# UoBDMUN 2026

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# Background guide

# The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

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# Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 2nd edition of the University of Birmingham in Dubai's MUN, and to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) committee. We are delighted to be moderating this committee, a committee of such a high caliber, and look forward to witnessing you showcase and meet your potential in discussing first-hand global predicaments. We truly hope that this committee not only challenges your intellect, but also reveals your ability to research and refines your capacity for high-level debate.

As your chairs, it is our goal to offer an experience that embodies a high level of professionalism, organization, and intellectual rigor. This, in turn, will allow for a level of discussion that mirrors the standards of global scale discussions. As individuals who have attended countless conferences in the past and have a driving passion for MUN, we hope to welcome you into a committee environment that encourages careful reasoning, clear communication, and the development of policy-driven outcomes, while maintaining an engaging and well-structured flow of discussion.

You as delegates are expected to interact productively and to offer original and viable argued views. Through this, we as a committee ensure that the road towards successful solutions is paved. Furthermore, we expect you to engage in debate that is mutually respectful and productive. The quality of this committee will be affected by your level of progress, debate, and reverence for each other through this conference.

If you need any kind of help or clarification on the content of this guide, or information in regards to either of the topics at any point, please do not hesitate to contact either one of your chairs. As you embark on this journey, we encourage you to embrace this conference as a chance to test yourself, improve your diplomatic skills, and gain meaningful experience that will last you beyond this conference.

All the best,
Tia Koulaylat and Daniel Shihat

# Committee Introduction

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established on July 29th, 1957 (History, no date). In its quest to maintain a safe and convenient world where nuclear energy is used sustainably and nuclear weapons are not used as a means of destruction, the IAEA has consistently shown initiative in hopes to create a world that is free of heinous acts. Having 180 member states as a part of the international organization, the IAEA has sought to bring peace and stability to all nations of the world (List of member states, 2016).

The organization was formed during the Cold War when nations realized the need for cooperation in the development and utilization of nuclear energy in a safe and peaceful manner. The main goal of the IAEA is to ensure the secure utilization of nuclear energy. One of the major milestones for the IAEA came after the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, in which the IAEA played an important role in the response to the emergency, helping nations deal with the consequences of the accident (Thirty Years of IAEA support to help mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, 2016). It helped other organizations in assessing the effects of radiation, remediation of the environment, etc.

The role of the IAEA is very important in the international system, as nuclear technology has both positive and negative aspects. The agency's efforts in establishing safety and security standards for all nations, as well as scientific and technological cooperation and monitoring the implementation of international nuclear agreements, are all factors that contribute to the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the limitation of nuclear conflicts, thereby contributing to international stability and security (United Nations, no date). Moreover, the safe use of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes such as nuclear power, medicine, and research.

# Topic Introduction

## Safeguarding the Right to Peaceful Nuclear Energy amid Global security concerns

The issue of nuclear energy has become one of the most critical and complex issues in international relations in the contemporary world. Nuclear energy has a number of advantages and benefits to offer to the world, ranging from the production of electrical energy, the treatment of cancer, agricultural development, and scientific research, among other benefits. In the contemporary world, nuclear energy has become a critical issue in the sense that it has the potential to boost the economies of different countries, particularly in the quest for clean and green energy in the world (Energy, no date). The International Atomic Energy Agency has become instrumental in the support of these developments in the nuclear field.

Nevertheless, there is an important security issue related to nuclear technology on a global scale. In fact, it is known that the technology and materials used for obtaining nuclear energy can be employed for developing nuclear weapons as well. In this regard, it is seen that there have been concerns related to nuclear proliferation and the development of nuclear weapons by other countries. In this context, it is underlined that the IAEA aims to monitor whether nuclear materials and technologies are employed for peaceful purposes, ensuring that countries comply with their commitments regarding international agreements such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (The NPT and IAEA safeguards, 2021).

In the modern world, this problem is highly relevant in the context of the contemporary international system. The ongoing geopolitical tensions in the world, the debate over the nuclear programs of countries such as Iran and North Korea, and the debate over the security of nuclear programs in the midst of the ongoing conflicts in the world are once again putting the focus on the fine line that is to be drawn between the advancement of technology and the maintenance of world stability. While some countries believe that the use of nuclear energy is a sovereign right that is an integral part of the sustainable development of the world, others believe that it should be regulated

# Topic History

The problem of the protection of the right to peaceful nuclear energy development while addressing the security issues in the world has its roots in the early development of nuclear technology in the mid-twentieth century. After the end of World War II and the beginning of the nuclear age, the world recognized the immense potential of nuclear technology, as well as the dangers that it presented. Nuclear technology provided the world with the opportunity to produce electricity, cure diseases, and achieve scientific advancements; however, it also showed its destructive capability in the form of nuclear weapons. This led to the search for ways that could help the world benefit from nuclear technology while preventing its use for military purposes.

