



SRMUN Charlotte 2025
March 20 - 22, 2025
gaplen_charlotte@srmun.org

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to SRMUN Charlotte 2025 and the General Assembly (GA) Plenary. My name is Jessica Case, and I have the utmost pleasure of serving as your Director for the GA Plenary. This will be my fourth time as a SRMUN staff member, having previously served as the Director of the Historical Security Council and Assistant Director of the General Assembly Plenary for both Atlanta and Charlotte conferences. I've also staffed as dais for my university's Model UN conferences and attended SRMUN Atlanta and Charlotte three times as a delegate. I graduated with my bachelor's degree in International Affairs with a concentration in Europe in late 2024 and I'm currently looking forward to attending graduate school next fall. Our committee's Assistant Directors will be Aubrie Chastain and Samuel Brown. This will be Aubrie's first time as a staff member. Aubrie has attended five SRMUN conferences as a delegate and she's excited to serve on staff during this conference. Aubrie graduated in May 2024 with her bachelor's degree in Political Science and Environmental Science with a minor in Pre-Law. This will be Sam's second time staffing with SRMUN, but first time in person. Sam has attended three SRMUN conferences as a delegate. He is very excited to return as a staff member this spring. Sam is currently getting his bachelor's degree in Information Technology.

The United Nations General Assembly, or GA Plenary, is composed of all 193 Member States of the UN, which provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues. The GA Plenary occupies itself as the chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The overarching mission of the GA Plenary is to recommend diplomatic and multilateral solutions to issues involving peace and security, human rights, development, international law and justice, and social, economic, and political unrest.

Focusing on the mission of the GA Plenary, we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss come conference:

- I. Addressing the Rise of Foreign Election Interference within Member States
- II. Combating Illegal Mining and Trafficking of Precious Metals

This background guide will serve as the foundation for your research, yet it should not be the extent of the research. Preparation is given to each topic to help guide delegates in their initial research, and to serve as a starting place for more in-depth studies. It is expected that delegates go beyond this background guide in preparation for their position paper and to better prepare themselves for contribution within the committee in March. Further, each delegation is required to submit a position paper for consideration. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies, and recommendations on each of the two topics. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit srmun.org. **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, February 28, 2025 by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website to be eligible for Outstanding Position Paper Awards.**

Aubrie, Sam, and I are excited for the opportunity to serve as your dais for GA Plenary. I wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to meeting and working with each of you. Should questions arise as you are preparing for this conference, please don't hesitate to reach out to your committee staff at the emails below.

Jessica Case
Director
gaplen_charlotte@srmun.org

Aubrie Chastain & Samuel Brown
Assistant Director
gaplen_charlotte@srmun.org

Beau Seate
Deputy Director-General
ddg_charlotte@srmun.org

History of the General Assembly Plenary

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945 to allow Member States to gather and develop solutions to common problems such as international security, cooperation, and peace.¹ Through its founding charter, the *Charter of the United Nations*, the UN can tackle not only global concerns, but also foster discussions amongst Member States.² These discussions are conducted through the six principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.³ As the UN's main deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ, the United Nations General Assembly Plenary (GA Plen) plays a significant role in addressing peace and security concerns, determining budgetary matters, and standard-setting for international law.⁴

The mandate of the GA Plen is outlined in Chapter IV (Articles 10-22) of the *Charter of the United Nations*.⁵ Article 10 explains that the GA Plen is tasked with discussing "any questions or any matters within the scope or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the [Charter]."⁶ Article 15 asserts that the GA Plen "shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council; these reports shall include an account of the measures that the Security Council has decided upon or taken to maintain international peace and security."⁷ Additionally, the GA Plen considers reports from other UN organs and makes recommendations to the Security Council and all Member States.⁸ The GA Plen also elects the UN Secretary-General based on recommendations from the Security Council.⁹

The GA Plen is comprised of six main committees, organized around the body's main fields of responsibility: The Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee), the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee), the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee), the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee), and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).¹⁰ The GA Plen and these six committees can mandate a subsidiary body to consider an issue and submit reports to the GA Plen.¹¹ These committees and subsidiary bodies discuss the agenda items assigned to them, present their recommendations in the form of draft resolutions and decisions, and then submit a report to the GA Plen.¹²

The GA Plen has universal membership, with each of the 193 Member States having one equal vote.¹³ Non-Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) can participate in GA Plen sessions with the status of Observer; however, these groups do not have voting rights.¹⁴ While Observers, like the State of Palestine and Vatican City do not have voting power, Observers can propose topics to the Committee and have free access to most meetings and relevant documentation.¹⁵ Most resolutions in the GA Plen are decided by

¹ United Nations, "About Us," <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>, (accessed June 10, 2024).

² United Nations, "About Us"

³ United Nations, "Main Bodies," <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/main-bodies>, (accessed June 10, 2024).

⁴ United Nations, "Main Bodies."

⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter IV.

⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter IV.

⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter IV.

⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter IV.

⁹ "The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly," Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, 2017, https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/un_pga_new_handbook_0.pdf, (accessed February 9, 2023), pg.13.

¹⁰ "The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly," pg.18.

¹¹ "The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly," pg.19.

¹² "The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly," pg.18.

¹³ United Nations, "General Assembly of the United Nations," United Nations, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>, (accessed June 17, 2023).

¹⁴ "The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly," Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, 2017, https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/un_pga_new_handbook_0.pdf, (accessed February 9, 2023), pg.30.

¹⁵ "About Permanent Observers." United Nations. Accessed July 15, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/about-permanent-observers>.

a simple majority.¹⁶ However, a two-thirds majority is required in the voting on important issues surrounding the maintenance of international peace and security; the admission, suspension, and expulsion of Member States; and all budgetary questions.¹⁷ Issues concerning international peace and security include recommendations for ceasefires or use of armed forces.¹⁸

All assessments on the regular UN budget are considered and approved by the GA Plen.¹⁹ The Committee on Contributions advises the GA Plen on how much each Member State is to pay to the UN based on their “capacity to pay” which is based on a number of factors such as a Member State’s gross national income, debt level, and other metrics.²⁰ Draft resolutions with budget implications must be examined by the Administrative and Budgetary Committee before they can be adopted in the GA Plen.²¹ The UN regular budget funds UN programs in almost all areas mandated by the GA Plen and its subsidiary organs.²² These organs and other deliberating bodies are involved in areas such as political affairs, international justice and law, regional cooperation for development, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and public information.²³ In December of 2024, the GA Plen adopted a USD 3.72 Billion budget for the 2025 fiscal year.²⁴

The GA Plen meets in regular annual sessions and in special sessions, which consist of both formal and informal meetings.²⁵ All GA Plen sessions are numbered consecutively and open on Tuesday of the third week of September.²⁶ Since the GA’s 44th session (1989–90), the GA Plen has been formally regarded as being “in session” for the entire year.²⁷ Additionally, the GA Plen may also hold special sessions, which can be convened either at the request of the Security Council or a majority of Member States.²⁸ There have been 32 GA Special Sessions as of June 2024.²⁹ The last two special sessions addressed the coronavirus pandemic (31st session) and the challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation (32nd session).³⁰ The GA Plen can also hold emergency special sessions, in which the GA Plen can make decisions on issues that are under the exclusive mandate of the Security Council if the Security Council fails to decide on an issue due to a lack of consensus among its permanent members.³¹ There have been 11 emergency special sessions as of June 2024.³² The 11th special session, held in 2022, was called due to the lack of unanimity among the Security Council when deciding a course of action regarding the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine.³³ The GA Plen adopted

¹⁶ “The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.68.

¹⁷ “The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.68.

¹⁸ “Explainer: What Is a UN General Assembly Emergency Special Session and Why It Matters | UN News.” United Nations. Accessed August 4, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142922>.

¹⁹ United Nations, “General Assembly of the United Nations,” United Nations, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>, (accessed February 10, 2023).

²⁰ United Nations, “Committee on Contributions,” United Nations, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/>, (accessed February 10, 2023).

²¹ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.77.

²² OHCHR’s Funding and Budget | OHCHR.” United Nations Human Rights, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/funding-and-budget>.

²³ “OHCHR’s Funding and Budget | OHCHR.”

²⁴ “General Assembly approves \$3.72 billion UN budget for 2025” United Nations, December 25, 2024. <https://www.un Geneva.org/en/news-media/news/2024/12/101679/general-assembly-approves-372-billion-un-budget-2025#>

²⁵ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.14-15.

²⁶ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.14.

²⁷ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.14.

²⁸ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.14.

²⁹ General Assembly of the United Nations, “Special Sessions,” United Nations, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/special.shtml>, (accessed February 11, 2023).

