*Delegates,*

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Kennesaw State University (KSU) High School Model United Nations (HSMUN) conference. My name is Cameron Rice and I have the honor of serving as your Director for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). I have a Master’s degree in Conflict Management from KSU, and have had two years of Model United Nations (MUN) experience as a member and facilitator. This includes serving as an Assistant Director for KSU’s HSMUN conference in 2024, as a delegate at Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) Charlotte in 2023, and as a delegate at National Model United Nations (NMUN) New York in 2024. I look forward to facilitating our time together, and hope to create meaningful discussion in debate.

Our Assistant Director is Eden McKenzie-Dingle. She is a senior at KSU studying Finance and is acting as Treasurer of KSU’s MUN Team. She currently works in the insurance field and has goals of creating a financial services firm.

Our committee Chair is Adeola Adewuyi. Adeola is a sophomore and this is her first year in both KSU MUN and KSU HSMUN. She is excited to gain experience in KSU High School Model UN as she develops in her university career. Adeola is currently majoring in International Affairs. A fun fact about Adeola is that she is an Army National Guard member.

**The topics under discussion for United Nations Commision on the Status of Women:**

1. **Addressing the Conditions for Women in Conflict Zones**
2. **Addressing Gender Inequalities in the Labor Force in Developing Member States**

Each Member State’s delegation within this committee is expected to submit a position paper presenting their ideas for both agenda topics. A position paper is a short essay describing your Member State’s history and position on the issues at hand. There are three key parts to any successful position paper: history, current status of the issue, and possible solutions for the future. Information for properly formatting the position papers, as well as valuable advice for writing a quality paper, can be found in the Delegate Preparation section of the HSMUN webpage (https://www.kennesaw.edu/conferences/high-school-model-united-nations-conference/). Delegates are reminded that papers should be no longer than two pages in length with titles in size 12 and text in size 10-12 Times New Roman. Citations should be footnoted in Chicago style formatting, such as those used inside this guide. Furthermore, plagiarism in an academic setting is unacceptable and will nullify any score for the paper in question. During the grading process, we will be utilizing the university’s plagiarism checker. Wikipedia is a wonderful place to begin researching, but we highly encourage the use of peer-reviewed academic articles or trusted media sources. The objective of a position paper is to present the diplomatic position of your Member State on both agenda topics as accurately as possible. ***All position papers MUST be sent to ksuhsmun2025@gmail.com by February 21st, 2025. Late papers will be accepted until February 26th, 2025 with points penalized.***

**History of The Commission on the Status of Women**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1946 as a pivotal body within the United Nations (UN), focused on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. Recognizing the need for an independent commission to address women’s rights, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) created the CSW, responding to the advocacy of influential women at the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco in 1945.[[1]](#footnote-0) Initially operating within the Human Rights Division, the CSW became an autonomous body under ECOSOC by June 1946, which marked a significant step toward institutionalizing global attention on women’s issues.[[2]](#footnote-1)

In its early years, the CSW was primarily concerned with establishing women’s legal rights and ensuring protection from discrimination. The commission conducted studies on global women’s rights and played a role in framing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, advocating for gender-inclusive language.[[3]](#footnote-2) The 1960s and 1970s saw an expansion of CSW's mandate in response to growing global feminist movements. This period culminated in the UN declaring 1975 as International Women's Year, leading to the World Conference on Women in Mexico City. The conference laid the groundwork for the Decade for Women (1976-1985), during which the CSW oversaw several conventions and agreements addressing women’s socio-economic and political rights.[[4]](#footnote-3) The landmark achievement came in 1979 with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW created a global bill of rights for women as well as an action plan for signatories to ensure those rights. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was another critical event, where the CSW adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This comprehensive framework outlined strategic objectives to address systemic inequalities, including violence against women, economic empowerment, and equal access to education and healthcare.[[5]](#footnote-4)

In recent years, the CSW has continued to evolve, addressing emerging issues such as the gender digital divide, climate change’s impact on women, and the intersection of gender with other social inequities. The CSW remains a global platform for advocating women’s rights, regularly convening at the UN to review progress, establish new goals, and engage civil society. This has been instrumental in shaping international norms around gender equality and inspiring global legislative reforms that support women’s rights and empowerment.

