MIDWEST MODEL UNITED NATIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL

TOPIC GUIDE

Topic Guides are prepared by MMUN volunteer staff and are meant to provide basic background information on each of the committees and the topics on their agenda. Delegates should conduct outside research in order to fully prepare for negotiations in committee.

Midwest Model United Nations, Inc.
PO Box 104522
Jefferson City, MO 65110

MIDWEST MODEL UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Security Council

Mandate of The United Nations Security Council

Following the devastation of the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) was created to prevent future hostilities and as stated by the *Charter of the United Nations* "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" by maintaining international peace and security and the development of friendly relations between countries.[1] Of the six main organs of the UN, the Security Council (SC) acts as the primary body responsible for addressing matters regarding peace and war.[2] Measures decided by the SC are legally binding under international law, as mandated by Article 25 of the *Charter of the United Nations*.[3] This is in contrast to other organs of the UN, such as the General Assembly, which issues resolutions that are not legally binding.[4]

The Security Council responds to threats to international peace and security in a variety of ways and Chapter VI of the *Charter of the United Nations* outlines actions the Security Council can take regarding the pacific settlement of disputes.[5] These include, but are not limited to, investigating disputes that may threaten international peace and security, adjudication, mediation, and issuing recommended actions to prevent violence and conflict.[6] If the Security Council determines the existence of more serious threats to international peace and security such as a breach of peace or act of aggression, the Security Council can impose economic sanctions, as authorized under Chapter VII of the *Charter of the United Nations*.[7] Only when it is determined that such actions have or would fail to address such threats to peace does the Security Council resort to the use of armed forces.[8]

Membership

The Security Council is comprised of 15 Member States. Five of these Member States are permanent members who have the authority to veto any substantive decisions and consist of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[9] The remaining 10 Member States are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms as non-permanent members from regional blocs with a two-thirds requirement required for election with three African States, two

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[1] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372.
[2] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372.
[3] United Nations Conference on International Organization, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.
[4] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372.
[5] United Nations Conference on International Organization, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.
[6] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372; United Nations Conference on International Organization, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945
[7] United Nations Conference on International Organization, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945
[8] United Nations Conference on International Organization, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945
[9] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372.

Asian-Pacific States, two Latin American and Caribbean States, two Western Europe and Others States, and one Eastern European State.[10]

Reporting

Article 29 of the *Charter of the United Nations* allows the Security Council to create specialized bodies or agencies such as committees and working groups to assist in performing its functions, including both procedural and substantive matters.[11] Some such subsidiary bodies include the Counter-Terrorism Committee, Non-Proliferation Committee, United Nations Military Staff Committee, Sanctions Committee, Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.[12]

Though it constitutes one of the main tools the Security Council uses to maintain international peace and security, peacekeeping operations are not explicitly provisioned by the *Charter of the United Nations*.[13] When deploying peacekeeping operations, however, the Security Council has often evoked Chapter VII of the *Charter of the United Nations* to explain the rationale for such action.[14] In these instances, the Security Council formally approves the establishment of a peacekeeping operation through adoption of a resolution, which details the mandate of the operation, a time frame for the operation, and authorizes the deployment of troops.[15] Mandates often consist of: facilitating the political process, protecting and promoting human rights, helping restore and extend State authority, and assisting in the restoration of the rule of law.[16]

If the use of armed forces is deemed unnecessary or unreasonable, the Security Council can enforce its decisions through the implementation of mandatory sanctions, which differ from unilateral sanctions that are imposed by various Member States or regional blocs.[17] Mandatory sanctions can vary in form and purpose and can take the form of trade embargoes, travel bans, and financial restrictions towards specific peoples or groups meaning that those peoples or groups are effectively frozen out of the greater worldwide economic system.[18] Sanctions are not always punitive, and in some instances they are used to support governments stuck in conflict, suppress terrorism and terrorist actions, and protect human rights of peoples across the globe.[19]

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[10] Publantz & Allphin Moore. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations, Second Edition,* 2008, page 372.
[11] United Nations Security Council. "Committees, Working Groups and Ad Hoc Bodies."
[12] United Nations Security Council. "Committees, Working Groups and Ad Hoc Bodies."
[13] United Nations Peacekeeping. "Mandates and Legal Basis for Peacekeeping."
[14] United Nations Peacekeeping. "Mandates and Legal Basis for Peacekeeping."
[15] Dag Hammarskjöld Library. "UN Documentation: Peacekeeping." n.d.; United Nations Peacekeeping. "Forming a New Operation."
[16] Dag Hammarskjöld Library. "UN Documentation: Peacekeeping." n.d.; United Nations Peacekeeping. "Mandates and Legal Basis for Peacekeeping."
[17] United Nations Security Council. "Subsidiary Organs Branch."
[18] United Nations Security Council. "Sanctions."
[19] United Nations Security Council. "Sanctions."

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MIDWEST MODEL UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Security Council

Topic A: Climate, Peace and Security

Introduction

"The climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win."

