Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2013 University of Colorado Model United Nations Conference and to the General Assembly First Committee! My name is Lillian Waters and I will be your director during the conference. I am a sophomore at CU Boulder who is majoring in international affairs, history, and minoring in German. Over this past summer, I also completed an international law class at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. I became involved in the Model United Nations my first year of university and participated in UNDP committee at the 2013 NY MUN conference. I am currently vice president of Model United Nations club at CU and this is my second time working at the University of Colorado Model United Nations conference.

Enough about me, more about you! If this is your first conference, then be excited! Conferences are a great way to meet new people and gain skills in public speaking, negotiating, debating, and writing. If you have already attended several conferences, then I hope you enjoy another opportunity to improve your “MUN skills” and benefit from the conference. But most of all, have fun! This conference should be taken seriously, but also enjoy yourselves. I have made many wonderful memories at conferences, and I hope you will find it to be a great experience!

Along with reading and understanding the background guide, I highly recommend you review parliamentary procedure as part of your preparation for the conference. It will be great at helping committee run smoother and quicker. I look forward to seeing you all work well together in committee, reading the resolutions you create, and hope you all come up with some interesting solutions to these real world problems.

I wish you good luck in your preparation for the conference, and look forward to meeting everyone in November.

Sincerely,

Lillian Waters

History of the General Assembly 1st Committee: Disarmament and International Security

The Committee for Disarmament and International Security (DISEC) is the first of six general committees in the UN General Assembly. DISEC addresses the implementation of disarmament, strives to prevent international aggression, and seeks to facilitate solutions in order to maintain international peace. DISEC operates under the guidelines set forth by chapter V of the UN charter, and is comprised of 192 member states. DISEC does not possess the capacity to require nations into acting upon UN resolutions. DISEC allows for the debate between nations in order that resolutions intended for the recommendations of actions exclusively will be drafted and later enforced by the UN Security Council when required.

The Committee for Disarmament and International Security was first formed by the mergence of two separate committees. The United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) was created in 1946 in the response to the use of atomic weapons by the United States in Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. UNAEC had first set the forth to achieve the goals of the Baruch Plan, which proposed that the United States would destroy its nuclear weapons arsenal, and that controls would be established to allow for the peaceful use of atomic energy. The Soviet Union abstained on the Baruch plan proposal in the security council and the plan was never accomplished. The United Nations Commission on Conventional Armaments was created in 1947 in order to reduce non-nuclear armaments around the world. The Commission on Conventional Armaments was rendered mostly ineffective by internal disagreement on how to implement its strategies. In direct response to the standstill, the UN General Assembly merged the functions of the UNAEC and Commission on Conventional Armaments together and created DISEC in 1952.

DISEC has primarily placed its efforts upon the dismantlement and prohibition of the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. DISEC has recently begun to draw international attention to the topics of the militarization of space, terrorist organizations gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, drones, and cyber-warfare.

DISEC holds a four to five week session once per year every October, and is comprised by one chairperson, three vice-chairpersons, and one rapporteur whom are all selected for an even representation geographically. All 192 member states of the UN are encouraged and welcome to attend.

The advancement of new technological weapons such as drones and the occurrences of international cyber-attacks are cases in which the threats to maintaining international peace are evolving. The Disarmament and International Security Committee is an essential UN organ to forging international collaboration on sustaining peace in the face of the changing ways in which nations conduct warfare.

TOPIC 1: IMPROVING NUTRITION WORLDWIDE

**Improving nutrition for children**

Nutrition is of utmost importance when considering the wellbeing of the global population. Children, often in rural, poor, or war zone regions, are one of the leading demographic groups that suffers from a lack of adequate nutrition and usually are under- or malnourished. This is major problem and the UN has taken measures in the past to correct this issue. The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 1386, ‘The Declaration of the Rights of the Child,’ on 10 December 1959. The declaration discusses the importance of nutrition in clause four, stating:

The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care. The child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.[[1]](#footnote-1)

By doing so, the UN General Assembly recognized the importance of children being properly nourished so as to ensure social security and proper health development.