As a result of these concerns, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was created as an international organization whose goal was to encourage the peaceful use of nuclear energy while at the same time ensuring that any assistance provided would not be used to attain military goals (IAEA Statute, 1957). The IAEA was charged with the responsibility of encouraging international cooperation in the use of nuclear technology while at the same time providing safeguards to ensure that the use of nuclear technology provided to any state was not used to acquire nuclear arms (IAEA Safeguards, no date).

An important milestone in the history of nuclear control was the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which became the foundation of worldwide efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The treaty seeks to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promote international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and achieve the goal of disarmament (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 1970). Under the treaty, non-nuclear weapon states committed themselves to accept IAEA safeguards to ensure that their nuclear activities were exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Today, the historical developments in the nuclear field continue to play a role in the way the world is governed. While many countries are focusing on the right to nuclear energy in the context of development and sustainability, the current geopolitical situation and security concerns are reminders of the significance of international oversight in the nuclear field. In this context, the IAEA is playing a critical role in balancing the needs of the international community, focusing on the peaceful development of nuclear energy while ensuring international security. This is a direct reflection of the international community's need to balance the right to peaceful nuclear energy with the security concerns that are arising in the world, ensuring the peaceful development of nuclear energy and preventing its misuse (IAEA Mission, n.d.; IAEA Safeguards, no date.).

# Topic Analysis

The development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes remains a central focus of international nuclear governance and the IAEA. Under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), states maintain the sovereign right to pursue nuclear technology for civilian applications, including electricity generation, medicine, and scientific research, provided such activities remain under international safeguards and are directed toward peaceful applications (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2023; IAEA, 2024). This framework establishes a fine balance between enabling technological advancement and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays a central role in maintaining this balance through inspections, verification systems, and technical assistance programs that promote the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology (IAEA, 2024).

International nuclear governance developed in response to concerns over nuclear weapons proliferation during the Cold War. Safeguards mechanisms were established to ensure that civilian nuclear programs would not be diverted toward military purposes. Over time, these safeguards evolved into a comprehensive system of monitoring and verification administered by the IAEA, forming a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime (IAEA, 2024).
In recent years, nuclear energy has gained renewed attention as countries seek reliable low-carbon energy sources to meet climate and energy security goals yet due to internal and external pressures. Nuclear power produces large amounts of electricity with minimal greenhouse gas emissions, making it an increasingly attractive component of national energy strategies focused on sustainability and energy security (IAEA, 2024). As a result, several states are expanding nuclear programs or exploring new reactor technologies to diversify their energy portfolios.

However, the expansion of nuclear energy raises complex security concerns due to the dual-use nature of nuclear technology. Facilities capable of enriching uranium or reprocessing spent fuel can potentially be redirected toward weapons development if safeguards fail or if states violate international commitments. Safeguards systems implemented by the IAEA aim to mitigate these risks by verifying state declarations, monitoring nuclear materials, and conducting on-site inspections to ensure that nuclear material is not diverted for military purposes (IAEA, 2024).

International treaties further reinforce these safeguards. Agreements such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) aim to limit nuclear weapons development by banning nuclear explosive testing, while the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) reflects increasing international calls for stronger disarmament norms (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2023).

Technological innovation is also shaping the future of nuclear governance. Emerging technologies such as small modular reactors (SMRs) promise improved safety and flexibility in nuclear energy generation. However, these advancements also raise new regulatory challenges regarding oversight and safeguards implementation. Strengthening verification systems, international cooperation, and transparency among states will therefore remain essential to safeguarding the right to peaceful nuclear development while maintaining global security.

# Questions for the Resolution

1. How can the International Atomic Energy Agency strengthen safeguards, inspections, and verification mechanisms while still respecting the sovereign rights of states to develop peaceful nuclear energy programs?

2. What international transparency and confidence-building measures could reduce mistrust among states pursuing civilian nuclear programs and prevent accusations of proliferation?

3. How should emerging nuclear technologies, such as small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced fuel cycles, be governed to ensure safety, accountability, and non-proliferation?

4. What mechanisms can ensure equitable access to peaceful nuclear technology for developing states while maintaining compliance with international safeguards?

5. How can the international community balance the growing demand for nuclear energy as a low-carbon power source with the need to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons?

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