



Security Council: Chernobyl Disaster

Chairs: Jarrett Gath '22 & Ishan Narra '22

Rapporteur: G. Wyatt Fernandes '23

Dear delegates,

My name is Ishan Narra, and I will be one of your chairs for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at CAMUN this year. To me, crisis committees provide delegates the perfect opportunity to think creatively, and to shape the direction of discussion in engaging ways. Since my freshman year, I have attended model UN conferences consistently, and have been amazed at the ways they have allowed me to improve my public speaking skills and my ability to work collaboratively with others. Crisis committees are always extremely fun, dynamic, and often chaotic, and I can't wait to start this committee in April.

My name is Jarrett Gath, your other chair; I am currently a junior at Concord Academy and this is my third year participating in model UN. As a freshman I didn't really have any idea what model UN was or how it worked but I decided to give it a try and immediately was hooked. I am incredibly excited for this year's conference and being able to partake in this Security Council with all of you! Alongside Ishan, I hope to make this committee as fun, engaging and inclusive as possible. I can't wait to get to meet you all and to work through this radioactive committee!

As you prepare for debate, we challenge you to think about how the Chernobyl disaster took place 35 years ago, in April of 1986, and to delve into debate with the historical context and state of your nations at this specific moment in time in mind. Please note that we've taken the liberty of replacing Denmark with Sweden on the 1986 Security Council, since Sweden was much more involved in the crisis at the time.

See you in April!

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Background

Nuclear technology has always been a topic of international debate. After the US dropped two atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945, the race to manufacture these weapons of mass destruction began. Starting in the late 1950s, nations began to construct boiling water reactors that harnessed the efficient energy output of nuclear fission reactions in order to produce massive amounts of electricity. However, nuclear accidents at these facilities quickly began to arise. In 1966, undetected vibrations at the Fermi Unit 1 nuclear power plant, located in Michigan, USA, induced the blockage of coolant flow. This prevented the system from controlling the nuclear fission reaction. The partial meltdown at Fermi Unit 1 sparked skepticism among the world regarding the safety of these reactors, and Three Mile Island, the largest nuclear disaster in the western hemisphere near Middletown, Pennsylvania, only exacerbated fears of this technology. In 1978, the staff at Three Mile Island Unit 2 failed to recognize that large amounts of coolant had escaped, leading to an onsite, nuclear meltdown. While the environmental impacts of this disaster were not as significant as in other nuclear meltdowns, Three Mile Island permanently shut down after this accident. After these catastrophes at nuclear energy sites, the industry began to decline. In the late 1970s, many believed that nuclear reactors cause more harm than good, creating a long-lasting negative stigma around these reactors.

The Complex

The Chernobyl Nuclear Energy Complex is about 20 km (12.4 mi) south of the Belarussian-Ukrainian border. It has four reactors in total, with two more under construction at the time of the accident. Between 115,000 and 135,000 people lived within 30 km (18.6 mi) of the complex at the time of the accident. Ukraine was a member of the Soviet Union then, led by Mikhail Gorbachev.¹ To this day, a 36 mile “dead zone” and various hot spots remain around Chernobyl.

The Chernobyl Disaster and Aftermath

On the 26th of April, 1986, a power surge occurred in Reactor Four, causing the Chernobyl disaster. The Chernobyl plant did not possess proper safety precautions, or properly trained personnel. These oversights as well as poor reactor design are largely considered the cause behind the disaster. After the Chernobyl disaster, there were thirty-one total recorded deaths within a few weeks, and 20,000 recorded cases of thyroid cancer (directly caused by the accident) since it occurred. 115,000 people were immediately evacuated, and eventually 225,000 more went with them. The radiation is thought to

¹ [Chernobyl | Chernobyl Accident | Chernobyl Disaster](#)

have affected 8.4 million people, as well as wildlife deaths and contaminated water sources. The Soviet Government's immediate countermeasures were deemed inadequate after a failed cover-up. This led to other countries such as the United States stepping in.²

World Leaders React

Swedish authorities were the first (outside the USSR) to notice spiked levels of radiation—this occurred prior to the USSR going public to the world about what happened. President Ronald Reagan offered “aid and assistance” to the Soviet Union, and also declared the incident “not an internal matter” imploring USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev to continue his policy of clarity with Western countries.³ The United Nations became much more involved in the Chernobyl disaster in the year 1990. The General Assembly adopted Resolution 45/190, which called for “international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant”.⁴

Committee Positions

Soviet Union: As the country in which the disaster occurred, the USSR has a lot at stake in this discussion. President Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to cover up the disaster until Swedish authorities detected radiation and the truth was inevitably revealed. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the USSR has veto power.