³⁰ General Assembly of the United Nations, “Special Sessions.”

³¹ “The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly,” pg.15.

³² General Assembly of the United Nations, “Emergency Special Sessions,” United Nations, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml>, (accessed February 16, 2023).

³³ United Nations, “Security Council Calls Emergency Special Session of General Assembly on Ukraine Crisis, Adopting Resolution 2623 (2022) by 11 Votes in Favour, 1 Against, 3 Abstentions,” United Nations, February 27, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14809.doc.htm>, (March 6, 2023).

A/RES/ES-11/1 on March 2, 2022, in which they condemned the actions of the Russian Federation and urged Member States to help with the humanitarian crisis that resulted from this invasion.³⁴

The 78th Session of the GA commenced on September 5, 2023, under the leadership of incoming President Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago.³⁵ During his opening remarks, Francis noted that the GA must come together and rebuild trust, along with creating a “renewed atmosphere of conciliation, cooperation, and shared commitment in addressing the many challenges and seizing every opportunity, however nascent, before the general assembly.”³⁶ During the 78th session, the GA adopted 288 resolutions covering a range of issues, from the launch of iGov to make UN meetings more accessible, to modifying the law of the sea concerning the sustainable use of marine biological diversity, as well as actions taken to curb racism, xenophobia, and general intolerance worldwide.³⁷

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly resolution ES-11/1, Aggression against Ukraine, A/RES/ES-11/1, (March 2, 2022), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/293/36/PDF/N2229336.pdf?OpenElement>.

³⁵ “Incoming General Assembly President to Prioritize ‘peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability’ | UN News,” United Nations, June 1, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1137247>.

³⁶ “Incoming General Assembly President to Prioritize ‘peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability’ | UN News.”

³⁷ “United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly, Resolutions, Official Documents.” United Nations. Accessed June 14, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/78/resolutions.shtml>.

I. Addressing the Rise of Foreign Election Interference within Member States

Introduction

There is an alarming rise in foreign election interference in Member States which poses a threat to security and sovereignty. However, this issue becomes increasingly more complicated due to its complex nature, along with the varying definitions of foreign interference and foreign electoral interference.³⁸ Currently, the United Nations lacks a definition of both concepts. This leads Member States to develop their own definitions and increases gaps in understanding.³⁹ The European Parliament, the legislative body of the European Union (EU), refers to foreign interference as “activities going beyond routine diplomatic influence practised by governments, that may take place in isolation or alongside espionage activities”.⁴⁰ It is typically understood that foreign election interference functions with the same definition, but in the context of elections.⁴¹ Another common misconception of the definition stems from the issues of distinguishing the difference between interference and influence.⁴² Interference can be a direct action of ‘hard power’ with military or political actions, whereas influence can be an action of ‘soft power’ where states might be more favorable to each other to gain influence within another state.⁴³ The methods used in foreign election interference are meant to be as covert as possible leading to the actors using many different methods to obtain their goals such as the use of disinformation and misinformation, bots and trolls on social media, deep fakes, illegal financing of preferred political parties, and even threatening law makers.⁴⁴ Member States have the responsibility to formulate policies to combat this issue to protect themselves from bad actors and other Member States who threaten the principle of sovereignty.⁴⁵ Member States actively participating in foreign election interference are acting in direct violation of the United Nations (UN) stance on this issue, one that is clearly stated in the General Assembly Plenary’s Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States.⁴⁶ With this issue developing rapidly in today’s global environment, Member States must act now in order to prevent further damage to their institutions and safeguard the principles of the UN.

History

Foreign election interference became a prominent issue for the international community starting in 2016.⁴⁷ Some argue that the foreign electoral interference started in the early nineteenth century with the actions of the United States (US) in Latin America.⁴⁸ The US government was accused of meddling in the elections of Latin American Member States during this time, but these allegations also widened to include the Soviet Union and the US during the Cold War.⁴⁹ However, due to a shift in the definition and understanding of the topic, these are now seen more as foreign interventions rather than foreign interferences.⁵⁰ Intervention is seen as the harsher of the two concepts with its main goal being to become severely involved in changing an outcome whereas interference aims to cause a

³⁸ Kofi Annan Foundation. “Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections.” Kofi Annan Foundation, September 2023. <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/news/foreign-interference-in-elections-how-to-define-it/>.

³⁹ Kofi Annan Foundation. “Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections.”

⁴⁰ Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.” EU DisinfoLab, October 18, 2021. <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/foreign-election-interferences-an-overview-of-trends-and-challenges/>.

⁴¹ Kofi Annan Foundation. “Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections.”

⁴² Fu, Diana, and Emile Dirks. “The TikTok Debacle: Distinguishing between Foreign Influence and Interference.” Brookings, June 24, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-tiktok-debacle-distinguishing-between-foreign-influence-and-interference/>.

⁴³ Fu, Diana, and Emile Dirks. “The TikTok Debacle: Distinguishing between Foreign Influence and Interference.”

⁴⁴ Issitt, Micah. “Election Interference: Overview.” EBSCO Information Services. <https://www.ebsco.com/sites/default/files/acquiadam-assets/Points-of-View-Reference-Center-Election-Interference-Overview.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Issitt, Micah. “Election Interference: Overview.”

⁴⁶ Issitt, Micah. “Election Interference: Overview.”

⁴⁷ Kim, Catherine. “The ‘Absolute Explosion’ of Foreign Interference in U.S. Politics,” POLITICO, June 17, 2024. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-nightly/2024/06/17/the-absolute-explosion-of-foreign-interference-in-u-s-politics-00163793>.

⁴⁸ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. “Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 20 (2019): 110–19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26794949>.

⁴⁹ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. “Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future.”

⁵⁰ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. “Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future.”

disruption in the outcome.⁵¹ Interventions are also seen as a more hands-on approach in the public eye, whereas interference is a more passive approach.⁵² It wasn't until 2016 that these variations in the concepts were explained, and this was in part thanks to the allegations of Russian electoral interference within the 2016 United States Presidential elections.⁵³ These allegations stemmed from months of investigations and tracking interactions by the US government; however, these allegations are something that Russia strongly opposes.⁵⁴ Another set of allegations of electoral interference were seen in the Philippines as many public officials alleged that China interfered in the 2016 elections.⁵⁵ This is something that China and other Filipino officials have denied as they blame other political parties being upset about the election outcome.⁵⁶

However, it's important to note that non-state actors can also participate in foreign election interference. These non-state actors can range from individual hackers, hacktivist organizations, organized crime groups, and terrorist organizations.⁵⁷ In some cases, these actors can pose a higher risk to security compared to traditional state actors since they lack any obligation to international laws, as well as not having to go through bureaucratic channels.⁵⁸ These non-state actors also participate in what's called a disinformation-for-hire campaign, where they are paid by individuals or groups to spread disinformation to promote a political campaign across the internet.⁵⁹ For example in 2020, Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta, announced that they took down numerous accounts across both platforms that promoted disinformation campaigns contesting the elections in the Member States of Venezuela and Bolivia.⁶⁰ Being that these elections were already very contentious, spreading these campaigns would lead to a higher rate of political polarization and pushback from the citizens who fell prey to these disinformation campaigns.⁶¹

Foreign electoral interference has been conducted on many different fronts as a way to keep Member States in the dark.⁶² This led to the development of newer technologies and techniques that are seen today.⁶³ The most common form of interference is the spreading of disinformation campaigns, where disinformation is understood as the deliberate spread of non-factual information with the intent to seriously harm one party.⁶⁴ Campaigns take many different forms, such as creation of misleading websites, deep-fakes and synthetic media, amplifying conspiracy theories, and even exploiting information gaps.⁶⁵ With misleading websites, webpage domains will "mimic another entity's domain name and trick visitors into believing they are visiting the legitimate website."⁶⁶ Deep fakes are

⁵¹ Wood, Michael. "Non-Intervention (Non-Interference in Domestic Affairs)," *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination*, 2024. <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/551>.

⁵² Wood, Michael. "Non-Intervention (Non-Interference in Domestic Affairs)."

⁵³ Kim, Catherine. "The 'Absolute Explosion' of Foreign Interference in U.S. Politics," *POLITICO*, June 17, 2024. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-nightly/2024/06/17/the-absolute-explosion-of-foreign-interference-in-u-s-politics-00163793>.

⁵⁴ Kim, Catherine. "The 'Absolute Explosion' of Foreign Interference in U.S. Politics."

⁵⁵ Reuters. "Philippines Calls Allegation of China Election Influence 'Nonsense,'" *Reuters*, July 12, 2021, sec. Asia Pacific. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-calls-allegation-china-election-influence-nonsense-2021-07-12/>.

⁵⁶ Reuters. "Philippines Calls Allegation of China Election Influence 'Nonsense.'"

