

GMC CONFERENCE 2024

1st National Edition

STUDY GUIDE

UNHCR

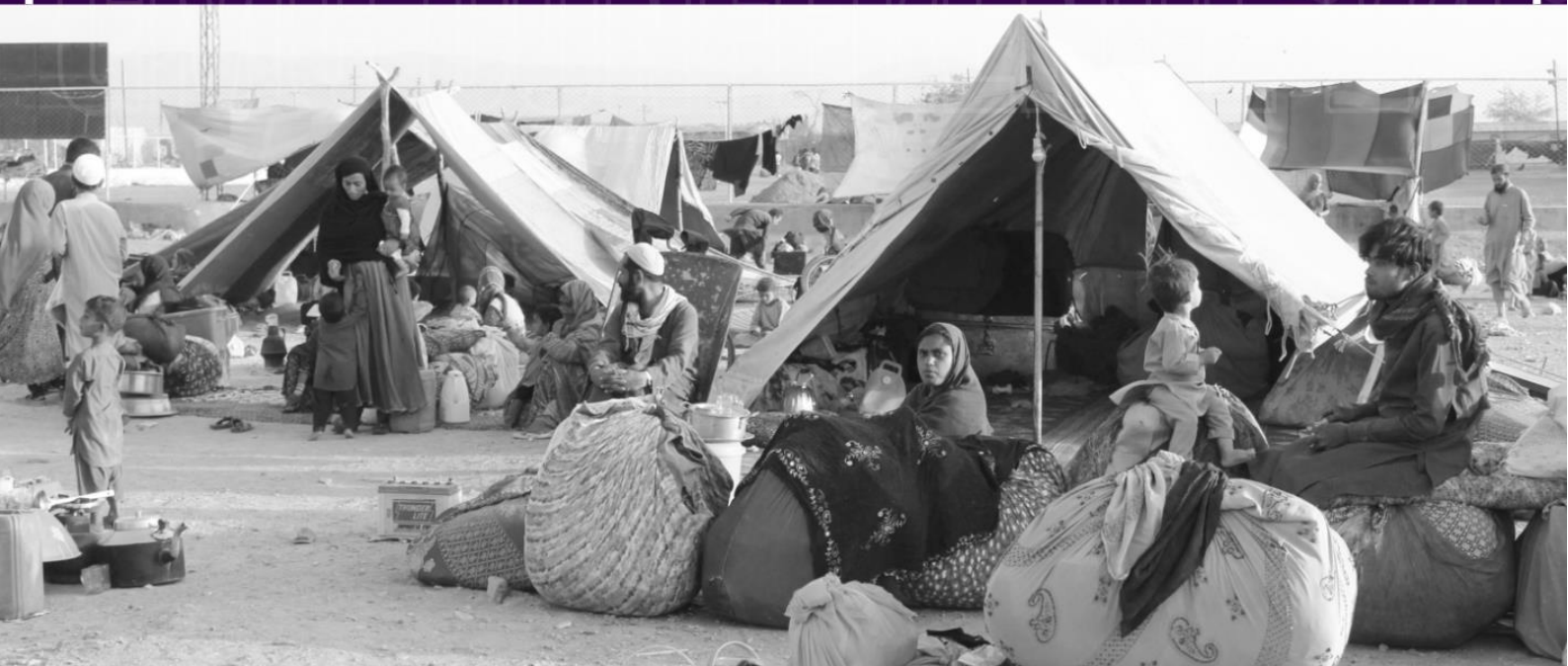


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**DISARMAMENT
AND
INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY
COMMITTEE**

GMC 2024

8TH-9TH-10TH MARCH, 2024

Agenda: Improving urban warfare civilian protection: Developing protocols, reducing collateral damage, and enhancing international cooperation in navigating conflict complexities.

