The Disarmament and International Security Committee

Letter from the Chair:

Dear Delegates,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) at the 27th Washington Area Model United Nations Conference (WAMUNC). My name is Owen Lewis, and I am honored to serve as your Chair for this session.

I am a sophomore at George Washington University, enrolled in the University Honors Program, pursuing a major in International Affairs with a concentration in conflict resolution and a minor in Arabic. With aspirations to work in the U.S. State Department and ultimately serve as a Foreign Service Officer, I am deeply committed to fostering international cooperation and understanding. Though I am not currently on GWU's MUN team, I founded the Model UN team at my high school, and this marks my second year chairing at WAMUNC, following my role leading DISEC discussions on the Syrian Civil War last year. Beyond my academic and professional pursuits, I enjoy playing volleyball, practicing guitar, and spending time with my twin sister, who is currently studying at Johns Hopkins University.

DISEC, as the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, is tasked with addressing issues of international security, disarmament, and conflict prevention. While its resolutions are non-binding, they are foundational in shaping multilateral approaches to some of the most pressing security challenges facing the world. Delegates will engage in collaborative debate to develop solutions that address global concerns while respecting the diverse interests of

member states. We will operate under standard General Assembly parliamentary procedure, fostering a diplomatic environment that encourages negotiation, compromise, and innovative policy-making.

Yemen has become a critical focus for international security, with terrorism and broader instability posing grave threats to the region and beyond. As delegates, you are tasked with developing coordinated strategies to combat terrorism, stabilize the region, and mitigate the impact of external influences that perpetuate the conflict. Addressing this topic is essential to fostering regional and global security in an increasingly interconnected world. Additionally, Yemen's humanitarian crisis represents one of the most severe global emergencies, with millions affected by famine, disease, and displacement. Simultaneously, the conflict has disrupted vital trade routes, threatening regional economic stability and international supply chains. Delegates must balance the immediate need for humanitarian relief with long-term strategies to restore trade flows and prevent further economic fallout. These topics not only demand thoughtful debate but also challenge delegates to consider the multifaceted and interdependent nature of global crises.

Your role in this committee is to represent your nation's policies with clarity and conviction while remaining open to collaboration and compromise. Whether you are new to MUN or a seasoned participant, this committee offers a unique opportunity to engage with some of the world's most urgent challenges.

I am confident that your contributions will lead to a dynamic and productive session. Should you have any questions or need assistance before the conference, please do not hesitate to reach out.

I look forward to welcoming you all to WAMUNC and working together to address these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Owen Lewis

Chair, DISEC

WAMUNC XXVII

Introduction

Yemen's ongoing conflict is one of the most complex and devastating crises in the Middle East today, marked by a deepening humanitarian disaster, political fragmentation, and the rise of extremist groups. At the heart of this crisis is the power struggle between the Houthis, a Zaydi Shia Muslim rebel group, and the internationally recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, which has been further complicated by the intervention of regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since the Houthis seized control of the capital, Sana'a, in 2014, the country has been plunged into a civil war with competing factions vying for dominance, including the Saudi-backed government, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, and various terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The war has left over 80% of the population in dire need of humanitarian assistance and has disrupted Yemen's already fragile economy. With a severe economic collapse, widespread disease, and a staggering loss of life, Yemen's conflict also threatens regional stability, as it becomes a battleground for the

geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This situation demands a multifaceted approach to address both the immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term challenges of reconstruction and peacebuilding.

Topic A: Counterterrorism and Regional Stabilization in Yemen

The Rise and Role of the Houthis

The Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, are a political and military movement with strong ties to Yemen's Zaydi Shi'i Muslim minority. This group, which was historically marginalized within Yemen's socio-political framework, originated in the northern region of the country. The Houthis gained significant prominence following Yemen's 2011 Arab Spring, which led to the ousting of long-time President Ali Abdullah Saleh. By 2014 and 2015, they managed to seize control of key territories, including the capital, Sana'a, and later forced Yemen's internationally recognized government, led by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, into exile **(Encyclopedia Britannica).** The Houthis established the Supreme Political Council to govern the country, with Mahdi al-Mashat serving as its leader. Iran, which has provided substantial military and financial backing, has enabled the Houthis to become a central force in Yemen's political landscape **(Council on Foreign Relations)**. This Iranian support has not only elevated the Houthis within Yemen but also positioned them as a key player in the broader geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, adding another layer of complexity to the regional balance of power. Despite a brief ceasefire in 2022, the Houthis have continued to control much of northern Yemen, where they remain a formidable challenge to both the Saudi-led coalition and the central Yemeni government.