1. **Addressing the Conditions for Women in Conflict Zones**

***Introduction***

As armed conflicts around the globe intensify, women and girls are at an elevated risk of experiencing significant challenges. For instance, women make up a considerable portion of the world’s internally displaced population and refugees.[[6]](#footnote-5) As defined by the UNHCR, refugees are people that have been forced to flee their own home to seek safety somewhere else. They are unable to live at home because of, “who they are, what they believe in or say, because of armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder.”[[7]](#footnote-6) This, compounded by the escalation and increase in the number of conflicts across the globe, shows that more women than ever are being impacted by violence. When looking at immediate impacts, conflict often leads to loss of community, livelihood, laws, and protections that communities establish in order to survive. When these facets of life are stripped away, women are more susceptible to gender-based violence. More specifically, while approximately one in five women are likely to experience gender-based violence under normal circumstances, research shows that women are more often taken advantage of physically, mentally, economically, and sexually, during times of war.[[8]](#footnote-7) The ongoing struggle that wome experience in conflict zones necessitates multilateral action from Member States.

***History***

Violence against women in conflict zones has a long and pervasive history. For this reason, quantitative data on gender-based violence prior to the UN’s creation was inadequate. Exploring pre-agricultural contexts, it was not uncommon within a “conquered” group for males to be slaughtered and women enslaved for sexual service. In early literature discussing the issue, violence and rape against women was once considered “inevitable side-effect” of war.[[9]](#footnote-8) Thought processes on the persistence of the issue have expanded to include multiple philosophical frameworks, but nonetheless indicate persistence of violence.

Throughout the 20th century, as the international community began to address human rights more comprehensively, the UN increasingly recognized the need to protect women in conflict zones. Reports of atrocities, such as the widespread sexual violence in conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s, emphasized the scale and severity of abuse that women endure during wartime. These conflicts demonstrated that women’s issues in war zones required specialized attention and protections beyond traditional humanitarian aid. The UN responded by prioritizing research, advocacy, and policy recommendations that highlighted the ways conflict uniquely impacts women, calling for international frameworks that would protect women’s rights during conflict.[[10]](#footnote-9) However, these early efforts faced challenges in enforcement, as the realities of war often left women without effective protection from gender-based violence.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw further advancements as global outrage grew around the treatment of women in conflict zones. By adopting critical frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, the UN established foundational policies that recognized the urgent need for protecting women from violence in war and supporting their roles in peace processes. These initiatives addressed not only the physical safety of women in conflict but also sought to empower them as active participants in peacebuilding. While these measures were significant steps forward, only 9% of the people involved in peace negotiations were women between 1992 and 2001.[[11]](#footnote-10) This can lead to a lack of gender-inclusive language and protections, failing to address structural violence against women.

***Current Situation***

Even with historical precedent and framework designed to holistically protect women in conflict zones and uplift them in peace talks, the complex nature of conflict environments has posed substantial obstacles to addressing the conditions of women in these settings. For instance, Colombia drafted a peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People’s Army (FARC-EP) in 2016 that highlights both measures taken to mitigate violence against women, and the challenges faced. On paper, the peace agreement has been praised for making a number of inclusions and accommodations for women and indigenous groups, but has failed to follow through in practice. Of the relevant peace inclusions, less than a quarter of those seeking protection for women have been implemented.[[12]](#footnote-11). While external departments and groups have been sent to monitor and evaluate progress on agreement implementations, most serve as recommendations committees, and lack any power to enforce adherence to the policies agreed upon.[[13]](#footnote-12)

These efforts to establish protections are also hindered by the fact that conflict has taken new forms within the country. While the paramilitary group FARC-EP has agreed to peace deals and for the most part has abided by those negotiations (albeit slowly), dissident paramilitary violence has been on the rise in the region. With a power vacuum created by the slow disappearance of FARC-EP, members of smaller groups like ELN and AGC have continued the retaliation against the government. This keeps disproportionately marginalized groups of women at risk for gender-based violence, with sexual assault being prominent in the Amazonian regions of the country.[[14]](#footnote-13) Without consistently monitored and established ways to maintain the rights of women, Colombia is at risk of maintaining the status quo of structural violence in the region. Colombia represents a flashpoint in the international battle to protect women and girls in conflict zones.

