

UPrep Model United
Nations 2026



UNGA C2

United Nations
General Assembly 2nd Committee



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Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at UPrepMUN 2026! It is with great enthusiasm that we gather to delve into the critical issue of maritime chokepoints and their impacts. Our time together will be focused on creating fair solutions for chokepoint governance, discussing case studies on maritime ownership, and ensuring overall transparency in canal/strait regulation. We will explore the complexities of international cooperation, the role of governments and their agencies, and the impact of U.N. policy decisions on both shipping companies and consumers. Thank you for your commitment to addressing this pressing global issue. We anticipate a productive and insightful session.

All the best,

Max Ruscher, Upper School Chair
West Wang, Upper School Director
Anne Findley, Middle School Chair
Faizi Moradian, Middle School Director

Committee Overview

One of the six committees central to the United Nations General Assembly, the 2nd Committee deals with matters related to economic and financial matters, including sustainable development, global trade, commerce policy, and economic cooperation between member-states of the United Nations. As a principal organ of the UN General Assembly, all UN-recognized states have representation in this committee. The 2nd Committee, also referred to as the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC), provides a space where member-states debate commerce policy and adopt resolutions that ensure equitable growth, fight to reduce poverty, and strengthen international shipping routes.

C2 is convened every year as part of the annual convening of the United Nations. C2 conventions are consisted of general debate, which lasts a week, and drafting resolutions, which can last for 4 weeks after the week of debate. The committee has 5 reporting bodies, which include the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and the 3 Rio Conventions on biodiversity, combating desertification, and climate change. The 2nd Committee uses all of these mechanisms to achieve its goals listed out in the founding documents of the United Nations. Since its establishment in the early days of the UN, C2 has served as a way to settle financial disputes and set the economic policy of the world community.

Topic A:

The Impact of Global Shipping Chokepoints on International Trade

Topic Introduction

Maritime chokepoints around the globe have been an integral part of the international trade system. These chokepoints, in total, bring in hundreds of billions of dollars and, without them, products, such as electronics, oil, and other everyday materials, would not be able to be moved, efficiently, across the globe for the use of the everyday consumer. Currently, many of these chokepoints are managed by the nations they are owned by, due to their geographical proximity. The waterways have brought about problems that have shut down the global economy, such as government shutdown of chokepoints and the unintentional blockage of chokepoints. Proponents of international oversight of the waterways believe that it will lead to more fair management and the prevention of shutdowns, intentional or not, that would benefit the global trade community. However, the nations currently managing these bodies of water have a historical and economic claim to these waterways and are not willing to give that up. Some of the concerns they have is based on historical foreign control of the waterways, including the United States' control of the Panama Canal and British control of the Suez Canal. Many of these nations had to fight for their claim to manage their respective waterways and sometimes to the point of violence. Another important party of this issue are the nations that are not aligned fully with either the current controlling nations or the proponents of international oversight. They believe in more fair management of the waterways, but they are reluctant to international oversight, as they have their own national interests or geographical claims. It is important that delegates are able to balance the perspectives and find the best solution to this issue as chokepoints can make or break the global economy and international connection.

Past Action

Maritime chokepoints have evolved and play a key role in global trade, and are essential for accessing ports. Due to their locations, chokepoints notably hold a lot of traffic and are often completely congested. Chokepoints, because of their high volumes of ships, struggle with vulnerability to conflicts, tensions, and disruptions. Countries and governments controlling global chokepoints have failed to respond to and treat disputes.

The international maritime law applies primarily to large or international bodies of water, with some restrictions. Although the international maritime law helps with shipping safety, the implementation of security and the prevention of pollution measures. The problem isn't the international maritime law; it is considering what role countries want to play in addressing the issues at hand, as there has historically not been complete control over the chokepoints by the country that holds the chokepoint.

Colonial powers have attempted to and wrongfully taken control of global chokepoints. In 1882, the British, as an imperial power, took over the Suez Canal in order to grow their economy and secure a way to ship to India and other Asian and East African countries. Having ownership over the Suez Canal for the British meant expanding their trade and economy, but the failure of the British to respond to issues created unrest and anti-British riots in Egypt. The British had consolidated their power over the Canal and were continuously fighting and underestimating the power of others.

The Americans and the Panama Canal. Although operated by the Panamanian Government since 2000, the U.S. funded the majority of the construction back in 1900–1914. But, president Trump strongly disagrees with the treaty and threatens to take it back.

Current Situation

Global trade today remains highly dependent on a small number of maritime chokepoints, most notably the Suez Canal, Panama Canal, Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Malacca. A key issue in the current global situations is the question of who should control major shipping chokepoints and to what extent international oversight is necessary.

The legal framework for all waterways is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This treaty guarantees that ships of all states have the right to pass through international straits without unnecessary delay or interference, even when those straits lie within a country's territorial waters. However, UNCLOS also affirms the sovereignty of coastal states to regulate navigations for reasons such as environmental protection and safety of their country.

This way of operating has created ongoing debate in current discussion. On one hand, people argue that increased involvement from the United Nations that could help ensure the stability of key chokepoints. With greater international coordination, it could reduce the risk of politically motivated disruptions and provide a more consistent enforcement of these navigation rights. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) already plays a role in setting the global shipping standards, but does not have power over state actions in chokepoints.