⁵⁷ Karásková, Ivana, Una Aleksandra Běrzina-Čerenkova, and Kara Němečková. "Foreign Electoral Interference Affecting EU Democratic Processes STUDY Requested by the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations," 2023. <https://www.appf.europa.eu/cmsdata/277388/Foreign%20electoral%20interference%20affecting%20EU%20democratic%20processes.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Schmitt, Michael N., and Sean Watts. "Beyond State-Centrism: International Law and Non-State Actors in Cyberspace," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 21, no. 3 (August 13, 2016): 595–611. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/krw019>.

⁵⁹ Hénin, Nicolas. "Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges," *EU DisinfoLab*, October 18, 2021. <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/foreign-election-interferences-an-overview-of-trends-and-challenges/>

⁶⁰ Hénin, Nicolas. "Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges."

⁶¹ Hénin, Nicolas. "Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges."

⁶² United Nations. "Countering Disinformation," United Nations, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation>.

⁶³ United Nations. "Countering Disinformation," United Nations.

⁶⁴ United Nations. "Countering Disinformation," United Nations.

⁶⁵ The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). "Tactics of Disinformation," 2024. https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/tactics-of-disinformation_508.pdf.

⁶⁶ Legare, Robert, Andres Triay, Matthew Mosk, and Melissa Quinn. "Biden Administration to Accuse Russia of Interference Campaign in Run-up to 2024 Election." *Cbsnews.com*. CBS News, September 4, 2024. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-accuses-russia-election-interference/>.

photos and videos that are produced from artificial intelligence technologies that use the likeness of people to produce new artificial content.⁶⁷ Exploitation of information gaps takes advantage of where there is a lack of information and floods the underrepresented areas, whether this be local communities or online platforms, with false information.⁶⁸ This last method is particularly harmful to Developing Member States and Member States that lack critical information infrastructure.⁶⁹

Current Situation

Due to the advancements in modern technology, actors have now started to use digital driven operations to not only impact more people across the globe, but also minimize the records of their clandestine actions.⁷⁰ Modern-day foreign interference within elections is conducted using a range of methods including, but not limited to bots, deep fakes, disinformation, misinformation, fake news, ransomware, bribery of public officials, and social media.⁷¹ These methods are combined and used to create interference operations which are understood as “coordinated efforts to manipulate or breach public debate for a strategic goal.”⁷² These interference operations can also be varied methods such as micro-targeting, troll armies, impersonation, hack and leak, and manipulation of civic processes.⁷³ Micro-targeting is done when user data is collected, and then specialized content is pushed towards their feeds flooding their media with agenda-motivated media.⁷⁴ Troll armies utilize live actors who create a form of media or inline campaign but then use internet bots to push this information around the clock where a live actor would be limited by the time in a day.⁷⁵ Hack and leak is when personal information is stolen and leaked for personal/corporate/state gains rather than public interest.⁷⁶ New York University’s Center on International Cooperation found that foreign inference, including electoral interference, takes root in “pre-existing divisions” within a Member State to better connect and influence with the population in the state, but to also cause a greater level of division.⁷⁷ This greater level of division feeds on “unresolved grievances” and exploits the emotional and ideological sides of populations.⁷⁸ In recent years, social media has proved to be a very useful tool of disseminating foreign disinformation and propaganda during Member States’ elections.⁷⁹ Researchers at the University of Oxford found that in 2020 alone, 81 Member States conducted some sort of propaganda activities within other states that involved “tools, capacities, strategies, and resources used to manipulate public opinion around the globe”.⁸⁰ However, these researchers also found that this issue is now surpassing just state-sponsored foreign interference and has now moved to be an issue for all types of actors like private corporations, non-profits, and non-governmental organizations.⁸¹

Since 2016, allegations of foreign election interference have been on the rise most notably in developed Member States such as the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Canada.⁸² However, developing Member States are more likely to be at a disadvantage in protecting themselves against foreign electoral

⁶⁷ University of Virginia. “What the Heck Is a Deepfake? | Information Security at UVA, U.Va.” security.virginia.edu, 2023. <https://security.virginia.edu/deepfakes>.

⁶⁸ The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). “Tactics of Disinformation,” 2024. https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/tactics-of-disinformation_508.pdf.

⁶⁹ The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). “Tactics of Disinformation.”

⁷⁰ Bradshaw, Samantha. “Industrialized Disinformation 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation,” 2020. <https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2021/02/CyberTroop-Report20-Draft9.pdf>.

⁷¹ Issitt, Micah. “Election Interference: Overview,”

⁷² Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges,” EU DisinfoLab, October 18, 2021. <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/foreign-election-interferences-an-overview-of-trends-and-challenges/>.

⁷³ Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.”

⁷⁴ Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.”

⁷⁵ Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.”

⁷⁶ Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.”

⁷⁷ Ur Rehman Mayar, Habib, and Céline Monnier. “Mitigating the Impact of Foreign Interference: The Role of National Prevention Strategies | Center on International Cooperation.” Center on International Cooperation, November 28, 2023. <https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/mitigating-the-impact-of-foreign-interference-the-role-of-national-prevention-strategies/>.

⁷⁸ Ur Rehman Mayar, Habib, and Céline Monnier. “Mitigating the Impact of Foreign Interference: The Role of National Prevention Strategies | Center on International Cooperation.”

⁷⁹ Bradshaw, Samantha. “Industrialized Disinformation 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation,” 2020. <https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2021/02/CyberTroop-Report20-Draft9.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Bradshaw, Samantha. “Industrialized Disinformation 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation,”

⁸¹ Bradshaw, Samantha. “Industrialized Disinformation 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation,”

⁸² Hénin, Nicolas. “Foreign Election Interferences: An Overview of Trends and Challenges.”

interference, both digital and other, and may be highly vulnerable due to the lack of safeguards.⁸³ An alarming case of instability caused by foreign interference within a developing Member State is the situation in Mali.⁸⁴ The UN finds that they are the only state experiencing four differing types of instability: “terrorism; communal conflicts manipulated by terrorists and their foreign State sponsors; cross-border organized crime; and violent actions by isolated individuals”.⁸⁵ Two of these categories are interference supported by foreign actors, and are more overtly impacting Mali’s ability to function as a state.⁸⁶ This type of foreign interference has made it extremely difficult to implement needed institutional changes within Mali’s government to improve the standard of electoral procedures, as well as causing delays in scheduling elections due to both external and internal conflicts.⁸⁷ Due to these issues, it has been incredibly difficult to hold an election within Mali and has decreased the security of elections, thus presenting a unique case of foreign electoral interference.⁸⁸

Mali isn’t the only Member State in Africa seeing a high level of foreign electoral interference. Sudan, Zimbabwe, and the Central African Republic are also among the most prominent victims.⁸⁹ The recent trend of the declining democracy across the continent may also be evidence of electoral interference as a threat to the stability of democracies.⁹⁰ However, for non-democratic Member States, foreign political interference threatens the stability of the government thus leading to potential instability.⁹¹ African Member States are increasingly aware of the impacts of interference and prominent leaders, such as the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have warned that they will not tolerate any sort of foreign political interference.⁹² South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has warned of potential foreign interference due to his court case against Israel over the Israel-Hamas War.⁹³ These feelings of perceived threats of foreign election interference fall in line with some academics who believe that African Member States feel a greater sense of threat with the issue.⁹⁴

Asian Pacific Member States are also seeing an uptick in foreign election interference allegations and activities.⁹⁵ Australia has publicly declared that if states commit acts of foreign election interference, they will name-and-shame them on the international stage.⁹⁶ This falls in line with the actions of New Zealand, who released an intelligence

⁸³ United Nations. “Negotiated Solution in Libya Crucial as Foreign Interference Grows, Thousands Flee Homes, Secretary-General Warns Security Council, Stressing Time ‘Not on Our Side’ | UN Press.” [press.un.org](https://press.un.org/en/2020/sgsm20166.doc.htm), July 8, 2020. <https://press.un.org/en/2020/sgsm20166.doc.htm>.

⁸⁴ United Nations. “Confrontation, Unilateral Action, Interference in States’ Internal Affairs Must Yield to Dialogue, Cooperation, Speakers Stress at Annual General Assembly Debate | UN Press.” [press.un.org](https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12451.doc.htm), September 22, 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12451.doc.htm>.

⁸⁵ United Nations. “Confrontation, Unilateral Action, Interference in States’ Internal Affairs Must Yield to Dialogue, Cooperation, Speakers Stress at Annual General Assembly Debate | UN Press.”

⁸⁶ United Nations. “Confrontation, Unilateral Action, Interference in States’ Internal Affairs Must Yield to Dialogue, Cooperation, Speakers Stress at Annual General Assembly Debate | UN Press.”

