DISEC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC A:
VIGILANTE VIOLENCE IN GLOBAL CONFLICTS

Our first topic focuses on addressing the violence perpetrated by vigilante groups in conflicts around the globe and understanding why and how these groups form. In cases of vigilantism such as that seen in Mexico and other Latin American countries, vigilante groups are locally formed to address criminal enterprises that the government is either unable to combat or choses to cooperate with for the sake of stability. Since 2013, an estimated 50 vigilante groups have arisen across Mexico in response to worsening criminal gang violence. In other cases such as India or the United States, the organizations have formed on the basis of ethnic divisions, with inflammatory rhetoric encouraging majoritarian communities to take up arms to "protect" their ethnicity against domination by minority groups. In India, hundreds have been injured and dozens killed in the name of protecting cows, which are sacred in the practice of Hinduism. This is ostensibly influenced by anti-Muslim propaganda peddled by the right-wing BJP party in political power. In other cases still, such as in nations like Sudan and Nigeria, the government, in recognition of its weak infrastructure, outsources the protection of local communities to vigilante groups. This has sometimes resulted in that group, like the Arrow Boys in Sudan, becoming a threat to national safety when the original conflict has been resolved. The threat that led to the formation of the vigilante groups noted above may appear to be different, but they are all reactions to the same underlying variables of economic inequality, political

instability, and the perception of ethnic division. From these foundational problems conflict can both bloom or be exacerbated, often due to the actions of the state's government itself. As the committee of DISEC it is the role of our delegates to address the obvious implications of a conflict such as the displacement, injury, and death of civilians as well as the more abstract concepts that lead to conflict in the first place.

In the face of bureaucracy or other obstacles to obtaining justice or security, it can often be tempting to take matters into one's own hands. What we hope is that, through researching and discussing this topic, delegates will learn to recognize the dangerous repercussions associated with this approach, as well as how to discern and address the underlying systemic issues which may make vigilantism tempting.

In the context of vigilante violence, and life, attempt to stay away from generalizations. Three different examples of vigilantism were mentioned above to help prepare a key understanding for this topic: that vigilantism is not a black and white issue. Start your research with the knowledge that the problem does not always manifest itself in the same way, and that the repercussions of vigilante violence can be widespread. Local cultures, access to weapons and resources, and the capabilities of the government all contribute to the emergence of vigilante groups and as such the problem is multifaceted. When conducting your research do not demonize or deify any one group, and when brainstorming solutions, try and look for common threads but leave room for local adaptations of your solutions.

TOPIC B:
CLIMATE CONFLICT IN AFRICA

RECOMMENDED READINGS AND AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS:

For a preview into the content covered by the background feel free to read and watch the sources below.

- Drought and Conflict across the Kenyan-Ethiopian Border | Climate Diplomacy

Our second topic centers around the conflicts driven by or exacerbated by the effects of climate change, specifically in the continent of Africa. Africa was chosen as the region of focus because it is one of the geographical areas most susceptible to climate change. Additionally, many African nations are already vulnerable due to infrastructural challenges, historical poverty, ongoing conflicts, and the remnants of colonial influence, making them a large recipient of UN aid and a hotbed for international concern. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, much of the water resources used for development in Africa are 'transboundary,' meaning that they naturally cross political borders. Water in Africa that is not found to be 'transboundary' is often centered in one location, with 589 of the 980 large dams in sub-Saharan Africa being located in South Africa. With the onset of droughts and rising temperature many of these transboundary water sources are receding over political lines, causing clashes between the groups that rely upon the sources for their livelihoods. Tensions surrounding the accessibility of water resources are just one example of the problems that are further heightened by climate change. Other events such as natural disasters and droughts can, and have, also caused the displacement of pastoralist and rural communities, creating climate refugees that come into contact with the nationals of other countries between which discontent can manifest into violence. Furthermore, climate change can also add another layer of complexity to existing conflicts by inflaming unsafe conditions in refugee

camps or serving as leverage by governmental and non-governmental forces.

A very large number of conflicts throughout history, and especially throughout the world today, stem from disputes relating to borders. At the same time, climate change is an existential threat to everyone on the planet. Through this topic delegates are able to learn about one of the many ways that this existential threat has manifested itself, as well as gaining an understanding about how the borders drawn during decolonization in Africa have had lasting repercussions on international relations throughout the continent.

This topic builds off of some of the same concepts essential to Topic A. Although the core problem you will be trying to solve is the way in which climate change in Africa drives conflict, delegates should look both at the different types of conflict and the effects of different types of climate change. Climate change can result in changes to longstanding natural weather cycles and geography so it is important to take into account the mannerisms, practices, and divisions of various peoples both before and after colonization and in coexistence with modern political lines. When applying the country policy of your own assigned nation, delegates should be ready to reckon with their own past regarding interactions with Africa as well as how they currently address climate change. Regardless of personal feelings, it is important to keep with country policy as it stands, not how you wish it to be. Finally, do not try to create a one size fits all solution. Despite the reference to Africa as one cohesive region above, Africa is made up of 54 sovereign countries, each with their own governments, economies, and peoples.