



# SITUATION

## IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

HSMUN  
2014

CHI EN CHIU

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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# LETTER FROM SECRETARY GENERAL



Dear delegates,

My name is Violet Lee, presently a sophomore majors in Business Administration in National Taiwan University. I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all High School Model United Nations 2014 delegates on behalf of the host team. HSMUN has dedicated to provide a conference with the highest academic standard in Taiwan. We wish to enliven the true spirit of Model UN through outstanding diplomacy during the conference and fun during the form of summer camp.

I commenced my Model UN career since I was a freshman in high school. Since then, I started to participate in various Model UN conferences including PKUNMUN, TMUN, and NSMUN. Each of them was unique and inspiring. I think that MUN is the place where we challenge ourselves and make progress. During the conference, delegates are encouraged to speak out your own thoughts, to exchange ideas and to cooperate with others. After you walk out the conference room, you should not only have proper academic knowledge but also sincere caring for the world.

The following study guide is prepared for you by the Department of Academics, namely the Chair and Assistant Chairs of your assigned committee. It should be the stepping stone that guides you through your research, providing fundamental understanding for the issues at hand but not solely rely on. The host team is looking forward to meeting all of you in July. Be prepared to learn and have fun!

Warmest Regards,  
Violet Lee

*Violet Lee*

Secretary-General  
High School Model United Nations 2014

# LETTER FROM UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL OF ACADEMICS



Distinguished delegates,

Greetings! I would like to, on behalf of the department of the Academics, send out sincere welcomeness for you to join in HSMUN 2014. It is our pleasure to have you as a delegate this year. I am Ederson Chang, serving as your director of Academics this year. I'm a rising junior majoring in Business Administration in National Taiwan University.

Comparing to a lot of you guys in the seat, my MUN career started rather late. It did not start until 2012 in PAMUN Security Council in the Freshman year of college. Ever since the conference started, I know that this is the place I belong to. For the past year, alongside with my wonderful colleagues, we put a great effort on making this community better. Today, we want to bring the same high quality of Model United Nations we seek for to you. We strive to bring you, not merely a conference, but life-changing four-day enjoyment.

This year, we have set up four committees, which tackle the world issues in difference aspects. In the Commission of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, we would be discussing Vulnerable Population in Prison, an essential issue where barely any conference in Taiwan have ever discussed about. Delegates of the General Assembly Fourth Committee, namely Special, Political and Decolonization committee, would focus on solving statelessness problems. The Economic and Social Council would tackle the catastrophe caused in tropical areas affected by climate change through the means of disaster management. The United Nations Security Council this year will be debating over the situation of South China Sea, seeking for an ultimate solution to reach peace in the controversial ocean.

Abreast with the conference, we have also prepared lectures on the United Nations and Rules of Procedures as well as English training sessions. We wish the best to you with your preparations and sincerely hopes that the HSMUN 2014 could be the conference where you learn, enjoy, and have fun.

"We born in one world, we born with one heart."

Can't wait to meet all of you in July! See you then!

Best regards,  
Ederson, Yu-Cheng Chang

Under-Secretary General of Academics  
High School Model United Nations 2014



## LETTER FROM CHAIR



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council of High School Model United Nations 2014. My name is Claire Wu, and I will be serving as your chair for this conference. I am a rising junior majoring in Business Administration at National Taiwan University. I am also the vice president of NTUMUN. Anne Lin, Violet Kuo, Natasha Chou and Janelle Shr will be serving as your assistant chairs for this conference. Anne and Violet are freshmen in the Departments of International Business and Business Administration respectively. Natasha and Janelle are freshmen in the Department of Political Science.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, was first established in 1946 to maintain international peace and security. The Council consists of 15 members. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are the 5 permanent members (P5) with the power to veto substantive resolutions. The other 10 non-permanent members are chosen from regional groups to serve two-year terms. The current non-permanent members are: Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania, and Nigeria.