⁸⁷ United Nations. “Confrontation, Unilateral Action, Interference in States’ Internal Affairs Must Yield to Dialogue, Cooperation, Speakers Stress at Annual General Assembly Debate | UN Press.”

⁸⁸ United Nations. “Confrontation, Unilateral Action, Interference in States’ Internal Affairs Must Yield to Dialogue, Cooperation, Speakers Stress at Annual General Assembly Debate | UN Press.”

⁸⁹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “Tracking Russian Interference to Derail Democracy in Africa,” *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, June 21, 2023. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/russia-interference-undermine-democracy-africa/>.

⁹⁰ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “Tracking Russian Interference to Derail Democracy in Africa.”

⁹¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “Tracking Russian Interference to Derail Democracy in Africa.”

⁹² News, BBC. “DR Congo President Kabila Warns against Foreign Meddling,” *BBC News*, April 5, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39503929>.

⁹³ S’thembele Cele. “South Africa’s Ramaphosa Warns ANC of Foreign Meddling in Vote,” *Bloomberg.com*. *Bloomberg*, January 31, 2024. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-31/south-africa-s-ramaphosa-warns-anc-of-foreign-meddling-in-vote>.

⁹⁴ Ishmael Dilnos Norman. “Foreign Election Interference in Africa’s De-Democratization Culture.” *European Journal of Law and Political Science* 3, no. 3 (May 21, 2024): 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejpolitics.2024.3.3.130>.

⁹⁵ Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. “Malign Interference in Southeast Asia Understanding and Mitigating Economic and Political Interference and Information Operations Edited by Veerle Nouwens and Alexander Neill,” 2022. <https://static.rusi.org/malign-interference-in-southeast-asia.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Page, Mercedes. “Australia Names and Shames in Its Fight against Foreign Interference | Lowy Institute,” www.loyyinstitute.org, March 31, 2023. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-names-shames-its-fight-against-foreign-interference>.

report which accuses China, Iran, and Russia of all partaking in foreign election interference.⁹⁷ While not directly electoral interference, New Zealand also saw an uptick in monitoring and harassment of ethnic and dissident groups from these Member States within New Zealand's borders and online.⁹⁸ It's also been reported the 2019 Indonesian national election experienced foreign interference operations by state actors.⁹⁹ Malaysia and the Philippines have also accused non-state actors of interfering with their electoral processes.¹⁰⁰ Around the world, many Member States are seeing an increase in these types of threats due to the increased efforts of actors pursuing foreign election interference.¹⁰¹

Even under the premise of help, Member States are often taken advantage of and are unaware of the consequences of actions until it is too late.¹⁰² This can be seen within the Member State of Georgia where they recently passed a foreign agents/organizations registry bill that was allegedly backed and pushed by Russia, and is modeled on a similar bill in Russia that has been used to crack down on opposition groups.¹⁰³ Georgia's bill makes "non-governmental groups, print, online, and broadcast media that receive 20 percent or more of their annual revenue – either financial support or in-kind contributions – from a 'foreign power'" register with the government as having connections with a foreign entity.¹⁰⁴ While some would assume that this passed bill reflects the Foreign Agents Registration Act of the US, organizations like Human Rights Watch found that the US law "does not equate receiving foreign funding, in part or in whole, with being under the direction and control of a foreign principal."¹⁰⁵ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, urged Georgia's Parliament to "shelve the controversial bill and engage in dialogue" while also conducting investigations into the crimes committed against protestors of the bill.¹⁰⁶ Other Member States have also followed suit to combat this issue within their own borders. For example, Canada in 2023 established the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference which was a formal investigation into the phenomenon along with the creation of a specialized task force.¹⁰⁷ The inquiry was broken up into stages of investigation of foreign actors, investigation on government pitfalls, analysis of response capabilities, and it ended in the policy implementation stage.¹⁰⁸ In early 2024, Canada put into effect Bill C-70 which is a bill that aims to combat foreign interference, most importantly in their upcoming elections.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁷ McClure, Tess. "New Zealand Intelligence Report Accuses China of 'Foreign Interference,'" *The Guardian*, August 11, 2023, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/11/new-zealand-intelligence-report-accuses-china-of-foreign-interference>.

⁹⁸ McClure, Tess. "New Zealand Intelligence Report Accuses China of 'Foreign Interference.'"

⁹⁹ Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. "Malign Interference in Southeast Asia Understanding and Mitigating Economic and Political Interference and Information Operations Edited by Veerle Nouwens and Alexander Neill," 2022. <https://static.rusi.org/malign-interference-in-southeast-asia.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. "Malign Interference in Southeast Asia Understanding and Mitigating Economic and Political Interference and Information Operations Edited by Veerle Nouwens and Alexander Neill."

¹⁰¹ Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. "Malign Interference in Southeast Asia Understanding and Mitigating Economic and Political Interference and Information Operations Edited by Veerle Nouwens and Alexander Neill."

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch. "Georgia: 'Foreign Influence' Bill Threatens Rights | Human Rights Watch." Human Rights Watch, May 9, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/09/georgia-foreign-influence-bill-threatens-rights>.

¹⁰³ The Associated Press. "What Is the Newly Passed 'Russia Law' That Has Divided People in Georgia for Months?," AP News, May 14, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/georgia-law-protests-explainer-0408d5f527d5558da270208963efc1b5>.

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch. "Georgia: 'Foreign Influence' Bill Threatens Rights | Human Rights Watch."

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch. "Georgia: 'Foreign Influence' Bill Threatens Rights | Human Rights Watch."

¹⁰⁶ United Nations. "UN Rights Chief Urges Georgia to Scrap 'Foreign Influence' Bill." UN News, May 2, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149291>.

¹⁰⁷ Foreign Interference Commission. "Foreign Interference Commission," <https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca>, March 22, 2024. <https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/>.

¹⁰⁸ Foreign Interference Commission. "Foreign Interference Commission."

¹⁰⁹ Parliament of Canada. "Government Bill (House of Commons) C-70 (44-1) - First Reading - Countering Foreign Interference Act - Parliament of Canada," [Parl.ca](https://www.parl.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/bill/C-70/first-reading), 2021. <https://www.parl.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/bill/C-70/first-reading>.

Actions taken by the United Nations

Due to the UN's investment and interest in safeguarding to protect Member State elections, they have implemented various resolutions and procedures to ensure that elections are fair and safe for all Member States.¹¹⁰ The UN offers electoral assistance to Member States that request it and provides it if it is mandated by the Security Council and General Assembly.¹¹¹ In fact, since 1991, over 115 Member States, including South Africa, Cambodia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone have used electoral assistance from the UN to ensure that their elections were safe and secure.¹¹² In 2024 alone, the UN facilitated technical assistance to 20 Member States.¹¹³ Due to the rise in foreign election interference, is it possible that Member States could start requesting these services more often to ensure their election security.¹¹⁴ These services include but are not limited to technical assistance, organization of electoral processes, electoral observation, election supervision, certification of electoral results, and coordination of electoral experts.¹¹⁵

In 1981, the UN General Assembly passed A/RES/36/103 which is titled "Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States".¹¹⁶ The passage was linked to a rise in global conflicts and political interference that occurred as a result of the increasing tensions of the Cold War.¹¹⁷ This resolution stated that "no State has the right to intervene directly or indirectly for any reason whatsoever in the internal and external affairs of any other State."¹¹⁸ This resolution is incredibly important in understanding the motivation for combatting and addressing these issues as it calls into question the national and international security concerns of foreign interference on Member States.¹¹⁹ Through the violation of these non-interference and non-intervention principles of this resolution, a violation of Member State sovereignty will also take place.¹²⁰

In 1994, the UN General Assembly passed A/RES/48/124 which was concerned with non-interference measures within Member State election processes.¹²¹ In clause three of the resolution, it states that "any activities that attempt, directly or indirectly, to interfere in the free development of national electoral processes, in particular in the developing countries, or that are intended to sway the results of such processes, violate the spirit and letter of the principles established in the Charter and in the Declaration on Principles of International Law."¹²² Therefore, the actions pursued by Member States to influence another's state's elections, are a direct violation of the foundations that the United Nations was founded upon.¹²³

¹¹⁰ United Nations. "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs." Un.org, 2016. <https://dppa.un.org/en/elections>.

¹¹¹ United Nations. "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹¹² United Nations. "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹¹³ United Nations. "The Role of the United Nations in Ensuring Free and Fair Elections." United Nations Western Europe, May 29, 2024. <https://unric.org/en/the-role-of-the-united-nations-in-ensuring-free-and-fair-elections/>.

