



No Borders MUN

Background Guide

SOCHUM

3 | Supporting Ukrainian refugees in adapting to new environments

No Borders MUN 2022

Authored by Sunwoo Yoo

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Committee Introduction	3
Agenda Introduction	4
Letter from the Chairs	5
Key Terms	6
Historical Background	6
Current State of Affairs	8
Stances of Parties	9
Possible Solutions	10
Questions to Consider	11
Bibliography	12

Committee Introduction

Delegates, welcome to the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)!

SOCHUM is the third committee out of six committees of the United Nations General Assembly (GA) and was established in 1945 under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. SOCHUM is tasked with a variety of topics related to social, humanitarian, and cultural issues that affect the world. As one of the six GA committees, SOCHUM cannot enforce anything on individual nations, though it can suggest guidelines, encourage nations to act, and support coordinating efforts. An important aspect of SOCHUM is protecting human rights and has taken actions to help women's advancement, protection of children, elimination of racial discrimination, improve the treatment of refugees, and much more. SOCHUM also takes action on societal issues such as international drug control, crime prevention, and global literacy. To initiate successful operations, SOCHUM works hand in hand with other nongovernmental organizations as well as government agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC).

In this committee, delegates will be creating resolutions, amendments, points of information, and speeches about issues surrounding the global trafficking of drugs, the suppression of Uyghurs, and supporting Ukrainian refugees. We hope delegates will immerse themselves in the world of MUN and come up with feasible solutions to address these issues.

Agenda Introduction

After weeks of heightened tension between Russia and Ukraine, Russian leader Vladimir Putin launched what Ukrainian officials described as a “full-scale invasion” of the country on February 24, 2022. Putin’s justification for this war – the biggest in Europe since World War Two – was that modern, pro-Western Ukraine was an unacceptable threat to Russia and that the invasion was an effort to defend the ethnic Russians residing in the eastern Donbas region. Despite global condemnation and cascading new sanctions, Russia continues its most aggressive attack since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

As of the time of this writing, the UN rights office (OHCHR) reports that more than 7.7 million Ukrainian citizens – about one third of the country’s population – have fled their country in search of safety, producing the fastest-moving refugee crisis since the Second World War. Most of the refugees have arrived in neighboring countries of Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Russia. Although the Ukrainian refugees have been relatively well-received in Europe compared to other refugee crises in recent history, resources have begun to run out in countries with high inflow of Ukrainian refugees. As the NATO Secretary-General and many other Western leaders fear that the war in Ukraine could continue for several years, it is crucial that the international community prepare both short-term and long-term solutions for the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

As of June, a number of Ukrainian refugees have chosen to return to Ukraine, despite the continuing violence. There are mainly three reasons for their return – patriotism, longing for husbands and sons fighting in Ukraine, and difficulty in securing a job and child care. SOCHUM cannot do much to resolve the first two issues, except for possibly facilitating their repatriation. Nonetheless, it can encourage its member states to adopt policies to resolve the third one, such as by providing financial assistance to child care centers and public schools.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear esteemed delegates,

I am Sunwoo Yoo, a rising senior at St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju, and I will be serving as one of your chairs for NBMUN III. It is a great honor and pleasure to chair this committee, and I wholeheartedly look forward to meeting all of you in the winter, albeit online.

With that being said, one of the greatest advantages of participating in an online MUN conference is that delegates are usually from a wide range of backgrounds. At the previous NBMUN conference, I was lucky enough to make friends with students from Asia and abroad – a precious opportunity during times of a global pandemic. I hope the diversity of NBMUN lets you not only widen your perspective on current affairs but also make friends with people all over the world.

Although NBMUN does award delegates at the end of the conference, I wish all delegates consider our conference more as an occasion of collaboration, communication, and reconciliation than as a competition. Have fun reading this background guide, writing position papers, researching country stances, and speaking to other delegates. Good luck!

Best regards,

Sunwoo Yoo

Key Terms

Refugees

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee his or her country due to persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Internally Displaced Person (IDPs)

A person who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders. Although such people are often mistakenly referred to as refugees, IDPs, unlike refugees, are on the run at home. They remain within their own country and under the protection of their government, even if that government is the reason for their displacement. The UNHCR identifies these people as "among the most vulnerable in the world," since they often move to areas where it is difficult for the agency to deliver humanitarian aid.

