UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1

STUDY GUIDE

SLRMUN '26

Sri Lanka Rotaract Model
United Nations VI

February 2026

SLRMUN General Assembly 1 Study Guide

Mandate and Objectives of General Assembly 1

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, GA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and the only one in which all member nations have equal representation.
Its powers are to :

- Oversee the budget of the United Nations
- Appoint the non-permanent members
- Make recommendations in the form of General Assembly Resolutions.
- Address issues related to international peace and security within the scope of the General Assembly

As such, to execute their many functions, the GAs have established a wide number of subsidiary organs. The General Assembly 1 (DISEC) deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime. It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

Practice Debate topic: International Chemical Weapons Controls and Disarmament

Topic Overview:

Chemical weapons present one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, international law and human security today. Because of their indiscriminate effects, long-term consequences for the environment, and potential to inflict mass civilian casualties, the international community has sought to bring about their total elimination through multilateral controls. Although tremendous strides have been made towards this goal in recent decades, the discovery of previously undeclared stockpiles; accusations of their use in warzones; and the threat of non-state actors acquiring these weapons keeps chemical disarmament a topic of high importance.

As a subject of General Assembly First Committee the disarmament and control of chemical weapons is discussed with regards to collective international security and the development of international norms. The General Assembly strengthens the global prohibition against chemical weapons through encouraging universal adherence to arms control regimes; and improving cooperation, transparency, and accountability between states. When discussing chemical weapons control and disarmament, delegates should assess the effectiveness of current mechanisms, discuss weaknesses with regards to compliance and enforcement, and how the international community should better coordinate efforts to prohibit the development, transfer, and use of chemical weapons.

Case Studies:

1. Chemical Weapons use in Syria (2017-2023)

Multiple investigations conducted under UN-mandated mechanisms and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons concluded that chemical agents, including sarin and chlorine, were used in areas such as Khan Shaykhun (2017), Douma (2018), and subsequent incidents in northwest Syria. These cases exposed persistent non-compliance with disarmament obligations, challenges to inspector access, and disputes over attribution. The Syrian case remains central to current debates on enforcement, accountability, and the credibility of international chemical weapons control regimes.

2. The Skripal and Navalny Poisonings

The poisoning of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom (2018) and Alexei Navalny in Russia (2020) involved the use of nerve agents from the Novichok group, substances prohibited under international law. These incidents demonstrated that highly controlled chemical agents continue to exist outside declared stockpiles and can be used for targeted assassinations. The diplomatic fallout, sanctions, and multilateral responses highlight how chemical weapons controls intersect

with state responsibility, deterrence, and geopolitical tensions in the present international system.

3. Chemical Weapons Risks Linked to Non-State Actors and Terrorism

A key example is when investigations confirmed the use of chemical weapons by ISIS as they've used sulfur mustard in Iraq and Syria between 2015 and 2017, marking one of the clearest cases of chemical weapons use by a non-state actor. The relevance to these recent concerns are about extremist groups seeking or using toxic industrial chemicals highlighting an evolving threat landscape. Unlike state programmes, these risks stem from improvised production, dual-use materials, and weak regulatory environments.

4. Ongoing Compliance Disputes over Undeclared Stockpiles

In recent years, unresolved questions regarding incomplete or inconsistent declarations by certain states have remained on the agenda of international disarmament bodies. Technical gaps, discrepancies in reporting, and delays in resolving these issues have raised concerns about transparency and long-term compliance. These cases are significant for current discussions on how verification mechanisms can be strengthened without undermining cooperation or politicizing disarmament processes.

Points to Consider:

1. How effective are existing international legal frameworks in preventing the development, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons, and where do their enforcement mechanisms fall short?

2. What challenges do verification and inspection regimes face in ensuring state compliance, particularly in conflict zones or politically sensitive environments?

3. How does the dual-use nature of chemical materials and technologies complicate regulation, monitoring, and attribution of chemical weapons activities?

4. In what ways does the alleged or confirmed use of chemical weapons in recent conflicts undermine international norms, and how should the international community respond to repeated violations?

5. What risks do non-state actors pose in relation to chemical weapons acquisition or use, and how can international cooperation better address these threats?

Further Reading:

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – Chemical Weapons Convention Overview
https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs – Chemical Weapons: Overview of the Chemical Weapons Convention and related UN disarmament work. UNODA – Chemical Weapons (UN disarmament)

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW): The main implementing body for global chemical weapons control. OPCW – Official Organisation Website

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) – Full Treaty Text: Official treaty document with legal obligations and verification provisions. Chemical Weapons Convention – Text Download (OPCW)

Arms Control Association – CWC Fact Sheet: Independent, detailed explainer on the Chemical Weapons Convention's scope, verification, and state participation. The CWC at a Glance (Arms Control Association)

OPCW – Responding to Use of Chemical Weapons: Information on how the international system can respond to allegations of chemical weapons use. OPCW – Responding to Use of Chemical Weapons

Main Conference Topic: Global Threats from Biological Weapons

Topic Overview:

Biological weapons are pathogenic microorganisms (such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi) or toxins that are deliberately developed or deployed to cause societal disruption among human populations, livestock, or crops. Unlike conventional weapons, biological agents can spread invisibly, cross borders with ease, and cause large-scale destabilization without traditional military engagement.