- *António Guterres, UN Secretary-General*

Climate Change is no longer an alien topic to human beings. We have now witnessed the signs of climate change ourselves and understood the fact that if we don't show greater care and concern for the current environment, our future generation may not be able to enjoy the same. Rising global temperature, changing precipitation patterns, prolonged droughts, rising sea-levels, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events have intensified existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities across many regions of the world. While climate change does not directly ignite conflict, it acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and tensions.[1] It intensifies competition for dwindling natural resources, drives up food prices and heightens geopolitical instability.[2] These interlinked challenges have resulted in growing recognition that climate-related risks can undermine national stability and create situations prone to conflicts.[3]

Mounting scientific evidence warns the urgency to address climate-related security risks. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN body established to assess science related to climate change. It has found with high confidence that climate change increases risks to human security through impacts on water availability, agricultural productivity, food systems, livelihood and population displacement.[4] The IPCC's Sixth Assessment report, published in 2021, found that human emissions of heat-trapping gases have already warmed the climate by nearly 2° Fahrenheit (1.1° Celsius) since 1850-1900.[5] Additionally, they have found that the global temperature is expected to exceed 1.5°C (about 3°F) within a few decades.[6] These repercussions have disproportionate effects on conflict-affected states, where insufficient capacity constrains adaptation and resilience. Interestingly, among the hardest hit by climate change, most countries and communities affected by fragility and conflict are also among those that have contributed the least to climate change.[7]

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[1] United Nations. "Climate, Peace and Security: What We Need to Know." n.d.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Simon Stiell. "Remarks to the Security Council." United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. 2024.
[4] United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Climate, Peace and Security." n.d.
[5] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Climate Change Widespread, Rapid, and Intensifying." 2021.
[6] Ibid.
[7] United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. "Climate Security Mechanism." n.d.

Background

The UN has increasingly acknowledged the relationship between climate change, peace and security since the late 20th century and is collaborating with multiple institutions and governments to address the security risks posed by the issue. International efforts to address climate change began with the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro.[8] This convention serves as the primary international framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting cooperation among Member States to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.[9]

Building on the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, which encouraged developed countries to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with the agreed respective targets.[10] After the Kyoto Protocol expired, the protocol was subsequently succeeded by the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement (PA) was adopted in 2015 by 195 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France.[11] Under PA, nearly all Member States committed to limiting the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. [12] Since 2020, countries have been submitting their climate action plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NCDs) where they communicate actions they will take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to reach the goals of the agreement.[13]

Alongside developments in international climate law, the United Nations gradually expanded its consideration of climate change within the context of peace and security. In 2007, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held its first open debate on “Energy, security and climate”, marking the beginning of formal discussions on the issue within the Council.[14] In 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted A/RES/63/281, requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the possible security implications of climate change, further acknowledging the relationship between environmental change and international cooperation.[15] To strengthen coordination across the UN, the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) was established in 2018 as joint initiative by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO).[16] The Mechanism supports the integration of climate-related risks into conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and humanitarian planning.[17]

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[8] United Nations Climate Change. “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.” 1992.
[9] Ibid.
[10] United Nations Climate Change. “The Kyoto Protocol.” n.d.
[11] United Nations Climate Change. “The Paris Agreement.” 2015.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] United Nations. “Security Council Holds First-Ever Debate on Impact of Climate Change on Peace, Security, Hearing over 50 Speakers.” SC/9000. 2007.
[15] United Nations General Assembly. “Climate Change and Its Possible Security Implications.” A/RES/63/281. 2009.
[16] United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. “Climate Security Mechanism.” n.d.
[17] United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. “Climate Security Mechanism: Support to Analysis and Action.” n.d.

Current Situation

Climate, Peace and Security engagement in the UNSC rests on an understanding that impacts of climate change deepen vulnerabilities that can aggravate existing threats to international peace and security, placing the issue within the UNSC's charter-given mandate.[18] Since its establishment in 2018, Climate Security Mechanism works with the UN system and its partners to analyze climate, peace and security (CPS) linkages, develop inclusive and forward-looking risk management strategies, and identify opportunities for the co-benefits between peacebuilding and climate action.[19] Member States have continued to implement the Paris Agreement through updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by updating their report every five years with increasingly higher ambition according to the country's respective capacity.[20] Recent Conferences of Parties (COPs) have emphasized mobilizing climate finance, strengthening adaptation measures, and supporting vulnerable countries through initiatives such as the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund.[21]

Despite these achievements and progress, significant challenges remain and the consequences of climate change are getting severe every day. Today, half of the world's population is living in the climate "danger zone", where people are 15 times more likely to die from climate impacts.[22] The number of people living in internal displacement has more than doubled since 2018, reaching a record high of 83.4 million across 117 countries and territories at the end of 2024.[23] Almost 830 million people (1 in 10 individuals) live in extreme poverty, and climate hazards make it even harder for poverty eradication efforts.[24] Worst of all, the report indicates that the global annual mean temperature in 2025 was around 1.43±0.13° C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average, making it the second or third warmest year on record.[25]

