

ECOSOC

Background Guide

GWCIA XXXI

Topic A: Legality and Protections of Animals in Warzones
Topic B: Animal Testing and Cruelty

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Conference Policies

Misconduct Policy

GWCIA acknowledges that collegiate Model UN spaces often echo or perpetuate real-world discrimination towards various historically marginalized communities. As such, GWCIA enforces a zero tolerance policy for harassment or discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, national origin, religion, age, disability, or any other identity-based designation. Additionally, GWCIA practices a zero tolerence policy for sexual misconduct of any kind, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. This includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate 1) content in notes passed or documents created during committee sessions, 2) conversations throughout GWCIA, and 3) conduct at The George Washington University campus or at any GWCIA-sponsored programming. If a delegate experiences any kind of discrimination, social discomfort, or sexual misconduct, they are urged to bring it to the attention of any GWCIA secretariat member or report the instance via our anonymous misconduct form, which can be found on our Conduct Policies website page and in each committee room. Any potential cases of discrimination or sexual misconduct will warrant immediate investigation and may result in disqualification from awards and/or dismissal from the conference at the sole discretion of the Secretary-General.

Technology Policy — General Assembly

Using technology is prohibited in GWCIA general assembly committees, unless a delegate has an approved accommodation. GWCIA will provide delegates with one white legal pad and a pen that they may use to write clauses and contribute to resolutions. Delegates are free to bring their own additional notepads, staplers, Post-Its, or other supplies, as these will not be provided.

Plagiarism, Pre-Writing & AI Policy

All pre-written, plagiarized, or AI-generated content, which can include working papers, draft resolutions, directives, or crisis notes, is strictly prohibited at GWCIA. Pre-writing constitutes any language or content that was written outside of unmoderated caucuses in General Assemblies and outside of when debate is formally opened in crisis committees. This means that creating content before or after committee sessions or during moderated caucuses in Assemblies & Specialized committees is pre-writing. Writing during USG feedback, announcements, or during guest speakers equally constitutes pre-writing. All dais members and undersecretaries general are specifically instructed to monitor for pre-writing by checking typed and written materials that delegates may have prepared before the conference if potential pre-writing is suspected.
By participating in GWCIA, your delegation acknowledges that they understand this policy and the consequences if it is broken. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, verbatim or near-verbatim copying and pasting from academic sources or other websites. Any delegate found guilty of pre-writing, plagiarism, or flagrant AI usage will be immediately disqualified from any award in their committee. The GWCIA Secretariat reserves the right to search computers and laptops, notebooks and binders, USBs, and any form of electronics for Model UN specific documents in response to allegations. They additionally reserve the

discretion to run any content through an AI detector. In order to report a case of substantive misconduct, please see the anonymous misconduct form on our Conduct Policies page or contact a member of the Secretariat.

Awards Policy

While GWCIA recognizes that the core value of participating in any Model UN committee is education in international affairs and the development of related skills such as productive collaboration, public speaking, and critical thinking, we also recognize the value of rewarding delegates who are exceptionally prepared and proficient in these skills. At GWCIA, we value delegates who can leverage creativity, diplomacy, substantive knowledge, and critical thinking skills to debate effectively, lead negotiations and blocs, and write comprehensive clauses. We especially look favorably towards delegates who individually develop meaningful solutions to the committee's main issues while keeping in mind the realistic diplomatic dynamics of our world, as well as those delegates who are able to advocate for their solutions and ideas to be adopted. The dais encourages delegates to lead in a manner that uplifts and respects their competitors while also introducing strong, unique solutions that consistently anchor their group's directive or working paper. On the other hand, attempts to undermine the goals of the committee without reason or acting without detailed thought of consequences are discouraged. Any rude, disrespectful, or demeaning conduct towards other delegates' ideas will not be tolerated.

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Hello everyone! Welcome to GWCIA and this year's ECOSOC! My name is Mia Sorgie. I'm a senior here at GW and this is my third year staffing GWCIA and second one serving as a Chair. I am also Head of the Model UN program here at GW, so I have some experience in committee! I am so excited for you all to be here and I hope we all have a fun and productive day! I always have such a fun time with GWCIA and doing Model UN. I hope you all will as well as we explore the topics! Don't forget to have fun and make the most out of your experience here! Best wishes to you all!

Mia Sorgie
mia.sorgie@gwmail.gwu.edu

Reminder: Delegates must CC their advisor on any email sent to the Chair.

Introduction to the Committee

Double Delegate Procedure

This committee will be run in a double delegate format. It is just like a typical General Assembly committee, but there are two of you! This simply means that instead of conducting debate, unmods, and writing resolutions alone you will have a partner from your school with you to share the workload. You both will represent the same country as you are one pair. This means you cannot be in a separate bloc than your partner or contradict each other's debate as you are one country. Pairs may give speeches together during their allotted time on moderated caucuses but taking turns alternating for speeches is also common in double delegate format. Everything else is the same and conducted like a traditional General Assembly in regards to parliamentary procedure.

