



BACKGROUND PAPER:

Special Political Committee (SPECPOL)
Situation in Cote D'Ivoire

Introduction: Cote D'Ivoire has experienced problems with stability in recent years. Two civil wars and recent United Nations intervention has left the country lost. The recently overthrown president Laurent Gbagbo was arrested on charges of election fraud by the military. Gbagbo is also charged by the ICC for crimes against humanity.

Background & History: Cote D'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960. The political landscape was dominated for 30 years afterward by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, leader of the conservative Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire. Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993, and the military established a temporary stratocracy, with democratic elections to be established in the year 2000.

Current Situation: As of now, Ouattara is recognized by the world as the legitimate president of Cote D'Ivoire. Despite this fact, Gbagbo has attempted to keep his control of the military intact. Recently, Gbagbo was arrested and awaits trial by the ICC. Ouattara has shown definite interest and progress in decreasing and discouraging the child slave labor which has plagued the industry of this nation by calling upon the cocoa companies to cease their purchase of inhumanely produced cocoa. Ouattara hopes that the success of this plan would diminish Gbagbo's economic hold over the power of the Ivory Coast, as well as to pressure individual farmers to change their working condition. Ouattara conveys the need for change in the country's policies as well those of the companies which indirectly contribute to this humanitarian nightmare.

The Problem: Despite the advancements made by Ouattara, there is still much conflict within the government's power, versus the economic powers the cocoa companies boast. Although some major cacao companies have ceased their purchase of said cocoa, many key clients have either not made a commitment or have simply declined. Because of this, Ouattara's vision of the Coast turning over a new leaf cannot be fulfilled. This means that the human rights violations are just as prevalent as in the past.



On the other hand, fair reputable cacao farmers are beginning to struggle because of the undesirable connotation that comes with purchasing Ivorian cacao.

Relevant Documents: The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are extremely relevant and useful documents in debate. By looking at these documents we can examine the past precedent set by the United Nations for situations like these. By incorporating the ideas that these documents have, we can determine the proper course of action and build on the model set by these documents.

You can find the links for these documents on the bottom of the page

Bloc Positions:

African Union (AU): The AU has expressed its disappointment in the hundreds of thousands of Ivorian refugees which have been moving into surrounding nations like Liberia and Mali. Additionally, the AU currently does not have the resources to adequately aid the Ivorian government in pursuing any of its goals. Also, more focus has been placed on solving individual internal conflicts within many of the other nations. There currently is not much of a collaborative effort among the AU to put the situation in Cote D'Ivoire ahead of other deeply concerning situations within the region.

Arab League: The Arab League has experienced many internal problems in the course of the last few months, and as a result, is not especially concerned with any conflicts not directly concerning the political welfare of their respective nations. Still, countries within the league express their sympathies for the suffering and conflict the Ivorian people have been facing, and place the greatest concern on Muslim sectors of the population. Should the political conflicts plaguing the Middle East cease, the Arab League might amend its position on this topic

European Union (EU): The EU has been protective of its investments in the Ivorian cocoa industry. Though some companies have complied with Ouattara's request of suspending their purchases of Ivorian cocoa, many stated that they would require additional research to verify whether that was a commitment they could make.

Committee Mission: The committee's mission should be to determine the proper course of action for dealing with the human rights violations which have been occurring for several years. As well as this, the issue of getting Gbagbo out of the picture is something that should be addressed, and decisions should be made over what his fate shall be. Also, the discussion of Ouattara's efforts and ways the international community can aid in his vision is something that should be determined by this committee.



Questions to Consider:

- 1.) Is your nation's economy affected by the global cocoa trade? If so, what steps have corporations in your country take toward promoting/preventing the exportation of cocoa harvested by child slaves?
- 2.) How much involvement should the United Nations have in the situation in the Ivory Coast? Do you feel that their previous actions have been sufficient?
- 3.) How should Laurent Gbagbo be turned over to the ICC? What alternatives would your country support?
- 4.) In the last 50 years, has your country experienced any questions of international recognition of either your government or an internal faction?

Sources for Further Research:

CIA World Factbook

www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/

NYTimes – Cote D'Ivoire

topics.nytimes.com/news/international/countriesandterritories/ivorycoast/index.html

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org

Convention on the Rights of the Child

www.unicef.org/crc

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

www.un.org/en/documents/udhr

ICC Prosecutor Seeks Investigation

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/cote-d%E2%80%99ivoire-icc-prosecutor-seeks-investigation-24062011/>