

## **General Assembly: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural**

### **Topic: Globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights**

Globalization is a process of greater economic integration with social, political, environmental, cultural and legal dimensions, which have an impact on the enjoyment of all human rights. Beginning in the 1400s, advancements like sailing, the internal combustion engine, the Industrial Revolution and the internet have spurred greater globalization. The rise of free trade policies in the 19th and 20th centuries was also a significant contributor to globalization. Early economic globalization culminated in the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and ultimately the World Trade Organization, which enshrined principles of free trade and globalization. These international efforts focused on reducing tariffs, stabilizing global trade and ultimately expanding global trade.

During the 20th and the 21st centuries, globalization has had both positive and negative effects. While globalization has been a major contributor to economic development around the world, the interdependence it creates has also allowed for national issues to have broad global implications, like the 2008 recession. The creation of global markets has driven down the price of many products, but it also ensures that local production issues can lead to global price spikes. The negative effects of globalization are often felt keenly in developing economies. These markets may have difficulty competing with the prices of imported goods, and state-subsidized production can make this problem worse. The presence of a global market can also encourage localities to create permissive labor environments in an effort to attract manufacturing and other jobs. This can also cause countries to ignore problems such as sweatshops, low wages and child labor in order to keep foreign investment. Finally, globalization can lead to economic trading and integration that encourages cultural mixing, integration and, in some cases, conflict.

The discussion on globalization and human rights stemmed from growing concern in the 1980s that governments were restricting human rights (particularly economic rights) to create a business-friendly environment that would spur economic development. In 1986, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development, which asserted that Member States have a duty to improve the economic and social capacity of those within their borders but that such developments should not come at the expense of human rights. Globalization created larger challenges for ensuring the protection of human rights while implementing development efforts. In late 1999, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution explicitly on the topic and called for a full report and analysis from the Secretary-General on the relationship between globalization and human rights. The General Assembly made a similar request of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2002.

Early General Assembly reports focused on areas: the impact on agricultural trade and economic disparities and the rise of racism and discrimination in light of globalization and massive technological development. Responses to the issue were mixed. Where some Member States argued that this issue required more attention, others believed that proposed actions would stifle economic growth. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had one of the most substantive responses. They concluded that globalization was generally marked by economic growth, but also the spread of liberalism. This cultural shift has the potential to destabilize areas and cause declines in human

rights including safe work environment and access to healthcare, clean water and food. The growth itself may necessitate systemic changes that Member States are unprepared for or cannot cope with. This may lead to regional increases in poverty.

The international community has felt many of globalization's potential for destabilization. In 2008, the international community officially declared an economic recession. The 2008 recession exacerbated many of the disparities caused by globalization. The recession led to major economic setbacks and directly impacted Member States' ability and willingness to fulfill their human rights obligations, including freedom of movement, education and health goals. As the instability persisted, many countries began to see major shifts in rhetoric away from globalization and toward nationalistic or protectionist policies. These policies tend to be isolationist, leading States to focus their policies and investments on benefits at home, often to the detriment of the international system. They also create problems for traditional and political rights, as restrictions are placed on dissenting views.

In the past four years, the Third Committee has significantly increased both its disapproval of xenophobic actions and its calls for further reevaluation of the state of human rights and the impact of globalization. Its debate has centered on reducing the gap between the rich and how to ensure that Member States can provide stable, accountable social safety nets for all. Because globalization can disrupt parts of the local economy, social safety nets are a vital tool for States to provide stability and predictability for their populations. These recommendations are controversial, however, because many developing Member States lack the monetary resources to provide social safety programs or lack the stability to implement them. The Human Rights Council also has debated the idea of creating an instrument that would track the impact of globalization on human rights and Member States' mitigation efforts to those negative impacts. This has been a highly controversial suggestion, and Member States have been hesitant to embrace it, largely due to the difficulties in improving some areas of human rights, reluctance to create further mechanisms to which they are held accountable and fear of treating all cases with the same approach.

Looking ahead, the United Nations must meet a few challenges when addressing how globalization has affected human rights. In terms of civil and political rights, globalization has challenged many rights, such as freedom of speech and open elections. As States move to favor nationalistic rhetoric, civil and political rights are stifled to restrict dissenting views. Economic and social rights have also been affected, where social welfare systems and cultural institutions struggle to serve citizens. The international community must find a balance where globalization can continue to foster growth, but the rights of individuals are protected and the resources needed to protect them are in place.

*Questions to consider from your country's perspective moving forward:*

How are the trends caused by globalization affecting civil and political rights? Where are the effects most obvious? How can States and the international community address those impacts?

What specific impact is globalization having on economic, social and cultural rights? What resources are needed to better protect those rights? How can the United Nations incentivize change? Are enforcement mechanisms necessary and, if so, what should they look like?

Has modern globalization increased the prevalence of racism? If yes, how can this be addressed?

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