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Please do not limit your research to the background guide and analyse beyond what is mentioned here. Following is an overview of the agenda of the committee. For any further queries feel free to drop a mail to:

To:	abeertiwari29@gmail.com
Subject:	Query

Letter From the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Disarmament and International Security Committee! I hope you enjoy your time committee, indulge in intellectual discussions, augment your understanding of this prominent issue of global significance, and leave the committee as international-minded global citizens.

This is Ritwick Bhuyan and Abeer Tiwari, and we will be serving as members of the executive board for the Disarmament and International Security Committee (**DISEC**) at the GMC Conference '24. As your executive board, we are extremely excited to see the unique arguments, thoughtful debate, and discussion you will have to offer! We hope to make your experience at GMC Conference '24 one of your most memorable conferences.

Our committee will be addressing the important issue of improving urban warfare civilian protection: Developing protocols, reducing collateral damage, and enhancing international cooperation in navigating conflict complexities, a critical issue that demands our immediate attention and action. The UN has a crucial role in addressing this issue, and we are confident that our committee will contribute to the global effort to end such abuses.

Every nation must uphold human rights and ensure respect and dignity for all individuals. This responsibility is amplified during times of emergencies and member states need to take up an active role during conflicts in the urban region.

In our discussions, we must deal with this issue with sensitivity and respect. We must work together to develop meaningful solutions that take into account the unique experiences of these groups and provide them with the protection they need and deserve.

During the conference, we expect delegates to work collaboratively to come up with realistic solutions that are effective in achieving this objective. Moreover, we could not stress the importance of collaboration and cooperation in the policy-making process at the UN enough. These values form the bedrock of the UN system and a guiding principle of a Model UN conference.

Furthermore, please have fun! A Model UN conference differs from other forms of public discourse or intellectual activities. This is an opportunity to learn and forge relationships that you shall cherish for

a long time. Please use this opportunity because you are fortunate enough to have such platforms to ameliorate your skills and augment your network.

Overall, this issue holds immense endowment for policy action at the global level and is something we found particularly cognizable. I expect all of you to learn and grow intellectually at the conference and make new friends! We couldn't be more excited to meet all of you!