¹¹⁴ United Nations. "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹¹⁵ United Nations. "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly resolution 103, *Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States*, A/RES/36/103, (December 9, 1981), <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/407/29/pdf/nr040729.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly resolution 103, *Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States*.

¹¹⁸ United Nations General Assembly resolution 103, *Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States*.

¹¹⁹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 103, *Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States*.

¹²⁰ United Nations General Assembly resolution 103, *Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States*.

¹²¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 124, *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non- interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes*, A/RES/48/124, (December 20, 1993), <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183404/>.

¹²² United Nations General Assembly resolution 124, *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non- interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes*.

¹²³ United Nations General Assembly resolution 124, *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non- interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes*.

Conclusion

Foreign election interference is one of the biggest threats to the sovereignty and security of Member States today. While foreign interference has been happening for decades, it was only around 2016 that it started to be investigated and studied extensively in a modern electoral context.¹²⁴ This was largely in response to allegations made by the United States and the rise of the issue within other Member States.¹²⁵ This is an issue that all Member States are threatened by; not just democratic states as it has been connected with all types of actors in both democratic and nondemocratic states.¹²⁶ This is why it's important for all Member States to come together and tackle this issue before it leads to greater consequences. Foreign election interference takes many forms which makes it one of the more complex international issues to combat, especially with the recent developments with technology.¹²⁷ The forms that are most commonly seen are disinformation campaigns, bribery of public officials, and manipulation of media within Member States.¹²⁸ These actions set up the landscape for a successful foreign interference campaign to be completed.¹²⁹ While efforts have been made by Member States to combat this issue domestically according to their own laws, there is still much work to be done internationally.¹³⁰

Committee Directive

Delegates should keep in mind that while this issue may seem to only impact domestic functions of Member States, it still has very many international implications. Foreign interference within Member State elections has the ability to alter who serves in public office, circumventing the voices of citizens and undermining the legitimacy of governments. Delegates should also consider previous actions by the United Nations General Assembly through its various resolutions on foreign interference, while also noting the lack of current resolutions and actions and work to fill the gap that currently exists. When addressing this issue, various questions should be entertained, such as: Who benefits from foreign interference within elections? What are the current repercussions for states, actors, or organizations that commit these activities? What initiatives can the UN implement to help combat this issue in developing Member States?

¹²⁴ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. "Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 20 (2019): 110–19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26794949>.

¹²⁵ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. "Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future."

¹²⁶ Mohan, Vasu, and Alan Wall. "Foreign Electoral Interference: Past, Present, and Future."

¹²⁷ Kofi Annan Foundation. "Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections," Kofi Annan Foundation, September 2023.

<https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/news/foreign-interference-in-elections-how-to-define-it/>.

¹²⁸ Kofi Annan Foundation. "Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections."

¹²⁹ Kofi Annan Foundation. "Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections."

¹³⁰ Kofi Annan Foundation. "Safeguarding Democracy: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Foreign Interference in Elections."

II. Combating Illegal Mining and Trafficking of Precious Metals

Introduction

The mining sector is crucial to the world's economy by supplying minerals such as coal, iron, gold, and rare-earth elements.¹³¹ In 2022, the top 40 mining companies generated USD 943 billion in revenue.¹³² While the mining industry is crucial for Member States' economies, the illegal practices and illicit trafficking of precious metals have hindered socio-economic development and put local communities at risk all across the globe.¹³³ Illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals hinders many of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).¹³⁴ Specifically, these practices harm SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).¹³⁵ The illicit trade of such metals undermines trust in the institutions of Member States, while reinforcing the link between the illicit trade and organized crime.¹³⁶ With its connection to organized crime and drug cartels, this trade further threatens national and global security, which directly undermines SDG 17.¹³⁷ Furthermore, all types of illicit trade hinder inclusive economic growth and achievement of SDG 8.¹³⁸ Illicit trade across all sectors has created an annual drain on the global economy of USD 2.2 trillion.¹³⁹ The UN has defined illicit trafficking of precious metals as the "fleecing of national assets and resources."¹⁴⁰ According to the International Council on Mining and Minerals, mining can contribute up to 25 percent of total government revenue for Member States, but widespread theft of precious metals has harmed governments of their ability to strengthen their domestic resources as revenue.¹⁴¹ The overarching link between illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals and the hindrance it poses to the UN SDGs showcases many challenges for Member States.¹⁴² Addressing these challenges will require international cooperation and leadership along with fostering partnerships and public-private dialogue.¹⁴³

History

An early example of exploitative mining practices can be seen in Spanish colonial rule from 1532 to 1800.¹⁴⁴ As Spanish colonialism spread throughout South America, Member States like Peru saw the economic impacts of silver mining.¹⁴⁵ With help from silver deposits in Peru and Bolivia, Spain was able to fund its expansion and decorated its many Catholic churches.¹⁴⁶ Because the mines were successful, the Spanish peso became the first global currency by the end of the 18th century (1700s-1800s).¹⁴⁷ Indigenous laborers, known as *mitayos* were forced to work in Peruvian colonial mines under the *mita* system.¹⁴⁸ Under this system, 200 communities in the region were required to provide one-seventh of their workers to work for these mines.¹⁴⁹ From 1573 to 1812, three percent of Indigenous males were

¹³¹ Garside, M. "Topic: Mining," Statista. Accessed August 16, 2024.

<https://www.statista.com/topics/1143/mining/#topicOverview>.

¹³² Garside, M. "Topic: Mining."

¹³³ "Strengthening the Security and Integrity of the Precious Metals Supply Chain," United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. Accessed August 18, 2024.

https://unicri.it/in_focus/on/precious_metals_supply_chain_report

¹³⁴ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade. Accessed August 19, 2024.

https://www.tracit.org/uploads/1/0/2/2/102238034/standalone_preciousmetals_gemstones.pdf.

¹³⁵ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹³⁶ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹³⁷ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹³⁸ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹³⁹ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁴⁰ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁴¹ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁴² "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁴³ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁴⁴ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles." SAPIENS, March 8, 2023.

<https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/peruvian-colonial-mines/>.

¹⁴⁵ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles."

¹⁴⁶ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles."

¹⁴⁷ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles."

¹⁴⁸ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles."

¹⁴⁹ Dizikes, Peter. "The Deep Roots of Inequality." MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://news.mit.edu/2010/inequality-roots-0416>.

recruited to these mines.¹⁵⁰ Other illegal activities began in these mines such as silver smuggling and clandestine refining, a term used for the production of illicit compounds such as in an illegal drug laboratory.¹⁵¹

Colonization also fueled exploitative mining practices in Asia during the 19th century (1800s-1900s).¹⁵² Because of Asia's many natural resources including oil, wood, and minerals, many European states colonized India, Palestine, and Thailand taking minerals and other natural resources by force.¹⁵³ Because colonized Member States had insufficient infrastructure and minimal legal protections, the extraction of these minerals allowed for human rights violations and environmental concerns to grow.¹⁵⁴ Colonialism throughout Africa was also used to exploit mineral resources in Member States like Ghana.¹⁵⁵ The introduction of new mining techniques allowed European mining companies to gain control of Ghana's mining industry in the last decade of the 19th century.¹⁵⁶ Farmland was taken from communities and given to mining companies such as Ashanti Goldfields Corporation Ltd.¹⁵⁷ Not only were land, minerals, and profits taken from communities, but the British government recruited many young men from the north to work in mines, which led to physical, emotional, and mental abuses.¹⁵⁸ As technology continued to advance in the 20th century (1900s-2000s), greater government control was exerted over Member States mineral resources.¹⁵⁹ This often came in the form of state-controlled mining firms, which established a monopoly over mineral resources within those states.¹⁶⁰ Because of the concentrated power in the mining industry, illegal practices became more common within several Member States such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, and Venezuela allowing the illicit trade of precious metals to ensue.¹⁶¹

The illicit trade of diamonds became an especially prominent issue in the early 1990s.¹⁶² Blood diamonds, which are diamonds mined in war zones to finance armed conflict against governments, began to garner increased international attention.¹⁶³ In Sierra Leone, blood diamonds were often mined using forced labor and then used to fund armed conflicts and human rights abuses.¹⁶⁴ Following the corrupt measures used to mine diamonds and the controversy that plagued blood diamonds, investigations into the diamond trade sparked a demand for international regulations on their trade.¹⁶⁵ A trade regime in 2003 called the Kimberley Process (KP) began with the intention of preventing the trade of blood diamonds.¹⁶⁶ The KP unites 85 Member States that have agreed to implement guardrails on shipped rough diamonds and ensure they are "conflict-free."¹⁶⁷ Under the KP, its members are responsible for preventing 99.8 percent of the illegal trade of blood diamonds.¹⁶⁸ However, many have called for reforms to the KP

¹⁵⁰ Dizikes, Peter. "The Deep Roots of Inequality."

