralistic and open media.[101] These factors inextricably connect freedom of information to the freedom of expression and though these freedoms differ, they work together to protect people and the press from being silenced and misled.[102] Freedom of expression and information has long been protected internationally under both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and Resolution 59 of the UN General Assembly (GA), which was adopted in 1946.[103]

Much has changed since the protections of the 1940s were put into place, particularly with the rapid development of the Internet as well as information and communication technologies (ICTs) throughout the 21st Century. Rapid changes in the means by which we communicate have posed many challenges to our freedom of expression and information including cyber-attacks, the invasions of privacy through the collection of personal data and surveillance, as well as the rise of digital authoritarianism.[104] However, according to the Special Rapporteur, which was mandated by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1993, "the Internet is one of the most powerful instruments of the 21st century for increasing transparency in the conduct of the powerful, access to information, and for facilitating active citizen participation in building democratic societies."[105] In accordance with its mandate, it is the duty of the UNGA Third Committee (GA 3rd) to promote these fundamental freedoms and to ensure that the freedoms of expression and information are not infringed upon despite the rapidly evolving challenges these freedoms face.[106]

Current Situation

There is much that can be understood by comparing present day violations of the freedom of expression and information to infringements of these rights in the past. The Cold War, for example, was an era of great suppression for the freedom of expression and information both in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and in the United States of America (US).[107] The USSR, under a strict Stalinist authoritarian regime, responded to political dissidents by discrediting them, confiscating literature, removing them from their places of work, or, more severely, prosecuting, imprisoning, or exiling dissidents.[108] The US, though more democratic compared to the USSR, also

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[99] "World Free Press Day," United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/events/pressfreedomday/background.shtml (accessed June 11, 2019).

[100] "World Free Press Day," United Nations.

[101] "World Free Press Day," United Nations.

[102] "World Free Press Day," United Nations.

[103] "Freedom of Information - United Nations and the Rule of Law," United Nations, https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/governance/freedom-of-information/ (accessed May 1, 2019).

[104] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression" Human Rights Council, 16 May, 2011 https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/17session/a.hrc.17.27_en.pdf

[105] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression" Human Rights Council.

[106] Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)," The United Nations General Assembly https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/ (accessed June 11, 2019).

[107] Bertrand M. Patenaude, "Regional Perspectives on Human Rights: The USSR and Russia, Part One," Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies, Stanford University, https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/regional_perspectives_on_human_rights_the_ussr_and_russia_part_one (accessed July 20, 2019).

[108] Bertrand M. Patenaude, "Regional Perspectives on Human Rights: The USSR and Russia, Part One," Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies, Stanford University, (accessed July 20, 2019).

suppressed the freedom of expression and information of its citizens through laws of ideological exclusion, which were used to prevent foreign speakers from entering the US based on the content of their speech.[109] International tensions and fear brought governments to violate their own citizens rights on both side of the Cold War.[110] Even as the Cold War came to an end and technology continued to flourish, the Cold War still serves as a reminder of how quickly these liberties could be taken away if governments are threatened.

Communication methods inevitably affect the freedom of expression and information. One-way transmissions of information such as radios, television, and printed publications are becoming relics of the past compared to quicker interactive mediums such as the Internet.[111] As estimated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), as of the end of 2018, 51.2 percent of the global population, or 3.9 billion people are using the Internet.[112] This growth has been most rapid on the African continent with populations with Internet access rising from two percent in 2005 to more than 24 percent today.[113] Increasing numbers of people are gaining access to the Internet every day, however, the ITU finds that some populations, particularly girls, women, the elderly, those with disabilities, the impoverished, and indigenous populations are most likely to lack access to the internet.[114]