Asylum-Seeker

A person who has left their home country and is seeking protection in another. In countries with individualized asylum systems, an asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker is granted a refugee status, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker.

4Rs

Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction. In post-conflict situations in countries of origin, the UNHCR proposes the 4Rs concept, bringing together humanitarian aid and development actors and funds. It aims to ensure linkages between all four processes so as to prevent the recurrence of mass outflows, facilitate sustainable repatriation, and help maintain orderly local governance.

Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation

Even when conditions in the country of origin are too difficult or dangerous for the majority of refugees to return, the UNHCR can assist ("facilitate") the repatriation of any refugee who makes an informed and voluntary decision to return and request such assistance.

Promoted Voluntary Repatriation

Voluntary repatriation encouraged and organized by the UNHCR when conditions are considered conducive to return in safety and with dignity.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

An alliance of countries from Europe and North America, formed in 1949 to provide collective security against the threat posed by the Soviet Union.

Historical Background

After weeks of heightened tension between Russia and Ukraine, Russian leader Vladimir Putin launched what Ukrainian officials described as a “full-scale invasion” of the country on February 24, 2022. Putin’s justification for this war – the biggest in Europe since World War Two – was that modern, pro-Western Ukraine was an unacceptable threat to Russia and that the invasion was an effort to defend the ethnic Russians residing in the eastern Donbas region. In order to at least faintly comprehend Putin’s explanation, one must examine the Russia-Ukraine relationship since the 1990s.

In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine declared independence as did many other Soviet-controlled countries in Eastern Europe. Simultaneously, NATO’s influence expanded eastward, into former Warsaw Pact nations and even into former parts of the Soviet Union. By 2008, NATO had eventually taken in most countries formerly in Moscow’s orbit, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and stated that it planned – someday – to enroll Ukraine. Vladimir Putin has lamented Russia’s loss of power since the Soviet disintegration and has spent his 22 years in power striving to reassert Russia’s geopolitical influence and thereby regain its rightful place among the world’s great powers. He has described NATO’s eastward expansion as a direct threat to Russia and has been clear for several years that, if continued, the expansion would likely meet with serious resistance by the Russians, even with military action. And the Russian elites weren’t the only ones warning against the possible consequences of such expansion. When President Bill Clinton moved to bring Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO in 1997, 50 prominent foreign policy experts that including former U.S. senators, retired military officers, diplomats, and academicians, signed an open letter to Clinton, calling his action “a policy error of historic proportion” that threatens “European stability.” In 2008, William Burns, then the American ambassador to Moscow, even elucidated that the prospective “Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite... In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players... I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests.” Thus, one view of the war in Ukraine is that the war is a predicted outcome of Putin’s resistance to NATO’s eastward expansion, which the Kremlin has long regarded as a legitimate threat to Russia’s national security.

However, while the Russian elites have expressed their concerns about NATO expansion, numerous politicians around the world, especially in the West, have refuted that the Kremlin is supposed to understand and accept that NATO is no longer an anti-Russian alliance and that it does not pose a direct threat to the Russian Federation. Many such politicians, such as U.S. President Joe Biden, view Russia’s insecurity as the country’s imperialist ambition – as “Putin’s desire for empire by any means necessary.” Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a former U.S. senior intelligence analyst, added weeks before the invasion that there probably are “legacy issues at play” for Putin, who believes “that he is the last Russian leader who would be willing to take such risks to reassert Russia’s role as a

great power.” Consequently, another view on the Russo-Ukrainian war is that Putin saw an opportune moment to accomplish his “very maximalist objectives” and seized it.

In fact, the current Russo-Ukrainian war is not Russia’s first invasion of Ukraine. In 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and backed a rebellion led by a pro-Russia separatist group in the eastern Donbas region. As experts predicted, the 2014 conflict was just the beginning, setting the stage for a much larger one: in February 2022, Putin announced he was launching an assault “to defend people who for eight years are suffering persecution and genocide by the Kyiv regime” – an unfounded claim about the Ukrainian government that the Russian government has been repeating for years.