On October 24, 1970, the General Assembly adopted the ‘International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade’. Principal eighteen of the Preamble states:

As the ultimate purpose of development is to provide increasing opportunities to all people for a better life, it is essential to bring about a more equitable distribution of income and wealth for promoting both social justice and efficiency of production, to raise substantially the level of employment, to achieve a greater degree of income security, to expand and improve facilities for education, health, nutrition, housing and social welfare, and to safeguard the environment.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This clause determines that for a child to have adequate opportunities to thrive, it is vital to have adequate nutrition. Additionally, the sub-clause D states “levels of nutrition should be improved in terms of the average caloric intake and the protein content, with special emphasis being placed on the needs of vulnerable groups of population.”[[3]](#footnote-3) There are two general types of malnutrition. The first and most important is protein-energy malnutrition (PEM). It is defined as the lack of enough protein (from meat and other sources, measured in grams) and food that provides energy (from any basic food group, measured in calories). This is the type of malnutrition that is referred to when world hunger is discussed.  The second type of malnutrition is micronutrient (vitamin and mineral) deficiency. This type of malnutrition isn’t often referred to when world hunger is discussed, yet it afflicts a majority of the malnourished.[[4]](#footnote-4)

On October 11, 2002, The General Assembly adopted the document S-27/2 entitled ‘A world fit for children’. Declaration seven, clause four called for…

…care for every child. Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition are the essential foundation of human development. We will make concerted efforts to fight infectious diseases, tackle major causes of malnutrition and nurture children in a safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Under the ‘Goals, strategies and actions’ section, goal number one is to promote healthy lives for children, by:

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and poor health by providing a safe and healthy start in life for all children; providing access to effective, equitable, sustained and sustainable primary health-care systems in all communities, ensuring access to information and referral services; providing adequate water and sanitation services; and promoting a healthy lifestyle among children and adolescents.[[6]](#footnote-6)

To ensure these goals, clause thirty-seven, point number thirteen states “Improve the nutrition of mothers and children, including adolescents, through household food security, access to basic social services and adequate caring practices.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Overall, UN General Assembly resolutions that have involved nutrition do so to provide children with all the rights, security, health, and opportunities they need to lead successful lives. As of 2010, there are 925 million hungry people: 19 million is developed countries, 37 million in Near East and North Africa, 53 million Latin America and the Caribbean, 239 million sub-Saharan Africa, and 578 million in Asia and the Pacific.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Stunted Growth in Children**

UNICEF has recently released a nutrition report illustrating the progress that has been made in recent years in combating stunted growth in children, and calls for increased efforts to accelerate a response to a condition that affects 165 million children worldwide. One in four of all children less than five years of age have their growth stunted because of chronic under-nutrition in crucial periods of growth. The damage done to a child’s body and brain by stunting is irreversible, and usually occurs in early childhood years. Around 80 percent of the world’s stunted children live in just 14 countries. The report highlights successes in scaling up nutrition and improving policies in 11 countries: Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Vietnam. Stunting was reduced through a series of simple and proven steps such as improving women’s nutrition, early and exclusive breastfeeding, and providing additional vitamins and minerals as well as appropriate food, especially in pregnancy and the first two years of a child’s life.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Adult Malnutrition**

Due to the aftermath of the global economic downturn, the volatility the price of food in has increased in the past 5 years. In the context of economic pressures, nutritious food is now more expensive, which means developing country consumers shift to even less-balanced diets that lack vital vitamins and minerals. Adult malnutrition is already a problem in many developing countries and the rise of food prices will only worsen conditions for poor families. Most people in developing countries spend around 50 to 70 percent of their income on food and are therefore highly susceptible to adult malnutrition.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In Guatemala, for example, the price of a diet based on corn tortilla, vegetable oil, vegetables, and beans—which supplies key recommended micronutrients—was almost twice as high in 2008 as the price of a less-nutritious diet based on tortilla and vegetable oil alone. For a poor family living on one dollar a day person, the cost of the balanced diet accounts for more than half the total income. Additionally, in Bangladesh, a 50 per cent increase in the price of food predicted from now to 2020 is estimated to raise the prevalence of iron deficiency among women and children by 25 per cent.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Recently, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization launched The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA). The report notes that while some 870 million people were still hungry in 2010-2012, this is just a fraction of the billions of people whose health, well-being and lives are blighted by malnutrition. Two billion people suffer from one or more micronutrient deficiencies, while 1.4 billion are overweight, of whom 500 million are obese, according to the report, which adds that 26 per cent of all children under five are stunted and 31 per cent suffer from Vitamin A deficiency. FAO states in a news release that vitamin and micronutrients deficiency together with obesity and overweight, costs to the world economy in lost productivity and health care are “unacceptably high” and could account for as much as 5 per cent of the global gross domestic product – $3.5 trillion, or $500 per person.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The key to combating malnutrition is healthy diets and good nutrition – which must start with food and agriculture, stresses FAO. “The way we grow, raise, process, transport and distribute food influences what we eat,” it says, adding that improved food systems can make food more affordable, diverse and nutritious. The report makes a number of recommendations, including using appropriate agricultural policies, investment and research to increase productivity; cutting food losses and waste, which currently amount to one third of the food produced for human consumption every year; and helping consumers make good dietary choices for better nutrition through education, information and other actions.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**The Obesity Epidemic**

