UNA-USA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

BACKGROUND / STUDY GUIDE

Addressing the Use of Non-State Armed Actors (NSAs) and Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) as Instruments of Proxy Warfare, and Its Implications for International Peace and Security

Committee: United Nations Security Council
Chair: Aryaman Thakkar
Vice Chair: Swarit Ganna
Prepared for KMUN
This guide follows the UNA-USA Model UN format. It is intended as a neutral research starting point for delegates and conference organisers. It does not represent the policy position of any government, the United Nations, or the author. Delegates are expected to conduct independent research reflecting their assigned country's positions and to consult primary UN documents before drafting position papers and resolutions.

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I. Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UNSC at Kanakia Model United Nations. It is my pleasure to welcome you to a committee that will grapple with one of the most persistent and evolving challenges in contemporary international security: the use of non-state armed actors and private military and security companies as tools of proxy warfare.

This topic sits at the intersection of international humanitarian law, the law on the use of force, state sovereignty, and human rights. It asks delegates to consider not only how the international community can respond to harm already caused by unregulated armed actors, but also how it can close the legal and normative gaps that allow states and other actors to use these groups to pursue military and political objectives while evading direct accountability.

I encourage each of you to approach this topic with academic rigour and diplomatic open-mindedness. This is a subject on which UN member states genuinely disagree — about definitions, about mandates, and about the proper balance between regulation and the legitimate right of states to contract for security services. Your task is not to resolve these disagreements according to your own personal views, but to represent your assigned country's foreign policy positions faithfully, in accordance with UNA-USA Model UN rules of procedure.

Please read this guide in full, but treat it as a starting point rather than an endpoint. Strong delegates will go beyond this guide to consult primary UN documents, statements by their assigned country's UN mission, and reputable secondary sources.

I look forward to a productive and rigorous committee session.

Sincerely,

Aryaman Thakkar

II.Letter from the Vice-Chair

Dear Delegates,

As your Vice Chair, I extend a warm welcome to all delegates of the UNSC at KMUN 2026.

Before you begin your research, I want to offer a few thoughts of my own.

Give primary importance to the people, not the definitions. Proxy warfare can feel abstract when framed in terms of legal gaps and sovereignty. Behind every proxy conflict are civilians displaced, communities fractured, and lives lost in wars that were often designed so that no one could be held responsible. Keep that reality in mind as you draft. The best resolutions will be the ones that would make a real difference on the ground.

Be specific in your speeches. The Committee does not want to hear broad calls for "accountability" and "cooperation" What sets a delegate apart is the detail— who monitors, who enforces, what triggers action, and how it is funded. A clause that names a mechanism will always be stronger than one that names an aspiration.

Negotiate terms with other delegates, don't just perform. This is the Security Council and the P5 veto shapes everything. The most impressive delegates will not be the loudest speakers but the ones who build coalitions, find common ground between rival positions, and know when to compromise without abandoning their country's core interests. Listen as much as you speak and pay close attention.

I look forward to an energetic and practical committee session.

Warm regards,

Swarit Ganna

III. Introduction to the Topic

Warfare conducted 'by proxy' — in which a state or organised political actor supports, arms, finances, directs, or otherwise enables a non-state force to fight on its behalf — is not a new phenomenon. What has changed over the past three decades is the scale, sophistication, and commercial structure through which this occurs. Two overlapping categories of actor are central to this committee's mandate:

- Non-state armed actors (NSAs): armed groups that are not part of the formal military or security apparatus of a recognised state, including insurgent movements, militias, rebel factions, and armed groups aligned with or sponsored by a state or coalition without being formally incorporated into its armed forces.
- Private military and security companies (PMSCs): commercial entities that provide military or security services — including armed protection, logistics, training, combat support, and, in some cases, direct participation in hostilities — for payment, typically under contract to a state, corporation, or international organisation.

