



United Nations

Practice Drafting Skills Test for POLNET



Task

You work in the field of political, peace, security and humanitarian affairs for the Large International Organization (LIO). The director of your office, Mrs. Smith, travels to various regions and nations to engage with both local LIO missions and national leadership.

Mrs. Smith is planning to visit the country of Hopelandia in the next few days, and she has asked you to summarize the current situation, identify recent developments and draw relevant conclusions from a political, peace, security and humanitarian perspective. Mrs. Smith is already familiar with the demography and geography of Hopelandia, so there is no need to provide such background information.

Today's date is 22 March. Using the news reports from January to March 2017, which you obtained from reliable sources, write a factual briefing note of no more than 400 words, using full sentences and paragraphs. Use the following paragraph headings in your briefing note: Summary; Political; Peace; Security; Humanitarian; Conclusion. Suggested word limits for these headings are provided below:

- 
1. Summary: (50-70 words)
 2. Recent Political Developments: (50-70 words)
 3. Recent Peace Developments: (50-70 words)
 4. Recent Security Developments: (50-70 words)
 5. Recent Humanitarian Developments: (50-70 words)
 6. Conclusions: (30-50 words)

You are strongly advised not to exceed the word limit, as no credit will be given for content that is written in excess of the first 400 words. Please make use of the word counter located at the bottom right corner of the response text box while drafting your response.

Background Information on Hopelandia

Neighbouring countries: Freeland and Westlandia

Population: 30 million

Ethnic groups 85% Hammur; 14% Jingar; 1% Passor

Government: Presidential Republic (2 terms maximum)

Head of State: President Jones (2009-2012 & 2012-2016)

News reports on Hopelandia January to March 2017

Political

22 January: President Jones remains in power after narrow vote to impeach him

30 January: President Jones: "I will stand for a third term."

7 March: High Court judge calls the president's announcement "unconstitutional".

15 March: Army places High Court judge under house arrest.

18 March: LIO condemns arrest as "threat to an independent judiciary".

Peace

21 February: Regional Organization for Peace (ROP) offers to deploy 10,000 peacekeepers to ease conflict amongst the Hammur and the Jingar.

2 March: President Jones outlines his conditions for accepting the ROP peacekeepers.

6 March: ROP "considering the President's conditions" with support from LIO.

18 March: President speaks of "intolerable delay" and sets even more stringent conditions.

20 March: ROP and LIO jointly "considering the President's new conditions".

Security

25 February: High security surrounding trial of rebel army leader General Sanders.

27 February: General Sanders' lawyers: "our client was tortured while being detained".

12 March Ten tourists are taken hostage by rebel army at the airport.

13 March: Hostages offered in exchange for the release of General Sanders.

20 March: International pressure mounts on President Jones to resolve the hostage situation.

Humanitarian

10 January: 100,000 Hopelandians displaced due to flooding.

15 January: Leading aid agency: "We are in great need of basic provisions"

22 January: Freeland and Westlandia each will accept 50,000 grateful refugees.

13 February: "Food production down 10 per cent in 2016" according to government report.

15 March: "Food prices rapidly going up" warns local newspaper.

Briefing Note on the Current Situation in Hopelandia

Summary

In the political sphere, there is concern about President Jones' intention to run for a third term and also his ability to promote an independent judicial system. In terms of peace, there are delays affecting the deployment of peacekeepers to ease conflict amongst the Hammur and the Jingar. Concerning security, there is increasing pressure on President Jones to resolve the hostage situation. Finally, on the humanitarian front, there are fears about an impending starvation crisis.

Recent Political Developments

President Jones announced his intention to run for a third term days after narrowly surviving an impeachment vote. The High Court Judge who condemned the president's decision was placed under house arrest by the Army. LIO has criticized this as a threat to the independence of the judiciary. Although there are no reports that the president ordered this action, he is not in a hurry to order the Army to lift the house arrest.

Recent Peace Developments

Due to the conflict between the Hammur and the Jingar ethnic groups, ROP recently offered to send 10,000 peacekeepers to Hopelandia. In response, President Jones has set increasingly stringent conditions, which are being reviewed jointly by the ROP and LIO. The president is impatient, yet he risks impeding the process further by imposing even more stringent conditions on the deployment. A bad deal might be better than no deal here.

Recent Security Developments

Shortly after the start of the trial of rebel army leader General Sanders, his soldiers took 10 international tourists hostage in an attempt to negotiate his release. President Jones is under international pressure to take action. It is unclear how he will respond.

Recent Humanitarian Developments

In January, flooding caused the internal displacement of 100,000 Hopelandians and basic provisions are in very short supply. 50,000 of those displaced have been taken in as refugees by Freeland and Westlandia. The recent flooding comes when it has just been announced that food production in Hopelandia fell by 10 per cent in 2016 and while food prices have soared. There is a clear danger that starvation may result.

Conclusion

The key concerns of LIO should be to encourage the Hopelandia government to allow ROP peacekeepers into the country under the best possible conditions, to make sure that food is delivered safely in the most affected areas and to ensure that access to drinking water is provided in affected communities.

(395 words)

Examiner's Grades and Comments

Summary

Score: 4 out of 4

The summary is written very clearly. There are no intrusive errors. The summary also describes the peace, security and humanitarian developments accurately.

Political and Peace Developments

Score: 2 out of 4

The Recent Main Developments are identified clearly and accurately. No important details are missing and the candidate has avoided the temptation of inventing details. However, while the candidate's intention is clearly expressed, the style of writing is sometimes speculative and occasionally somewhat informal.

Security and Humanitarian Developments

Score: 2 out of 4

The Recent Main Developments are identified clearly. No important details are missing; however the candidate drew an inaccurate timeline about when the flooding happened in relation to the published information about food production and prices.

Conclusions

Score: 2 out of 4

The conclusions drawn are clear and easy to understand. The candidate's conclusions are appropriate in the sense that they are balanced and objective. However, only the security and humanitarian situation is dealt with. Even though the food shortage is obviously the most important problem, the candidate could have said something about the other areas of concern.