Though populations are gaining access to a platform for communication, expression, and a new medium to access information, the benefits of the Internet also come with challenges and risks. Worldwide, the freedom of expression has come under attack in the form of restrictions of the free press and infringements of the right to free speech of citizens in many Member States.[115] In 2016, global press freedom was at its lowest point in 13 years with only 13 percent of the world's population having access to free press.[116] This decline is due to rampant threats to journalists and media outlets, and crackdowns by authoritarian governments.[117] These attacks diminish the credibility and freedom of journalists and prevent them from freely circulating information independently from their governments and without retaliations from political leaders.[118]

Additionally, Freedom House, a non-governmental organization committed to researching and advocating for democracy, political freedom, and human rights, published in their Freedom in the World 2019 report that freedom of expression has declined particularly in the past 13 years, with a rapid decline in the years following 2012.[119] The extrajudicial imprisonment of journalists and the censorship or prevention of discussions that are critical of government are two examples of the current threats to the freedom of expression and information.[120] Many of these latest restrictions and violations of freedoms originate due to the wide use of social media and spread of information and news via the Internet.[121] Additionally, the rise in racism and xenophobia, which has flourished in the age of the Internet, poses a threat to the freedom of expression.[122] An example is the increase of false rumors and propaganda on social media concerning ethnic and religious groups, and this has incited outbreaks of violence.[123] Incidents such

[109] "Ideological Exclusion," American Civil Liberties Union, https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/privacy-and-surveillance/ideological-exclusion (accessed July 20, 2019).

[110] "Ideological Exclusion," American Civil Liberties Union.

[111] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council, 16 May, 2011.

[112] "ICT Statistics." ICT STATISTICS Home Page. 2019. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx. (accessed May 1, 2019).

[113] "Internet Milestone Reached, as More than 50 per Cent Go Online: UN Telecoms Agency | UN News," United Nations, December 7, 2018, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/12/1027991 (accessed May 1, 2019).

[114] "Internet Milestone Reached, as More than 50 per Cent Go Online: UN Telecoms Agency | UN News." United Nations.

[115] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat." Freedom House. February 5, 2019. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019/democracy-in-retreat (accessed May 01, 2019).

[116] "Press Freedoms Dark Horizon." Freedom House. 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2017 (accessed July 20, 2019).

[117] "Press Freedoms Dark Horizon," Freedom House, 2017, (accessed July 20, 2019).

[118] "Press Freedoms Dark Horizon," Freedom House.

[119] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House. February 5, 2019.

[120] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[121] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[122] "Racism, Xenophobia Increasing Globally, Experts Tell Third Committee, amid Calls for Laws to Combat Hate Speech, Concerns over Freedom of Expression," United Nations, https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gashc4182.doc.htm (accessed May 1, 2019).

[123] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House, February 5, 2019.

as this have occurred in many Member States including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.[124] These incidents may also be exploited by antidemocratic movements, the government, or foreign states or actors which have encouraged violence through encouraging and exacerbating ethnically, religiously, or racially intolerant content on the Internet.[125] However, as Member States censor hateful, racist, and xenophobic content, they may also be encroaching upon the rights of their citizens to express themselves freely.[126]

Case Study: Sudan

Omar al-Bashir ruled as the authoritarian President of Sudan for nearly 30 years until he was ousted and arrested by the military in April 2019.[127] In late 2017, prior to his removal from the presidency, mass anti-austerity protests began to take place due to emergency austerity measures imposed by the government and staggering inflation.[128] Protesters then shifted from their economically-focused protests to demanding the removal of President al-Bashir.[129] In February 2019, the Sudanese National Security and Intelligence Service announced that al-Bashir would step down.[130] In a defiant grab for power, al-Bashir declared a state of emergency and dismissed the federal government and replaced them with members of the security forces who were loyal to his regime.[131] Al-Bashir assured protesters he would step down at the end of his term without seeking re-election, however, protesters had little faith in this promise.[132] As a result, thousands of protesters gathered at the military headquarters to demand al-Bashir's removal as well as a transition to a democratically elected government.[133]