These categories are analytically distinct but increasingly overlap in practice. A PMSC can function as a de facto proxy force when it is financed, directed, or shielded by a state that seeks to obscure its own involvement in a conflict — commonly described by scholars and UN experts as a 'deniability' or 'plausible deniability' strategy. The Russian Federation's use of the Wagner Group and its successor, the Africa Corps, is the most widely discussed contemporary example, but it is not the only one; historically, and currently, a range of states and non-state sponsors have used similar arrangements in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

The implications for international peace and security are significant. Proxy arrangements can lower the political cost of intervention, complicate attribution of internationally wrongful acts, undermine arms control and sanctions regimes, contribute to human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, and prolong conflicts by introducing actors with financial or resource-based incentives to continue fighting. At the same time, delegates should be aware that PMSCs also perform lawful and widely used functions — including diplomatic and commercial security, logistics and training — and that many states view a well-regulated private security industry as a legitimate policy tool rather than a threat in itself. Any resolution produced by this committee should reflect this complexity rather than treat all private or non-state military activity as inherently illegitimate.

IV. Key Definitions and Terminology

Mercenary (Article 47, Additional Protocol I, 1977)

A mercenary is defined, in summary, as any person who: is specially recruited to fight in an armed conflict; takes a direct part in hostilities; is motivated essentially by private gain and is promised material compensation substantially in excess of that paid to comparable members of the armed forces of the relevant party; is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party; is not a member of the armed forces of a party; and has not been sent by a state which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces. All six criteria must be met cumulatively, which in practice makes the legal definition very narrow and difficult to apply to many modern PMSC employees.

Mercenary (1989 UN Mercenary Convention)

The 1989 Convention adopts a similar cumulative definition and adds a second category covering persons recruited to participate in a 'concerted act of violence' aimed at overthrowing a government or undermining the territorial integrity of a state, motivated by private gain or promise of gain.

Private Military and Security Company (PMSC)

There is no single, universally agreed treaty definition of a PMSC. The Montreux Document (see Section V.F) describes PMSCs functionally as private business entities that provide military and/or security services, irrespective of how they describe themselves, including armed and unarmed guarding, protection of persons and property, maintenance of weapons systems, prisoner detention, and advice or training of local forces and security personnel.

Proxy Warfare

A widely used working definition describes proxy warfare as indirect engagement in a conflict by a third party through the support, financing, arming, training, or direction of another actor — state or non-state — that conducts the fighting, allowing the sponsoring party to pursue its strategic objectives while limiting direct exposure, cost, and legal or political accountability.

Attribution

Under the customary international law reflected in the International Law Commission's Articles on State Responsibility, conduct by private persons or groups is generally not attributable to a state unless the group is acting on the instructions of, or under the direction or control of, that state, or the state later acknowledges and adopts the conduct as its own. This attribution threshold is central to the difficulty of holding sponsoring states legally responsible for the acts of proxy forces and PMSCs.

V. Historical Background

A. Proxy Warfare and Mercenarism Before 1945

The use of hired soldiers and sponsored irregular forces predates the modern state system, from European mercenary companies of the medieval and early modern periods to colonial-era chartered companies that maintained private armies to secure territory and trade routes. Mercenary use was gradually curtailed by the consolidation of standing national armies and, later, by the emergence of international humanitarian law, which drew an increasingly sharp distinction between lawful combatants entitled to prisoner-of-war status and irregular fighters who were not.

B. The Cold War and the 'Golden Age' of Proxy Warfare

The Cold War (1947–1991) is widely regarded as the formative period for modern proxy warfare, as the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies frequently avoided direct confrontation by arming, training, financing, or otherwise backing local factions, insurgencies, and governments in conflicts across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Notable examples cited in the academic literature include the Angolan and Congolese civil conflicts, the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s. Private mercenaries — individuals such as those active in the Congo Crisis of the 1960s and in various African conflicts of the 1970s — also operated alongside state-sponsored proxies, prompting some of the earliest international efforts to regulate mercenary activity, including the 1977 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention discussed below.

