

BACKGROUND GUIDE



GIISMUN
TOKYO2024
CHAPTER 4

Committee:

SOCHUM

Social, Cultural, & Humanitarian Committee

Agenda:

Addressing the ongoing challenges faced by indigenous communities, including discrimination, land rights violations, and cultural appropriation, exploring pathways for reconciliation and cultural preservation.

SOCHUM

Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)

Committee Overview

History of the Committee

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the third committee of the United Nations (UN) is a committee responsible for dealing with issues regarding fundamental human rights in the international community. SOCHUM was founded in 1945 in reaction to the establishment of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

SOCHUM was significantly involved in developing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was amended and passed on 10th December 1948. As an integral component of international human rights legislation, this historic declaration established essential freedoms and rights for all individuals.

Background information

Expanded Mandate: Over the years SOCHUM has expanded its horizon to address emerging global issues including women and child rights, refugee status, and the protection and promotion of cultural diversity.

Annual Sessions: SOCHUM much like other UN Committees convenes yearly wherein member states come together to engage and negotiate resolutions concerning various social, humanitarian and cultural issues.

Focus Areas: With a mission to create peaceful solutions for a wide range of social, humanitarian, and cultural challenges facing the global society, SOCHUM gets its legitimacy from the original United Nations Charter. This body achieves this by starting research projects that support suggestions for advancing global collaboration and everyone's right to fundamental freedoms.

SOCHUM continues to play a vital role in addressing social, cultural and humanitarian challenges and formulating appropriate and timely resolutions promoting human rights and cultural diversity within the United Nations.

In recent years there have been multiple new improvements and policies brought up in order to address the circumstances of the indigenous people. This comprises the introduction of several legislative proposals protecting indigenous people, alongside the provision of various opportunities for schooling, culture incorporation and exposure.

Different countries have a wide range of legal frameworks and policies set out to address the Indigenous community. Major ones include the UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169 on an international level and multiple others on a national level varying from country to country.

- I. Land Rights Violation: Article 26 in the UNDRIP recognizes the indigenous people's rights to their lands, territories and resources.
 - A. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
 - B. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess because of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
 - C. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs,

traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned. [13th September 2007, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, UN, Article 26]

II. Culture Appropriation:

- A. Article 31 in the UNDRIP affirms the indigenous peoples right to maintain, protect and develop their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.
- B. WIPO and Traditional Knowledge acknowledge the value of preserving folklore, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions. Several initiatives explore legislative frameworks for the protection of indigenous intellectual property.

III. Culture Preservation:

- A. Article 11 in the UNDRIP recognizes the right of Indigenous people to practise and bolster their cultural traditions and customs.
- B. Article 13 in the UNDRIP emphasises the right to practise and proffer cultural heritage.

Despite having numerous such policies and legal frameworks both international and national, the level of cooperation between governments and indigenous communities, as well as the implementation often determines how effective they are.

Implementation Challenges:

- I. Land Rights Violation: The increasing income rates alongside developing economies means that there is more money for people to spend on housing and businesses to spend on expanding for which often the indigenous people's land is used non-consensually and as governments need to support the development of their economies it leads to them being unable to take much action.
- II. Culture Appropriation and Preservation: There is often difficulty in implementing and upholding these rights as the modern world continues to evolve and change wherein there are various new traditions and customs alongside opposition to the customs of indigenous people.

Despite such challenges, the UN States continue to strive to improve and develop policies that uphold and protect the rights of indigenous people.

Key Definitions

- **Indigenous (People)** - People or communities that are native to a particular region or territory and typically have a distinct cultural, and social identity that is closely connected to their ancestral lands and traditional ways of life.
- **Culture appropriation** - Culture appropriation refers to the adoption, use, or exploitation of concepts from one culture typically without proper acknowledgement, permission, or understanding of the cultural significance.
- **Mandate** - The official authority or instruction given to a committee or organisation to carry out particular tasks or responsibilities.
- **Criminalization** - The process of making an action or behaviour illegal and subject to punishment by law.
- **Sovereignty** - The authority of a state or government to govern itself and make decisions without external interference.
- **Sovereignty (In this context)** - refers to the right of indigenous people to self-governance and self-determination over their lands, resources, and cultural affairs.

Agenda overview

The agenda and the committee's aim/targets

Agenda: Addressing the ongoing challenges faced by indigenous communities, including discrimination, land rights violations, and cultural appropriation, exploring pathways for reconciliation and cultural preservation.