Though al-Bashir was removed from the presidency, the loyalist security force regime he installed remained.[134] The Transitional Military Council seized power as the acting interim government led by the defense minister, Lieutenant General Awad Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Auf, who was an ally of al-Bashir and who has been accused of committing war crimes in Darfur.[135] Protests continued and thousands of people filled the streets of Khartoum. In response, on June 3, 2019, the Military Council carried out a large scale attack against protesters during a peaceful sit-in in Khartoum, which led to the deaths more than 100 civilians and hundreds of injuries.[136] Simultaneously, numerous reports of internet disruptions arose amid the violence.[137] By June 10, 2019, the government severed all remaining fixed line connections, which shut down nearly all access to the Internet in Sudan.[138]

Following these reports, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) strongly condemned the actions of the Military Council as they are in violation of international human rights law, specifically the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information.[139] The Internet shutdown interfered with activists' and residents' ability to report and share critical information regarding the situation in Sudan, including the location of government forces who have reportedly continued to attack civilians.[140] The shutdown also prevented medical professionals from being able to provide care, made it difficult for drivers to navigate roadways safely amidst the civil unrest, and hindered

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[124] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat." Freedom House. February 5, 2019.
[125] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat." Freedom House. February 5, 2019. (accessed May 1, 2019).
[126] "Racism, Xenophobia Increasing Globally, Experts Tell Third Committee, amid Calls for Laws to Combat Hate Speech, Concerns over Freedom of Expression" United Nations. (accessed May 1, 2019).
[127] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here" BBC News. April 11, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47892742
[128] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[129] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[130] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[131] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[132] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[133] "Omar al-Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here," BBC News.
[134] Walsh, Declan, and Joseph Goldstein. "Sudan's President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir Is Ousted, but Not His Regime." The New York Times. April 11, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/11/world/africa/sudan-omar-hassan-al-bashir.html
[135] Walsh, Declan, and Joseph Goldstein. "Sudan's President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir Is Ousted, but Not His Regime." The New York Times. April 11, 2019.
[136] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately." Human Rights Watch. June 13, 2019. https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/12/sudan-end-network-shutdown-immediately
[137] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately," Human Rights Watch.
[138] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately," Human Rights Watch.
[139] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately," Human Rights Watch.
[140] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately," Human Rights Watch.

humanitarian operations.[141] Negotiations between civilians and the Transitional Military Council (TMC) ended in Khartoum after TMC forced killed 118 peaceful protestors, raped an estimated 70 civilians, and injured many more.[142] The death toll of this massacre is estimated to be approximately 128, and this death toll was conceivably exacerbated by the mass loss of Internet in Sudan.[143] After weeks without Internet, a Sudanese court ruling in July 2019 ordered telecom companies to restore Internet access.[144]

This is a pattern of political oppression through the denial of Internet access that has been seen before in Sudan. In December 2018 and April 2019, the government blocked access to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram.[145] These patterns developed into a much broader violation of human rights as the most recent shutdown violated the Sudanese peoples' freedom of expression and information, as well as their right of free assembly and access to basic services.[146] Even in times of conflict, these rights must be protected, as stated by the 2015 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations, "using communications 'kill switches' (i.e. shutting down entire parts of communications systems) can never be justified under human rights law."[147] The case of Sudan illustrates the results that the denial of these freedoms can have and emphasizes the importance of protecting the freedom of expression and freedom of information.

Actions Taken by the United Nations

The UN protects freedom of expression and information under the 19th article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[148] The ICCPR, which was adopted by A/RES/2200A(XXI) on the December 16, 1966, further defines freedom of opinion and expression to include both the freedom to hold opinions without interference and the freedom to seek, receive, and communicate ideas and information in any form, through any media, and of any kind.[149] The ICCRP also stipulates that these rights may only be restricted to protect the rights and preserve the reputations of others, and for the protection of national security, or public order, health, or for moral reasons.[150] These provisions were put in place with the foresight that technological advancements would impact the protection of these rights.[151] For this reason, it is imperative that GA 3rd continues these efforts and that Member States protect the rights of their citizens as the development of ICTs continues.

