



United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity

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Context:

The **Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** approved a resolution to convene a **United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity**. This step marks a significant move toward creating a **global treaty** dedicated to addressing **crimes against humanity**.

Key Aspects of the Resolution

- **Sixth Committee's Role:** The **Sixth Committee** is the primary forum within the UNGA for discussing legal matters. This resolution will pave the way for international negotiations to establish a treaty specifically targeting crimes against humanity.
- **Definition of Crimes Against Humanity:** As defined by the **Rome Statute**, crimes against humanity include **acts such as murder, rape, torture, apartheid, deportation, and persecution**, committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population according to a state or organizational policy.

Need for a Treaty on Crimes Against Humanity

- **Absence of a Dedicated International Treaty:** Although international humanitarian laws, like the **Geneva Conventions** (which address the laws of war), have been established, they **do not adequately address crimes that occur in non-armed conflict situations**. A treaty dedicated to crimes against humanity would fill this gap.
- **Comprehensive Legal Framework:** The treaty would **provide a global framework** for prosecuting such crimes. It would offer new legal avenues for victims and enable countries to integrate these crimes into their **national legal systems**.
- **Global Cooperation:** The treaty could enhance **international cooperation** among states, facilitating actions like mutual legal assistance, joint investigations, and prosecutions to combat impunity for crimes against humanity.

Existing Legal Mechanisms

- **International Humanitarian Laws:**
- **Geneva Conventions (1949):** Protect civilians and combatants during armed conflicts.
- **Biological Weapons Convention (1972):** Prohibits the development and use of biological weapons.
- **Chemical Weapons Convention (1993):** Bans the use of chemical weapons.
- **Rome Statute (1998):** Established the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** and codified crimes against humanity.

These instruments have laid the foundation for international efforts to prevent and punish crimes, but they do not fully cover all the crimes against humanity that can occur in non-conflict situations.

India's Role

In the context of India, **Article 51** of its Constitution directs the state to **promote international peace and security** and to **respect international law and treaty obligations**. The adoption of a treaty on crimes against humanity aligns with India's commitment to supporting global justice and could strengthen India's own legal mechanisms for addressing such crimes.

This move by the UNGA represents a crucial step toward global accountability and justice, offering a comprehensive framework to combat the impunity for crimes against humanity.