Land Rights Violation: SOCHUM focuses on addressing social, cultural and humanitarian rights and does not specifically address the land issues. However, the land of Indigenous people plays a huge part in their culture and disturbing their land in any way is equivalent to violating their cultural rights which is something that SOCHUM does address.

Cultural Appropriation and Preservation: While SOCHUM's actions depend on the global agenda and priorities, they play an important role in addressing cultural rights in the following ways: -

- I. Advocating Cultural Diversity and Dialogue
- II. Addressing Cultural Heritage Preservation
- III. Encouraging Education and Cultural Understanding
- IV. Acknowledging Cultural Appropriation
- V. Discussing Arts and Culture for Social Development

Issues faced by the committee

Resource Curtailment: Over the years SOCHUM has faced multiple issues regarding insufficient funding. This includes insufficient funding for treaty bodies and other Social, cultural, and humanitarian operations. The severely underfunded humanitarian operations noted in October of 2023, including concerns for adequate funding for 2024, are a notable example.

Accommodating cultural sensitivities: When addressing specific human rights commitments, SOCHUM has had to deal with member states invoking culture, emphasising that "Sensitivities" cannot excuse the criminalization of gender identity, sexual orientation, or racial discrimination. This was mainly discussed in October 2018, when delegates denounced nation-specific mandates.

Response to emerging issues: Although the committee has been exceptionally effective in trying to react swiftly to emerging issues with a plan of action, it has encountered challenges in immediately and relevantly addressing certain issues.

Despite these challenges, SOCHUM has played a crucial role in shaping international discussions on social and cultural rights, human rights, and humanitarian issues.

UN Response (Actions taken):

The UN has addressed challenges faced by indigenous communities through various initiatives that promote their rights, and address discrimination, land rights violations, and cultural appropriation. These initiatives include:

1. **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** - This document was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 and sets out both indigenous people's collective and individual rights.
2. **Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** - This is an expert appointed by the UNHRC who monitors, reports and promotes the rights of the Indigenous people. Alongside making recommendations on how to address the issues faced by the indigenous community.
3. **UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)** - This is a forum that provides advice to ECOSOC and provides a platform to discuss issues affecting indigenous communities, including land rights, cultural preservation, and development.
4. **International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169** - This convention is the only international treaty which specifically focuses on the rights of indigenous people. It addresses issues including land rights and the protection of cultural heritage. This convention also makes it obligatory/compulsory for UN Member states to consult with indigenous people and obtain their consent before taking on any project that involves or affects their land and culture in any way.

Scope of Debate:

Possible Caucus Questions:

Delegates researching the agenda can consider using the following questions during moderated, and unmoderated caucuses, and create discussions during committee sessions. These questions can be used by delegates to explore more areas of SOCHUM.

1. What part can education play in eradicating misconceptions and prejudices about indigenous peoples by raising awareness and understanding?
2. How can governments and international organisations support and defend indigenous communities' land rights and sovereignty more effectively?
3. In what ways can cooperation between governments and indigenous communities foster respectful cultural representation and engagement?
4. How can new technology assist in preserving the culture and heritage of indigenous communities?
5. How can the media assist in representing indigenous cultures respectfully and truthfully, avoiding stereotypes and fostering cross-cultural understanding?

Sources/Useful websites

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University of Tsukuba

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*Please check the application guidelines or ask the contact address below for more details and other conditions.

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Admission Fee	JPY 282,000
Tuition Fee	JPY 535,800/year
Living Cost (Including accommodation)	JPY 80,000/month

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- Campus Photo Album

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- Contact details

ac.intl@un.tsukuba.ac.jp

Hot Topic!!

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Hi, I am Dwitipriya (ブリア). I am a 3rd year undergraduate student at the University of Aizu's ICTG program.

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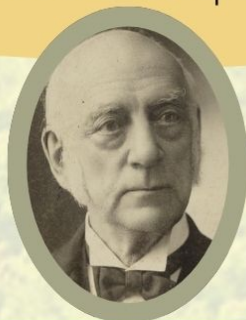
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	> Degree-seeking students > Transfer students <i>(applicants who have a valid status of residence)</i>		Jan 24, 2025
Fall 2025	> Degree-seeking students > Transfer students <i>(applicants who need a student visa)</i>	Sep 2, 2024	Apr 14, 2025
	> Degree-seeking students > Transfer students <i>(applicants who have a valid status of residence)</i>		May 30, 2025

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Tuition, Faculty and Equipment	1,596,000	1,596,000
Total	1,796,000	1,596,000

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