The Fall of Yemen's Recognized Government

Before the Houthi insurgency, Yemen's central government, led by President Hadi, was recognized internationally and backed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). However, the Houthi advance on southern Yemen, including the crucial port city of Aden in 2015, led to the collapse of Hadi's government. In the face of mounting military pressure, Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia, leaving behind a power vacuum **(Toronto Star).** This marked the beginning of Yemen's fragmentation, as multiple competing factions emerged, each vying for control. The formation of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) was meant to restore Yemen's stability, but the PLC has struggled to consolidate power amidst challenges from the Houthis, as well as internal divisions between various factions.

Saudi Arabia's Response: Operation Decisive Storm

In response to the rapid Houthi advance and the threat to regional stability, Saudi Arabia initiated Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015. This military intervention aimed at restoring Hadi's government and weakening the Houthis' military capabilities was backed by an array of regional allies, including Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan. The coalition's military strategy involved extensive airstrikes and the mobilization of a substantial ground force. Although Saudi forces were able to deal significant damage to Houthi infrastructure and military assets, they were unable to achieve lasting stability or decisively defeat the Houthis. By mid-2015, large-scale military operations were officially suspended, but airstrikes continued sporadically **(Reuters)**. This intervention escalated Yemen's internal conflict, drawing in regional powers and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

Yemen's Fragmentation and Emerging Factions

Yemen's internal fragmentation has deepened over time, with new factions emerging, further complicating efforts to stabilize the country. One significant group is the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks autonomy for southern Yemen and control of vital ports like Aden. The STC, backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has aligned itself with Saudi Arabia in opposing the Houthis but has also clashed with the Saudi-supported PLC, creating a complex web of alliances and rivalries **(Middle East Eye)**. This fragmentation has resulted in a three-way conflict: the Houthis in the north, the Saudi-backed PLC in the center, and the UAE-backed STC in the south. These divisions have rendered Yemen nearly ungovernable, preventing any central authority from asserting control. Furthermore, internal power struggles within both the PLC and STC have only added to the country's instability. This fragmentation has also created a fertile environment for extremist groups to flourish, exacerbating the challenges to regional peace and security.

The Threat of Terrorism: AQAP and ISIS in Yemen

The ongoing conflict and political vacuum have allowed terrorist organizations to thrive in Yemen, with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) emerging as one of the most dangerous entities in the region. AQAP, a merger of Yemen's and Saudi Arabia's Al-Qaeda factions, gained prominence during the Arab Spring and used the instability to strengthen its presence. By 2015, AQAP controlled large swathes of territory in southern Yemen and even provided governance in certain areas. The group's ability to operate freely in these regions, despite U.S. drone strikes, has made it a persistent threat to both Yemeni stability and international security **(Office of the Director of National Intelligence)**. While drone strikes have killed key leaders, they have also

caused civilian casualties, leading to increased anti-U.S. sentiment and providing propaganda for extremist groups.

Additionally, the rise of ISIS (Islamic State in Yemen, or IS-YP) has added another layer of complexity to the security situation. Although smaller than AQAP, ISIS has become notorious for carrying out suicide bombings and high-profile attacks on Shi'i communities and Houthi targets. The rivalry between AQAP and ISIS has further fragmented Yemen's security environment, complicating efforts to combat terrorism effectively.

Challenges to Counterterrorism in Yemen

Yemen's fractured political and military landscape presents significant obstacles to effective counterterrorism operations. The constant shifting of territorial control between the various factions makes it challenging for international forces to target terrorist groups without risking civilian casualties. U.S. and allied counterterrorism efforts, particularly drone strikes, have had limited success due to the difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and civilians. These operations, while sometimes effective in eliminating key targets, have also led to civilian deaths, which undermines the legitimacy of counterterrorism campaigns and fuels further radicalization. As a result, addressing Yemen's terrorist threats requires a more nuanced approach that focuses on intelligence gathering, local partnerships, and addressing the root causes of instability, such as poverty, lack of governance, and sectarianism.

Counterterrorism and Regional Stabilization: Primary Questions

1. What are the primary factors contributing to the rise of extremist groups like AQAP and ISIS in Yemen, and how can international efforts effectively counter these threats?

