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Letter from the Chair

To be Released!

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Committee Description

The Arab League is a regional organization made up of states across both the Middle East and North Africa. Though the organization had only six founding states, it has since expanded, and now includes a total of 22 member states. Topics discussed within the Arab League have always been quite diverse, ranging from political and cultural issues to resolving various conflicts and disputes. These topics should all be very much reflected in the debate that will go on throughout committee, as delegate will be expected to consider both topics included in the background guide from multiple perspectives

Additionally, due to the large range of topics and responsibilities managed by the Arab League, there are a variety of different ministerial councils that work alongside the organization, including the Council of Arab Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Council of Arab Ministries of Information, and more. Though delegates are encouraged to explore the work that these ministries do as part of their background research and incorporate some of these ministries into their resolution, delegates will not be expected to have extensive knowledge of their operations, and should focus on the topics and issues that will be highlighted in this background guide

Finally, something quite important to note is that similarly to other organizations in the UN, the resolutions passed by the Arab League are often not binding, limiting much of their effectiveness. However, there is one exception; if a resolution passes unanimously, it is therefore binding. Thus, though this committee will function as a typical regional committee in all other senses, any resolution that is passed unanimously will be binding.

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History

The Arab league was officially born in 1945, with the Alexandria Protocol in Cairo having been signed the previous year. The founding states of the Arab league were Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Though the Arab League handles many issues today, the primary reason for the founding of the Arab League was to protect the sovereignty (or in simpler terms, the independence) of its member states. As WWII had ended a few months before the League officially was founded, many states were concerned that their territory would be once again split between different European colonial powers, as it had been after WWI through the Sykes-Picot Accord. We see the desire to protect from further colonization outlined clearly in the Charter of the Arab League, which describes the general goals of the Arab League as bringing Arab states closer together, coordinating policies, protecting peace and security, and maintaining the independence of member states.

But despite the powerful goals of the Arab League, it has known to struggle quite a bit with ensuring these goals have been achieved. For example, though the League has long aimed to promote closer relationships amongst its member states, Egypt, one of the founding states, had actually had its membership revoked before. The organization has generally been criticized for its lack of enforcement, especially as very few policies are ever passed synonymously.

When we consider the history of the Arab League, it is very important to consider its important role in the 1970s, especially as it placed an oil embargo on states such as the US and the UK, leading to what is known in the US as “shrinkflation”, an important economic effect. But since this initial show of its power, the Arab League has shifted its

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role to be far more involved in the politics of the Middle East, as highlighted by its actions during the Arab Spring, in which it attempted to help support and protect human rights as protests against the government in both Syria and Libya were increasingly repressed, even suspending both member states right to participation. Today, the Arab League continues to fight for its guiding principles as it navigates an increasingly complicated world.

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Topic 1: Increasing Regional Cohesion

When we refer to improving regional cohesion within the Arab League, we are referring directly to several of the goals mentioned in its charter, including promoting closer relationships between states, coordinating policies, and cooperating across economic and social issues as well. Delegates are encouraged to try to find new methods and ideas to help bring countries closer together, especially in terms of policies and general relations.

Background

Despite the explicit goal of unity mentioned within its charter, the Arab League has long been renowned for the lack of unity that it presents. These challenges in terms of unity have existed almost since the beginning of the body itself. As the Cold War began shortly after WWII, different member states chose to ally themselves either closely with the USSR or the US, thus splitting the League into two different camps. But disunity has gone even further; several member states have also even been deprived of their membership privileges in the past as well.

Many of the problems in cooperation and in ensuring regional cohesion have continued into today as well. The League has been ineffective in providing aid or stability to several active civil wars or helping with any disputes, as seen by its lack of a role in the civil wars in Syria, Yemen, or Libya, all of which are its member nations.

On the other hand, there have been some general successes and attempts to push relationships between member states closer together. For example, the League

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successfully unanimously adopted the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, though this initiative has not been implemented. The League also took a stand during the Arab Spring, going into talks with the Syrian government and suspending Libya's membership privileges after both governments repressed peaceful protests against their autocratic regimes.

In terms of cultural programs, the Arab league initially focused far more on such issues, establishing the Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization(ALECSO) in 1964. ALECSO continues to host a variety of programs today, including lectures, a poetry day, a heritage protection program, and more.