C. Post-Cold War Africa and the Rise of the Modern PMSC Industry

The end of the Cold War coincided with the demobilisation of large numbers of trained military personnel and a wave of weak-state conflicts, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, that created demand for private security and combat support services. The South African firm Executive Outcomes, active in Angola and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, is frequently cited by scholars as an early example of a modern PMSC providing direct combat support to a government under commercial contract. This period saw growing debate within the UN human rights system — including through the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, whose mandate had existed since 1987 — over whether such companies represented a new, more 'legitimate' form of mercenarism or a fundamentally different phenomenon requiring separate regulatory treatment.

D. Iraq and Afghanistan (2001–2014)

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq produced an unprecedented expansion of the PMSC industry, as the United States and coalition partners relied heavily on private contractors for logistics, base security, convoy protection, and, in some cases, functions closely resembling direct combat support. At points during the Iraq War, contractor personnel numbers approached or exceeded the number of uniformed military personnel deployed by some contributing states. The September 2007 Nisour Square shooting in Baghdad, involving contractors from the US firm Blackwater, became a widely cited case illustrating the accountability challenges posed by PMSC operations, including questions of applicable jurisdiction, immunity arrangements, and host-state consent. This period substantially accelerated international efforts to develop regulatory instruments, culminating in the Montrreux Document process (2006–2008).

E. The Contemporary Era: State-Aligned PMSCs and Hybrid Proxy Forces

Since the mid-2010s, attention has increasingly focused on PMSCs and armed groups that operate in close alignment with, or under the effective direction of, a sponsoring state — blurring the line between 'commercial' PMSC activity and traditional state-sponsored proxy warfare. The Russian Wagner Group, active from roughly 2014 in eastern Ukraine, and subsequently in Syria, Libya, the Central African Republic, Mali, and Sudan, has been the most extensively documented example, with the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries and multiple UN human rights mechanisms raising concerns about its conduct.

Following the death of Wagner's founder, Yevgeny Prigozhin, in 2023, the Russian Ministry of Defence moved to consolidate Wagner's overseas operations under a new, more directly state-controlled structure known as the Africa Corps. Wagner formally announced its withdrawal from Mali in June 2025, with operational responsibility largely transferring to Africa Corps units, which have also taken over roles previously held by Wagner-linked personnel in Libya and Syria. Reporting through 2026 indicates that a coordinated insurgent offensive in Mali has since reversed a number of the territorial gains associated with the earlier Russian-backed campaign, underscoring the volatility of these arrangements and their consequences for local populations. Delegates researching this section should treat rapidly evolving field reporting with appropriate caution and verify current developments against up-to-date, reputable sources.

Other contemporary cases frequently raised in UN and expert discussions include allegations regarding the role of foreign-backed armed groups and private security elements in the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces since 2023, and continuing debate over the accountability of PMSCs operating in maritime security, extractive industries, and cyber-related security services — an area the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries has specifically flagged for further study.

VI. The International and UN Legal Framework

Delegates should understand that the international legal framework governing NSAs and PMSCs is fragmented, non-uniform, and, in several respects, contested by UN member states. No single binding, universally ratified treaty regulates PMSCs as such. This section summarises the principal instruments and mechanisms delegates should be familiar with.

A. The UN Charter

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and is generally understood to extend to the use of force through proxy actors under a state's effective control. Article 51 preserves the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence. The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, and shall then make recommendations, or decide what measures are to be taken under Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security, including in situations involving proxy or non-state armed actors.

B. 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 47

Article 47 provides that a mercenary, as narrowly defined, does not have the right to combatant or prisoner-of-war status. It does not prohibit mercenary activity outright, nor does it establish individual criminal responsibility; its effect is limited to denying certain legal protections under international humanitarian law.

C. The 1977 OAU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa

Adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in Libreville in 1977, this regional convention was among the first binding instruments to criminalise mercenary activity, reflecting African states' particular concern over mercenary involvement in post-colonial and civil conflicts on the continent. It remains in force among its African states parties and informs the African Union's continuing engagement with this issue.