In 1992, the UN Commission on Human Rights also established, through resolution A/HRC/7/36, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, which was created to promote and protect the freedom of expression, opinion, and information.[152] The Special Rapporteur gathers information involving the violation of the right to freedom of

[141] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately." Human Rights Watch. June 13, 2019.

[142] "Sudanese internet blackout continues following court ruling." Engineering and Technology. June 26, 2019. https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2019/06/sudanese-internet-blackout-continues-following-court-ruling/

[143] "Sudanese internet blackout continues following court ruling." Engineering and Technology. June 26, 2019.

[144] "Some internet service restored in Sudan after court ruling." Reuters. July 9 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics-internet/some-internet-service-restored-in-sudan-after-court-ruling-idUSKCN1U41PN

[145] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately." Human Rights Watch. June 13, 2019.

[146] "Sudan: End Network Shutdown Immediately." Human Rights Watch. June 13, 2019.

[147] "Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and responses to conflict situations" United Nations Human Rights: Office of High Commissioner. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15921&LangID=E (accessed July 7, 2019).

[148] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council, 16 May, 2011.

[149] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[150] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[151] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[152] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx. (accessed May 1, 2019.)

expression on a global scale.[153] This includes discrimination, threats of violence, persecution, or harassment that occurs which would prevent a person from exercising their right to expression and their opinion.[154] The protections apply to journalists and professionals working in the field of information as well.[155] The Special Rapporteur also makes recommendations and suggestions as to how to better protect and support freedom of expression in all its forms.[156] Additionally, the Special Rapporteur can submit appeals and letters of allegation to Member States upon violations of the right to freedom of express.[157] The Special Rapporteur conducts investigations in different Member States and collects information to be sent to the HRC in the form of an annual report.[158]

Additionally, the UN's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) with the endorsement of the UNGA through the passage of A/RES/56/183 on December 21, 2001.[159] WSIS was held in two phases, in Geneva, Switzerland, and Tunis, Tunisia, respectively.[160] At these conferences, the WSIS drafted the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.[161] These plans of action aimed to create international consensus and solidarity on issues such as: the development of ICT infrastructure across all levels of economic development; improving access to information and knowledge through ICTs; addressing security concerns regarding the use of ICTs; and promoting the protection of data and network integrity.[162] Furthermore, UNESCO has reaffirmed its support for the freedom of information, freedom of press, and the freedom of expression by hosting the UNESCO conference on Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People which held on World Press Freedom Day each year.[163]

Challenges

There are many threats to the protection of the freedom of expression and information, particularly in the 21st century as technology continues to advance in a manner that is truly unprecedented. One of the primary challenges brought about by these advancements is the intermediate liability of the Internet.[164] Most information on the Internet is transmitted through intermediaries, or the private corporations that provide the platforms on which online communication can occur and Internet content can be spread.[165] As the hosts of these platforms, intermediaries have control over the content on the websites they service and what their users can and cannot post on their websites.[166] Unlike governments and intergovernmental organizations, intermediaries such as private corporations have little

[153] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, (accessed May 1, 2019.)

[154] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights.

[155] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights.

[156] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights.

[157] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights.

[158] "Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," The Office of the High Commission of Human Rights.

[159] "World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)," United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/wsis (accessed June 11, 2019).

[160] "World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)," United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

[161] "World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)" United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

[162] "World Summit on the Information Society" International Telecommunications Union. https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html (accessed June 11, 2019).

[163] "Freedom of Information" United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/freedom-of-information/ (accessed June 11, 2019).