Kindest regards,

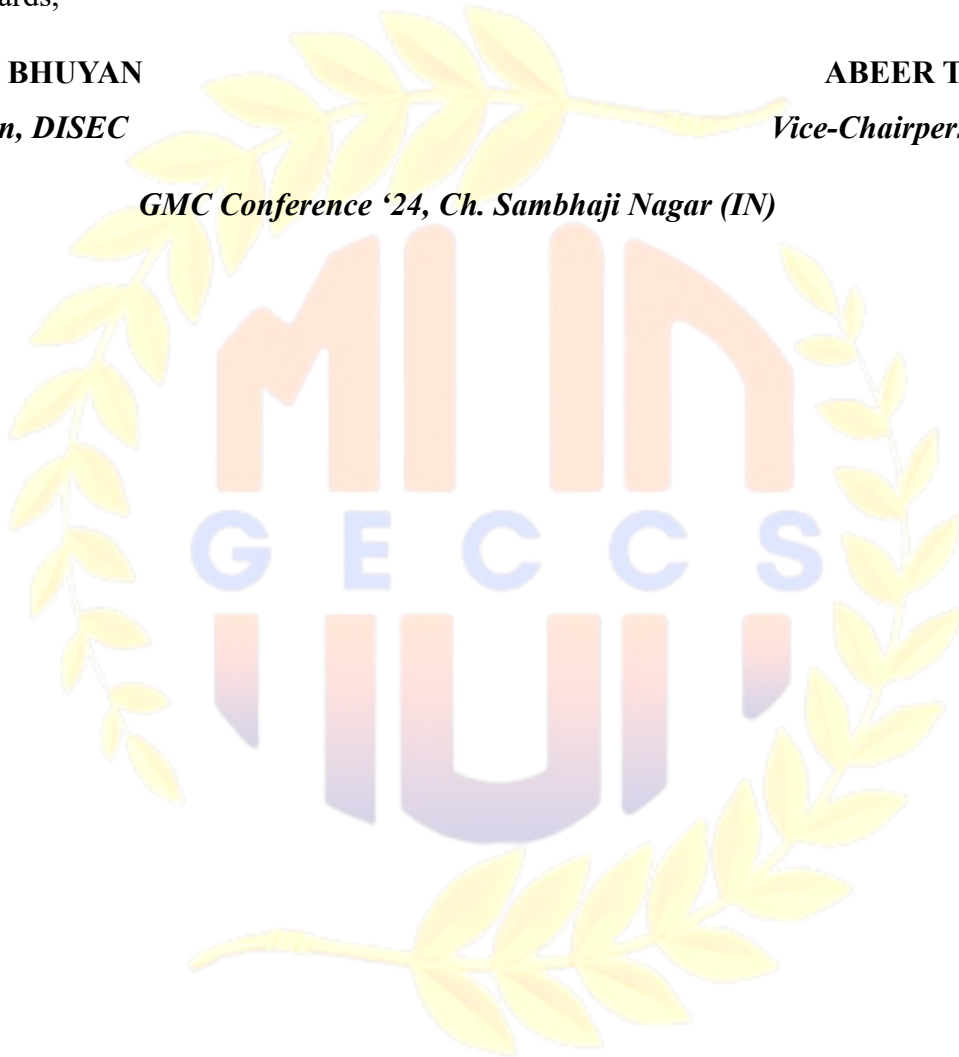
RITWICK BHUYAN

Chairperson, DISEC

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Vice-Chairperson, DISEC

GMC Conference '24, Ch. Sambhaji Nagar (IN)



About the Committee

Ban Ki-Moon once said:

“The burden for achieving disarmament cannot be borne by peace groups alone. Everybody, regardless of age, income, profession, gender or nationality, has a stake in this quest.”

Disarmament and security have been a core aspect of the United Nations since its foundation. This emphasis on these two core aspects has led to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) being at the forefront of that battle. Following the damage and atrocities that were a result of the two World Wars, the United Nations Member States took to the Charter to maintain international peace. Thus, this committee responds to the need to discuss and find solutions for disarmament and the guarantee of international security. DISEC is the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee and was created in 1946. The committee resolves issues related to disarmament, global challenges and international security. Moreover, it cooperates with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament (UNDC and UNCD). There are often questions as to what DISEC can do and what the Security Council could not do. While the Security Council has more means at their disposal, the main difference comes in the process in which both operate. Because it is a General Assembly committee, it has a wider range of countries present since it is not limited to 15 members. Furthermore, there are no vetoes, which means that the resolutions must be passed with a majority.

Another way that DISEC and the Security Council differ is in their mandates. DISEC is ordered to focus purely on security and disarmament issues; and works closely with the above-mentioned UNDC and UNCD, both of which are highly specialized organs, providing them with up-to-date data and information. Therefore, while the DISEC cannot instruct peacekeeping missions to be formed, they can coordinate current peacekeeping missions regarding security and anti-terror measures.

Although the committee aims to ensure sustainable peace and examines anything concerning disarmament, international security or the promotion, establishment, and subsequent maintenance of global peace at present; it mainly focuses on regional security, biological/ chemical/technological/ nuclear weapons and arms trade. All observers and 193 states of the United Nations are members of this committee. Documents require at least a simple majority to be passed in DISEC and all members have the equal right to vote.

Even though the Disarmament and International Security Committee cannot impose sanctions, authorize armed intervention, or pass binding resolutions; it can work with other organs of the United Nations and make recommendations. As of today, this committee continues to grow in significance and is a key factor in solving international crises for a reliable future.

Introduction to the Agenda

History of Urban Warfare:

War is an ancient social phenomenon and is constantly evolving. Even though conflict studies very rarely mention cities, they have always been affected by armed violence. All periods of history have seen cities destroyed or experimented with specific techniques of urban warfare, such as the use of the siege in ancient times or the Middle Ages. But urban warfare has changed considerably, particularly over the last two hundred years which can be divided into three distinct periods.