D. The 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries

Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 4 December 1989 (Resolution 44/34), this Convention entered into force on 20 October 2001 after reaching the required 22 ratifications — a process that took nearly twelve years, reflecting limited early state interest. As of the most recent UN treaty status data, the Convention has a modest number of states parties (approximately in the high thirties to low sixties depending on the count of later accessions), and notably lacks ratification by several major military and PMSC-contracting states, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, and China. This significantly limits its practical reach. The Convention obliges states parties to criminalise the recruitment, use, financing, and training of mercenaries as defined in the treaty, and to either prosecute or extradite offenders.

Delegates should verify the current, exact number and list of states parties via the UN Treaty Collection (treaties.un.org) before finalising position papers, as accessions continue to occur.

E. The UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries

Established by the former UN Commission on Human Rights in July 2005 (Resolution 2005/2), the Working Group succeeded the earlier Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, a mandate that had existed since 1987. It is composed of five independent experts serving in their individual capacity, geographically representative, and unpaid. Its mandate, renewed periodically by the Human Rights Council (most recently through resolutions such as A/HRC/RES/60/5), is to monitor and study the use of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors — including PMSCs functioning as proxies, enablers, or facilitators for states and non-state actors — and their impact on human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination, and to report annually to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly's Third Committee. The Working Group also conducts country visits (for example, a 2025 visit to Cyprus examining maritime-sector PMSC activity) and issues periodic calls for input on specific themes,

including, in recent cycles, the use of technology by mercenary-related actors and their role in organised criminal activity.

A significant and unresolved debate within the UN system — repeatedly raised by the European Union and other Western states in Third Committee dialogues — concerns whether the Working Group's mandate conflates lawful, regulated PMSC activity with the narrower and more clearly unlawful category of mercenarism, and whether the mandate should be narrowed accordingly. This disagreement is directly relevant to committee debate and should be reflected in delegate research rather than presented as settled.

F. The Montreux Document on PMSCs (2008)

Launched jointly by Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 2006 and finalised on 17 September 2008, the Montrreux Document is a non-binding but widely endorsed instrument. It does not create new legal obligations; rather, it restates existing obligations of states under international humanitarian law and human rights law as they apply to PMSCs operating in armed conflict, distinguishing between 'Contracting States' (which hire PMSCs), 'Territorial States' (on whose territory PMSCs operate), and 'Home States' (where PMSCs are based), and sets out a corresponding list of good practices for regulation, licensing, vetting, and oversight. It was initially endorsed by 17 states and the ICRC in 2008; participation has since grown substantially, and a Montrreux Document Forum, supported by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), was established in 2014 to support implementation and remains active.

G. The Draft International Convention and the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group

Separately from the Montrreux Document, the Human Rights Council established an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) in 2010 to elaborate the content of a possible new, legally binding international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring, and oversight of PMSC activities — going beyond the 1989 Convention's narrow mercenary definition. This process has produced draft text but has not yet resulted in an adopted treaty, and remains a live, contested item on the Human Rights Council's agenda, with continuing divisions among states over its scope, necessity, and relationship to existing instruments.

H. State Responsibility and Attribution

Because no single treaty comprehensively regulates state responsibility for proxy and PMSC conduct, this area is governed primarily by customary international law as reflected in the International Law Commission's 2001 Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (not itself a binding treaty, but widely regarded as reflecting customary law). Article 8 attributes to a state the conduct of persons or groups acting on its instructions or under its direction or control; the International Court of Justice has addressed the required threshold of control in cases including Nicaragua v. United States (1986) and the Bosnian Genocide case (2007), generally requiring a high threshold of 'effective control' over specific operations, which in practice makes attribution difficult to establish for many proxy relationships.