This year, the Security Council will be discussing the situation in South China Sea. Countries that surround the South China Sea, including China, Taiwan, and the ASEAN countries, claim the sovereignty over the islands. However, the lack of clear principles that distinguish the sovereignty of the area results in competition over the territories and the abundant natural resources. China believes its possession of the islands is righteous due to historical facts, while most ASEAN countries follow the UN Convention on the Law of Sea. Therefore, consensus is difficult to reach with such diverse standpoints. In the four day conference, we hope that delegates can come up with a resolution that solves the dispute and ensures peace and safety in the South China Sea.

This study guide is meant to provide you with comprehensive background knowledge of the committee topic. However, further research is required in order for you to be well prepared for the conference. You should not only search on your own country but also understand the policies of other related countries. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask us. We really look forward to meeting all of you in summer!

Sincerely,

Claire Wu

Chair, United Nations Security Council  
High School Model United Nations 2014

## COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION



### History of the Committee

After World War II, the United Nations Security Council, one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, was established to maintain international peace and security. <sup>1</sup>It consists of fifteen members. China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America serve as the five permanent members (P5) with veto power. The rest are non-permanent members, with five selected each year for two-year membership with equitable geographic distribution.<sup>2</sup>

During the Cold War, the Security Council lost its function due to the hostility between the United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics though it authorized many interventions and peacekeeping missions, inter alia, the Korean War and Suez Crisis. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the peacekeeping duties of the Security Council grew in scale. In recent years, Brazil, Germany, India and Japan are calling for the reform of the Security Council, claiming that the P5 cannot represent the current global political status quo and the huge changes after the World War II.<sup>3</sup>

### Major Roles of the Security Council

The Security Council should first seek for possible peace solutions to maintain or restore the international peace and security.<sup>4</sup> As for further acts, the Security Council can impose economic and political sanctions, authorize military actions, and send peacekeeping troops.<sup>5</sup> From the administrative aspect, the Security Council can recommend the admissions of new members to, and elect the judges of International Court of Justice together with the General Assembly.<sup>6</sup>

Substantive decisions of Security Council require the affirmative votes of nine members.<sup>7</sup> However, any opposition vote from P5 members will fail the resolution. The power is controversial since the P5 often use this power to pursue their country's interest rather than international peace and security.

## TOPIC: SITUATION IN SOUTH CHINA SEA



### **Statement of the problem**

#### **Introduction**

The situation in South China Sea is a longstanding dispute for more than four decades. Surrounding countries claim for islands in the second busiest international sea lane in South Asia.<sup>8</sup> The controversy involves two groups of islands being claimed possession by China, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> Due to geographical reasons, there is currently no clear guideline to fairly distinguish the sovereignty of the islands. The lack of evident instruction leads to the contest for territories and the abundant natural resources alongside the isles. Interlaced with numerous obstacles, denoting clashes are still occur to this day in the area.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Territory and sovereignty**

The countries' claims originate from a series of historical, territorial and legal matters. China claims the sovereignty over the islands, saying that the islands belong to the country before the conflicts erupted. The claim is complemented by the "nine-dash line", which designates the complete sovereignty of the contested islands on a map.<sup>11</sup> Some countries, however, follow another way of division: the international maritime boundaries. This makes the problem no less arduous since South China Sea is a very dense region, with many marine borders overlapping.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Natural resources and economic value**

The underlying cause of the contentions is strongly related to the abundance of natural resources such as petroleum, hydrocarbon, manganese nodules and fishery resources.<sup>13</sup> US Energy Information Administration estimates that there are approximately 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in established and possible reserves. The sea's richness in resource proves major



economical potential for countries.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the South China Sea has turned to a “hotspot” for conflicts.