[164] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[165] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[166] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

incentive to prioritize human rights over profit.[167] Many Member States have adopted legislation that would hold intermediaries accountable if they fail to censor and delete illegal content.[168] However, placing liability on intermediaries to delete or censor illegal content may encroach upon the right to freedom of expression due to the tendency of self-protective and overly broad methods of private censorship which are unlikely to be transparent.[169] If expression and information are not privately censored by intermediaries, they might be censored by governments which may result in the censorship or criminalization of legitimate expressions.[170] Governments, in a form of digital authoritarianism, may use existing laws or adopt new laws to restrict legitimate expression which may have extreme consequences for the creators of this content.[171]

Governments, as well as private corporations, may also be violating the privacy of Internet users through surveillance and collecting their personal data.[172] Preserving the right to privacy is crucial in ensuring that individuals can express themselves fully and freely.[173] The threat of surveillance or the invasion of privacy as well as the loss of anonymity may affect people's willingness to express themselves or access information freely.[174] This undermines people's confidence in the privacy and security of their internet usage which may restrict information and expression.[175] The UN Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned with violations of privacy committed by Member States and the trend of broad censorship loosely justified by national security and the threat of terrorism.[176] Though these risks pose a serious threat to security, according to the Special Rapporteur, most surveillance occurs for political reasons.[177]

Journalism has been under attack recently as well, with the harassment, imprisonment, and assassination of journalists around the around the world.[178] According to Freedom House, 24 Member States have targeted political dissidents, including journalists, with harassment, kidnapping, extradition requests, and assassination.[179] In the past, pressures on the media did not seem to significantly affect the US and European Member States, however, Freedom House finds that, more recently, the media is under these types of pressures and restraints in every region of the world.[180] The freedom of information and expression in Western Member States is now being threatened by the growing popularity of populist leaders and the willingness of politicians to bypass the norms of the political arena to undermine these freedoms for their own political gain.[181] The press' ability to hold governments accountable, a process which is vitally important to democracy, is being threatened by populist leaders and politicians labeling unfavorable information as "fake news."[182] This weakens the credibility of the media and undermines the freedom of

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[167] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[168] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[169] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[170] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House, February 5, 2019.

[171] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[172] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[173] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[174] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council, 16 May, 2011.

[175] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[176] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[177] "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression," Human Rights Council.

[178] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House, February 5, 2019.

[179] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

[180] "Attacks on the Record: The State of Global Press Freedom, 2017-2018," Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/attacks-record-state-global-press-freedom-2017-2018 (accessed June 11, 2019).

[181] "Attacks on the Record: The State of Global Press Freedom, 2017-2018," Freedom House, (accessed June 11, 2019).

[182] "Attacks on the Record: The State of Global Press Freedom, 2017-2018," Freedom House.

information and expression.[183] Despite these challenges, journalists are still able to make an impact even in regions with the most restrictions and hostility to journalist.[184]

Cyber-attacks also pose a threat to freedom of expression and information because they disrupt computer-based systems and may take the form of hacking into private accounts or networks or distributed denial of service attacks.[185] These attacks may target web servers causing websites to crash and become inaccessible.[186] They may also take place strategically in order to disrupt freedom of expression and deny users access to information during important political events, such as an election.[187] In fact, according to the Freedom House Freedom in the World 2019 report, in almost half of the Member States where internet freedom has declined, the decrease in freedom was related to elections due to a rise in censorship, disinformation, and cyberattacks.[188]

Conclusion

As technology advances, ICTs continue to develop, and access to the Internet steadily increases throughout many Member States, it is important to recognize that the norms and agreements of the international community must change with these developments. The rise in digital authoritarianism, as exemplified by events in Sudan, as well as cyber-attacks, threats to the free press, and difficulty to regulate intermediaries have shaped the 21st century digital landscape and the freedom of expression and information must adapt. These freedoms have and will continue to be stripped from civilians if the proper protections are not put into place. In considering this problem, GA 3rd is faced with a wide array of threats and issues, not only between different platforms and technologies, but additionally between the different levels of access and development in each Member State. These issues must be addressed in order to preserve the rights to information and self-expression without the obstruction or the censorship of those in power.