VII.Case Studies

1. Executive Outcomes — Angola and Sierra Leone (1993–1998)

A South African PMSC contracted directly by the governments of Angola and Sierra Leone to provide combat support against insurgent forces (UNITA and the Revolutionary United Front, respectively). Frequently cited as an early model of a state contracting a PMSC for direct combat operations, raising early questions about accountability and the blurred line between mercenary activity and lawful contracted military assistance.

2. Blackwater / Nisour Square, Iraq (2007)

US contractors employed by Blackwater USA, providing diplomatic security under a US State Department contract, killed a number of Iraqi civilians in Baghdad's Nisour Square. The incident became a landmark case in debates over contractor accountability, jurisdictional immunity under Coalition Provisional Authority Order 17, and the applicability of US extraterritorial criminal law to contractor conduct.

3. Wagner Group — Syria, Libya, CAR, Mali, Sudan (2014–present)

A Russian PMSC (later reorganised as the state-controlled Africa Corps following the 2023 death of its founder) providing combat, training, and security services to allied governments, widely reported by UN experts, NGOs, and investigative journalists to operate with close, if often officially unacknowledged, ties to the Russian state — illustrating the 'proxy' dimension central to this committee's topic. The 2025–2026 transition from Wagner to Africa Corps in Mali, and reported military setbacks there, provide a current and evolving case for delegates to track.

4. Sudan — Rapid Support Forces (2023–present)

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has raised sustained international concern, including allegations — examined by UN human rights mechanisms — regarding external financing, arms transfers, and the involvement of foreign-linked actors, illustrating how proxy dynamics can intersect with an internal armed conflict and complicate international response.

5. Maritime and Extractive-Sector PMSCs

The UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries has in recent years directed particular attention to PMSCs operating in maritime security (e.g., anti-piracy escort services) and extractive industries, where oversight and jurisdictional gaps are especially pronounced, including through a 2025 country visit to Cyprus focused on the maritime sector.

VIII.Current Situation (2024–2026)

As of the most recent reporting available to this guide, several developments are directly relevant to committee debate:

- The UN Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries in 2025 (Resolution A/HRC/RES/60/5), continuing to task it with examining mercenaries, mercenary-related actors, and PMSCs functioning as proxies, enablers, and facilitators for states and non-state actors.
- In November 2025 Third Committee dialogues, the European Union and other states reiterated calls for the Working Group's mandate to more clearly distinguish mercenaries (a narrowly defined category under international law) from the broader and, in many contexts, lawfully regulated PMSC industry — a debate delegates should expect to encounter directly.
- The Working Group has issued recent calls for input on emerging themes, including the use of technology by mercenary-related actors and their involvement in organised criminal and illicit networks, reflecting an evolving understanding of the issue beyond traditional battlefield mercenarism.
- Russia's transition of paramilitary operations in Africa from the nominally private Wagner Group to the directly state-controlled Africa Corps (formalised in Mali in June 2025, with parallel transitions in Libya and Syria) illustrates a broader trend toward tighter state control over previously more autonomous proxy structures, with significant and still-unfolding consequences on the ground, including a major insurgent offensive in Mali in 2026.
- The Montrreux Document Forum continues to expand state participation and has, in 2025, focused work on regulatory transparency and PMSC activity in cyberspace, reflecting the framework's ongoing (if non-binding) relevance.

Given the pace of developments in this area, delegates are strongly encouraged to search for news from the weeks immediately preceding the conference, particularly regarding any Human Rights Council, Third Committee, or Security Council action.

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IX. Positions of Blocs and Key Stakeholders

The summaries below are intended as a neutral starting point reflecting general tendencies frequently expressed in UN debate. They are generalisations, not authoritative statements of any individual government's position, and delegates must verify their assigned country's specific stance independently.