The first corresponds to the emergence of States and modern armies in the 18th century when wars were essentially waged between one State and another and on open battlefields. In the second period, from the 1930s, cities were increasingly targeted and affected by conflict. The Spanish Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War and, not least, the Second World War were all conflicts in which cities and their strong industrial capacities became strategic targets for warring nations, and sometimes even military objectives themselves, such as Dresden and Hiroshima. Directly targeted civilian society thus became the first victim. Lastly, the Cold War often took warfare back to rural areas, giving rise to conflicts fought far from the urban centres, as was the case in Vietnam, Cambodia and some countries in Africa. The urban guerrilla tactics of El Salvador or Guatemala were therefore as exceptional as they were ineffective for the non-state armed groups engaged there.

However, since the 1990s, and the end of bloc-on-bloc antagonism, wars seem to have become more urban-based, adopting the characteristics of contemporary armed conflict in the sense that they are more internal than international, last longer and involve enemies with vastly different means. This is referred to as “asymmetric warfare”. There seems to have been a surge in such conflicts, although there is a lack of precise data on the subject.

Urban Warfare:

Urban warfare is defined as the conduct of military operations in cities (Spencer, 2019). Depending on the strategic objectives pursued, urban operations can take different forms, ranging from high-intensity conventional warfare to low-intensity combat, counterinsurgency, stabilisation, or humanitarian aid operations. The transitions between different stages of urban conflict can be very fluid and dynamic; actions of criminal paramilitary groups can very easily and quickly escalate into urban combat operations as demonstrated by the militarised fight against drug cartels in Mexico or the eruption of violent protests in Iraq.

Combat operations in urban areas are primarily defined by three factors: physical terrain, population, and infrastructure. Generally speaking, the physical terrain and infrastructure pose significant problems for movement and manoeuvres, the use of force, intelligence, and communications. The most important challenge in urban combat operations, however, is the presence of civilians. Conventional armed forces operating in urban areas are constrained by human, legal, and military considerations relating to the presence of civilians at the heart of combat zones.

Dense urban areas are about the most complex operating environment for military forces. Urban terrain impedes situational awareness and degrades command and control (C2). Operations in urban areas also make manoeuvring, the movement of large troop formations, and heavy equipment difficult. Urban warfare, therefore, is high-intensity warfare which requires the command of small, flexible units. The difficult terrain, narrow streets, lack of open spaces, and high-rise buildings expose soldiers to ambushes and make the evacuation of wounded more difficult. The features of urban terrains can vary with each presenting specific challenges regarding size, landscape, infrastructure, population, and other characteristics. Urban combat favours the defender. Even armed forces which are technologically, materially, and numerically inferior compared to their opponents can take advantage of the urban environment. The complexity of the urban terrain makes detection, identification, selection, and prioritisation of legitimate military targets difficult (Konaev and Spencer, 2018). Urban infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, power stations, or waterworks can be used by enemy forces for military purposes and the city's residents could, willingly or not, provide cover to enemy forces. This complicates the differentiation between combatants and non-combatants (Konaev, March 2019). The high population density in cities increases the risk of killings and injuries among the civilian population. Seventy per cent of civilian deaths in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq occurred in cities (Keck, 2017). The proximity of civilians to military operations complicates

military planning and targeting (ICRC, May 2017). These factors and the application of restrictive rules of engagement (ROE) are likely to strain the ability of NATO forces to operate effectively in hostile urban environments.

Urban Warfare as a “Humanitarian Challenge”

The latest data gathered, albeit patchy, suggests that urban warfare currently affects over 50 million civilians worldwide, and kills on average eight times more than a conflict in a rural environment. The complex nature of urban sites is a major challenge for military and humanitarian aid operations given the population density and the fact that civilians and combatants intermingle. Joshua Baker, producer and director of the film *Battle for Mosul* relates the following account:

“One commander told me that the fighting was so close that he could be in the kitchen of one apartment and be exchanging fire with an enemy in the sitting room whilst there were civilians on the floor above.”