Hence, the global community seems to be acting oblivious to the accelerating impacts of climate change, despite facing record-breaking weather events. In one hand Member States agreed to set a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance of at least $300 billion per year by 2035 and agreed to secure $1.3 trillion for developing countries by 2035, while on the other hand, highest global EGE emitting country— U. S, has now withdrawn from PA.[26] Some observers have expressed concern that other countries may follow the U.S. in withdrawing from the PA.[27] Similarly, a reduction in U.S. foreign aid under the "America First" policy of Trump Administration, has significantly impacted global health and the global conservation projects, suggesting that some of the most developed or wealthy

[18] Danish Institute for International Studies. "Climate, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council." 2026.
[19] United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. "Climate Security Mechanism: Support to Analysis and Action." n.d.
[20] United Nations. "All About the NDCs." n.d.
[21] United Nations. "Belém COP30 Delivers Climate Finance Boost and a Pledge to Plan Fossil Fuel Transition." UN News. 2025.
[22] United Nations. "Finance & Justice." n.d.
[23] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. "2025 Global Report on Internal Displacement." 2025.
[24] United Nations. "Ending Poverty." n.d.
[25] World Meteorological Organization. "State of the Global Climate 2025." 2026.
[26] United Nations. "Finance & Justice." n.d.; Our World in Data. "CO_2 Emissions per Capita." n.d.; Congressional Research Service. "U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Process and Potential Effects." R48504. 2025.
[27] Congressional Research Service. "U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: Process and Potential Effects." R48504. 2025.

Members states simply don't care the shared responsibility for world sustainability, even when they emit the vast majority of global greenhouse gases.[28]

Therefore, political divisions among Member States remain a significant obstacle to effective international action on climate security. While climate mitigation and adaptation measures are within the UNFCCC and countries' commitments are outlines in the PA, there is no consensus within the UN Security Council members on whether climate change should be treated as a matter of international peace and security.[29] As a result, geopolitical disagreements often prevent meaningful actions. A notable case occurred in 2021, when Niger and Ireland, with 113 Member States as co-sponsors, opted a thematic resolution (S/2021/990) on climate and security, but it was vetoed by Russia, with China abstaining and India voting against, illustrating how the political interests of a few powerful states can block collective efforts to address the security implications of climate change.[30]

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, the effect of global warming is not the warning of the future anymore, it's the reality of today. Some seconds of delay mean even more ice melting in the mountain and rising sea level; proving that we cannot afford to waste our time or ignore these clear signs. Human activity is producing greenhouse gas emissions at a record-high, with no signs of slowing down.[31] According to a ten-year summary of UNEP Emission Gap reports, we are on track to maintain a "business as usual" trajectory.[32] Therefore, it is high time that we insure the intersection of climate change, peace, and security get the prominence on the international agenda. Through climate diplomacy, peacebuilding, technology transfer, capacity building for policy implication and humanitarian actions, government and international organizations can still address the security implications of environmental change. While differing arguments, states' political interests, and withdrawal from such global mandates will continue to hinder this collective action. Delegates must therefore consider how the Security Council can respond effectively to the signs of climate-related risks, vulnerable peace and security while respecting international law, sovereignty of the state, and the authority of other UN bodies like UNFCCC. The decision made today can help control the fire that has already been broken out and increase the international community's ability to prevent future conflicts and build resilient, sustainable peace in an increasingly climate-affected world.

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[28] Tezuka et al. "The Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid Reduction on Global Health." Tropical Medicine and Health. 2026.
[29] Security Council Report. "The UN Security Council and Climate Change." 2021.
[30] United Nations Security Council. "Ireland and Niger: Draft Resolution." S/2021/990. 2021.; United Nations. "Security Council Fails to Adopt Resolution Integrating Climate-Related Security Risk into Conflict-Prevention Strategies." SC/14732. 2021.
[31] United Nations. "The Climate Crisis – A Race We Can Win." n.d.
[32] Ibid.

Focus Questions:

- Should the UN Security Council formally recognize climate change as a threat to international peace and security? If so, what would such recognition look like in practice?
- What role should regional organizations, such as the African Union, European Union, ASEAN, SAARC, play in addressing climate-related security threats? How can we strengthen cooperation between the Security Council, the UNFCCC, and regional organizations in responding to climate-related crises?
- How can the Council improve early-warning systems to identify when climate-related pressures may contribute to conflict?
- Should climate risks be incorporated into the mandate and operations of UN peacekeeping missions? If so, how?
- How can the international community ensure that climate-security policies do not place additional economic or political burdens on developing countries?
- With global temperature continuing to rise, is the goal of limiting warming to 1.5° still realistic and relevant today? What should the global community do if the goal becomes increasingly difficult to achieve?