Committee Directive

In solving this issue, delegates should be mindful of the current pressures and constraints facing the media in their Member State, and well as the legal restrictions and protected freedoms regarding freedom of expression within their borders. Delegates should also consider the levels of access citizens in their Member State have to the Internet and other ICTs. What infrastructural developments have been made towards increasing accessibility to ICTs in their Members State? Which, if any, declarations and agreements have their Member State participated in regarding the freedom of information and expression? Considering the threat posed by cyberattacks, how can Member States ensure the security of data and networks without infringing upon freedom of expression and information? How can Member States protect and support open and pluralistic media environments? These are a few of the questions delegates should consider in preparation for committee. Delegates should also work to expand upon provisions of the ICCPR as well as the findings of the Special Rapporteur. The committee should focus on improving current strategies employed by the UN, sharing best practices, and further protecting and preserving the freedom of expression and the freedom of information.

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[183] "Attacks on the Record: The State of Global Press Freedom, 2017-2018," Freedom House.
[184] "Attacks on the Record: The State of Global Press Freedom, 2017-2018," Freedom House.
[185] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House, February 5, 2019.
[186] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.
[187] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.
[188] "Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat," Freedom House.

Annotated Bibliography

I. Implementing and Improving Infrastructure Development in Cities for People with Physical Disabilities

"Mainstreaming Disability in the Post-2015 Development Agenda." Accessibility and Development, April 9, 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242456568_Improving_accessibility_for_people_with_disabilities_in_urban_areas

> Published by the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Division for Social Policy and Development, this article reviews accessibility and its role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This source provides a deeper insight on accessibility especially in regard to those with disabilities. In addition, the publication further provides an excellent explanation of different disabilities and examples on how to better address them. The article goes further into explanation as it discusses accessibility in three key issues: accessibility in regards of human rights and development; accessibility in policy and practice; and accessibility and a disability-inclusive post-2015 development agenda.

"Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, April 10, 2019. https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/desa/good_practices_in_accessible_urban_development_october2016.pdf

> This article provides information regarding the accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in relation to urban development. Presented by the UN's DESA, this document entails initiatives and progress made towards international policy frameworks, inclusive development plans, and key subject matters, such as inclusivity in regards to housing, transportation, public spaces and services, and strategies and innovations that promote accessible urban development. The article further includes several case studies throughout different Member States and recommendations on ways to progress accessibility and disability inclusion.

Julie Babinard, Wei Wang, Christopher R. Bennett and Shomik Mehndiratta. "Accessibility of Urban Transport for People with Disabilities and Limited Mobility: Lessons from East Asia and the Pacific." World Bank, April 10, 2019. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTRANSPORT/Resources/336291-1227561426235/5611053-1231943010251/TRN-44Accesssibility-of-Urban-Transport-for-People-with-Disabilities-final-2May2012.pdf.

> Using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), this article expands on ensuring accessibility concerning the delivery of services and transport infrastructure. This article explains the World Bank's involvement in the CRPD regarding the implementation of principles and binding obligations, as well as persuading the use of good practice in national law. The article also presents an analysis focused on the accessibility features of recent transport projects in the East Asia and Pacific region. This publication provides a number of sources and articles for reference, including a detailed section on CPRD for delegates to review and reference when creating their position papers and working paper ideas.

Maria Isabel Egüez Community Development, Gender Equality and Children Section Division of International Protection. "NGOs and UN Agencies Assisting Persons with Disabilities." April 2008, https://www.unhcr.org/4ec3c78c6.pdf.

> Produced by the Community Development, Gender Equality, and Children Section (CDGECS), a division of international protection, this source is presented by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The report provides a non-exhaustive reference list of specialized organizations working globally alongside persons with disabilities relating to services, education, livelihood opportunities, rehabilitation, and community support. Within this report, delegates will be able to find a brief description of the Member States' population, as well as what the organization serves and their activities. The report further discusses international presence and/or local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) partnered with International

Organizations (IOs), as well as, elaborating on Organizations of Persons with Disabilities also known as Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs).