¹⁵¹ Alex, Bridget. "The Colonial Roots of Peru's Troubles."

¹⁵² "Asia: Resources." National Geographic. Accessed September 27, 2024. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/asia-resources/>.

¹⁵³ "Asia: Resources." National Geographic.

¹⁵⁴ "Asia: Resources." National Geographic.

¹⁵⁵ "Colonialism, Neocolonialism and Gold Mining in Ghana: A Social Justice and Common Good Perspective." The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Accessed September 27, 2024. https://www.pass.va/en/publications/studia-selecta/studia_selecta_10_pass/ntewusu.html.

¹⁵⁶ "Colonialism, Neocolonialism and Gold Mining in Ghana: A Social Justice and Common Good Perspective." The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

¹⁵⁷ "Colonialism, Neocolonialism and Gold Mining in Ghana: A Social Justice and Common Good Perspective." The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

¹⁵⁸ "Colonialism, Neocolonialism and Gold Mining in Ghana: A Social Justice and Common Good Perspective." The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

¹⁵⁹ Kaur, Guneet. "The History of Mining: From the Stone Age to the Digital Era," Cointelegraph, February 10, 2023. <https://cointelegraph.com/news/the-history-of-mining-from-the-stone-age-to-the-digital-era>.

¹⁶⁰ Kaur, Guneet. "The History of Mining: From the Stone Age to the Digital Era."

¹⁶¹ Zabyelina, Yuliya. "The Harms and Crimes of Mining." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology, November 22, 2023. <https://oxfordre.com/criminology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-766?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780190264079.001.0001%2Facrefore-9780190264079-e-766&p=emailA0YG9gnFCjE6Y>.

¹⁶² "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process," Accessed August 14, 2024. <https://www.brilliantearth.com/news/history-of-blood-diamonds-and-the-kimberley-process/>.

¹⁶³ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

¹⁶⁴ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

¹⁶⁵ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

¹⁶⁶ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

¹⁶⁷ "What Is the KP." KimberleyProcess. Accessed September 29, 2024. <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/what-kp>.

¹⁶⁸ "What Is the KP." KimberleyProcess.

because of its many limitations.¹⁶⁹ When Member States use the KP, the certification accounts for the last country of export, which allows a diamond to be certified as ethical even if it was first smuggled from another Member State.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, the KP does not investigate individual diamonds, and the definition of blood diamonds is considered narrow.¹⁷¹

Along with blood diamonds, the illicit trade of gold was prominent throughout the 20th century in South Africa.¹⁷² Originally, mining towns in South Africa welcomed families and skilled technicians, but the need for more workers led to worsening labor practices.¹⁷³ With a history of racial segregation, Black workers were underpaid and exploited to work in these mines.¹⁷⁴ Because of this, mining companies operated a central recruiting agency for Black workers across South Africa.¹⁷⁵ Between 1910 and 1960, five million Black mining workers traveled between South Africa and Mozambique, while getting paid significantly less compared to their White counterparts. 20 years later, gold prices dramatically decreased, resulting in the closure of many South African mines in 1989.¹⁷⁶ Following the closures, thousands of men began exploring the abandoned tunnels for leftover ore.¹⁷⁷ These men were later referred to as *zama-zamas*, who were mostly immigrants from neighboring Member States such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe.¹⁷⁸

Current Situation

In recent years, the international community has highlighted illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals as a growing concern.¹⁷⁹ To combat this concern, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) created the Illicit Markets Environmental Security Programme (ENS) in 2010.¹⁸⁰ According to INTERPOL, illegal mining has evolved into a dangerous environmental crime.¹⁸¹ Because illegal mining has also been linked to environmental degradation, fraud, corruption, and human trafficking, ENS launched “Project MYNA” in 2020.¹⁸² Through Project MYNA, ENS observed Latin America and was able to produce a detailed picture of how to combat illegal mining in the region.¹⁸³ From Project MYNA, researchers found that Member States such as Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador were source states and their borders contained trafficking routes for the illegal trade of mercury and gold.¹⁸⁴ While Project MYNA details how illegal mining operates in these Member States, the secluded areas and technical difficulties make illegal mining difficult to combat.¹⁸⁵

Currently, there has been a shift in international focus towards artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM).¹⁸⁶ ASM is a type of mining where individuals use basic tools and manual labor and can typically be found in remote and rural

¹⁶⁹ “History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process.”

¹⁷⁰ “History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process.”

¹⁷¹ “Kimberley Process: What it is and Why it’s Insufficient.” Accessed December 1, 2024.
<https://www.brilliantearth.com/news/kimberley-process-not-conflict-free/>

¹⁷² Greef, Kimon de. “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.” *The New Yorker*, February 20, 2023.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/02/27/the-dystopian-underworld-of-south-africas-illegal-gold-mines>.

¹⁷³ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁴ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁵ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁶ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁷ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁸ Greef, Kimon de, “The Dystopian Underworld of South Africa’s Illegal Gold Mines.”

¹⁷⁹ “Strengthening the Security and Integrity of the Precious Metals Supply Chain,” United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

¹⁸⁰ “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization. Accessed August 12, 2024.
<https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/17495/file/ILM - Illegal mining - Report.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization.

¹⁸² “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization.

¹⁸³ “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization.

¹⁸⁴ “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization.

¹⁸⁵ “Illegal Mining and Associated Crimes: A Law Enforcement Perspective on One Of the Most Lucrative Crimes,” International Criminal Police Organization.

¹⁸⁶ “Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals,” Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

areas.¹⁸⁷ In 2017, 40 million people worked in ASM and 150 million depended on ASM across 80 countries throughout the Global South.¹⁸⁸ While many rely on ASM, most practices operate informally and illegally without the needed permits.¹⁸⁹ This informality in ASM creates more opportunities for corruption and negative socioeconomic and health impacts.¹⁹⁰ Because of this, there has been a push to formalize, where those who work in ASM can work in the formal mining sector.¹⁹¹ In Uganda, an estimated 40,000 people are involved in informal ASM practices for gold mining and Uganda has become an increasingly desirable market for illicit gold because of its mobility and competitive prices.¹⁹²

The illicit trade of precious metals is also closely related to organized crime groups and drug cartels.¹⁹³ Drug cartels in South America have used illegal drug profits to invest in gold mining, and some estimates have found that the illicit gold trade has become more profitable than cocaine.¹⁹⁴ Criminal organizations such as the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the National Liberation Army facilitate illegal mining operations within the borders of Venezuela and Brazil.¹⁹⁵ Because these groups have control over parts of Venezuela, it has been harder for the government to enforce laws against these practices.¹⁹⁶ Because of pre-existing drug smuggling networks, these groups can continuously carry out operations at a much more efficient and effective rate.¹⁹⁷ In a 2023 report from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, it was found that 75 tons of gold were illegally extracted in Venezuela annually and totaled approximately USD 4.8 billion.¹⁹⁸ However, there have been pushes to force these groups out.¹⁹⁹ For example, the Bolivarian National Armed Forces successfully forced 14,000 illegal miners from southern Venezuela.²⁰⁰

Because illegal mining practices utilize unregulated methods such as ASM without government supervision, human rights violations remain at the forefront of international concerns.²⁰¹ According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the illegal mining industry is riddled with child labor and forced labor of undocumented immigrants, while willfully disregarding health and safety requirements for miners.²⁰² The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that one million children aged 5 to 17 years old are working in these mines.²⁰³ In South Africa, there are an estimated 8,000 to 30,000 illegal miners, with many being undocumented immigrants from neighboring Member States such as Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.²⁰⁴ Additionally, the rise in electric vehicles has led to an increased need for lithium, cobalt, and nickel for batteries.²⁰⁵

¹⁸⁷ Zabyelina, Yuliya. "The Harms and Crimes of Mining." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology*. 22 Nov. 2023; Accessed 9 Dec. 2024.

<https://oxfordre.com/criminology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-766>.

¹⁸⁸ "Global trends in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)." The International Institute for Sustainable Development. Accessed December 2, 2024. <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/igf-asm-global-trends.pdf>.

¹⁸⁹ "Global trends in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)." The International Institute for Sustainable Development.

¹⁹⁰ "Global trends in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)." The International Institute for Sustainable Development.

¹⁹¹ "Global trends in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)." The International Institute for Sustainable Development.

¹⁹² "Gold Rush: How Illicit Gold from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo Flows through Uganda." Risk Bulletins. Accessed August 14, 2024.

