IBERIAN MUN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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*The question of promoting and prolonging regional and international ceasefires during a global crisis.*

War has been a constant in human society, even if the reasons for such have varied wildly. Consequently, many different agreements have been set in order to stop these conflicts from continuing when there are more pressing global issues at hand. These are called ceasefires. Ceasefires can be called whenever the two belligerent parties agree to cease fighting occurring due to extraneous circumstances, such as the celebration of holidays or visits from world leaders, but their nature is often temporary. They are especially relevant in the context of a global crisis, such as recently with the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to differentiate between ceasefire, armistice, and truce. A truce is very brief and has no intention of resolving the conflict. An armistice is a formal agreement to cease all military operations. A ceasefire is a negotiated agreement to pause military operations by ceasing hostilities but they do not bring about an end to the conflict. In this debate, the house will mainly be discussing ceasefires.

It is important to consider and negotiate ceasefires in order to preserve humanity. Ceasefires in any scenario are beneficial since they temporarily stop a war, which stops the destruction and all the other issues that come with it. It can also lay the groundwork and provide an avenue for future peace talks in ending the war, even if their main purpose is not such.

The first issue to be considered is what qualifies as a global crisis. A worldwide pandemic definitely qualifies as a crisis. War in itself could be qualified as a global crisis as it can cause mass distress among many different peoples if it occurs at a multinational level. But for the sake of debate, we will not consider war as a global crisis, only those unrelated to war. Different Member States will have different definitions on what constitutes as a global crisis, and very rarely would they all agree, so this would need to be determined as a major consensus between nations or from another trusted organization.

Of course, ceasefires have their limitations. A ceasefire is only as good as the negotiations that lead up to the agreement and its enforcement. If the negotiations reach no conclusion, or an unfavorable conclusion, then the ceasefire will have little to no value. It is important that the belligerent states delimit what will be discussed in the negotiations in order to make it more productive by setting limit on what can be debated. In this context, the topic should remain relevant to the global crisis at hand in order to get a better negotiation for all. The enforcement of the said ceasefire is also very important. If nothing is enforced and only written on paper, then there is no purpose to a ceasefire. Proper frameworks need to be implemented to ensure that the ceasefire occurs as planned. The document in itself has to be specific with geography, effect time, and other important factors in order to bring about an agreement that is reliable and not open to misinterpretations.

Another problem with ceasefires is their temporary nature. Ceasefires are only in effect for a set period of time stated in the agreement, not indefinitely. An armistice is what is in effect to end the war. Each of them have their own advantages and disadvantages. The advantage to a ceasefire is that it takes less time to negotiate compared to an armistice since it only involves the stopping of a conflict for a specific reason. This can prove itself to be useful in a global crisis because a ceasefire could be drawn up rather quickly so that the belligerents can quicker attend to the issue at hand. Armistices succeed in making permanent change in order to prevent the conflict from continuing any further, which benefits everyone. The speed and effectiveness must be considered and weighed out in order to determine which is best for the situation. In a global crisis, quick action is often very important in order to bring about change but it is important to remember that it does not affect if the war finishes or not.

COVID-19 is a global medical crisis that has affected the daily lives of many in a very dramatic manner. One positive aspect that it has brought is the increase in ceasefires in order to facilitate the job of many different NGOs, especially those in the medical and infrastructural fields in order to prevent the spread of the virus. This has been a time in which despite all the disagreement, many Member States have decided that cooperation against a threat to all of humanity is more important than continuing a conflict. Ceasefires are important because they can stop the spread of the virus through contact between soldiers and refugees. They also allow for time in which decaying infrastructure, such as hospitals or camps, can be restructured in order to accommodate for the virus. Less infrastructure, in any state, but especially those affected by conflict, increases the risk of infection of COVID-19, so taking time to better it is beneficial for all.

The global ceasefire recently drawn out by the Security Council on July 1st, 2020 was a landmark achievement for ceasefires. All members in the Security Council unanimously voted to implement a global ceasefire for at least 90 days. It brought a sense of unity to the fact that we are trying to fix this global crisis first and focus on the wars later as the pandemic is more important and more pressing. For this to reoccur in another future global crisis, the groundwork for global cooperation at this scale must be laid in order to make this possible

Ceasefires are very common, especially in very long wars, but besides COVID-19, there are no concrete examples in history of major ceasefires that occur due to global (humanitarian) crises, meaning, delegates will have to draw upon limited sources in order to develop their solutions to the issue in the resolution. What has shown to work in the past is to have countries discuss terms of a ceasefire in a limited manner that focuses the arguments. Delegates should focus on frameworks to discuss ceasefires and ways to increase their effectivity and implementation, and other relevant issues.

An important distinction that needs to be made is that between bilateralism and multilateralism. Bilateralism is forming a policy based on two states while multilateralism focuses on three or more. Bilateralism is the base of negotiation between two nations in a regional ceasefire to stop a local conflict. If a widespread ceasefire, such as the one for COVID-19, the agreement needs to be reached multilaterally, between many different countries in order to ensure that the different countries’ stances are heard and so it is applied truly internationally. It is important that this is distinguished because these different approaches to ceasefires can lead different results and implementation at different levels.

Delegates should consider if their Member States are often considered more hostile and tend to engage more in conflict and whether they would prioritize solving a crisis or resolving a conflict. The main concept to be discussed is the implementation of frameworks and avenues in order to apply ceasefires at every level whenever needed, preferably adaptably and quickly.

Sources

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