

## Northwest Model United Nations 2013

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Executive Committee – Explanatory Note

#### What is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Executive Committee?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1949 as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly (GA) pursuant to resolution 319 (IV) and reports annually to the GA and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UNHCR Executive Committee, its primary governing body, is comprised of 87 members, elected by ECOSOC and approved by the GA, who meet in Geneva annually to review and approve the agency's programmes and budget, advise on international protection and discuss a wide range of other issues with UNHCR and its intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

#### What will happen at UNHCR at NWMUN 2013?

NWMUN 2013 will simulate a special session of the UNHCR Executive Committee convened to negotiate and draft a *Convention on Persons Displaced by Climate Change (PDCCs)* which will codify a normative framework protecting and promoting the rights of persons displaced by climate change. Building on previously adopted international instruments, such as the *Guiding principles on internal displacement*, the *Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, and the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, delegates will develop a comprehensive convention which codifies internationally recognized principles into a new framework for protection specifically related to climate change displacement, using innovative diplomatic solutions. At NWMUN 2013, delegates will be challenged to create a new text that has yet to fully drafted or agreed upon in the 'real world' by drawing on groundwork laid in previously formulated principles and international agreements, aiming to close the gaps in international protection for PDCCs.

#### Structure of the Convention on Persons Displaced by Climate Change

The treaty that delegates will negotiate at NWMUN 2013 will have these specific components, each of which will have a section in the final outcome document:

- Preamble:** This section will introduce the relevant existing documents and commitments, which already exist in this topic; additionally it will recognize and acknowledge the existing challenges that PDCCs face.
- Scope and Definitions:** Sets the parameters for the treaty to be implemented; the definitions build upon what already exists in international law and sets the specific parameters for PDCCs.
- Assistance and Protection:** Assesses and lays out a future framework for understanding and abiding by States obligations to protecting PDCCs and defines, or redefines, protections under international law.
- Implementation:** Establishes obligations for states in reporting and implementing provisions of the treaty including steps for what Member States will need to do within their national structures to abide by and implement the treaty.
- Final provisions:** Sets up the compliance and monitoring parameters of the treaty, as well as creates, if the body wishes, enforcement mechanisms for Member States to implement the treaty.

#### Why is NWMUN 2013 simulating UNHCR as a treaty body?

Simulating a treaty body has become an NWMUN tradition over the past several years, because we feel that providing delegates with opportunities to experience a range of negotiation processes at the international level, outside of proceedings within UN committees, will provide a more complete picture of the way in which the international community addresses pressing global issues. The NWMUN Executive Secretariat feels that simulating a treaty body focused on climate change-related displacement will provide delegates with an exciting, and challenging opportunity to learn not only how to negotiate with other parties in a multilateral, multivariable setting, but also explore how treaty negotiations take place in regional and global for a. NWMUN prides itself on innovation and educational integrity, and alongside our experienced delegates participating in treaty body simulations, we too want to continue to challenge and expand our educational experience. As a result, we are simulating the UNHCR Executive Committee as a treaty-making body for the purpose of examining what is fast becoming an urgent global crisis.

This treaty does not yet exist, but there is a call from Member States and Civil Society for the development of binding guidelines to supplement existing agreements in order to address the protection concerns of displaced persons. UNHCR is commonly looked to as the host for negotiations for this future convention due to its expertise as the paramount entity responsible for displacement. This year, NWMUN is excited to challenge our delegates with a truly innovative way of simulating the UN, by doing what has yet to be done.

#### How will the UNHCR be simulated at NWMUN 2013?

UNHCR will mirror the processes occurring in other committees with two main differences: (1) the agenda is already set for the committee; and (2) there will only be one final outcome document (instead of multiple draft resolutions).