Another major humanitarian challenge is the damage caused by the use of means and methods of warfare that were designed for use in open battlefields. These include the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas; these are often indiscriminate in that they have a wide “impact area” due to their relatively inaccurate delivery system, their explosive power or the number of sub-munitions they contain. The ICRC, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and even States jointly condemn these practices, the use of which is steadily rising and causing major damage among civilian populations. The NGO coalition, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), which documents such use, claims that their deployment in an urban area kills on average twenty-eight people (90% of whom are civilians) compared with just three in a non-populated area.

In addition to the direct damage caused by an explosion, explosive weapons can give rise to a myriad of indirect effects, “domino effects”, which affect the population’s essential infrastructure. An attack on an arms depot, for example, could damage a nearby electrical transformer leading to power cuts which would cause problems for a hospital or a sanitation system, thus creating risks for the wounded and ideal conditions for the emergence of water-borne diseases. These consequences are more severe in an urban environment where the population is more dependent on essential services and the networks are highly interconnected, increasing the risk of malfunction or stoppage when one part is affected by conflict. The shutdown of certain parts of an infrastructure can, because of its central

position upstream of a network of services (so-called “upstream components”), affect thousands of people at the same time.

Today’s urban centres are often *vulnerable to conflict* for the very reasons they are key hubs of civilian life.

First, cities have strategic value. As a core hub of people, power, economic activity, social institutions, history, and culture, and an embodiment of national identities, controlling cities and their inhabitants is seen as strategically critical by belligerents.

Second, the rapid rise in urbanization – which also reinforces the strategic value of cities. For the first time in history, more people live in urban areas rather than rural settings, a proportion that is expected to increase to *68 per cent by 2050*. With cities growing vertically and populations becoming denser, urban centres will become increasingly congested, complex and interdependent.

And third, it may be the belligerents’ strategy to draw the fighting into an urban area. The physical and human terrain of a city can offer advantages to the defender and mitigate the technological superiority of a more powerful opponent. Attackers may also try to pin defenders down in a city to prevent their escape or resort to siege warfare.

Against the chaotic backdrop of cities in conflict, there are a range of humanitarian, legal and military challenges, as well as ways of overcoming them. We invite you to join us in a critical reflection on some of the age-old problems – and the new solutions to them – in this new blog series on how best to minimize the humanitarian consequences arising from urban warfare.

Adapting humanitarian action to urban conflicts

The nature of the challenges posed by conflicts in urban areas also calls for a rethink, if not a “paradigm shift” in the ways in which humanitarian aid is provided.

Firstly, it would seem that a holistic approach is needed to address humanitarian aid requirements in urban conflicts. The interdependence of service networks, the intermingling of civilians and

combatants, and the prolonged nature of conflicts require cross-cutting rather than sector-based interventions, for the long term. Repairing urban services requires time, resources and specific skills (repairing infrastructure, training managers, etc.); while at the same time, emergency actions must continue to be carried out to help the affected populations survive. This is why some humanitarian actors are requesting new funding schemes to reconcile short and long-term actions as well as individual and systemic approaches.

Furthermore, there is a major change in humanitarian needs in urban conflicts where invisible damage is caused by incessant bombardment, weeks of siege and the destruction of powerful symbols. For example, the mental health needs of the affected populations must be addressed by humanitarian aid actions. More recently, “digital needs” also seem to be gaining in importance; populations who are affected by violence are expressing an increasing need to be connected, to communicate with their loved ones, and to see their digital data and identity protected so that they can safeguard certain essential documents. Last December, Yves Daccord, Director-General of the ICRC, said that these are a “third generation” of humanitarian needs.

Lastly, if gaining access to conflict zones and the affected civilian populations is a global problem of ever-increasing importance, it is a particularly significant issue in urban environments. Cities in conflict situations are often fragmented and controlled by various belligerents, some of whom may deliberately deny access to certain areas. Humanitarian aid organisations must be able to negotiate and communicate more with local public authorities and civil society organisations to “decentralise” humanitarian diplomacy. Despite occasional and well-founded concerns about compliance with humanitarian principles or corruption, such collaboration can lead to a greater understanding of the local situation, facilitate access, and help identify humanitarian needs much more quickly.