Borg, Johan, Rosangela Berman-Bieler, Chapal Khasnabis, Gopal Mitra, William N. Myhill, and Deepti Samant Raja. "Assistive Technology for Children with Disabilities: Creating Opportunities for Education, Inclusion and Participation." Accessed April 11, 2019. https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Assistive-Tech-Web.pdf.

> Produced by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), this report provides information regarding the rights of children with disabilities, in addition to the barriers children with disabilities face. The report further explains the importance of assistive technology for children with disabilities, alongside with the benefits and the principles that guide the provision of assistive technology. The report presents sources that include thorough examples of resolutions created to assist and provide for children with disabilities.

II. Addressing Challenges to Freedom of Expression and Information in the 21st Century

"The FOI Act at 50: Still Going despite Tension, Challenges." Freedom Forum Institute, Accessed June 7, 2019. https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/2016/07/07/the-foi-act-at-50-still-going-despite-tension-challenges/.

> In this article, the Freedom Forum Institute underlines the significant challenges of freedom of information in today's age. By analyzing the United States' (US) federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Freedom Forum Institute confronts the obstacles facing the dissemination of government information and the role of national security. The article provides an example of legislation to promote the freedom on information and the challenges it has continued to endure for the past 50 years. As stated within this article, open government advocates regard legislation such as the FOIA as vital to fully functioning constitutional democracies. By examining the successes and shortcomings of legislation such as the FOIA, delegates may evaluate and create innovative approaches that refine previous efforts and ensure the global progression of the freedom of information.

"Our Approach - What We Do - IFEX." *International Freedom of Expression Exchange*, 2019, https://ifex.org/what-we-do/our-approach/

> This source on freedom of expression by the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) provides delegates a different perspective on the challenges of unrestricted freedom of expression, including potential concerns over unfiltered hate speech, uncensored and offensive ideas, the promotion of violence and cruelty, immoral and indecent media and publications, and so forth. IFEX has engaged in international outreach, developed strategic campaigns in addition to advocacy programs with the commitment to promote and defend freedom of expression as a fundamental human right.

Freedom of Information: Practices and Challenges in Selected ASEAN Countries - IEEE Conference Publication. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/6163812.

> This publication by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) provides a useful evaluation of the freedom of information in selected Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States. More specifically, the publication provides an evaluation of the willingness and eagerness of citizens with selected ASEAN Member States to fight for improved freedom of information compared to their willingness to practice freedom of information. Delegates might find this source useful in understanding the cultural barriers that may hinder the advancement of freedom of information practices and dissuade citizens from strongly advocating for them.

Kaye, David. "Challenges to Freedom of Information in the Digital Age." April 2018. https://www.swlaw.edu/sites/default/files/2018-04/JIMEL_V7,_N2_-_Challenges_to_Freedom_of_Information_in_the_Digital_Age.pdf.

In his keynote speech, *Challenges to Freedom of Information in the Digital Age*, David Kaye implements the framework of international human rights law when evaluating the unique role of sources and whistleblowers in their quest for more transparent freedom of information processes in today's age. The source makes great use of referencing provisions outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights for delegates to review. Additionally, this source provides excellent insight on digital ages risks which impact sources and whistleblowers, including surveillance such as spying on journalists, and the effects of mass releases of documents.

Elsayed-Ali, Sherif, and David Kaye. "Challenges to Freedom of Expression." International Law Programme Meeting Summary, July 20, 2016. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/events/2016-07-20-challenges-freedom-expression-meeting-summary.pdf.

David Kaye and Sherif Elsayed-Ali analyze five key areas of consideration concerning freedom of expression in their work, *Challenges to Freedom of Expression*. The article elaborates in these areas, which include the rationale that drives restrictive government policies; the diversity in tools used to diminish the freedom of expression by various governments; the tensions between human rights and countering violent extremism (CVE); competing models of cyber governance and their sustainability; and strategic and global responses to the challenges which face freedom of expression. Delegates will find this source useful to reduce the challenges facing the freedom of expression.