Current State of Affairs

On February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin launched a “special military operation” on Ukraine, claiming that its invasion is not targeted at civilians, but instead, at disarming and “denazifying” the Ukrainian government. On the other hand, Ukraine and its allies assert that such claims are baseless and Russia has crossed the Ukrainian border for a “full-scale war.” Despite global condemnation and cascading new sanctions, Russia continues its most aggressive attack since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

As of the end of May, OHCHR reports at least 4,031 civilian deaths in Ukraine, including nearly 200 children. OHCHR also reports, as of June 16, that more than 7.7 million Ukrainian refugees have fled their countries in search of safety, with a majority arriving in the neighboring countries like Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Russia. This rapid outflow of refugees has produced the fastest-moving refugee crisis since World War II and has pushed global displacement figures to record levels, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since Ukraine’s military conscription does not allow most men between the ages of 18 to 60 to leave the country, approximately 90% of refugees fleeing Ukraine are women and children, which is why some call Russia’s war on Ukraine “a war on women.” Most of these female refugees have left behind their husbands, sons, and brothers to fight for their homeland, and they thus are the single heads of households who must care for their children and for their elderly relatives.

Compared to other refugee crises in recent history, the Ukrainian refugees have been relatively well-received so far in Europe. There could be several reasons for this warm welcome, such as that the war in Ukraine evokes Cold War memories for Europeans, that Ukrainians are predominantly White and Christian, and that earlier refugee crises – which consisted mainly of refugees from Islamic countries – occurred at a time when European fears of Islamic extremism were high. So far, Ukraine’s neighboring countries have responded to the crisis with an outpouring of public and political support for the refugees. To begin with, the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which means that those fleeing Ukraine can access harmonized rights across the EU for three years – including residence, housing, medical assistance, and access to the labor market and education – without formal applications or examinations. Furthermore, European governments have promptly opened borders, with Slovakia and Poland allowing Ukrainian refugees without passports or valid travel documents and Ireland announcing the immediate lifting of visa requirements. In addition to the governments, citizens in Europe have opened up their homes, welcoming Ukrainian refugees to stay in their own houses. Due to this relatively warm welcome, several scholars point out that, although the Ukrainian refugee crisis has prompted a surge of humanitarian action, it has also revealed Europe’s double standards towards refugees.

Nonetheless, as resources began to run out in April, thousands of Ukrainian refugees have chosen to return home despite the continued danger. Every refugee has his/her own reasons for returning. For some refugees, homesickness and separation from

family members are the biggest reasons for returning to Ukraine. Though grateful for the help they have received in the European Union, they have realized that they cannot leave behind their sons and husbands who are risking their lives while fighting for their country. Most men say that they have a duty to return to fight for their country. For the women – most of whom have young children to care for – finding work and lodging abroad has been a major problem. After traveling across several countries, shuttling between refugee shelters, and sleeping with hundreds of strangers, they decided that it is unfeasible for them to stay in the European Union in the long term, even if it may be safer. And even for women who have been able to secure jobs in their new environments, many are unable to find child care. According to NBC News, Marina, 30, was able to find a job as a waitress in Budapest and rent a small apartment for a month, but she did not have anyone to watch her kids while she was at work, which is why she turned down the job and began looking for a way to cross the border into Ukraine. Due to these various reasons, Ukrainian officials estimated in April that about 50,000 people a day are crossing the border to enter Ukraine, in spite of the violence. Refugee and migration experts explain that, although it is not uncommon for refugees to return home during a time of conflict, it is often a sign of weak humanitarian and official government responses.

More than a hundred days into the war, Western leaders are predicting the war to continue in the long term. For instance, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg the war in Ukraine could last years and emphasized the importance of “not let[ting] up in supporting Ukraine,” even if “the costs are high.” British Prime Minister Boris Johnson made similar comments, urging Ukrainian allies to demonstrate that they were there to support the Ukrainians for however long the war persists.

Stances of Parties

Russia

Despite being the aggressor, Russia has received the second-highest number of refugees from Ukraine. Russia has offered Ukrainian refugees a safe haven from the violence it initiated in Ukraine, although Ukrainian officials denounced this as a “trap.” Many Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Russia hold different views from the Ukrainian officials. These refugees include the pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine called Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. There have been reports of Ukrainian refugees in Russia being forced into “filtration camps” to face strip searches and harsh interrogation.

United States of America

In April 2022, US President Joe Biden accused Russian forces of committing acts of “genocide” in Ukraine. He said Putin was trying to “wipe out the idea” of Ukrainian identity. He has also pledged to take in 100,000 Ukrainians fleeing war and to send \$1 billion in humanitarian aid to European countries housing refugees. In March, the U.S. announced that it would offer temporary protected status to Ukrainians already in the U.S., although members of the Congress predict the effects to be modest at best.