[https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/esa-obs-017/04-gold-rush-how-illicit-gold-flows-through-uganda.html#:~:text=OC%20Index-,Gold%20rush%3A%20How%20illicit%20gold%20from%20South%20Sudan%20and%20the,United%20Arab%20Emirates%20\(UAE\).](https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/esa-obs-017/04-gold-rush-how-illicit-gold-flows-through-uganda.html#:~:text=OC%20Index-,Gold%20rush%3A%20How%20illicit%20gold%20from%20South%20Sudan%20and%20the,United%20Arab%20Emirates%20(UAE).)

¹⁹³ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade. Accessed August 19, 2024.

https://www.tracit.org/uploads/1/0/2/2/102238034/standalone_preciousmetals_gemstones.pdf.

¹⁹⁴ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

¹⁹⁵ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold."

¹⁹⁶ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold."

¹⁹⁷ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold."

¹⁹⁸ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold."

¹⁹⁹ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold."

²⁰⁰ Aneesah Babatunde, Jacqueline Cardona, "The Price of Gold"

²⁰¹ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals" Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²⁰² "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²⁰³ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²⁰⁴ "Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals," Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²⁰⁵ "Executive Summary – the Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions – Analysis." IEA. Accessed December 2, 2024. <https://www.iea.org/reports/the-role-of-critical-minerals-in-clean-energy-transitions/executive-summary>.

The growth in demand has raised various environmental concerns such as deforestation and biodiversity loss.²⁰⁶ Along with environmental concerns, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute has been at the forefront of addressing concerns about the growth in demand and how it may lead to an increase in illegal mining and international crime.²⁰⁷

The use of mercury in the illegal mining of gold also presents many health threats.²⁰⁸ For example, in 2016, Peru declared a temporary state of emergency over widespread mercury poisoning following an illegal mining operation in a jungle near Madre De Dios.²⁰⁹ Additionally, in February of 2019, the Peruvian government started an extended operation to combat illegal gold mining within La Pampa in the Madre de Dios region known as “Operation Mercury” (OM) which lasted for two years until the Covid-19 pandemic halted the project.²¹⁰ During this two-year operation, 1,500 armed military personnel and members of the national police force were deployed to the region to evict miners and destroy any equipment within the 1000 km² region. They also establish military and police bases at mining access points to prevent the resuscitation of illegal mining operations.²¹¹ Within the years preceding OM, there was considerable mining expansion within the La Pampa region growing at a rate of 33 percent to 92 percent of new mining pits per year depending on the region of La Pampa.²¹² Following the start of OM, there was an immediate impact with these regions of La Pampa experiencing a decline of mining pits from 2019-2020 of up to 5 percent. Analysis of the disturbed sediment within the region’s ponds showed a sharp decrease in mining activity.²¹³ Any positive environmental impact that preventing illegal mining within La Pampa had was immensely offset by the increased deforestation and opening of new mining pits within nearby legal mining zones, contributing four times as much deforestation as before.²¹⁴ Additionally, the sites targeted by the Peruvian government within the illegal mining zones were intentionally non or minimally mechanized mining sites, while heavily mechanized mining sites within La Pampa were left alone, making it unclear if the same effects could be had when dealing with groups that work with heavy machinery.²¹⁵

Actions taken by the United Nations

The UN has recognized the problem of illegal mining and the trafficking of precious metals in many different ways. In 2019, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) passed resolution E/RES/2019/23 with support of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.²¹⁶ This resolution drew attention to the growing levels of involvement among criminal organizations within the illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals, specifically noting the increased levels of activity in these areas and the increased range of these offenses occurring internationally.²¹⁷ To combat this, ECOSOC called on Member States to increase cooperation in the monitoring of illegal mining and for Member States to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other similar organizations to strengthen their investigations and prosecutorial abilities in these cases.²¹⁸ ECOSOC also recommended Member States use existing treaties such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized

²⁰⁶ “Executive Summary – the Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions – Analysis.” IEA.

²⁰⁷ “Unicri Launches New Study on Illegal Mining and ‘green Minerals’ in Southeast Asia.” UNICRI, December 2, 2024. <https://unicri.it/News/New-Study-Illegal-Mining-Green-Minerals-Southeast%20Asia#:~:text=Illegal%20mining%20and%20smuggling%20of,other%20stakeholders%20in%20the%20region.>

²⁰⁸ “Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals,” Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²⁰⁹ “Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals,” Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade.

²¹⁰ Olson, Amy. “‘Operation Mercury’ Curbed Illegal Gold Mining in Peru,” Dartmouth, September 29, 2023. <https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2023/09/operation-mercury-curbed-illegal-gold-mining-peru.>

²¹¹ Dethier, Evan N et al. “Operation Mercury: Impacts of National-Level Armed Forces Intervention and Anticorruption Strategy on Artisanal Gold Mining and Water Quality in the Peruvian Amazon,” Society for Conservation Biology, September 16, 2023. <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/conl.12978>

²¹² Dethier, Evan N et al. “Operation Mercury: Impacts of National-Level Armed Forces Intervention and Anticorruption Strategy on Artisanal Gold Mining and Water Quality in the Peruvian Amazon,” Society for Conservation Biology.

²¹³ Dethier, Evan N et al. “Operation Mercury: Impacts of National-Level Armed Forces Intervention and Anticorruption Strategy on Artisanal Gold Mining and Water Quality in the Peruvian Amazon,” Society for Conservation Biology.

²¹⁴ Dethier, Evan N et al. “Operation Mercury: Impacts of National-Level Armed Forces Intervention and Anticorruption Strategy on Artisanal Gold Mining and Water Quality in the Peruvian Amazon,” Society for Conservation Biology.

²¹⁵ Dethier, Evan N et al. “Operation Mercury: Impacts of National-Level Armed Forces Intervention and Anticorruption Strategy on Artisanal Gold Mining and Water Quality in the Peruvian Amazon,” Society for Conservation Biology.

²¹⁶ “Illegal Mining and Trafficking in Precious Metals,” United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/environment-climate/illegal-mining.html>

²¹⁷ “Illegal Mining and Trafficking in Precious Metals,” United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime.

²¹⁸ “Illegal Mining and Trafficking in Precious Metals,” United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime.

Crime and the UN Convention Against Corruption, which are meant to provide assistance to Member States in providing training to better combat these threats.²¹⁹ The UNODC further supplemented these resources by supplying a document called the “Response Framework on Illegal Mining and the Illicit Trafficking in Precious Metals.”²²⁰ This document outlines scope of these crimes, the impact they have societally, economically, and environmentally, and how the UNODC can assist Member States to combat these issues in every area.

The General Assembly has also briefly touched on this topic twice in recent years, in the 76th and 77th sessions during 2022 through A/RES/76/185, or “Preventing and Combating Crimes that Affect the Environment” and part of the preliminary list A/77/132 in which a report by the Secretary General goes over recommendations on what crimes affect the environment and how to combat them, one of which is illegal mining.²²¹ This resolution aims to encourage and request Member States to increase the severity of transnational crimes that affect the environment and to make them predicate acts to other crimes.²²² In addition it also encourages Member States to act in accordance with existing United Nations treaties to more effectively combat crimes that affect the environment as well as increase the ability of Member States to work together to combat these crimes. Specifically, the resolution references the document the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.²²³ Additionally a large part of the resolution and work that has to be done on this issue is gathering data, as a centralized source of this global data is incredibly hard to come by, so this resolution also hopes to get Member States to report these crimes to the UNODC to better analyze global trends on crimes that affect the environment.

Other UN based conventions such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury, aims to limit the permitted mining and use of mercury worldwide due to its significant health risks.²²⁴ This is of importance because a common method of small scale gold mining uses mercury to extract the gold by making a compound of mercury and gold, where the mercury is then heated into its gaseous form polluting the air and leaving the gold behind.²²⁵ Marcos Orellana, the Special Rapporteur on toxins and human rights, even called for the total ban on the mercury trade and its use in small-scale mining in 2022 due to human rights issues and environmental concerns.²²⁶ These concerns stem from the emissions and contamination released by mercury during its use in small scale gold mining, the fact that mercury remains for centuries, and that it can travel through the placenta leading to birth defects, in large parts due to a lack of formalized training.²²⁷ In 2023, the UNODC in Brazil and the Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change held an international conference on the trafficking of mercury, a growing concern for the conference's 60 participants.²²⁸ Central to all of the talks at the conference was the use of mercury in mining operations, the health impacts of mercury on local populations, and how to prevent the trade of mercury.²²⁹ These two illicit trades feed each other, as more channels open for the illicit gold trade and it becomes more profitable, the illicit mercury trade grows to meet the demands of it. And as the trade in mercury grows, it becomes more available

²¹⁹ “Illegal Mining and Trafficking in Precious Metals,” United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime.