Preparation and training during an “Urban Warfare” situation:

The protection of civilians needs to be made a priority for all military operations and, in particular, in the urban environment where civilians are most acutely at risk. At all levels, and well before the planning phase of any urban operation, civilian authorities and military commanders need to clearly articulate, including, in doctrine and directives, an intent that places IHL compliance and the protection

of civilians at the centre of any mission, and subordinate commanders must be trained in how to reflect this in their *military decision-making*.

Greater respect for IHL and urban-warfare-specific policies is only possible if military forces and non-state armed groups are properly trained and equipped for the demands of the urban environment if they are under strict orders as to the conduct to adopt, and if effective sanctions are applied in the event they fail to obey such orders. In addition to *formal integration* of the law, encouraging individual soldiers and fighters to internalize the values it represents through *informal sources of socialization* is particularly important for urban warfare where traditional understanding of command and control face persistent challenges.

Urban warfare doctrine and training must be realistic. It should place greater emphasis on *preparing troops* for how large-scale civilian presence impacts operations, targeting or other aspects of combat, and conversely how urban warfare affects cities and their population. In particular, the taking of precautions to avoid or at least minimize civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects needs to be prioritized as an integral component of any urban combat training programme. Armed forces need to have the ability to understand, anticipate and mitigate the variety of long-term harmful effects that urban warfare causes for the city's inhabitants, including displacement, lack of access to essential services, or loss of livelihoods, and how such risks may be amplified by specific methods such as sieges. Similarly, troops need to be trained in how to identify risks and opportunities to better ensure respect for IHL during *partnered military operations*.

A recent *ICRC study* found that training is most effective if taught intensively when using mixed methods such as classroom instruction, case-study analysis, command post and practical field exercises and *wargaming*, and when taught by a trainer with high credibility among the soldiers. Effectiveness should be tested under duress. For example, command and staff colleges need to prepare future commanders and staff officers for the genuine humanitarian challenges they will face when forced to operate in the urban environment; bypassing and avoiding cities in warfare will not always be a viable course of action, no matter how preferable.

Better Protecting civilians on the Urban Battlefield:

Beyond training, a lot more needs to be done on the actual battlefield.

First, operational commanders should shape the battlefield at the strategic, operational and tactical levels in a way that minimizes urban fighting, favouring strategies and tactics that draw the fight outside of cities to the extent possible.

Second, recent conflicts have seen a resurgence of sieges and other encirclement tactics. Such tactics raise many *legal, policy and humanitarian issues*. Today, sieges are lawful only when directed exclusively against an enemy's armed forces. The plight of civilians deprived of supplies essential to their survival in a besieged area can no longer be used by a besieging party as a legitimate means to subdue its enemy. The implementation of several rules stemming from the *principle of precautions* also requires both parties to allow civilians to leave the besieged area whenever feasible.

Third, all belligerents who plan and decide upon attacks in an urban area, whether besieged or not, must know how to anticipate the direct and *indirect (or reverberating)* effects of their attacks. For example, a sound understanding of the human environment (*chapter 3*) during the 'intelligence preparation of the environment' phase of military planning can facilitate the design and implementation of effective strategies to minimize risks of civilian harm. This includes an understanding of the population's vulnerabilities, strengths and resiliencies, based on a multidisciplinary people-centric assessment. Belligerents must notably account for the specific characteristics, vulnerabilities and interconnectedness of critical urban civilian infrastructure and *services essential* to civilian survival (e.g. *water, sanitation, electricity and health care*). The expertise of humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC, working on the front lines to respond to the consequences of urban warfare, might be particularly informative for belligerents and commanders when planning military operations, as well as when promulgating guidance and standard operating procedures on how to anticipate and avoid causing, such civilian harm.