However, the UN has done little to address the epidemic of obesity. People have grown to favor nutrient-poor foods with high concentrations of salt, fat, and simple sugars. But human biology is ill suited for such a diet. Junk food is cheap, tasty, and firms spend billions advertising it. In America sugary drinks accounted for at least 20% of the weight gained from 1977 to 2001. In 2011 the average Mexican guzzled 728 eight-ounce servings of Coca-Cola, more than in any other country (30% of Mexican adults are obese).[[14]](#footnote-14) Meanwhile jobs require less physical exertion, cars have reduced the need for walking and cycling, and children are less physically active.

This poses a grave challenge to health systems and public coffers. Obesity increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver disease, joint troubles and some cancers. In the US, obesity-related illnesses cost around $190 billion a year, or one-fifth of health spending, according to the Institute of Medicine. And this isn’t just an issue for the developed world. In developing countries, obesity threatens to limit economic growth as workers become less productive and weak health systems lose functionality under new demand. Responses have differed from country to country. Japan has set a specific limit to citizens’ waistlines; if workers do not slim down, their employers face fines. Another response is governments imposing a large tax on soda. A third response called “soft paternalism” is favored by behavioral economists. The idea is not to limit choice or create strict guidelines, but to make it easier for individuals to choose carrots over French fries.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The UN has yet to pass a single resolution to ameliorate the obesity epidemic. This largely because of the misconception that obesity affects only developed countries. However, for the first time in human history, the number of overweight people rivals the number of underweight people. While the world’s underfed population has declined slightly since 1980 to 1.1 billion, the number of overweight people has surged to 1.1 billion. The population of overweight people has expanded rapidly in recent decades, more than offsetting the health gains from the modest decline in hunger. In the United States, 55 percent of adults are overweight by international standards, and 23 percent of American adults are considered obese. This trend is spreading to children as well, with one in five American kids now classified as overweight. Globally, in 2010 the number of overweight children under the age of five, is estimated to be over 42 million. Close to 35 million of these are living in developing countries. [[16]](#footnote-16) These statistics show obesity has evolved from a problem afflicting developed countries to a global epidemic that is now spreading in developing nations due to the easy access and low cost of junk food.

The WHO also projected that by 2015, approximately 2.3 billion adults will be overweight and more than 700 million will be obese, not counting for childhood. The WHO stated,

“The problem [of childhood obesity] is global and is steadily affecting many low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings.… Globally, in 2010 the number of overweight children under the age of five, is estimated to be over 42 million. Close to 35 million of these are living in developing countries.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Overweight and obese children have higher chances to remain obese as adults and more likely to develop complications like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age.

As a response to the obesity epidemic, the UN has recently issued a statement discussing the new solution of eating bugs to slow the rise of obesity. Over 1,990 species of insects are eaten globally, mainly in Africa and Asia. The authors of the study by the Forestry Department, part of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said many insects contained the same amount of protein and minerals as meat and more healthy fats doctors recommend in balanced diets. However, people in the West have a strong cultural bias that would lend this solution some difficulties. That is to say, people in the western world don’t want to eat bugs.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Expected Behavior in Committee**