Introduction to Topics

How we treat animals is an important question for the world today. Whether in a warzone or lab setting, animals are often in danger but international laws don't always protect them. In wars, animals like military dogs, horses, and strays can get hurt or lose their homes, but current laws often see them as "property" of the state. In labs, animals are used to test medicines and products. This may keep humans healthy, but it can cause lots of unnecessary and cruel suffering towards the animals. Different countries have different rules about this and yet these situations ask us how we should update our global rules to show more care for animals?

This committee will have two topics for delegates to choose from. Topic A being the Legality and Protections of animals in warzones and Topic B being on Animal Testing and Cruelty. While they are separate topics, both come down to the idea that practical rules are needed to create a fair society for all living beings. As a general reminder both of these topics

contain sensitive content so please be respectful when discussing your solutions and thoughts. Any inappropriate comments or behavior about harmful situations will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Topic A: Legality and Protections of Animals in Warzones

Background

Animals are often the forgotten casualties in war. While human suffering is the primary focus of armed conflict, countless animals are directly harmed by hostilities. Wildlife populations typically decline during warfare, with horrible effects on ecosystems and food chains.[1] Meanwhile domestic animals, such as pets or livestock highly dependent on human care, face starvation, injury, or death when their caretakers are forced to flee. Despite this, animals still remain largely invisible victims in armed conflict.

Current Situation

Current legal protections for animals in warzones are limited and indirect. International humanitarian law mainly treats animals as property or objects rather than as beings worthy of protection and their own rights.[2] The Geneva Conventions and their Protocols along with the Hague Convention offer some safeguards, but these are mainly tied to human interests. For example, livestock are protected as a food source for civilians, and wild animals may be protected as part of the natural environment. However, military animals such as dogs are considered legitimate targets though they are protected from unnecessary suffering under general principles of international humanitarian law.[3] This framework leaves many animals, especially those in zoos or not directly useful to humans, with little to no explicit legal protection.

Relevant Conflicts and Issues

[1] Andreia Garcês and Isabel Christina Pires, "The Impact of Conflict on Biodiversity," *Wild Animals*, March 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390066320_The_impact_of_armed_conflict_on_biodiversity.
[2] Giovanni Vultaggio and The Sanremo Review, "The Unknown Victims of Armed Conflicts," International Institute of Humanitarian Law, September 2024, https://iihl.org/the-unknown-victims-of-armed-conflicts/.
[3] Carolina Wiklund, "What Legal Protection is Offered to Animals During Armed Conflicts?" (MA Thesis, Abo Akademi, 2025), https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/10024/192599/3/wiklund_carolina.pdf.

The reality of this legal gap is devastating. In Ukraine, within the first four months of the invasion, hundreds of thousands of livestock died mostly from starvation as farms were abandoned.[4] To make matters worse, armed groups and soldiers often take advantage of the chaos to engage in illegal poaching and trafficking of wildlife for profit. Because these animals are seen as property, hunting them isn't automatically a war crime. The few attempts to prosecute had to be creative, and are rarely straightforward. For example, Ukraine prosecuted the illegal export of rare animals from a nature reserve as a war crime against the nature reserve fund, not as a crime against the animals themselves.[5]

In Palestine, the fate of animals is deeply intertwined with human suffering. War and conflict have not only claimed countless human lives but have also destroyed the homes and lives of animals. By August 2025, up to 97% of farm animals in the Gaza Strip had died from bombardment, starvation, and the destruction of agricultural infrastructure.[6] Stray cats and dogs were also left to fend for themselves as violence escalated and families were forced to leave their homes. Violence against animals in Palestine in this case is not an isolated event. Harming animals through direct attack, deprivation, theft, and forced separation has long accompanied Israeli violence against Palestinian communities. The issue of animal protection cannot be separated from political and humanitarian context creating even more legal barriers in aiding animal welfare and protections.

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[4] Sam Whitt and Vera Mironova, "Toward a Posthumanist Understanding of Wartime Suffering: Public Concern for Animal Welfare in Ukraine," *Perspectives on Politics* 24, no. 2 (August 2025), https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592725101862.

[5] Whitt and Mironova, "Toward a Posthumanist Understanding of Wartime Suffering: Public Concern for Animal Welfare in Ukraine."

[6] Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, "97 per cent of Gaza's animal wealth destroyed by Israeli bombing, starvation, and looting," August 2025, https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6811/97-per-cent-of-Gaza%E2%80%99s-animal-wealth-destroyed-by-Israeli-bombing,-starvation,-and-looting.