***Actions Taken by the UN***

As alluded to in previous sections, The UN has taken several pivotal actions to address the conditions of women in conflict zones, with the establishment of the CSW being one of the most significant. Over the years, the CSW has advanced policies and frameworks that address the unique challenges faced by women in conflict, including gender-based violence, displacement, and exclusion from peace processes[[15]](#footnote-14). By advocating for international cooperation and setting global standards, the CSW has influenced how governments and international organizations approach the needs of women in conflict zones.

Another significant step by the CSW was its involvement in developing the *Beijing Platform for Action* in 1995, during the Fourth World Conference on Women. The platform outlined critical areas of concern, including women in armed conflict, and called for the protection of women in war zones. It emphasized the need for women's participation in peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts, recognizing that women’s involvement is essential for achieving lasting peace and security. The platform also called on governments and international bodies to ensure that women affected by conflict receive adequate support, including access to healthcare, education, and legal protections.

The CSW has also played a role in supporting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000[[16]](#footnote-15). This landmark resolution underscored the importance of women’s participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as the need to protect women and girls from sexual violence in war. The CSW has used its annual sessions to monitor progress on the resolution’s goals, encouraging Member States to integrate gender perspectives into their national security and humanitarian strategies. Thematically, we see the UN has fostered a holistic approach to ensuring and encouraging the inclusion of women in the peacebuilding process, in creating resolutions that best serve the needs of women. In recent years, the CSW has continued to prioritize the conditions of women in conflict zones by fostering dialogue, collecting data, and issuing recommendations to guide international and national actions. Through its sessions, the CSW has highlighted issues such as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, the displacement of women and girls, and the barriers women face in accessing justice and rebuilding their lives post-conflict[[17]](#footnote-16). By keeping these issues at the forefront of global discourse, the CSW has helped to ensure that the needs and rights of women in conflict zones remain central to international policy agendas.

***Conclusion***

In conclusion, the CSW plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of women in conflict zones. With pivotal frameworks like Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action of 1995, the CSW remains at the forefront of women’s issues. The world has made great strides in preserving the rights of women in conflict, although challenges persist and evolve, as displayed by the ever changing dynamics of conflict in Colombia, and other regions throughout the globe. Overall, conflicts and the threat they pose towards women necessitate holistic and effective action.. Here, the CSW remains crucial in ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of women across the globe.

***Committee Directive***

Within this topic, key themes for discussion should revolve around understanding the multifaceted dynamics of addressing violence against women. Delegates should have baseline understanding of how women are directly and indirectly impacted by conflict, existing national and international precedents for resolving the issue, and any known policy recommendations for addressing the concerns of their member state. This baseline understanding should be used to evaluate existing frameworks for recommendations, and leveraged in negotiation within the committee. It is important that this committee not just be mindful of dynamics of ongoing conflicts and navigating their challenges, but maintain a future-oriented focus in addressing protections against women post-conflict. In addressing women’s conditions, delegates must represent their member state’s interests, and explore ways in which policy recommendations can help women feel seen, valued, and respected with regard to their concerns in conflict.

1. **Addressing Gender Inequalities in the Labor Force in Developing Member States**

***Introduction***

Women globally make up an invaluable portion of the labor force. Despite this, workplace imbalances remain evident particularly within developing Member States. In many Member States, the high participation rate of women in the workforce is positively correlated with their economic development. a large portion of women within the workforce often carry the opposite connotation, meaning larger amounts of women in the workforce correlate with poor economic conditions. In many impoverished communities, women work to earn income; however, available work is often in unsafe conditions and offers poor wages or requires secondary education and pays wages lower than their male counterparts. With women now having a longstanding position within the workforce globally, it is important to address the discrepancies in workplace qualities between men and women within developing Member-States

***History***

Although women have worked in the agricultural sector for centuries, women in some countries started entering the modern workplace in the late 1700s.[[18]](#footnote-17) While jobs were often limited to trades including garment-making, this still demonstrated the ability of women to earn wages without a spouse, outside of the home. At this time, the vast majority of women still worked within the home as caretakers, while a small percentage of mostly single women were able to work beyond the agricultural industry and within the industrial sector. The first means for women to higher education began in the early 1830s. This allowed women to take on professions previously unattainable.