Developed countries in the West, particularly North America, with high rates of obesity would support UN resolutions to address the epidemic at hand. Currently, the countries with highest obesity rates are the United States of America (34%), Mexico (30%), New Zealand (27%), Australia (25%), the United Kingdom of Great Britain (25%), Canada (24%), Ireland (23%), Chile (22%), and Iceland (20%). However, developing countries with high rates of hunger and starvation would most likely not see it in their best interest to support such efforts since they themselves don’t feel like they will be suffering from the obesity epidemic. Of all the issues of malnutrition, obesity has been the most difficult for the UN to collectively agree on. Other than that, most countries should unanimously agree on combating global malnutrition and starvation. The only points of contention should lie within the details of the draft resolutions, as well as cost. If you want to be successful, poor countries will want the wealthier ones to secure the largest percentage of the costs associated with solving these troubling problems.

TOPIC 2: COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

**Previous action supporting sustainable energy against climate change**

Combating climate change and supporting sustainable energy have been of growing concern to the United Nations General Assembly for the past decades.

The General Assembly has been involved in creating awareness and solutions to climate change since the Economic and Social Council suggested the General Assembly convene a UN conference on problems of the human environment which led to the UN Conference on the Human Environment 1972 held in Stockholm, Sweden that established the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). There was also The World Commission on Environment and Development 1987 established by General Assembly resolution 38/161 which created a four-year study entitled *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland report, which developed the theme of sustainable development.

The General Assembly passed resolution 44/228 in 1992 to convene the UN Conference on Environment and Development that led to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The three major agreements adopted were 1) the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, a series of principals defining the rights and responsibilities of States; 2) Agenda 21, a global plan of action to promote sustainable development; and 3) Statement of Forest Principals, a set of principals to underpin the sustainable management of forests worldwide. In addition, two multilateral treaties were opened for signature: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The conference also called for several major initiatives in other key areas of sustainable development, such as, a global conference on Small Island Developing States; negotiations began for a Convention to Combat Desertification, and for an agreement on highly migratory and straddling fish stocks.

General Assembly resolution 47/190 in 1997 led to the General Assembly Special Session on the Environment, also known as Earth Summit +5, which created the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. The World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 was convened by the General Assembly resolution 55/199 which reviewed the implementation of Agenda 21 and created the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 was convened by General Assembly resolution 66/197 and created the report “The future we want”.

The Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an international treaty that sets binding obligations on industrialized countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The UNFCCC is an environmental treaty with the goal of preventing "dangerous" anthropogenic (i.e., human-induced) interference of the climate system (Article 2, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). There are 192 parties to the convention, including 191 states (all UN members, except Andorra, Canada, South Sudan and the United States) and the European Union that signed the treaty in 1997 and entered into force in 2005. However, the United States did not ratify the Protocol and Canada withdrew in 2011. There has been controversy surrounding the Kyoto Protocols, especially considering the United States refusing to ratify the Protocol, and the notion that it prevents developing countries from economically advancing while larger developed nations have special status[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Sustainable Energy Development**

More recently, the United Nations is looking to utilize the benefits of “science, technology and innovation to create jobs, end poverty, reduce inequality and address other challenges in sustainable development”[[20]](#footnote-20), officials today told UN partners in an event during the 1,000 Days of Action for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The event united the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN Office for Partnerships, the UN Global Compact, and the Global Partnerships Forum along with Member states, the private sector, foundations, and civil society to increase efforts towards reaching the MDGs by the target deadline and to promote thinking on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

“Technological learning and innovation capacity is critical to enable the provision of essential amenities to all and is therefore fundamental to ensuring overall sustainable development… The absence of such capabilities results in limitations to application of existing technologies in all sectors, including those of public importance such as health, education, agriculture and climate change, to name but a few…To achieve robust development results in future, a renewed global partnership for development must embrace diversity and recognize the roles of all stakeholders, including those of philanthropic organizations,” Néstor Osorio, president of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reported”[[21]](#footnote-21)

He noted that the ideas and messages from the event merge with the key outcomes of yesterday’s ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum special policy dialogue on private philanthropic foundations in the post-2015 setting.

Additionally, the General Assembly has acknowledged that reliable and stable transit of energy will play a larger role in sustainable development and international cooperation in the coming decades. In resolution 63/210, the General assembly “welcomes international cooperation in developing transportation systems and pipelines; recognizes the need for extensive international cooperation in determining ways of ensuring the reliable transportation of energy to international markets through pipelines and other transportation systems”[[22]](#footnote-22). There has also been discussion in the role of Central Asia and their production of energy and its transportation to international markets taking into account their reserves of natural gas. Central Asia is one of the leading sources of natural gas to the whole of Europe, and proper transportation is vital to a sustainable future.