United States of America: During the time of the Chernobyl disaster, American President Ronald Reagan was in the process of trying to topple various communist governments and end the Cold War. Reagan attempted to deny Soviet access to technology, which may have indirectly caused the Chernobyl disaster. Despite that, Reagan offers aid to the USSR in cleaning up the Chernobyl disaster, and he and Mikhail Gorbachev find some common ground. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the US has veto power.

China: Under its communist government, China and the Soviet Union have non-hostile relations. However, within the country, there is much unrest- including the recent Student Protests in Hefei, Shanghai, and Nanjing. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has veto power.

² [Nuclear Energy Institution: Chernobyl](#)

³ [Reagan Criticizes Disaster Secrecy : Soviets 'Owe World an Explanation' for Chernobyl Blast, President Says](#)

⁴ [Background | International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day | United Nations](#)

France: There have been many recent terrorist bombing attacks in France, so the country is anxious, rife with unrest, and distrustful of foreigners. As a permanent member of the Security Council, France has veto power.

United Kingdom: Queen Elizabeth has recently visited China. Margaret Thatcher, a widely disliked Conservative, is Prime Minister, leading to protests and unrest across the UK. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the UK has veto power.

Argentina: Argentina is in the midst of a debt crisis. The Dirty War waged by Argentina against its left wing political opponents has torn the country apart. Attempts have been made to boost morale, but have been mostly unsuccessful.

Japan: Yasuhiro Nakasone, the Japanese Prime Minister, has close economic relations with the United States at this time. The Equal Gender Opportunity Act has just passed, and the country's morale is generally high.

West Germany: When the Cold War began, Europe was divided into East and West. This caused the division of East and West Germany, with West Germany calling itself the "true Germany" and claiming that East Germany is a puppet state of the Soviet Union.

Italy: The economy in Italy is growing rapidly at this time. People have stopped emigrating from Italy and started immigrating to it. Racism emerges in Italian society and politics, with immigrants being branded criminals.

Zambia: The country has been in economic decline for several years, and there was an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1980. Copper is a major commodity there, but revenues from minerals have been dropping since the mid-70s, and recent labor strikes have led to arrests.

Madagascar: Incumbent President Ratsiraka has maintained increasing government control over the free market for the past 10 years. In 1986, he relinquished a large amount of it, leading to an economic boom.

Thailand: In September of 1985, officers loyal to Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda stopped a coup attempt by a loyalist faction. On the southern border with Malaysia, Thai troops, cooperating with Malaysian forces, battle Communist rebels. On the southeastern border with Cambodia, Thai forces

have been fighting the Vietnamese troops occupying Cambodia. Thailand has large amounts of foreign debt, which they attempt to control by devaluing the Thai Baht 17%.

Trinidad and Tobago: The National Alliance for Reconstruction is founded, with the purpose of being a racially diverse and liberal party. For a time, it succeeds in boosting economic growth.

Australia: In 1986, Australia finally acquired its legal independence from the United Kingdom. It is an amicable split, and the two remain allies. In its first year as a solo country, it is also Australia's first year on the Security Council. Additionally, Australia houses the largest reserves of Uranium-235, the nuclear reactant used in most nuclear fission reactors including Chernobyl's.

Sweden (*in place of Denmark*): Swedish authorities were the first to discover the radiation emanating from Chernobyl and trace it back to Ukraine. They reported it to other countries and the UN while the Soviet Union was still trying to cover it up.

Questions to Consider

1. How, if at all, will your country be affected by the disaster?
2. How does this alter your country's stance on nuclear power?
3. How does this disaster impact other economic, technological, or political goals of your country?

Resources for Further Research

1. [ICRIN > Home](#)
2. [WHO on Chernobyl](#)- Mitigating Consequences
 - a. [WHO on Chernobyl- FAQ](#)
3. [IAEA: Chernobyl](#)
4. [Nuclear power plants by country 2020](#)
5. <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/current-and-future-generation/outline-history-of-nuclear-energy.aspx>
6. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/brief-history-nuclear-accidents-worldwide>