On the other hand, many states emphasize that different chokepoints within their territory are a matter of their own national sovereignty. From this perspective, countries have the right to restrict or regulate access in response to security threats, environmental concerns, or even their economic interests. The World Trade Organization has noted that freedom of transit can also come into tensions with national policies, especially during periods of crisis.

Case Studies

Suez Canal

The Suez Canal, located in Egypt and running between the Sinai Peninsula and the Nile Delta, connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. Since the canal opened in 1869, the Suez Canal reached an all-time traffic peak in 1945, when almost a million vessels sailed through the strait. In 2023, 26,434 vessels sailed through the strait (an average of 72 per day), carrying about 1.6 billion metric tons of cargo. The chokepoint is governed by the Suez Canal Authority, which made a total revenue of \$10.3 billion in 2023 and \$4 billion in 2024, according to a statement on its Facebook page. When a 200,000-tonne Panama-flagged ship sailed off course and blocked the Suez Canal in 2021 for almost a week, nearly \$10 billion worth of goods were blocked off from world markets every day.

Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is located between Iran, Oman, and the UAE, and connects the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf. The Strait of Hormuz isn't significant in that it connects two bodies of water, but that 20.3 million barrels of petroleum and crude oil pass through it every day, which is about 25% of all global maritime oil trade. At its narrowest, the chokepoint measures only 29 nautical miles, according to the IEA. Although most of the strait is located within the territorial waters of Oman, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) governs the strait. However, Iran plays the most significant role in the strait itself, as its naval force is able to close the chokepoint as it pleases.

Panama Canal

With the first attempt by the French to build a canal between Colon and Panama City at sea level in the 1800s, the United States succeeded at dredging and constructing several locks to build the Panama Canal into what we know it to be today. From the canal's opening in 1914, the Panama Canal and 5 miles of territory in each direction were owned and operated by the United States government until 1999. The Canal is currently governed by the Panama Canal Authority, but private companies such as the U.S.'s BlackRock and China's CK Hutchison Holdings own significant assets in and around the ports on each side of the Canal.

Bloc Positions

Countries Located on Chokepoints: Main Benefactors of Shipping Fees and Lack of International Oversight:

Djibouti, Egypt, Greece, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Panama, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates

These nations are geographically located directly on maritime chokepoints, so they have long-standing connections and economic stakes to these waterways. This bloc opposes international oversight on these waterways due to the impacts on the investments they have.

Countries Located Near Chokepoints: Supports the Deregulation of Straits and Increased Investment into Port Infrastructure but Weary of International Governance in Any Form:

Algeria, Canada, Italy, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, United States of America, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen

These nations have some stakes in the status of waterways due to their close proximity to the waterways. They believe in fair management of chokepoints, but they are skeptical of the effectiveness of international oversight.

Countries Located Away from Chokepoints: Support International Oversight on Canals and Straits

Angola, Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Ukraine, United Kingdom

This bloc consists of nations that are not in close proximity to important waterways, but believe in international oversight to fairly manage the maritime chokepoints. Many of these nations see economic gains to be made to the international community and have had control of the waterways in the past.

Guiding Questions

1. Do maritime checkpoints require governance?
2. Would the international regulation of shipping chokepoints create needless bureaucracy or ensure fairness?
3. Which international bodies would regulate canals and straits, or would they be created?
4. Does international oversight limit national sovereignty?
5. Is it ethical for international bodies to collect fees from ships in transport?
6. What would international oversight entail?
7. How extensive would the regulation be?
8. What consequences would come with refusing international regulation over shipping chokepoints?
9. Should private companies or owners of ships expect increased fees?
10. If a profit is made from shipping fees towards an international body, what would the money be used for?
11. Are member states responsible for the safe passage of ships that sail through their territorial waters?
12. How would an international shipping oversight body respond to wars located at or around shipping chokepoints?
13. Should geographical convenience decide geopolitical power?

Further Research

UN Committee for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on navigating the issue of maritime chokepoints:

https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2024overview_en.pdf

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea:

<https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/legal/pages/unitednationsconventiononthelawofthesea.aspx>

Overview of global chokepoints, what they are, and which are at risk of disruption:

<https://www.globalguardian.com/global-digest/global-chokepoints>

Hoover Institute on the state of chokepoints:

<https://www.hoover.org/research/changing-character-maritime-choke-points-who-throttles-whom>

International Maritime Organization (IMO):

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/IMO/>

Nature Communications on the systemic impact of maritime chokepoint disruptions:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-025-65403-w>

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<https://wavellroom.com/2021/07/16/britain-suez-canal-strategy-1854-1882/>

<https://www.cfr.org/articles/presidents-inbox-recap-trumps-plan-panama-canal>

Current situation–

<https://unctad.org/news/vulnerability-supply-chains-exposed-global-maritime-chokepoints-come-under-pressure>

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/IMO/>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352243122_The_Relationship_Between_Freedom_of_Transit_and_General_and_Security_Exceptions_Under_WTO_Rules

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<https://www.history.com/articles/panama-canal>