To streamline the process of writing the treaty, and reflect the reality of treaty negotiation processes, we have set the agenda for the committee, pre-determined the sections of the treaty and dedicated each committee session to one or more treaty section, as follows:

Friday, November 22 – Afternoon	Introductory Statements & Preamble
Friday, November 22 – Evening	Scope & Definitions
Saturday, November 23 – Morning	Assistance & Protection
Saturday, November 23 – Afternoon	Implementation

Saturday, November 23 – Evening	Final Provisions
Sunday, November 24 – Morning	Consolidation of Draft Treaty, Final Edits, and Amendments
Sunday, November 24 – Afternoon	Final Amendments and Voting Bloc

The agenda for each committee session is flexible insofar as the committee can move *more quickly* than the schedule is laid out; if, for example, the “Scope & Definition” section(s) of the treaty have been drafted prior to the conclusion of the Friday evening session, the committee may move on to discussing “Assistance & Protection.” This decision is up to the committee and based upon their progress in negotiating and drafting working papers that comprehensively address the section. Additionally, the Committee Staff will edit working papers continually. In other words, the committee may have moved from discussing “Assistance & Protection” to discussing “Implementation,” but the Committee Staff may still be handing back edits on working papers related to “Assistance & Protection” as well, until those papers have been approved by the dais.

### **What Rules of procedure will UNHCR be using at NWMUN 2013?**

The rules of procedure for the UNHCR will be the rules of procedure of the General Assembly at NWMUN, with the addition of a UNHCR-specific rules addendum. Most rules are unchanged; however, there are two major changes from other NWMUN committees.

The first change is that the final outcome document is a treaty, not a resolution. The treaty will be comprised of treaty segments, which prior to their adoption during voting will be known as “draft treaty segments.” During voting bloc, each draft treaty segment will be considered in the same way a draft resolution would be, with amendments and other motions considered, followed by a vote on the segment’s inclusion in the draft treaty, which will require a simple majority. Once all segments are voted upon, the draft treaty (which will contain all approved draft segments) will be voted on as a package. This final outcome document will have one segment per treaty section – i.e. for each committee session, there will be one draft treaty segment, which will form that section of the final document.

The second change is in regards to the threshold required to adopt the final outcome document. For most committees, the required majority is “simple majority.” However, for UNHCR, it will require a two-thirds majority of members, as mandated by the *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties*.

### **How do I prepare for UNHCR at NWMUN 2013?**

*Where do I find my countries position?*

1. Your country’s Foreign Ministry, Refugee/Immigration Ministry, and/or Environmental Ministry website;
2. Your country’s Permanent Mission to the UN website;
3. Reports / policy briefs from the UN, NGOs or academic institutions which review the impact of the current situation on many countries and major positions of Member States (this list is by no means exhaustive):  
<http://www.ccdpconvention.com/documents.html>; <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4a5096.html>
4. News articles that may describe climate change and refugee situations in your country, such as:  
<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/05/04/climate-change-and-the-existential-dilemma-to-oceanias-microstates/>

*How do I negotiate towards a climate change agreement?*

There are numerous resources for negotiators of negotiating climate change agreements. Three that we suggest are:

1. Harvard Project on Climate Agreements:  
[http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/56/harvard\\_project\\_on\\_climate\\_agreements.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/56/harvard_project_on_climate_agreements.html)
2. Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development, Short guide to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process for negotiators: [http://www.field.org.uk/files/field\\_short\\_unfccc\\_guide\\_may\\_2012.pdf](http://www.field.org.uk/files/field_short_unfccc_guide_may_2012.pdf)
3. Craig Hart, Climate Diplomat: Post-2012 Climate Change Negotiation Simulation:  
<http://eeocw.org/environmentalnegotiation/climate-diplomat-post-2012-climate-negotiation/climate-diplomat-negotiation-simulation>

### **What do I do if I have more questions?**

If you have questions related to the process we will follow at our conference, position papers, or anything related to the conference’s simulation of the UNHCR, please email the UNHCR Committee Staff, consisting of the Director, Assistant Director, and Chair, at [unhcr@nwmun.org](mailto:unhcr@nwmun.org) and they will be happy to answer questions.

If you have questions related to the substance or content of the negotiations and eventual *Convention on Persons Displaced by Climate Change*, the UNHCR Committee Staff is also a resource that can help you with interpretation of information and answers to some basic questions. However, if your question relates to research, the sources contained in the Bibliography of the Background Guide, located on our website at the [Committees and Topics](#) page, are your best option.

Thank you! We look forward to seeing you this November!