



CHSVMUN '25

Background Guide



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
(UNHRC)

Agenda:

“Addressing Human Rights Violations and Labour Exploitation in the Global Lithium Mining Industry.”



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD



Dear Delegates,

It is our utmost pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Human Rights Council at CHSV Model United Nations 2025.

This background guide outlines the foundational elements required for your preparation. However, please remember that it is not exhaustive. Think of it as a starting point rather than a complete source. Your true preparation lies in the depth of your independent research beyond these pages, and we're excited to witness the thoughtful, well-informed discourse you will bring to the committee.

As long as you speak with confidence, stay informed on your country's stance, and uphold proper decorum, you are already on the path to success.

We understand that each committee will include a number of first-time participants, and they may seem inexperienced. It is important to note that manipulating or misleading newer delegates is totally unacceptable.

If the Executive Board becomes aware of any such misconduct, it will be addressed with appropriate action. Always remember, you are expected to conduct yourselves as diplomats, and we trust you will maintain the standards of professionalism and respect throughout the conference.

Finally, while competitiveness is natural, do not let the desire to win overshadow the spirit of collaboration. Hostile behavior undermines the committee experience for everyone involved.

We look forward to an engaging, respectful, and impactful session with all of you.

Regards,

The Executive Board:

Chairperson - Yohan

Vice Chairperson - Meghana

Vice Chairperson - Tahani



INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a key UN body dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe. Established in 2006, it comprises 47 Member States elected by the UN General Assembly and works to address human rights violations and respond to global crises.

One of its most significant tools is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which assesses the human rights records of all UN Member States. The Council not only holds countries accountable, but also encourages dialogue and international cooperation.

Through its work, the UNHRC plays a crucial role in advocating for justice, equality, and human dignity worldwide.



ABOUT THE AGENDA



Agenda: “Addressing Human Rights Violations and Labour Exploitation in the Global Lithium Mining Industry.”

Lithium has become a vital resource in the global shift towards clean energy, powering everything from electric vehicles and smartphones to large-scale renewable energy storage systems. As demand for lithium skyrockets, mining operations—especially in the Global South—have expanded rapidly. While these activities can bring economic growth, they often come with a heavy human cost.

Reports of labour exploitation, violations of land rights, environmental harm, and a troubling lack of corporate accountability have raised serious concerns.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) plays an essential role in addressing these issues, working to ensure that economic development does not come at the expense of basic human rights.



BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTENT



The “Lithium Triangle,” made up of Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia, has been at the heart of global lithium extraction since the early 2000s.

As the demand for this mineral grows, mining has also spread to regions like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and parts of Asia, where artisanal methods are often used.

Unfortunately, this rapid expansion has not come without serious consequences. Across several mining areas, there have been alarming reports of child labour and unsafe working conditions.

At the same time, Indigenous communities have voiced strong opposition to lithium operations that encroach on their ancestral lands, often without proper consultation or respect for their rights or their land.

While the world races to decarbonize and invest in green energy, many of these efforts are moving forward without sufficient legal safeguards to protect the people and communities directly impacted by this industry.



RELEVANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



The UNHRC is mandated to address human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors, including corporate entities.

This agenda aligns closely with several key areas of the Council's work:

- **Business and Human Rights:** ensuring corporate accountability for human rights impacts.
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- **Protection of Indigenous peoples' rights:** safeguarding Indigenous communities affected by mining operations.
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- **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights:** promoting fair labour standards, equitable access to resources, and protection of workers' rights.
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- **Environmental Justice:** upholding the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.



KEY HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IDENTIFIED



1. Labour Exploitation

Workers in some industries, especially mining, face unsafe working conditions, excessive hours, low wages, and limited legal protections.

Child labour is still present in certain artisanal mining sectors, raising serious ethical and legal concerns.

2. Violations of Indigenous Rights

Many projects proceed without securing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from Indigenous communities, violating international norms.

There is widespread encroachment on sacred lands, leading to the disruption of traditional livelihoods and cultural heritage.

3. Health and Environmental Impacts

Mining and industrial activities often lead to pollution of local water sources and air, affecting entire communities.

Long-term exposure to toxic substances has raised serious public health concerns, especially among vulnerable populations.

4. Lack of Corporate Accountability

Multinational corporations are frequently linked to violations through indirect or poorly monitored supply chains.

There is a lack of enforcement when it comes to international human rights standards and national labour laws, allowing violations to persist unchecked.



EXISTING INTERNATIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND FRAMEWORKS



Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): Protects the rights to safe working conditions, property, and health.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) – Covers fair labour practices, cultural rights, and access to natural resources.

ILO Conventions:

- Convention No. 138 – Minimum Age for Employment.
- Convention No. 182 – Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour.
- Convention No. 169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.
- Convention No. 155 – Occupational Safety and Health.

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie Framework) – Outlines corporate responsibilities and state obligations.

UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300 – Recognizes the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises – Voluntary principles promoting responsible business conduct.



STAKEHOLDERS



National Governments

- Resource-exporting countries often prioritize economic gain over enforcing labour protections.
- Importing nations face increasing pressure to ensure ethical sourcing of raw materials.

Multinational Corporations

- Companies benefit—directly or indirectly—from cost-cutting practices in vulnerable regions.
- Many subcontract extraction operations to local entities, often with minimal oversight.

Local Communities & Indigenous Groups

- These communities frequently bear the environmental and social costs of mining.
- Growing movements are advocating for land rights and environmental justice.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- NGOs monitor abuses, publish reports, and push for corporate accountability.

International Organizations & UN Bodies

- These entities work to strengthen regulatory frameworks and provide technical guidance to promote ethical and sustainable practices.



PREVIOUS UNHRC ENGAGEMENT



- UNHRC Resolutions on business and human rights (e.g., HRC/RES/26/9)
- Mandates for the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.
- UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights field visits and country reports.
- Recommendations on human rights due diligence for multinational enterprises.



QARMA



- How can the UNHRC ensure that lithium extraction operations respect international human rights standards?
- What steps can be taken to protect workers from exploitation across the lithium supply chain?
- How can the rights of Indigenous and local communities be protected where mining takes place?
- Are the current international frameworks enough to deal with corporate responsibility and human rights?
- What role should global institutions like the ILO, OECD, and regional bodies play in regulating mining practices?
- How can we deal with the lack of transparency in global lithium supply chains?
- What kind of justice and support mechanisms should be made available to victims of rights violations in mining regions?
- How can the committee balance the global demand for green technology with the human rights risks associated with it?