²²⁰ “Response Framework on Illegal Mining and the Illicit ...” United Nations. Accessed September 26, 2024. https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/UNODC_Response_Framework_Minerals.pdf

²²¹ “Preventing and Combating Crimes that Affect the Environment,” UN Documents. Accessed September 26, 2024. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n21/405/47/pdf/n2140547.pdf>

²²² “Preventing and Combating Crimes that Affect the Environment,” UN Documents. Accessed September 26, 2024.

²²³ “Preventing and Combating Crimes that Affect the Environment,” UN Documents. Accessed September 26, 2024.

²²⁴ “About Us,” Minamata Convention on Mercury. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://minamataconvention.org/en/about>

²²⁵ “About Us,” Minamata Convention on Mercury.

²²⁶ “UN Expert Calls for a Global Ban on Mercury Trade and Use in Small-Scale Gold Mining | OHCHR,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-expert-calls-global-ban-mercury-trade-and-use-small-scale-gold-mining>

²²⁷ “UN Expert Calls for a Global Ban on Mercury Trade and Use in Small-Scale Gold Mining | OHCHR,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

²²⁸ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,” UNODC Brazil and the Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change hold International Conference on Mercury Trafficking. Accessed September 26, 2024. <https://www.unodc.org/lpo-brazil/en/frontpage/2023/11/unodc-brazil-and-the-brazilian-ministry-of-environment-and-climate-change-hold-international-conference-on-mercury-trafficking.html>

²²⁹ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,” UNODC Brazil and the Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change hold International Conference on Mercury Trafficking.

for small-scale gold mining operations in more areas.²³⁰ The Minamata Convention notes that non-mercury based methods for mining gold in small-scale operations exist and often produce more gold than mercury based methods.²³¹ Additionally, the use of mercury due to its easy accessibility leads to increased levels of mercury pollution in these areas which poses significant health risks.²³²

Conclusion

The issue of illegal mining is nothing new to the international stage with the most prominent early case being Sierra Leone's blood diamonds of the 1990s.²³³ Fortunately, the international community has made attempts to regulate the fruits of those mining practices with the Kimberley Process and laws passed by Member States.²³⁴ While the situation for illegal mining and the trafficking of precious metals still appears to be dire, it's important to note that the United Nations, its organs, and its Member States continue to make progress combating these activities. This can already be seen to a certain extent as ECOSOC's E/RES/2019/23 resolution makes note of the increased range and volume of these offenses occurring, this also means that these cases are being caught more often.²³⁵ This does not mean the international community should treat this situation with levity though, as presently more criminal organizations are entering into the illicit mining industry and bringing their expertise, connections, and resources with them.²³⁶ The ability of Member States and the international community to stop illicit mining and the illicit mining enterprises themselves appear to be growing and only through a vigorous and continued effort can the international community put a halt to the industry's expansion.

Committee Directive

In addressing the issue, delegates should remain mindful of the rights and limits of Member States sovereignty in addressing national, political, and economic issues of illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals. Delegates should also take into account the complex nature of this issue and, therefore, the complex solutions that will be needed to combat this illegal trade. For example, developing Member States without robust legal systems cannot effectively prosecute those accused of these crimes without a comprehensive legal framework. Economic programs can be put in place to help Member State's mining practices develop sustainably. Delegates should also research to further understand how illegal mining practices harms and undermines the UN's SDGs. Consider the following questions: How has the illegal mining industry affected human rights and human trafficking? How can Member States promote public-private dialogue within the mining sector? How can the UN formulate a political framework to address organized crime within the industry? How can Member States provide effective strategies and roadmaps that address the serious threats posed by illegal mining and trafficking of precious metals?

²³⁰Esdaile, Louisa J, and Justin M Chalker. "The Mercury Problem in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining." *Chemistry*, May 11, 2018. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5969110/>

²³¹ "Mercury, Small-Scale Gold Mining and Human Rights." United Nations Official Document System. Accessed August 15, 2024. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/403/63/PDF/G2240363.pdf?OpenElement=>

²³² "Mercury, Small-Scale Gold Mining and Human Rights." United Nations Official Document System.

²³³ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

²³⁴ "History of Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process."

²³⁵ "Illegal Mining and Trafficking in Precious Metals," United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime.

²³⁶ "Mercury: Illicit Flows with Damaging Impacts." Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, July 26, 2022. <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/mercury-illicit-flows-with-damaging-impacts/>

Annotated Bibliography

I. Addressing the Rise of Foreign Election Interference within Member States

Francisco Domínguez, Geraldine Lievesley, and Steve Ludlam. *Right-wing politics in the New Latin America: Reaction and revolt*. London: Zed, 2011.

Discussing one of the most prominent historical cases of foreign election interference, Francisco Domínguez, Geraldine Lievesley, and Steve Ludlam discuss the decades-long campaigns of election interference conducted by the United States within both Central America and South America. They provide key examples from several Member States including Chile, Uruguay, Honduras, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and others. Domínguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam expand on the Central Intelligence Agency's intervention and the U.S. government's opposition of left-of-centre governments in Latin American Member States. Delegates may find this material helpful with their research on the history of foreign election interference within Member States located in Latin America

Ramani, Samuel. *Russia in Africa: Resurgent great power or bellicose pretender?* London: Hurst & Company, 2023.

In this book, Samuel Ramani discusses case studies of Russian election interference in African Member States such as Libya, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The book is based largely on a broader scope of Russian foreign policy towards Africa in the post-Cold War era. However, the information Ramani provides on Russian election interference in Africa will be particularly helpful for delegates seeking to understand the 'big players' in foreign election interference internationally.

Reimann, Nils. *Foreign electoral interference: Normative implications in light of international law, human rights, and democratic theory*. Zurich: Sui Generis, 2023.

This source provides an overview of the impacts of foreign election interference on states, but more specifically its impacts on the institutions of international law. This book was written by Nils Reimann, leading scholar of international law and refugee law advisor. Election interference poses a great threat to the ideals of international institutions which seek to uphold the sovereignty of its Member States. Reimann writes on these arguments and the potential damage that this type of foreign interference causes to international institutions from the standpoint of international law. Delegates may find this source useful to understand the legal precedents surrounding foreign election interference in the international system and normative approaches to combating interference.

II. Combating Illegal Mining and Trafficking of Precious Metals

Agyare, Eunice Brago. *Influence of illegal small scale mining activities on water quality*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2014.

Eunice Brago Agyare writes in this source about the impact of illegal mining on the quality of water in Member States, which has disproportionately affected developing Member States. Agyare discusses the environmental challenges associated with heavy metal mining such as the toxic by-products that are introduced into the atmosphere and how those by-products contaminate water sources. She provides a specific case study example of the contamination of the River Bonsa, located in Ghana, by small illegal mining operations. This river is a vital source of drinking water in the Tarkwa area of south Ghana. Delegates may find the information in this book useful to understand examples of the impacts of illegal mining operations on the environment and the communities that depend on it.

Dixon, Roger, and Robert Schouwstra. "The Role of Forensic Geology in the Illicit Precious Metals Trade." *Episodes* 40, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 132–40. <https://doi.org/10.18814/epiiugs/2017/v40i2/017015>.

In this journal article, Roger Dixon and Robert Schouwstra write on the consequences of the illicit trade of precious metals, and how often the money earned from these illicit trades is used to fund terrorist operations. They examine this issue from the perspective of analysing the knowledge of forensic geology. The need for legal protections in the international system is noted by Dixon and Schouwstra. The information from this article will be beneficial to delegates in gaining a deeper understanding of the illicit metals trade and how the funds from these trades are used to fund more illicit activities.

United Nations, International Monetary Fund. *Implementing AML/CFT Measures in the Precious Minerals Sector: Preventing Crime While Increasing Revenue*. New York, NY: UN Headquarters, 2014.
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/tnm/2014/tnm1401a.pdf>.

This report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) discusses the measures which international institutions have implemented in an attempt to tackle the issue of precious metals trafficking. The report talks about the financing of terrorism through organized operations of trafficking, specific Member States where precious metals are crucial to their economy and development, and demonstrating how international organizations have underperformed in tackling this issue previously. Delegates may find this information useful by understanding what solutions have attempted to be implemented to tackle this issue, what international organizations are currently doing to mitigate this crisis, and what needs to be built upon.

Zabyelina, Yuliya, and Daan van Uhm. *Illegal mining: Organized crime, corruption, and ecocide in a resource-scarce world*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

By analysing illegal mining operations from theoretical perspectives of international politics such as organized crime theory, green criminology, and anti-corruption studies, Yuliya Zabyelina and Daan van Uhm aim to provide an overview of the environmental implications of illegal mining operations. This piece provides unique analysis on the changing relationship between the environment and illegal mining using case studies of Member States such as Australia, Ukraine, and the Central African Republic. This book will be useful for delegates to use when thinking of solutions to illegal mining operations that bear in mind the current environmental situation in many Member States.