In the early 20th century, approximately 20 percent of women and five percent of married women held jobs outside of the home in the West.[[19]](#footnote-18) Though this was an increase at the time, most jobs readily available were factory or agricultural work. Because only two percent of college aged women, 18-24 years old, were able to receive higher education, the professional workplace gender participation gaps remained. In the mid-20th century, the UN was founded and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established.[[20]](#footnote-19) The CSW met in 1947 with a goal of safeguarding and promoting the rights of women, including means for furthering gender equality in the labor force.

In the late 20th century, female participation in the workforce increased to approximately 50 percent for unmarried women in the US, coinciding with increased rates of education. This allowed women to become highly educated, allowing them to prioritize their professional careers. In the late 20th century, women began entering workforces that previously exclusively employed men and reached an employment rate of approximately 73 percent in the West.[[21]](#footnote-20) Today, women of many Member States have access to resources and professions held primarily by men. Because both men and women are able to hold similar positions with similar qualifications, a new problem arose from the noticeable wage gap between the genders. Developing and developed Member-States have recorded gaps of five to forty percent, with the largest occurring in Developing Member-States.

***Current Situation***

Women make up almost half of the working-age population, but only about 50 percent are active in the workforce, contrasting the 80 percent of active men. Finding opportunities tends to be difficult for women, especially in developing Member States, some which have laws restricting their inclusion within the workforce. Their wages and conditions of work are usually disparate to their male counterparts, especially in Member States where there are fewer regulations for employers to follow.[[22]](#footnote-21) Women tend to work in less productive, vulnerable jobs such as unpaid family work.[[23]](#footnote-22) These inequalities also affect women in their households as gender roles are usually heavily enforced in developing Member States to suppress women and keep them from branching out beyond the household.

Although disheartening, new legislations and protections have been passed and implemented within the past few years that promote women and increase their equality in the workforce. Member States such as Sierra Leone and Morocco have both introduced legislation to increase the percentage of women on commissions, boards, etc.[[24]](#footnote-23) As said by Carmen Reinhart, “ Women cannot achieve equality in the workplace if they are on an unequal footing at home,” “That means leveling the playing field and ensuring that having children doesn't mean women are excluded from full participation in the economy and realizing their hopes and ambitions.”[[25]](#footnote-24) Some Member States who previously provided paid maternity leave have now introduced paid paternity leave as well. Laws enforcing paid leave to both parents to care for their child post birth, can lead to reduced gender discrimination in the workplace and the equalization of parental responsibilities. With continued efforts to push for gender equality in the workforce, developing Member States can strive to significantly reduce these issues within their labor force.

***Actions Taken by the UN***

The United Nations have taken many steps to address the issue of gender inequality in the labor force in developing Member States. Through promoting legal reform, supporting the representation of women in leadership positions, setting target goals for equal representation of both men and women in leadership, and empowering women to make decisions. The UN has also created a number of different committees and initiates which aid in promoting women’s equality such as, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP).[[26]](#footnote-25) [[27]](#footnote-26) [[28]](#footnote-27) A

***Conclusion***

Addressing gender inequalities in the labor force within developing Member States is essential for achieving broader goals of sustainable development, economic growth, and social equity. Owing to the CSW being established to target a variety of women’s rights issues, including changing discriminatory legislation, it is important to address workplace imbalances and correct the gender-wage gap.[[29]](#footnote-28) This will require the reform or creation of policy within developing Member States. While significant progress has been made through historical advancements, legislative reforms, and initiatives by the UN, work must be done to bridge persistent gaps in workforce participation, wages, and conditions. Through the continual promotion of education, enforcement of legal protections, and challenging of societal norms, developing Member States can empower women to fully participate in their economies. These efforts not only enhance individual opportunities but also contribute to building more inclusive and resilient societies.

***Committee Directive***

For this topic, discussion should revolve around creating an understanding of inequalities in the labor force within developing Member States. Delegates should have a broad understanding of how to define gender inequalities specific to the labor force and how it affects the livelihood of women within developing Member States. Furthermore, delegates should research existing policy within their Member States that works to address this issue. It is important that the committee works towards not only defining and acknowledging this issue but also collaborating with other Member States to create solutions, whether through policy or legislation creation or reform.

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