The core conflict is clear: international law is stuck in the 20th century, treating animals as property while the rest of the world is starting to recognize them as sentient beings. Many experts now argue we need a major shift of international law. This could mean clarifying existing rules to better protect animals or even creating a new international treaty that finally gives them rights during wartime. Until that happens, millions of animals will continue to be the forgotten victims of human conflict.

Questions to Consider

1. How can countries work together to close loopholes and ensure consistent enforcement of animal protection laws?
2. How should aid organizations balance animal rights with human needs during a humanitarian crisis?
3. Should harming animals be considered a war crime? How would that be upheld?

Topic B: Animal Testing and Cruelty

Background

Internationally, animal testing is a massive and deeply flawed system, with over 100 million animals suffering in labs each year for drug, chemical, and cosmetics testing.[7] Beyond the cruelty of forcing these animals to endure pain, fear, and isolation in cramped cages, the science behind animal testing is often unreliable. More than 90% of drugs that pass animal tests end up failing in humans because animals are not people, leading to wasted money and even deadly human complications.[8] The global response is a mismatch of rules, as there is no single international ban. While the EU, US, and UK are moving to phase out testing, many other countries still use it, creating a dangerous effect where companies simply outsource their experiments to nations with weaker animal welfare laws. Although new alternatives exist, progress is held back by high costs, lack of trust between countries over what counts as "good science", and a failure to agree on shared global standards. Ultimately, solving this crisis requires nations to stop working in isolation, pool their resources, and agree on modern, cruelty-free testing rules that protect both animals and human health worldwide.

Current Situation

Lab Testing and Other Issues

When we talk about lab testing, it is describing procedures that go far beyond just giving these animals a quick shot. In these labs, animals are forced to swallow or breathe harmful chemicals to see how much it takes to make them sick or kill them (known as lethal dose tests).[9]

[7] Humane World for Animals, "Animal Testing," 2026, https://www.humaneworld.org/en/issue/about-animal-testing.
[8] Humane World for Animals, "Animal Testing."
[9] The Humane Society of the United States, "LD50: A Cruel Waste of Animals," *WellBeing International*, 1983, https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=cu_reps.

Scientists use these animals to test new medicines, household cleaners, and pesticides. But the majority of the drugs and chemicals that do pass animal tests end up failing human trials, causing immense pain for unreliable results.

However, lab testing is just one piece of the harmful puzzle that is animal cruelty. The biggest offender when it comes to this issue is actually factory farming.[10] To produce cheap meat, eggs, and milk, millions of chickens, pigs, and cows are crammed into dark, dirty sheds so tight they cannot even turn around. Oftentimes these animals are also painfully physically altered to stop natural practices such as grooming. Beyond food and science, animals are also forced to suffer for entertainment and fashion. The fur and exotic leathers trades still kill hundreds of minks, foxes, and crocodiles each year just for a jacket or handbag. Whether it is behind a lab door, inside a factory farm shed, or simply being hunted for entertainment and fashion, the common problem is how these animals are treated as disposable objects. Tackling animal cruelty requires us to look at all these dark corners, not just the science labs, and ask ourselves if these products are truly worth all the pain and suffering.

Current Rules and Regulations

Currently, there is no single, binding international law that bans animal cruelty everywhere. Instead, the world relies on a messy patchwork of local laws, regional agreements, and voluntary guidelines. The European Union and the UK have some of the strictest rules, officially recognizing animals as "sentient beings" and banning things like cosmetic testing on animals.[11] Meanwhile, many other countries have weak, outdated, or barely enforced laws, meaning an act of cruelty that is a crime in one nation is perfectly legal just across the border. International groups like the World Organization for Animal Health and the World Health

[10] Animal Welfare Institute, "Animals on Factory Farms," 2022, https://awionline.org/programs/farmed-animals/animals-on-factory-farms/.
[11] European Animal Research Association, "EU Regulations," 2026, https://www.eara.eu/policy/eu-regulations.

Organization do set global standards for animal welfare and testing, but these are just recommendations, not enforceable laws.[12] Since there is no global police force for animals, countries are free to ignore them without facing any real punishment. This broken system creates dangerous loopholes where big companies simply move their animal testing or cruelty factory farming to poorer countries with the loosest rules. Until world leaders agree on a strong, binding international treaty that everyone actually has to follow, animals will keep falling through the cracks of this uncoordinated global system, suffering just because the rules are different depending on which side of the border they are on.

Questions to Consider

1. How can governments and scientists work together to speed up the adoption of non-animal testing methods?
2. Should there be international level inspections that monitor for animal welfare violations?
3. How can countries agree on shared global standards so companies aren't forced to test on animals to sell products everywhere?

[12] World Organization for Animal Health, "Introduction to the Recommendations for Animal Welfare," *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, 2022, https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/current/en_chapitre_aw_introduction.htm.

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World Organization for Animal Health. “Introduction to the Recommendations for Animal Welfare.” *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, 2022. https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/current/en_chapitre_aw_introduction.htm.