Poland

Poland has received the highest number of Ukrainian refugees, with an estimated 3.5 million people crossing the border since the war broke out in late February. Out of the 3.5 million, about a million have been registered by the Polish government, and 94% of those registered refugees were identified as women and children. Floods of volunteers have rushed to help refugees arrive in Poland, but resources have begun to run low. Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski warned in April that, after receiving 300,00 refugees, Warsaw is at “capacity” and is unable to absorb another wave of refugees. He has asked for resources to assist with the current refugee population from the White House.

Romania

Thousands of Ukrainian refugees have poured into Romania since the beginning of the war, and as of March, more than 84,000 currently remain in the country, most of whom are in the capital of Bucharest. Bucharest has shelters open for refugees arriving into the country, and it has even converted part of the massive exposition center Romexpo to a refugee overflow shelter. The city of Suceava has also converted the Mandachi Hotel into a refugee shelter. Jill Biden, the First Lady of the U.S., has lauded Romania’s response to the refugee crisis upon her visit to Romania.

Belarus

The Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, has been Russia’s closest ally in its war with Ukraine, at least for the first few months. For instance, Lukashenko did not object to Putin using the Belarusian territory as a launching pad for the invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine that began on February 24. In May, Lukashenko did admit that he did not expect Russia’s invasion in Ukraine to last so long and claimed he is doing “everything”

for a peace agreement between the two sides. Nonetheless, it would be reckless to equate Lukashenko's regime with the rest of Belarus. Anti-war sentiment is very strong among many Belarusian citizens, and a number of Belarusian volunteers have joined the war to fight for Ukraine. Belarusian IT specialists have also joined the resistance against Russia's war in Ukraine, disrupting the transit of Russian soldiers and military equipment to Ukraine.

Possible Solutions

Unlike the UN Security Council, SOCHUM does not have the authority to interfere directly with the war in Ukraine, which is the cause of the Ukrainian refugee crisis. However, we can encourage member nations to adopt policies that can hopefully help the Ukrainian refugees better adapt to their new homes, find jobs and child care, receive health care, and access information about returning home – if they choose to.

Continue providing ample humanitarian aid

Since early March, Ukraine’s neighbors have warned that the resources they can provide for the Ukrainian refugees will run out someday. In the Polish town of Zamosc, mayor Andrzej Wnuk stated, “Polish people seem infinitely ready to give, but it will end one day.” True to his words, Poland and other European countries neighboring Ukraine has seen recessions in resources – including volunteers, housing, and classroom spaces. Many mayors and leaders and such countries have asked for additional resources from the international community, and SOCHUM could encourage member states with a small inflow of Ukrainian refugees to provide such assistance to the countries in strain.

Aid refugees in finding jobs and child care in their new countries

An overwhelming number of refugees fleeing Ukraine are women with children, which means that securing a job and child care is crucial to their rehabilitation in their new countries. Difficulty in finding both a job and child care is also one of the crucial reasons that refugees choose to return to Ukraine, despite the waging war. SOCHUM and its member states could assist these refugees in various ways, such as financially funding child care institutions and public schools so that they can take in a higher number of children, setting up an information center where refugees can access information about available jobs, and providing job training.

Facilitate voluntary repatriation

Although many female refugees are choosing to return home due to difficulty in securing a job and/or child care, many are choosing to return due to homesickness or patriotism. In such cases, the best that our committee can do for the refugees is to respect their decision and wish them safe travel. As stated in the Key Terms, UNHCR can, in a process called “facilitated voluntary repatriation,” assist the repatriation of any refugee who makes an informed and voluntary decision to return and request such assistance. Thus, SOCHUM can cooperate with and aid UNHCR to ensure that any refugee who makes the brave decision to go home can rebuild their lives in a stable environment.

Questions to Consider

1. Are there certain “model examples” of how to help refugees make a smooth transition into their new environment? Are there examples of failures that we can be mindful of?
2. How can be the safety of refugees be ensured during and after relocation?
3. What are the current policies of countries with large inflows of refugees and what kind of policies could be amended to better ensure the safety of Ukrainian refugees?
4. What can countries that hardly have any refugees from Ukraine do to help countries with high inflows of Ukrainian refugees?
5. How is the Ukrainian refugee crisis different from other refugee crises?
6. Will the European Union’s warm welcome towards Ukrainian refugees continue?
7. Assuming the war lasts for several years, how can we ensure that the humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees does not run out?

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