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displacement.org/publications/2025-global-report-on-internal-displacement-grid/

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un.org/en/peaceandsecurity/climate-peace-and-security-what-we-need-know

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MIDWEST MODEL UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Security Council

Topic B: Question of Cyprus

Introduction

As the decades-long division of Cyprus continues to challenge efforts toward peace, the United Nations (UN) remains central to finding a lasting solution. The UN emphasizes its commitment to "assisting the parties to bring the Cyprus conflict and division of the island to a comprehensive and durable settlement with a sense of urgency."[1]

The Question of Cyprus has remained one of the longest-standing issues before the United Nations Security Council (UNCS) since intercommunal violence erupted on the island in the early 1960s. Located along the sea routes that connect Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, Cyprus occupies a strategically significant position in the eastern Mediterranean. Since 1974, the island has been divided between the internationally recognized UN Member State, the Republic of Cyprus, in the south and the Turkish Cypriot-administered northern breakaway state, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TPNC or simply Northern Cyprus), separated by the United Nations Buffer Zone, commonly known as the Green Line.[2] Although violence has significantly declined over the past several decades, the political status of the island remains unresolved, making Cyprus one of the world's longest-running frozen conflicts.

The origins of the dispute stem from competing political aspirations among the island's Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities before, during, and following the end of British colonial rule. Before achieving independence, many Greek Cypriots supported ***enosis***, or political union with Greece, many Turkish Cypriots favored ***taksim***, the partition of Cyprus into separately ruled Greek and Turkish states.[3] These competing visions contributed to constitutional disagreements following independence in 1960 and eventually escalated into intercommunal violence. In response, the Security Council established the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) through *S/RES/186* (1964), which remains active today.[4]

Since the combined Greek and Turkish military interventions in 1974, numerous diplomatic initiatives have sought to reunify the island under a mutually acceptable political settlement. The United Nations continues to facilitate negotiations through the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission while renewing the mandate of UNFICYP every six to twelve months.[5] Despite decades of negotiations, important questions concerning governance; territorial adjustment and adjudication; security guarantees; property rights; displaced persons; self-determination; and the exploitation of natural gas resources in the

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[1] United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 2771 (2025)." S/RES/2771. 2025.
[2] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About the Buffer Zone." n.d.
[3] EBSCO. "Greek and Turkish Cypriots Clash over Political Rights." Research Starters. n.d.
[4] United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 186 (1964)." S/RES/186. 1964.
[5] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About UNFICYP." n.d.; United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. "About the SG's Good Offices Mission in Cyprus." n.d.

Eastern Mediterranean remain unresolved. Consequently, the Security Council continues to consider the Cyprus question an issue affecting international peace and security, requiring continued diplomatic engagement and peacekeeping efforts.

Background

Cyprus has occupied an important geopolitical position for thousands of years because of its location in the eastern Mediterranean. Following nearly three centuries of Ottoman rule, administration of the island was transferred to the United Kingdom under the *Cyprus Convention of 1878* and formally annexed by Britain in 1914 during the First World War.[6] Throughout British colonial administration, tensions gradually emerged between the island's two largest ethnic communities regarding Cyprus's political future. Greek Cypriots increasingly advocated for ***enosis***, while Turkish Cypriots promoted ***taksim*** as a means of preserving their political security and cultural identity.[7]

Following complex negotiations that often fell apart or had deals rejected by one (or more) sides between the United Kingdom, Greece, and Türkiye, Cyprus achieved independence on 16 August 1960 under the *1959 Zürich and London Agreements*. These agreements established the Republic of Cyprus and created a constitution intended to guarantee political representation for both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The agreements also established the *Treaty of Guarantee*, under which Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom agreed to preserve Cyprus's independence, constitutional order, and territorial integrity.[8]

Despite these constitutional safeguards, disagreements concerning power-sharing emerged almost immediately. In December 1963, constitutional amendments proposed by President Archbishop Makarios III were rejected by Turkish Cypriot representatives, triggering widespread intercommunal violence. Thousands of Turkish Cypriots were displaced, and the constitutional government effectively ceased functioning as a bicommunal administration upon the withdrawal of the Vice President and all other Turkish-Cypriot members from the government.[9] Recognizing that the conflict threatened international peace and security, the Security Council adopted *S/RES/186* in 1964, establishing UNFICYP to prevent further fighting, contribute to the restoration of law and order, and facilitate a return to normal conditions.[10]

The Cyprus conflict escalated dramatically in July 1974 when members of the Greek military junta supported a coup against President Makarios III in an attempt to achieve *enosis*. Invoking its rights under the Treaty of Guarantee (though not approved or supported by the UN, the UK, and other international organizations) , Türkiye launched a military intervention just five days later, eventually establishing control over approximately thirty-seven percent of the island.[11] The military operation resulted in the displacement of approximately

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[6] Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Cyprus: Ottoman Rule.” n.d.
[7] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Cyprus (Historical Overview).” n.d.
[8] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. “UNFICYP History.” n.d.; United Nations Peacemaker. “Treaty of Guarantee.” 1960.
[9] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. “Establishment of UNFICYP.” n.d.
[10] United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 186 (1964).” S/RES/186. 1964.
[11] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.; United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 353 (1974).” S/RES/353. 1974.