The United Nations Secretary-General recently launched the initiative Sustainable Energy For All with has the ultimate goal of making sustainable energy for all a reality by 2030. The three primary objectives are ensuring universal access to modern energy services, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix[[23]](#footnote-23). Such goals are meant to encourage innovation for sustainable development and energy sources that are not fossil fuels on a global scale.

**A Focus on the Oceans**

At the 10th Meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) South West Pacific Ministers for Agriculture, held in the Samoan capital of Apia, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva stated that the sustainable development of the world’s maritime harvests, as well as climate change, had become “a question of survival – just like hunger.” The fight against hunger and climate change will disturb the success of sustainable development of oceans and fisheries, a top UN official stressed.

“The importance of capture fisheries and aquaculture cannot be neglected.…At the same time, these vital services must not jeopardize the key role oceans play in regulating the earth’s climate. They absorb more than 25 per cent of the carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere from human activities,” Mr. Graziano da Silva said, pointing out that they provide over 3 billion people with about 15 per cent of their average per capita intake of animal protein while also contributing to over 200 million jobs globally.

The Southwest Pacific comprises both a sizeable and vulnerable area of the Earth’s surface, accounting for an estimated 15 percent of the globe. In addition, it includes around 2,000 islands and atolls, which are particularly susceptible to storms and flooding as well as scarcity of drinkable water and stresses on the fishery and forestry ecosystems, according to the FAO.

Mr. Graziano da Silva noted that although the international community had made significant strides in its fight against hunger, much still remained to be done on food security and quality of nutrition (especially in island and/or tropical nations) in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving, by 2015, the number of people suffering from hunger, as measured against 1990 benchmarks[[24]](#footnote-24).

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on world leaders to take stronger action to protect the planet’s oceans, warning that pollution, unsustainable exploitation, climate change and acidification threaten the foundations of all life and the international economy.

“We need practical, timely action at the national, regional and global levels to improve the health of the oceans, and to recover and sustain ocean resources,” he told ‘*The High Seas, Our Future! Conference*’ in a message read out in Paris by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova[[25]](#footnote-25).

“It is time to take stronger, more pragmatic and more concerted effort to protect our oceans,” he said, stressing that oceans are heating up and their acidification is adversely affecting on marine life, while rising sea levels threaten to re-draw the global map at the expense of hundreds of millions of people, often the most vulnerable.

He highlighted the critical role oceans play “for the health of our planet, for all life, and for the global economy”[[26]](#footnote-26). One of the greatest threats to our planet from climate change is the melting of the polar ice caps. This would lead to a rise in sea levels due to the large influx of freshwater into the oceans. A dramatic increase of fresh water into the oceans, such as the North Atlantic, could potentially disrupt the Gulf Stream, thus causing mass climate change in the North Hemisphere, particularly North America and Europe.

**Expected Behavior in Committee**

Climate change is one of the biggest issues affecting the human population across the globe, so it is in the General Assembly’s best interest to pass resolutions that will incorporate all countries to help combat climate change that, if let unchecked, may lead to crop failures, severe drought, flooding, and extreme weather. Rising sea level should be of greatest concern to coastal states in the tropics and island nations, all of which have the most to lose in their already wet climates. However, nations without these risks should become involved in the fight against climate change since it has ramifications for every nation on Earth. Sustainable energy development and research will aid in combating climate change, and therefore should also involve all countries. Countries with greater technological capacities and funding should be the main supporters of such resolutions while developing nations provide support and innovation of ideas and tactics.

While all states can agree that something must be done about climate change, and that its existence being very real, there is large disagreement about how to go about solving the issue. Developed countries, especially in the West, expect developing countries to be held to standards they themselves were not held to during their industrial revolutions. Countries like China, India, and Brazil have criticized the West for attempting to slow down their economics for a problem they have largely caused during their own industrial growth and beyond. While the effects of climate change are understood by every nation, it is important to remember that every state’s economy and sovereignty will be take priority in this matter.

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