Historically, biological warfare has taken various forms — from the contamination of water supplies to the intentional spread of diseases such as anthrax. In the contemporary era, rapid advancements in biotechnology, genetic engineering, and synthetic biology have amplified concerns that both state and non-state actors could engineer pathogens to be more lethal, ex:- resistance to medical treatment.

Case Studies

1. The 1979 Sverdlovsk Anthrax Incident (Soviet Union)

In April 1979, an accidental release of aerosolized anthrax occurred at Compound 19, a Soviet military microbiology facility in Sverdlovsk. The leak happened after an exhaust filter was removed for maintenance and not replaced, allowing weaponized spores to escape into nearby civilian areas. At least 66 people died from inhalational anthrax,. The Soviet government falsely blamed contaminated meat for over a decade, until President Boris Yeltsin admitted in 1992 that the incident was linked to the secret offensive bioweapons program Biopreparat. The case demonstrates that a BWC signatory violated the convention without consequence, highlighting the treaty's lack of verification and the risks of military biolabs near civilian populations.

2. U.S. Anthrax Letter Attacks (Amerithrax), 2001

Between September and October 2001, letters containing powdered anthrax spores were mailed to U.S. senators and media offices, resulting in casualties. The strain used was the Ames strain, originally stored in U.S. military biodefense laboratories. The FBI's investigation lasted seven years, ultimately identifying U.S. biodefense scientist Bruce Ivins of Fort Detrick as the prime suspect before his death in 2008. Decontamination of federal buildings and postal facilities cost over $1 billion, causing major national disruption.

3. Aum Shinrikyo Bioweapons Attempts (Japan, 1990–1995)

The Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo attempted to weaponize anthrax and botulinum toxin in clandestine laboratories during the early 1990s, backed by millions of dollars in funding and trained scientists. In 1992, members traveled to Zaire (DRC) seeking Ebola samples, though they were unsuccessful. While their biological program ultimately failed due to technical

limitations, the group successfully carried out the 1995 Tokyo sarin gas attack, proving their capacity for mass violence. This showcases that non-state actors can seriously pursue biological weapons, posing a growing security risk beyond state-based proliferation.

4. Gain-of-Function Research and Lab Leak Risks

Gain-of-function research modifies pathogens to increase transmissibility or virulence in order to study potential pandemic threats. However, past incidents, including SARS laboratory leaks in China and Taiwan in 2003, demonstrate the risks of biosafety failures. Due to security concerns, the United States implemented a temporary pause on certain gain-of-function studies from 2014 to 2017. Critics argue that such research could create more dangerous pathogens than those found in nature, while proponents claim it is necessary for preparedness.

5. Sino-Japanese War

The Japanese used plague as a biological weapon during the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1930s and 1940s. They filled bombs with plague-infected fleas and dropped them from airplanes onto two Chinese cities. They also used cholera and shigella as weapons in other attacks. An estimated 580,000 Chinese died because of the Japanese bio-weapons program (Martin et al., 2007)

Points to Consider

1) Is the Biological Weapons Convention sufficient, or does it require a stronger enforcement mechanism?
2) Should an international inspection regime similar to that of the Chemical Weapons Convention be established?
3) Should certain types of biological research be banned outright? If so, who decides?
4) How can attribution in biological attacks be improved?
5) What responsibilities do technologically advanced states have in preventing proliferation?

Further Reading

- https://tdcenter.org/2025/07/24/global-threats-of-biological-weapons-and-thewests-vulnerability/

- https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/our-work/weapons-mass-destruction/biological-weapons

- https://armscontrolcenter.org/biological-threats-have-evolved-for-the-worse-and-we-are-not-prepared/

- https://historyofvaccines.org/vaccines-101/ethical-issues-and-vaccines/biological-weapons-bioterrorism-and-vaccines

- https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/03/how-emerging-technologies-increase-the-threat-from-biological-weapons/

Message from the chairs

It is our pleasure to welcome you to SLRMUN 2026. The First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly provides an important platform to engage with some of the most pressing issues related to international peace and security. This committee requires delegates to approach debate with a clear understanding of global dynamics, legal frameworks, and the responsibilities of states within the multilateral system.

We encourage all delegates to come prepared, engage respectfully, and contribute constructively to discussions. Meaningful debate, cooperation, and pragmatic problem-solving will be essential to the success of this committee. We look forward to your participation and to a productive and insightful conference. Good Luck !

Sarvesh & Shahzadi :)