200,000 people, widespread property loss, and the establishment of the United Nations Buffer Zone, which continues to divide the island today.[12]

In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot administration unilaterally declared the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The Security Council responded by adopting *S/RES/541*, declaring the declaration of independence legally invalid and calling upon all Member States not to recognize the entity.[13] *S/RES/550* reaffirmed this position the following year and condemned attempts to facilitate the secession of northern Cyprus.[14] These resolutions remain central to the United Nations' legal position regarding the question of Cyprus.

Throughout the following decades, the United Nations sponsored numerous rounds of negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement. One of the most significant proposals was the *Annan Plan*, introduced in 2004, which proposed establishing a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation composed of two constituent states under a single sovereign government.[15] Although the proposal received support from a majority of Turkish Cypriot voters, it was rejected by nearly seventy-six percent of Greek Cypriot voters during separate referendums.[16] Since then, additional negotiations including talks at Crans-Montana in 2017 and informal meetings convened by the Secretary-General have failed to produce a comprehensive settlement, leaving the political status of Cyprus unresolved.[17]

Current Situation

United Nations Peacekeeping and Mediation

For more than six decades, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has remained one of the United Nations' longest-running peacekeeping operations. Established by *S/RES/186* in March 1964 amid escalating intercommunal violence, the mission was initially deployed to prevent renewed fighting between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities and to contribute to the restoration of normal conditions on the island.[18] By the end of 1964, approximately 6,300 peacekeepers had deployed to Cyprus.[19] The scale of the initial deployment reflected the intensity of the violence and the international community's concern that the conflict could escalate further.

The mission's responsibilities expanded significantly following the events of 1974, when the island was effectively divided along a ceasefire line. Today, UNFICYP monitors the approximately 180-kilometer Buffer Zone, investigates ceasefire violations, facilitates humanitarian activities, supports demining operations, and promotes confidence-building measures between the two communities.[20] Although the mission does not possess enforcement authority, its continued presence has contributed to preventing a return to large-scale armed conflict along the ceasefire line. The mission has therefore evolved from a force primarily

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[12] Security Council Report. "Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda." Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.; United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About the Buffer Zone." n.d.
[13] United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 541 (1983)." S/RES/541. 1983.
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[17] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. "About the SG's Good Offices Mission in Cyprus." n.d.; United Nations Secretary-General. "Secretary-General's Press Conference following the Informal 5+1 Meeting on Cyprus." 2021.
[18] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "Establishment of UNFICYP." n.d.
[19] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "UNFICYP Marks 60 Years in the Service of Peace." 2024.
[20] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About UNFICYP." n.d.; United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About the Buffer Zone." n.d.

intended to contain active intercommunal violence into one focused on maintaining the existing ceasefire, reducing tensions, and creating conditions conducive to a political settlement.

The size of UNFICYP has changed substantially over the course of its history, reflecting this shift in the security environment. From its initial strength of approximately 6,300 personnel in 1964, the mission has gradually become much smaller as large-scale violence subsided and the ceasefire line became relatively stable. By 2023, approximately 800 troops were serving in Cyprus on a rotating basis.[21] Despite this reduction, the mission has remained necessary because the political division of the island has never been resolved.

Over the six decades of the mission, more than 150,000 military and police personnel from 43 countries have served with UNFICYP.[22] Some of the countries that played major roles during the mission's early years have since reduced or ended their military contributions, while other states have assumed larger roles. The changing composition of the mission illustrates how international participation in UNFICYP has evolved alongside the conflict itself. During the mission's early decades, several European and British Commonwealth countries provided substantial military contingents.[23] Over time, these contributions became smaller and more geographically diverse.

The Security Council reviews UNFICYP's mandate through periodic resolutions that emphasize maintaining stability while encouraging meaningful progress toward a political settlement. Recent resolutions have reiterated support for a comprehensive settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, consistent with previous Security Council resolutions.[24] At the same time, the Council has encouraged both communities to increase cooperation on humanitarian concerns, environmental management, public health, economic development, and other issues affecting communities across the Buffer Zone.[25]

In addition to peacekeeping, the United Nations facilitates negotiations through the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission. Acting under the authority of the Secretary-General, the mission provides diplomatic support, convenes meetings between community leaders, and assists in identifying areas of common ground for future negotiations.[26] This diplomatic role complements UNFICYP's physical presence on the island with peacekeepers preserving stability and preventing the deterioration of conditions along the ceasefire line, the Good Offices Mission seeks to address the underlying political dispute. Ultimately, however, responsibility for reaching a political settlement rests with the parties themselves.[27] The longevity of UNFICYP therefore reflects both an important achievement of international peacekeeping, the prevention of renewed large-scale violence, and a continuing limitation of peacekeeping in the absence of political agreement.