Issues to Consider

For the issue of improving regional cohesion, delegates should focus on several key aspects, including improving cultural unity and increasing coordinations in policy, especially in terms of economic or educational policies.

For example, in terms of improving cultural unity, delegates can focus on finding ways to encourage cultural cooperation while including minority groups within member Arab states as well. Many of the existing cultural programs within ALECSO can also be expanded, especially in terms of scientific collaboration and education. Educational exchange or even language exchange programs should also be considered as issues which have a great potential to help maintain or even strengthen the relationships between member states.

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Economic policy is also quite important to consider. Like any other regional organizations, the Arab League has its own trade zone, known as the Greater Arab Free Trade Area(GAFTA), though not all member states are included. However, the levels of interregional trade within GAFTA are quite low, and are only 11% of the trade conducted with member states of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD). Delegates could focus on finding ways to increase trade between member states, or otherwise adjust economic policies in order to improve relations between member states and cooperation.

Guiding Questions

What is the relationship of your state with other member states of the Arab League?

Should the Arab League try to increase regional cooperation and cohesion?

What are some economic policies your delegation would like to promote across the Arab League?

What are some of the culture policies your delegation believes would help increase cohesion the most? What new projects or forms of cooperation between member nations should be created?

What policy areas should the Arab League seek to cooperate on more?

What types of cooperation should be prioritized most to increase regional cohesion?

Topic 2: Encouraging Regional Development

Regional development is yet another extremely important topic to the Arab League, though it is not as explicitly stated within its charter. Typically, regional development focuses on improving the economic conditions within a specific region, and thus, this topic will focus more on promoting economic growth and the development of new businesses in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Background

The Middle East and Northern African have a wide range of development levels, and have been growing quickly throughout the past years. However, economic issues in general first came into the focus of the Arab league in 1950, with the reaction of the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League(ESC). In 1957, the ESC then created the Council of Arab Economic Unity(CAEU). While CEAU focuses more on keeping economic relations amongst states positive and helping them grow their economies, the ESC has continued to establish new organizing in order to promote regional development, creating the Agreement to Facilitate and Develop Trade Among Arab Countries in 1997, and through this agreement, GAFTA.

Though many of the member states of the Arab League are rich in natural resources, many still wish to further promote regional development and to diversify their economies. In 2018, the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League adopted a resolution which sought to improve previous trade policies and to push for more regional cooperation, and many new ideas continue to be created.

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For development specifically, the Arab League has worked directly with the UNDP to create the AEISD project, which seeks to create inclusive and sustainable development within the region through modernizing trade policies and facilitating dialogue between different member nations and the private sector. It also seeks to reduce time at border crossing and customs and to enhance the role of women in trade policy, creating workshops and job opportunities for women specifically.

Issues to consider

One of the main issues to consider in regards to development is whether GAFTA or other similar agreements should continue, expand, or be replaced. In the past, many have considered expanding the existing economic agreements in order to create not just a free trade zone but a common market instead, as this could further lower the cost of trade and thus bring in more investment and development. However, given the fact that even free trade agreements have been increasingly controversial within the Arab League and amongst the people of member nations, it remains a very important issue to debate and consider.

Additionally, in order to further encourage development, many have considered the idea of appealing more directly and working more directly with the private sector and many companies in order to encourage them to invest in member nations' economies and cooperate with them. But this issue too can be quite controversial, as some may view collaborations with private companies as just another form of privatization of the economy, which has had many problems as it was implemented in member nations as well. As the governments of member nations have lessened their control over the economy, problems arose due to the lack of expertise on many financial issues and the

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overall need to restructure the use of labor in the economy. These changes can also be quite painful for the economy to initially go through as well, with inflation often rising rapidly. Thus, delegates must consider whether their nation would seek to focus on private enterprise to further their development, and whether shifting to private sector control is suitable for their nation.

Another issue that is important to consider is how member nations can encourage the creation of businesses amongst minority communities, women, and disadvantaged populations in general. Resolutions that focus on making the cost of starting a business lower, quotas for diverse representation in companies, and stipends for small businesses led by minority groups could all help encourage both development and help diversify the benefits of development.

Guiding Questions

What is the general economic standing of your country? Is it seeking to develop its economy further, and if so, what are its current goals?

How does your country view the current economic organization led by the Arab League? Is it a member of GAFTA?

Would your nation want to expand GAFTA in order to create a common market?

