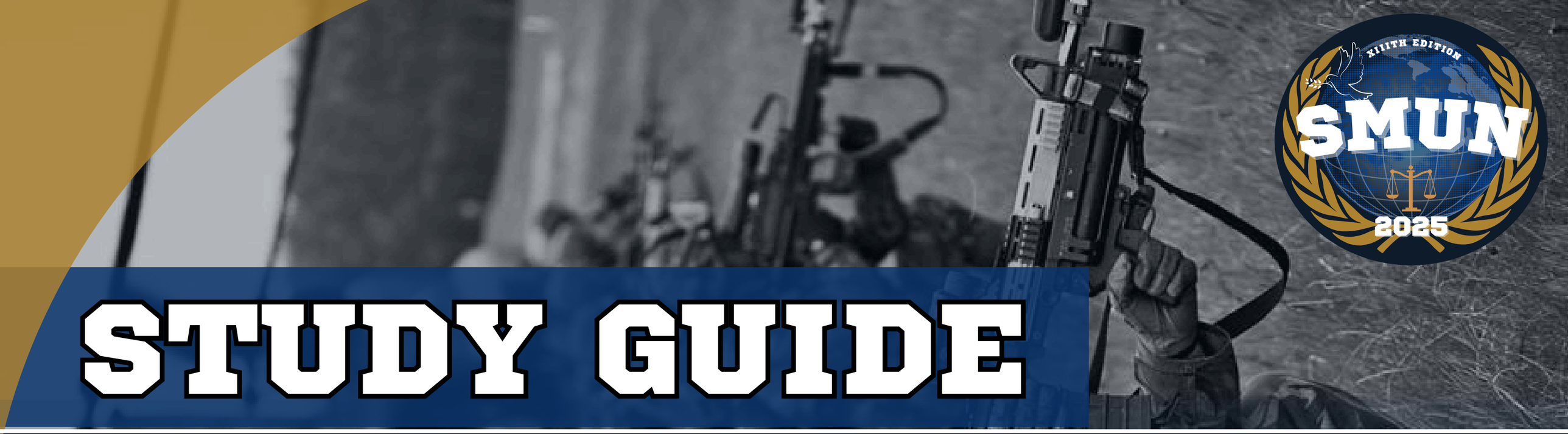

STUDY GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



SMUN 2025

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE AND IT'S MANDATE

The Organization has a major policy making organ, the UN General Assembly (UNGA). It is also made up of all the Member States and offers the only multilateral platform where the totality of international issues contained in the Charter of the United Nations can be discussed. The United Nations has an equal vote amongst the 193 Member Nations.

AGENDA OF UNGA:

Discussing Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

UNGA deals with the struggle of development in Africa, just as it endeavours to promote peace and security in the world as well as sustainable development.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Sub-Saharan Africa is a diverse region with a rich history and varying levels of economic and social development. Despite significant progress in recent decades, the region continues to face systemic challenges that hinder sustainable development. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for a significant portion of the world's extreme poor, with approximately 29% of the population living below the international poverty line of $2.15 per day (2023 data). The region also has the highest population growth rate globally, with a projected population of 2.5 billion by 2050, posing both opportunities and challenges for development.

As such, it remains a focal point for international development efforts and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda on development in Sub-Saharan Africa concerns how the international community, under the United Nations framework, can best support these countries in overcoming challenges like weak institutions, indebtedness, and climate vulnerability to foster sustainable growth and social progress.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Without taking into account the historical background of the region, it is impossible to fully comprehend the development challenges facing Sub-Saharan Africa. Up until the middle of the 20th century, a large portion of the region was colonized, which altered political borders, upended established structures, and left behind extractive economies that prioritized raw materials over value addition or diversified growth.

Many states experienced governance problems after gaining independence, such as conflict, corruption, and authoritarian rule, which slowed the pace of development. Furthermore, the region became even more unstable during the Cold War era due to proxy wars. There have been attempts at economic liberalization and democratic governance since the 1990s, but the results have been inconsistent and tainted by ongoing institutional flaws and frequent crises.

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AND THE UPROOTING OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN AFRICA

In Africa, the 74 subsea cables currently operational or planned can be said to be largely responsible for the massive increase in total inbound international bandwidth that has been growing well over the past ten years. Nonetheless, connectivity gaps remain very high in the continent despite this development. Moreover, the digital divide is aggravated due to poor physical capability of the middle-mile and last-mile infrastructure. The available infrastructure is usually clustered in the urban regions, which gives the rural areas slight connectivity and increases the divide in access to digital services.

The socioeconomic prospects of LEO connectivity satellites are extremely wide. They include:

- Regulation to put in place flexible licensing, spectrum access as well as an effective system of taxation so as to eliminate any block in the way of affordable and seamless satellite connectivity.

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AND THE UPROOTING OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN AFRICA

- Utilizing the public-private partnerships (PPP) to fuel satellite deployment and adoption in line with national priorities.