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[21] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "About UNFICYP." n.d.
[22] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. "UNFICYP Marks 60 Years in the Service of Peace." 2024.
[23] Ibid.
[24] United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 2674 (2023)." S/RES/2674. 2023.
[25] Ibid.
[26] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. "About the SG's Good Offices Mission in Cyprus." n.d.
[27] Ibid.

Political Negotiations

Negotiations concerning the Cyprus conflict have continued intermittently under United Nations auspices since the late 1970s. High-Level Agreements reached in 1977 and 1979 established the basic framework for a future settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, with the two communities participating as politically equal partners.[28] This framework subsequently guided decades of UN-supported negotiations and provided the foundation for later comprehensive settlement proposals.

The most significant UN-backed settlement proposal after these agreements was the *Annan Plan*, developed under the leadership of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and put to simultaneous referendums in April 2004. The plan proposed the establishment of a United Cyprus Republic composed of two constituent states and sought to address the major outstanding issues of governance, territory, property, security, and guarantees.[29] Although Turkish Cypriot voters approved the plan, Greek Cypriot voters rejected it, preventing its implementation.[30] The failure of the *Annan Plan* represented a major setback for efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement and demonstrated the difficulty of securing simultaneous approval from both communities.

Following the rejection of the *Annan Plan*, negotiations returned to the UN-sponsored framework of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. A significant new phase began with the *Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014*, in which the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a negotiated settlement and agreed that the status quo was unacceptable. The declaration established principles for subsequent negotiations, including the creation of a united Cyprus with a single international legal personality, sovereignty, and citizenship, while preserving the political equality of the two communities.[31]

The most extensive post-Annan negotiations took place between 2015 and 2017 under the leadership of Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı. These talks addressed six major areas: governance and power-sharing, the economy, European Union matters, property, territory, and security and guarantees.[32] In June 2017, the negotiations culminated in the Conference on Cyprus at Crans-Montana, Switzerland, which brought together the two Cypriot communities, Greece, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations.[33] Despite intensive negotiations, the conference ended without an agreement.[34] The failure at Crans-Montana marked another major turning point and left the island divided without a comprehensive political settlement.

The United Nations subsequently attempted to determine whether sufficient common ground remained for a new round of formal negotiations. In April 2021, Secretary-General António Guterres convened the Five-Plus-One Informal

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[28] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.
[29] Ker-Lindsay. “The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know.” Oxford University Press. 2011.
[30] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.
[31] Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Leaders. “Joint Declaration.” 2014.
[32] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. “After Failure of Crans-Montana Talks, What Next for Cyprus Peace Process?” 2017.
[33] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. “Conference on Cyprus Reconvenes in Crans-Montana.” 2017.
[34] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. “After Failure of Crans-Montana Talks, What Next for Cyprus Peace Process?” 2017.

Meeting on Cyprus in Geneva, bringing together the two Cypriot sides and the three guarantor powers, Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom, under UN auspices. The meeting did not produce enough common ground to restart formal negotiations.[35] The disagreement increasingly centered on the fundamental political model for the island. The Republic of Cyprus and Greece continued to support a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, while the Turkish Cypriot leadership and Türkiye increasingly promoted a two-state solution based on sovereign equality and equal international status.[36]

More recent UN diplomacy has therefore focused less on introducing another comprehensive settlement plan and more on creating conditions for negotiations to resume. In 2024 and 2025, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and subsequent UN-led informal meetings sought to identify areas where the two sides could cooperate despite their disagreement over the final political settlement. These discussions produced several confidence-building initiatives, including efforts to open additional crossing points, expand cooperation on environmental and climate-related issues, restore and protect cultural heritage sites, and strengthen cooperation in areas affecting everyday life.[37] In March 2025, the two sides also agreed on a series of confidence-building measures following an informal meeting convened by the Secretary-General.[38] These initiatives represent the most recent phase of UN engagement, but they differ fundamentally from the *Annan Plan* with the UN prioritizing incremental cooperation and rebuilding trust as possible foundations for future comprehensive negotiations.

The evolution of these initiatives from the *Annan Plan* in 2004, through the Crans-Montana negotiations in 2017 and the Geneva meeting in 2021, to the confidence-building measures pursued in 2024–2025 demonstrates the changing strategy of UN mediation in Cyprus. While earlier efforts focused on negotiating the structure of a final settlement, recent UN diplomacy has concentrated on rebuilding trust and identifying limited areas of cooperation. The central challenge remains unresolved with the two sides continuing to disagree fundamentally over whether a future settlement should establish a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation or recognize two separate sovereign states.[39]

Humanitarian Issues

Although large-scale violence on Cyprus ended decades ago, significant humanitarian concerns continue to affect both communities. One of the most enduring consequences of the 1974 conflict is the displacement of nearly 200,000 individuals, many of whom lost access to homes, land, and businesses.[40] While numerous displaced persons have established new communities elsewhere on the island, disputes regarding property ownership remain one of the principal obstacles to a comprehensive political settlement. Since many properties