## **Security issues**

Many security issues had arisen in the past and are currently unresolved due to the conflicts involving the region. Although the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed on the 2002 “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea”, aiming to “enhance favorable conditions for a peaceful and durable solution of differences and disputes among countries concerned”, it is still nowhere near adopting a legally binding code of conduct which implements further peace and stability. China is reluctant to negotiate any sample draft, since adopting this code of conduct may restrict its own right on South China Sea.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent upsurge in tension had coincided with more assertive posturing from China. Beijing officials issued a series of powerful statements, including warning their rivals to stop any mineral exploration in the area. In early 2012, the Philippines and China even engaged in a maritime standoff, accusing each other of intrusions in the Scarborough Shoal. Chinese and Filipino vessels refused to retreat from the area for weeks, leading to rhetoric and protests. Subsequently, China authorized its coast guards to board and check foreign ships crossing its waters. Besides disputes between China and the Philippines, there were claims of Vietnamese exploration operations deliberately sabotaged by the Chinese navy that led to extensive anti-China protests on the streets of Vietnam. Afterwards, China created an administrative body in the Paracels that frustrated both Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>16</sup> The question of security management therefore needs to be tackled urgently and in a strategic manner.

## **History and Discussion**

### **The History of Dispute in South China Sea<sup>17</sup>**

The dispute in South China Sea has become more severe since the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) discovered the abundant oil and natural gas saving in the area in mid-twentieth century, and the transportation technology progressed intensely in those days. These



factors have attracted neighboring countries to obtain the sovereignty rights over the archipelago resorting to diplomatic negotiations and military force.

After World War II, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines became sovereign states, bringing more chaos onto the stage. China, alongside with the ASEAN powers, play essential roles in the power balance in South China Sea.<sup>18</sup>

## **China and the Philippines<sup>19</sup>**

Many countries and organizations have been dedicated to regional safety. One of the most crucial declarations, the ASEAN Declaration of South China Sea signed in July 1992, reaffirmed the importance of peace and called for self-restraint amongst nations for a more positive and optimistic future. It also encouraged cooperation on possible navigation security, environmental protection, and disaster rescue issues.

However, the tension between China and the Philippines over South China Sea has escalated in recent decades. The Philippines passed the “Republic Act No. 3046-An Act to Define the Baselines of the Territorial Sea of the Philippines” in 1961, expanding the boundary set in the U.S.-Spain Paris Treaty in 1898. President Ferdinand Marcos announced the legal sovereignty over the nine islands in 1972; yet, none of the United Nations organs have recognized its jurisdiction.<sup>20</sup> China claims to have sovereignty rights on several South China Sea’s islands referring to their governmental demarcation line, “The nine-dash”; this declaration worsens the situation and arises conflicts.

## **The US Statement**

In February 2014, the White House delivered a testimony, condemning the actions of China in ignoring the prosperity of the region and breaking international laws. The condemnation was a change in attitude compared to the neutral standpoint the Obama administration used to hold.<sup>2122</sup> According to the statement the White House made in 2012 and the co-statement with the EU in 2014, Washington appeared to support the proposal of ASEAN.<sup>2324</sup>

## **Past actions<sup>25</sup>**

### **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty that implements a regulatory framework for the use of the world's seas and oceans. UNCLOS addresses concerns including maritime jurisdiction, rights of usage in maritime zones, and navigational rights, which applies to the South China Sea disputes.<sup>26</sup> Before the convention was signed, most of the coastal countries did not have a clear jurisdictional line on the ocean. Countries ratifying this convention abide by UNCLOS in order to gain legitimacy over sea area. However, powerful countries such as but not limited to the United States of America refused to ratify the treaty; furthermore, the United Nations does not have control over the implementation of the convention. Since UNCLOS is the codification of previous maritime customs, the International Court of Justice views most of the UNCLOS provisions as customary international law, meaning that whether the country has signed UNCLOS or not, it is still bounded by the convention.

In 2002, 10 members of ASEAN signed an official declaration with China to take UNCLOS and Instrument of Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as the highest guiding norms.<sup>2728</sup> This was considered a milestone for the situation in South China Sea. The declaration puts the security of navigation, fishery, and environmental issues rather than sovereignty on the top priority. It allows countries to work closer for different actions.

## **The Future of UNCLOS**

Although the UNCLOS has shown some effects, there's still a long way before it accomplishes its task. The lack of actual political power from UNCLOS makes it unable to stop member nations from violating UNCLOS to pursue their national interest. Besides, in order for the convention to be effective, all relevant countries should take part in the negotiation process.