Finally, belligerents must be able to recognize when an attack in an urban area will run afoul of the prohibitions on *indiscriminate* or disproportionate attacks and must refrain from such attacks. In particular, belligerents should not use explosive weapons with a wide impact area in populated areas unless sufficient mitigation measures are taken to limit their wide area effects and reduce the

consequent risk of civilian harm. In this respect, belligerents need to be equipped with the means and trained on methods that enable them to fight in compliance with IHL and avoid or at least minimize civilian harm.

Closing Remarks

Congratulations! You finally made it to the end of this background guide. We hope you learned a great deal about the topic and that this guide directed your thought process and research. We hope you will raise the points mentioned in this guide to lead discussions in the committee. We expect you to read this background guide in its entirety as it took a lot of time and effort to prepare this work product and We strongly feel that the knowledge and information presented in this guide are crucial to constructive discussions in committee. While this guide is a good starting point for your research, this guide should not be the ending point. It amounts to a manageable amount of research and we strongly recommend that you research beyond the bounds of reading the study guide.

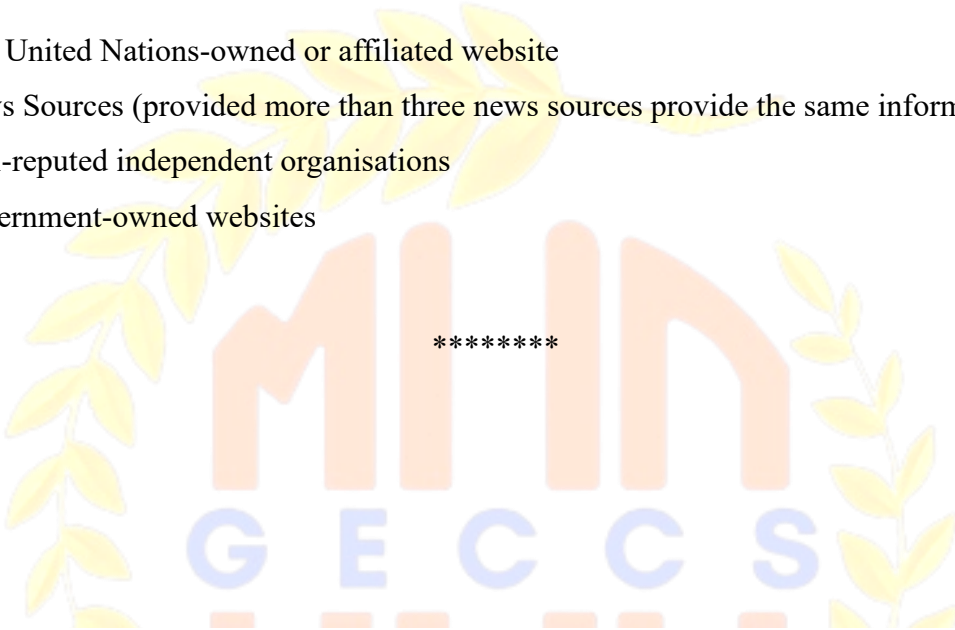
Our chief objective for the committee is to have intellectual, realistic, solution-oriented, and engaging discussions given the prominence of the agenda. At the same time, we must ask you to enjoy the learning process and leave the committee with not only skills and knowledge but also friendships and memories that live forever. Learning at a Model UN ought to be an enjoyable experience; let us know to get involved in intense competition and be tunnel-visioned toward awards. Every delegate who learns and is a better version of themselves towards the end of the committee is the best!

We hope that you are all excited about the committee so, let us all enjoy and show the great work that we have done. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us and we will gleefully help you, see you at the conference!

Credible Sources

These are some highly recommended sources to use for your research. However, please do not limit yourself to these, and do not hesitate to critically analyse and use any other information that may come your way.

1. Any United Nations-owned or affiliated website
2. News Sources (provided more than three news sources provide the same information)
3. Well-reputed independent organisations
4. Government-owned websites



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