[35] United Nations Secretary-General. “Secretary-General’s Press Conference following the Informal 5+1 Meeting on Cyprus.” 2021.
[36] United Nations Secretary-General. “Secretary-General’s Press Conference following the Informal 5+1 Meeting on Cyprus.” 2021.
[37] Security Council Report. “Cyprus, July 2025 Monthly Forecast.” 2025.
[38] United Nations Good Offices Mission in Cyprus. “Cyprus Peace Talks.” n.d.
[39] Security Council Report. “Cyprus, January 2026 Monthly Forecast.” 2025.
[40] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.

changed possession following the island's division, determining legal ownership has become increasingly complex and politically sensitive.[41]

An additional issue underlying the Cyprus conflict is the principle of self-determination, which concerns the right of peoples to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.[42] The United Nations recognizes self-determination as a fundamental principle of international law, but its application to Cyprus is complicated by the competing claims of the island's two communities.[43] UN Security Council resolutions have consistently supported a settlement based on the political equality of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots within a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, rather than endorsing unilateral separation or the creation of two internationally recognized states.[44] At the same time, the Turkish Cypriot position has increasingly emphasized the right to sovereign equality and self-determination, while the Republic of Cyprus maintains that a two-state settlement would undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic.[45] The UN's approach has therefore attempted to reconcile the principle of political equality and participation of both communities with the preservation of Cyprus's unity and internationally recognized sovereignty. This tension makes self-determination one of the central legal and political questions underlying the conflict.

To address humanitarian concerns, the United Nations has supported several confidence-building initiatives designed to improve communication and cooperation between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Since the partial opening of crossing points across the Green Line in 2003, millions of crossings have occurred, allowing increased interaction between the two communities.[46] These crossings have contributed to expanded commercial activity, tourism, educational exchanges, and cultural cooperation while reducing tensions between populations separated for decades.

Another continuing humanitarian issue concerns persons reported missing following the intercommunal violence of the 1960s and the events of 1974. The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP), established under United Nations auspices, works jointly with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists to recover, identify, and return the remains of missing individuals to their families.[47] The work of the CMP has become one of the most successful examples of bicommunal cooperation on the island and has provided closure for hundreds of families while fostering greater trust between the communities.

The preservation of cultural heritage also remains an important humanitarian concern. Religious sites, archaeological monuments, and historical buildings belonging to both communities have experienced neglect or damage following the island's division. In response, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union, has restored numerous churches, mosques, monasteries,

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[41] European Court of Human Rights. “Cyprus v. Turkey.” Application No. 25781/94. 2001.
[42] United Nations General Assembly. “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” A/RES/2200(XXI). 1966.
[43] United Nations. “Charter of the United Nations.” 1945.
[44] United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 2674 (2023).” S/RES/2674. 2023.
[45] United Nations Secretary-General. “Secretary-General’s Press Conference following the Informal 5+1 Meeting on Cyprus.” 2021.
[46] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.
[47] Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. “Who We Are.” n.d.

cemeteries, and other culturally significant sites throughout Cyprus.[48] These restoration projects have demonstrated how practical cooperation can contribute to reconciliation while protecting the island's shared cultural history.

Regional Security

The Cyprus question extends beyond the island itself and has become increasingly connected to broader security developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. The continued presence of approximately 35,000 Turkish troops in northern Cyprus remains one of the most contentious aspects of negotiations.[49] The Republic of Cyprus and Greece generally support the withdrawal of foreign military forces and the termination of the 1960 *Treaty of Guarantee*, whereas Türkiye maintains that its military presence is necessary to ensure the security of the Turkish Cypriot community.[50] Reconciling these differing security perspectives remains one of the principal challenges facing future negotiations.

In recent years, discoveries of significant offshore natural gas reserves have further complicated the regional security environment. Cyprus has partnered with neighboring States to develop offshore energy resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), while Türkiye disputes portions of these maritime boundaries and argues that Turkish Cypriots should share equally in the benefits derived from hydrocarbon resources.[51] As a result, competing exploration activities have occasionally increased tensions between regional actors and prompted calls from the Security Council and the Secretary-General for restraint and dialogue.