## **Possible solutions**

Despite that ASEAN, China and Taiwan agreed upon the code of conduct deal in 2002, recent events seem to propose that countries have failed to follow the essence of that agreement. At once, the international efforts had tried to promote the implementation of the Declaration of the Conduct of the South China Sea, in which concerned representatives would come together periodically to work out a solution.

Though it might not be a long-term solution for the dispute, it still would serve as a guideline to maintain peace and stability in the field. Furthermore, the most important character the Declaration of the Conduct of the South China Sea marked is the switch in priority. Therefore, nations should consider first and foremost the economic development and civilian security in South China Sea. It would be beneficial if the next declaration adheres firmly on this principle and freeze the acute issue of sovereignty.

The problem remains that one of the major powers, China, has resisted such proposition. As a country already attempting to control the disputed regions using routine navy patrol forces, China is certainly not willing to give up its self-determined authority.<sup>29</sup> China tends to favor bilateral agreements while other countries are more inclined toward international multilateral resolutions. By creating a multilateral negotiation, the issue will allow other countries and international organizations to join the talk directly, hoping to come up with a more cohesive solution.<sup>30</sup> For ASEAN countries, frequent organized discussions and meetings should be held more in order to advance this situation.<sup>31</sup>

## **Bloc Position**

### **China**

China consistently proposes “the nine dash line”, which is backed by historical evidence, to claim the sovereignty over South China Sea. First officially published in 1947, this rather vague boundary has been included in related documents issued by Chinese government. In legal aspects, China claims that it is the first to discover, name and exercise jurisdiction over the islands. It requires full recognition of all these acts by international community.

Facing the current turbulence, China has several concrete acts to claim the sovereignty over these regions. On January 1, 2014, Hainan province began to enforce new fishing regulations, requiring vessels fishing in South China Sea to be ruled under Hainan’s jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup> The regulation provoked related countries’ discontent since it secured the power of China’s authority over the South China Sea. Later, on March 8, when South China Sea became a Malaysia Airlines flight’s suspected missing site, China sent massive military forces to seek for the flight. The rescue operation was interpreted as proclaiming sovereignty over the water.<sup>33</sup>

On March 30, the Philippines submitted its Memorial to the Arbitral Tribunal, which put China under the screening of UNCLOS. China believes that the convention is not applicable to the South China Sea disputes since China defines disputes as sovereignty controversy among islands while UNCLOS only covers waters and continental shelf. Therefore, China refused to accept the arbitration and emphasized its preference to resolve dispute through bilateral negotiation. China accounts that through equitable negotiation, the consensus contained in Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea is followed and prosperity of the region can be pursuit by joint development.<sup>34</sup>

## **ASEAN countries**

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei are the ASEAN countries involved in the South China Sea disputes. While China prefers bilateral negotiation, ASEAN countries seek for possible solutions through regional groups and international organizations.

In 2002, ASEAN and China signed Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), which pursued peaceful means to settle the disputes and emphasized the importance of accordance with international law, particularly the UNCLOS.<sup>35</sup> Although it is informal and indefinite, the declaration is still one of the very few consensus between China and ASEAN countries by now, regarded as the principal of defusing disputes peacefully. However, China often takes advantage from being an essential trading partner with most ASEAN countries. The dilemma between economic and political interest pull the status quo in the area away from the declaration. “We have to be mindful of the fact that the South China Sea could evolve into another Palestine if countries do not try harder to defuse rather than inflame tensions,”<sup>36</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, the ASEAN chief, said in 2013, urging involved countries to be consistent with the 2002 declaration.