2. How can the United Nations and regional powers support Yemen's government in restoring stability and territorial integrity while addressing internal political fragmentation?

3. What role should regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, play in the stabilization of Yemen, and how can international diplomacy balance their competing interests?

4. How can the UN support efforts to improve intelligence sharing and coordination among Yemeni, regional, and international forces in combating terrorism in Yemen?

Topic B: Humanitarian Crisis and Trade Disruption in Yemen

The Humanitarian Toll of Yemen's Conflict

Yemen has long been one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, and its humanitarian situation has worsened significantly due to the ongoing conflict. Over 80% of the population, or approximately 24 million people, are in need of humanitarian assistance, while three-quarters of Yemen's population now lives in poverty. The collapse of infrastructure, the destruction of vital services, and the spread of disease have compounded the suffering. Cholera outbreaks, which have reached unprecedented levels, have left more than 200,000 cases across the country, exacerbating the already dire health crisis. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic further strained Yemen's fragile healthcare system, as limited resources and a lack of testing led to an underreporting of cases. With millions displaced due to the conflict, the living conditions in overcrowded camps are appalling, with limited access to sanitation, food, and clean water. The United Nations has reported that over 370,000 people have died due to the war, with the majority succumbing to indirect causes such as starvation and disease **(UNHCR)**. The United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees **(UNHCR)** estimates that roughly 75% of Yemen's population is in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

Trade Disruption and Economic Collapse

Yemen's economy has suffered enormously due to the conflict. A blockade imposed by coalition forces has disrupted crucial trade routes, significantly limiting the country's access to essential goods. Key ports like Hodeidah and Aden, controlled by the Houthis and the STC respectively, have become battlegrounds for control, further complicating trade and the flow of supplies. Houthi attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea have disrupted international maritime traffic by more than 60%, worsening shortages of food, medicine, and other critical supplies. The collapse of Yemen's oil industry, which once accounted for 70% of the country's revenues, has further weakened the economy and increased dependency on foreign aid **(Yemen Data Project)**.

In addition to the economic impact, Yemen's currency has experienced severe devaluation, leading to hyperinflation and skyrocketing prices for basic goods. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that Yemen's GDP contracted by nearly 50% between 2014 and 2021 **(IMF)**. This economic collapse has made it increasingly difficult for the government to provide services or pay civil servants, further alienating the population and exacerbating discontent with the war.

Challenges in Providing Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian organizations face numerous obstacles in delivering aid to those in need. Both the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition have placed restrictions on the flow of aid, accusing each other of exploiting humanitarian assistance for political gain. In areas controlled by the Houthis, aid distribution has been manipulated to favor Houthi supporters, while in areas controlled by the

Saudi coalition, access has been restricted for fear of aiding Houthi forces **(Oxfam)**.

Additionally, humanitarian workers are at constant risk of attack or kidnapping, complicating

efforts to deliver aid to the most vulnerable populations. Despite these challenges, international

aid agencies like the UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme **(**WFP**)** continue to

provide vital assistance to millions of Yemenis, but the scale of the crisis far exceeds the capacity

of these organizations.

The Role of the International Community: Primary Questions

1. Given the enormity of Yemen's humanitarian crisis, what are the key obstacles to
   effective humanitarian assistance in Yemen, and how can international organizations, like
   the United Nations, overcome these challenges?
2. What role should donor countries and international organizations play in supporting
   Yemen's reconstruction and economic recovery post-conflict?
3. How can regional powers, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, contribute to humanitarian
   efforts without exacerbating political divisions?
4. How can international diplomacy balance the immediate humanitarian needs with the
   long-term political solutions required to end the conflict?

Conclusion

The conflict in Yemen is a complex and multifaceted crisis that requires urgent attention from the

international community. The rise of extremist groups, political fragmentation, and the ongoing

humanitarian disaster have made Yemen a volatile and unstable region with serious

consequences for regional security. To address these challenges, a coordinated international

approach is needed, combining counterterrorism strategies, humanitarian aid, and political solutions that address both the root causes of the conflict and the immediate needs of the Yemeni people. Ultimately, restoring peace and stability in Yemen will require a concerted effort by both regional powers and international organizations to bridge political divides, promote reconciliation, and create conditions for long-term recovery and prosperity.

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