The Cyprus question also has implications for neighboring Middle Eastern and North African states, particularly Egypt. Egypt and the Republic of Cyprus established a bilateral agreement delimiting their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in 2003, which entered into force in 2004.[52] The agreement created a framework for cooperation over maritime resources and has contributed to the development of a broader strategic relationship between the two countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Egypt has subsequently worked with Cyprus and Greece on energy, maritime security, and regional cooperation, making Cairo an important stakeholder in the broader geopolitical environment surrounding Cyprus. The United Nations has formally registered the Cyprus-Egypt maritime delimitation agreement, while Türkiye has objected to aspects of the agreement because of its broader disagreement with the Republic of Cyprus's maritime claims.[53]

Egypt's position is also significant because of its wider relationship with the competing parties to the Cyprus dispute. Cairo maintains diplomatic relations with the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus while also maintaining relations with Türkiye, requiring Egypt to balance its support for regional cooperation with its broader strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. More recently, Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece have continued to coordinate on energy and regional security issues, particularly as offshore natural gas development has

[48] United Nations Development Programme. “The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus.” 2013.
[49] Security Council Report. “Cyprus: New Hope after 45 Years on the Security Council Agenda.” Special Research Report No. 3. 2008.
[50] Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office. “The Cyprus Question: A Brief Introduction.” 2025.; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Cyprus (Historical Overview).” n.d.
[51] House of Commons Library. “Cyprus: Recent Developments and Peace Talks.” CBP-9555. 2022.; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Press Release Regarding the Greek Cypriot Administration’s Hydrocarbon-Related Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.” No. 43. 2018.
[52] United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. “Maritime Space: Maritime Zones and Maritime Delimitation – Cyprus.” n.d.
[53] Ibid.

increased the strategic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean. Egypt's involvement therefore extends beyond the Cyprus dispute itself and reflects the conflict's connection to wider questions of maritime jurisdiction, energy security, and regional alliances.

Other Middle Eastern states have also become connected to the Cyprus issue through maritime boundaries and energy development. Israel and Cyprus concluded an agreement delimiting their EEZ in 2010, while Lebanon and Cyprus concluded a maritime delimitation agreement that entered into force in 2026.[54] These agreements have contributed to a broader network of maritime relationships linking Cyprus with neighboring states and have made the island an increasingly important participant in Eastern Mediterranean energy politics. Although North African and Middle Eastern states have generally not played the same direct mediating role as Greece, Türkiye, or the United Kingdom, their maritime, energy, and diplomatic interests mean that developments surrounding Cyprus can affect the wider regional security environment.

The European Union has also become an important stakeholder in the Cyprus issue following the Republic of Cyprus's accession in 2004. Although European Union law technically applies to the entire island, its implementation remains suspended in areas outside the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.[55] The European Union continues to support confidence-building measures, economic development projects, and reunification efforts while emphasizing that a comprehensive settlement would strengthen regional stability and cooperation.[56]

Despite these ongoing challenges, Cyprus remains considerably more stable than many other conflict regions discussed by the Security Council. UNFICYP continues to monitor the Buffer Zone, facilitate communication between military authorities, and prevent isolated incidents from escalating into larger confrontations.[57] Nevertheless, unresolved disagreements regarding sovereignty, governance, security guarantees, maritime jurisdiction, and natural resources demonstrate that the Cyprus question continues to require sustained international attention.

Future Outlook

More than sixty years after the establishment of UNFICYP, the Cyprus question remains unresolved despite sustained international engagement. Although the island has experienced relative peace since the cessation of major hostilities, the absence of a comprehensive political settlement continues to affect regional security, economic cooperation, and humanitarian reconciliation. The Security Council is therefore expected to continue renewing the mandate of UNFICYP while encouraging negotiations under the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission.[58]

Future negotiations will likely continue to address several fundamental issues that have remained unresolved for decades. These include the future constitutional structure of Cyprus, territorial adjustments, security guarantees, the presence of

[54] United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. “Maritime Space: Maritime Zones and Maritime Delimitation – Cyprus.” n.d.
[55] European Commission. “Green Line Regulation.” n.d.; Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office. “The Cyprus Question: A Brief Introduction.” 2025.
[56] European Commission. “Green Line Regulation.” n.d.
[57] United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. “About UNFICYP.” n.d.
[58] United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 2771 (2025).” S/RES/2771. 2025.; Security Council Report. “Cyprus, January 2026 Monthly Forecast.” 2025.

foreign military forces, property restitution for displaced persons, governance arrangements, and the equitable distribution of natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Progress in any of these areas will require sustained political will from both communities, continued support from guarantor powers, and constructive engagement by the broader international community.

In addition to formal negotiations, confidence-building measures will likely remain an important component of future peace efforts. Expanding cooperation in trade, environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, renewable energy development, education, and public health may strengthen relationships between the two communities while creating conditions more conducive to future political compromise. The Security Council will continue balancing its responsibility to maintain stability with its long-standing objective of facilitating a comprehensive and mutually acceptable settlement consistent with international law and previous Security Council resolutions.

Focus Questions

- What role should the Security Council continue to play in facilitating negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities?
- How can confidence-building measures contribute to a lasting political settlement?
- What security arrangements could address the concerns of all relevant stakeholders while maintaining regional stability?
- How should disputes regarding displaced persons and property ownership be addressed in accordance with international law?
- What role should natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean play in promoting cooperation rather than conflict?
- How can the United Nations strengthen existing peacekeeping and mediation efforts while encouraging renewed negotiations?

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