Among ASEAN countries, the Philippines stand the sternest position and is related to most of the misfires in this area. In 2013, the Philippines claimed that it has exhausted all the possible diplomatic approaches, and asked the international tribunal to bring the disputes to durable solutions.<sup>37</sup>

In response to China’s unilateral fishery policy in 2014, Vietnam condemns China for infringing on Vietnam’s sovereignty and violating DOC.<sup>38</sup> Further, Vietnam



state media for the first time commemorated a China-Vietnam battle in 1974 over South China Sea. This was interpreted as a squelch toward China's new fishery ban.<sup>39</sup>

## **The United States of America**

The Obama government propels the rebalance in the Asia-Pacific regions as U.S. government's security policy, leading to a closer military cooperation relationship between US and ASEAN countries and justifying US measurements in the disputes. The action of the United States on one hand safeguards its commercial and military interests by keeping open routes passing through South China Sea; on the other hand, it operates leverage between China and ASEAN countries to obtain political interests.

In the 2014 US-ASEAN Defense Forum, US expressed its vision that the right of all the countries must be respected and clarifications on sovereignty claims should be made on the basis of international law.<sup>40</sup> Critics doubt its justification to resolve disputes through international laws with the country's missing on UNCLOS.<sup>41</sup>

However, The United States has also signed a mutual defense treaty with the Philippines back in 1951, and has recently embarked on a military cooperation with Vietnam.<sup>42</sup><sup>43</sup> Considering USA's defense partnership with the ASEAN nations and its ambition to "re-balance" the situation in East Asia against China, United States starts to have stronger attitude among this issue.

## **Questions to Consider**

1. Regarding the issue of South China Sea dispute, what role can the Security Council take within the United Nations? Furthermore, many countries involved in the disputes are member states in ASEAN. What are the possible ways for the Security Council and ASEAN to reach collaboration in easing the dispute in South China Sea?
2. What role can the Security Council play in joint effort with the International Court of Justice to make the adjudication or the sanctions more powerful and compulsory?
3. From the Scarborough Shoal Standoff to the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), the tension in East Asia has been escalated by the aggressive attitude of China.<sup>44</sup> However, there has not been any military confrontations or conflicts because of the negotiations between states. How can the Security Council adopt and develop the past experiences into a formal mechanism of

negotiation that can de-escalate the tension when the next conflict erupts?

4. The South China Sea channels approximately one-third of the world's shipping, but in this conflict-prone zone, any form of legal framework or agreement that ensures the security of personnel and commodities passing the channel is currently absent, leaving them to the risk of threat by other states.<sup>45</sup> What are the possible measures the Security Council can adopt in order to guarantee the safety of personnel on the South China Sea?

5. China and Vietnam's territorial claims are based on their historical sovereignty over the islands, while some other states such as the Philippines claim their legal control based on the international law and conventions.<sup>46</sup> In the conflicting view of history and international law, how can the Security Council prevent future military confrontation without infringing each nation's sovereignty?

6. What kind of role can USA play in the dispute? How will the potential competition between USA and China influence the decision-making of the Security Council regarding the issue?

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

This background guide is meant to serve the purpose of introducing delegates to the United Nations Security Council and the situation in South China Sea. To begin with the research, it is essential to possess general understandings of geographic, demographic, social, economic, and political background of the country you are representing in order to form your country's position regarding the topic. It will also be beneficial to read through the country profile of other Security Council member states and countries that are involved in the South China Sea dispute, including a few ASEAN countries. Some important information can be found in the CIA's World Factbook.<sup>47</sup> Delegates should also be aware of the latest development of the issue via useful resources including The New York Times, BBC News, and The Diplomat.<sup>48</sup> These news sources provide diverse viewpoints and in-depth analyses on the multilateral relationships between nations, which allow delegates to acquire a more holistic perspective on the issue.

The official websites of the United Nations and the Security Council also serve as important resources of information, which provide updated meeting agendas, resolutions, and the committee's past actions. These are the information that delegates

need to take into account when viewing the issue and constructing possible resolutions. Delegates should also keep track of any information or material update on the official HSMUN website (<http://hsmun2014.weebly.com/>) during conference preparation.

The dais wishes all delegates the best of luck on the preparation for the conference. If there is any further question or concern on the committee, topic, or the conference in general, please do not hesitate to reach out to the dais team.

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