- Spending in the local capacity development and generation of fair conditions established in the market so as to increase regulatory experience, innovation and establishment of fair competition within the satellite industry.

- Registering the balance between the privacy and security of data and flexibility of policies to facilitate affordable and flexible satellite services

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND THE DEBT CRISIS IN AFRICAN STATES

Africa's Debt Crisis Africa's debt increased dramatically after the 1980s due to irresponsible lending by the countries and irresponsible lending by the lenders. In 2023, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 68.6%. As much as 60% of debt is currently owned by private creditors, at rates up to 4 times G7 levels. This limits the availability of capital, raises the cost of repayment, and crowds out development spending. How nations service this debt also tends to surpass the true social investment within their own borders. For example, in Ghana, 26% of its revenue goes to servicing interest. Multiple nations have more that they service in debt than they invest in education and healthcare.

- **Inequality in Africa**

Africa is the second most unequal continent in the world. In the economy, the top 10% have 54% of the income, whereas the 50% receive 1%. The inequality cuts across all the dimensions of income, gender, region, and access to services. With 83% of the workforce in the informal sector, most are not secure, they have no protection and even minimal sanitary facilities.

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND THE DEBT CRISIS IN AFRICAN STATES

- **Debt-Inequality Link:**

1) Unsustainable debt makes inequality broader by:
2) Increasing regressive taxation
3) Reducing public services
4) Preventing investment
5) Inducing inflation

At low levels, debt reduces inequality; whereas over 34.7% of GDP, it increases it.

- **UNGA's Role**

The UNGA has backing through SDG 10 (inequality) and principal resolutions such as A/RES/68/304 and A/RES/77/271. It advocates for debt transparency, equitable restructuring, and development financing. Evident mechanisms such as the G20 Common Framework are slow and creditor-centric. Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) are $88.6B+ per year for Africa. Facilitated through tax loopholes and havens around the world, they reduce domestic revenues and worsen debt. UNGA supports more robust global tax norms and recovery measures.

UNGA Reform: Strengthening Multilateralism to Support African Development

Multidimensional Inequalities in Africa

Africa faces some of the world's most severe inequalities. Nine of the twenty most unequal countries globally are in Africa, where the informal economy accounts for approximately 83% of employment. This vast informal sector exacerbates inequalities by offering limited job security and scant social protections. Moreover, the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the poorest populations, deepening existing vulnerabilities. High debt levels further worsen inequalities as increased taxation on low-income households diverts vital resources away from essential social programs. Consequently, progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) remains alarmingly poor, with rising poverty, hunger, and unequal access to opportunities threatening to reverse development gains.

UNGA Reform: Strengthening Multilateralism to Support African Development

The Case for UNGA Reform:

Africa’s Limitations and Demands
UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions on global issues, including those affecting African development, are mostly recommendatory in nature and lack enforceability. Furthermore, persistent deadlocks in the UN Security Council —largely due to the veto powers held by the five permanent members (P5)—often hinder timely and effective action on critical issues impacting the continent. In response, the African Union’s Ezulwini Consensus (2005) calls for greater African representation and influence, proposing that Africa be granted two permanent and two non-permanent Security Council seats, including veto powers, as a corrective measure for historical underrepresentation and injustice.

ROADMAPS TOWARD ENHANCED MULTILATERALISM

Reforming the Global Financial Architecture

The current G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments of Highly Indebted Poor Countries has been widely criticized as inadequate, slow, and creditor-centred, having failed to deliver any debt relief dollars by April 2024. To address these deficiencies, proposed reforms include establishing automatic two-year debt service standstills and collective solutions to systemic global financial crises. UNGA Resolution 68/304 (2014) envisions a multilateral legal framework designed to facilitate sovereign debt restructuring in a fair and orderly manner. More recently, the Lomé Declaration on Africa's Debt (May 2025) has called for comprehensive reforms—including a revamped G20 Common Framework, the creation of a Pan-African Credit Rating Agency, and reforms to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation system—to ensure equitable financial governance that better serves Africa's development needs.

Domestic Resource Mobilization and Tax Justice

Africa suffers substantial financial losses due to illicit financial flows (IFFs), estimated at over USD 88.6 billion annually—an amount exceeding the combined health and education expenditures required for most African countries. Recognizing this critical challenge, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 79/234 (2024), which calls for an intergovernmental tax negotiation process under the UN system that ensures equal participation for all countries. This initiative aims to combat tax evasion and illicit flows, promote tax justice, and support the recovery and repatriation of stolen assets, thereby strengthening domestic resource mobilization crucial for sustainable development.

QARMAS

- How can the international community balance economic growth with environmental sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa?

- What measures can be taken to ensure foreign investments benefit local communities without creating dependency?

- How can regional cooperation through the African Union be leveraged to address cross-border challenges?

- What role can technology and innovation play in addressing education and health disparities?

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