How does your country weigh the negatives against the positive of encouraging private sector investment to further development?

What can your country do to promote the creation of small businesses, especially within its minority populations?

Country Positions

Algeria: Algeria has often had a very involved role within the Arab League, and has long advocated for more unity amongst Arab nations, especially on policy issues. It is also a member of GAFTA, and views economic collaboration as key to further development. In terms of development, Algeria is currently focused on diversifying its economy and encouraging education and youth employment.

Bahrain: Bahrain tends to promote regional stability and security as well as more cultural exchange and education amongst Arab countries. It is also part of GAFTA, and is seeking to develop its economy through encouraging startups and foreign investment.

Comoros: Comoros support more regional cohesiveness as it greatly benefits from many of the benefits of the Arab league as a smaller nation. It is not a member of GAFTA, but it is seeking to diversify its economy through encouraging infrastructure and sustainable development to reduce poverty.

Djibouti: Djibouti tends to focus most on its security, viewing regional unity as necessary to ensure it. It is not a member of GAFTA, but it is investing greatly in energy infrastructure with the goal of becoming a regional trade hub.

Egypt: Egypt also emphasizes regional collaboration and cohesion, especially when it comes to responding to common political struggles. It is a member of GAFTA, and is prioritizing economic diversification and foreign investment, focusing on the importance of the Suez Canal.

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Iraq: Iraq views regional cohesion in a positive light, as it feels it will improve many of its internal political and security problems. It is a member of GAFTA, and is focusing on reconstructing its economy and diversifying away from oil dependence.

Jordan: Jordan believes regional cooperation is important as it benefits from much of the Arab League's economic and political support. As a member of GAFTA, it emphasizes investment in education and technology as well as job creation and trade partnerships.

Kuwait: Kuwait wants to emphasize security and economic development across the Arab League. As part of GAFTA, it is seeking to transform itself into a new financial and trade hub and attracting foreign investments.

Lebanon: Lebanon prioritizes policies that focus more on financial aid and political stability, and thus wants to coordinate such policies across the Arab League. As part of GAFTA, it is aiming to stabilize its economy and attract foreign aid and investment while building up infrastructure.

Libya: Libya also would like to increase policy coordination, especially when it comes to economic aid and political stability. As a member of GAFTA, it also wants to foster economic diversification and gain more international support.

Mauritania: Mauritania would like to focus on policy coordination focused on security and the environment specifically. Though it is not a member of GAFTA, it is also trying

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to improve its economy through diversification and through investing in education and healthcare.

Morocco: Morocco wants increased economic integration, but it also wants increased support for its territorial claims in the Western Sahara. As part of GAFTA, it is focusing on industrialization and education, especially vocational training, in order to support economic growth.

Oman: Oman would like to focus policy coordination mostly on diplomatic collaboration. It is a member of GAFTA, and is investing in tourism, education, and healthcare as its economy grows.

Qatar: Qatar supports increased cohesion especially when it comes to political stability. As a member of GAFTA, it is focusing on moving away from hydrocarbon dependence and investing in education and sports as well as infrastructure.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest proponents of policy coordination and collaboration within the Arab League. As a member of GAFTA, it is seeking to move away from oil dependency and towards large projects focused on entertainment and technology.

Somalia: Somalia also supports more policy coordination amongst the Arab League, especially for economic support. Though it is not a member of GAFTA, it is focusing on international aid and investment in order to further its development.

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Sudan: Sudan supports increased policy coordination, especially from the perspective of conflict resolution and economic recovery. As a member of GAFTA, it prioritizes international aid and investment as it tries to move towards economic reform and recovery.

Syria: Syria has recently been brought back into the Arab League after its suspension, and wants more unity amongst the League. As a member of GAFTA, it is trying to rebuild much of its infrastructure and needs international aid and support to do so.

Tunisia: Tunisia also supports policy coordination in order to help its country grow economically and support its political stability. As a member of GAFTA, Tunisia is trying to diversify its economy and attract foreign investment.

United Arab Emirates: The UAE advocates for more policy coordination especially in terms of regional prosperity. As a member of GAFTA, it is moving towards innovation and sustainability while even expanding towards space exploration and renewable energy.

Yemen: Yemen also wishes for more policy coordination, focused on humanitarian needs and recovery. As a member of GAFTA, it is mostly rebuilding infrastructure through the help of vital international aid.

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