Western States (e.g., EU member states, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia)

Generally emphasise a sharp legal and policy distinction between unlawful mercenary activity and the lawful, regulated PMSC industry, on which several of these states rely for logistics, diplomatic security, and training missions. Many support the Montrreux Document and voluntary regulatory approaches (e.g., industry codes of conduct such as the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers) over a new binding convention, and have periodically abstained from or opposed resolutions establishing or expanding the mandate of the Working Group on mercenaries and the Open-Ended IGWG, viewing the latter as duplicative or insufficiently focused.

Russian Federation and Aligned States

Historically among the group of states sponsoring the Working Group's mandate and supportive of a binding international regulatory instrument in principle, while — according to reporting by UN experts, journalists, and other governments — itself having made extensive practical use of nominally private military companies (Wagner Group, and its successor Africa Corps) in a manner widely characterised by outside observers as state-directed proxy warfare. Delegates representing this bloc should research their assigned country's official public statements, which generally do not acknowledge direct state control over such entities.

African Union Member States

Given the continent's extensive historical experience with mercenary activity from the colonial and immediate post-colonial period through to contemporary PMSC and proxy involvement in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa, African states have historically been strong proponents of binding regulation, reflected in the 1977 OAU Convention and continued African Union engagement with the Working Group and IGWG processes. Positions vary considerably by country, particularly regarding states that currently host Wagner/Africa Corps or other foreign security personnel.

Non-Aligned Movement and Global South States More Broadly

Frequently supportive of strengthening the Working Group's mandate and advancing the draft international convention, often framing the issue in terms of sovereignty, self-determination, and historical experience of foreign-backed destabilisation, consistent with the origins of the 1989 Convention and the Working Group's foundational mandate language on self-determination.

International Committee of the Red Cross and Civil Society

The ICRC, as co-author of the Montrreux Document, focuses on ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law regardless of an actor's legal status. NGOs and research institutions (e.g., DCAF, human rights organisations, and conflict-monitoring bodies) generally advocate for stronger transparency, accountability, and victim-remedy mechanisms, and frequently publish investigative reporting that informs Working Group findings.

X. Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

- How should this committee define the actors within its mandate — should PMSCs and mercenaries be treated as a single regulatory category, or should the committee maintain and sharpen the legal distinction between them?
- What is the appropriate balance between accountability/regulation and respect for the sovereign right of states to contract private security and military services for lawful purposes?
- Should the Council prioritise strengthening voluntary and soft-law frameworks (e.g., encouraging wider participation in the Montrreux Document), advancing binding Chapter VII measures on PMSCs and mercenary groups in specific conflict situations it has determined to be threats to international peace and security (under Articles 39, 41, and 42), or pursuing both in parallel?
- How can attribution and state-responsibility standards be clarified or strengthened to address situations where a state exercises significant but informal influence over a nominally private or non-state armed actor?
- What mechanisms could improve monitoring, reporting, and victim redress for human rights and international humanitarian law violations committed by NSAs and PMSCs, including in contexts where the host state lacks capacity or willingness to investigate?
- How should the committee address emerging and cross-cutting concerns identified by the UN Working Group, such as PMSC involvement in cyber operations, maritime security, and organised criminal or illicit financial networks?
- What role, if any, should sanctions regimes, arms transfer controls, and financial-transparency measures play in curbing the sponsorship of proxy forces and PMSCs by states or other actors?
- How can any resulting framework accommodate significant and enduring disagreement among member states over the scope of the Working Group's mandate and the desirability of a new binding treaty?

X. Committee-Specific Guidance and Position Paper Requirements

[This section should be customised by the Chair/Dais to reflect the specific conference's rules of procedure, deadlines, and expectations. A standard UNA-USA-style template is provided below.]

In keeping with UNA-USA Rules of Procedure, delegates are expected to submit a position paper of approximately one page per topic in advance of the conference, addressing:

- A brief summary of the topic and its relevance to the delegate's assigned country.
- A summary of the assigned country's relevant policy positions, past voting record, and any relevant national legislation or practice regarding PMSCs, mercenaries, or proxy actors.
- Proposed solutions or policy directions consistent with the assigned country's foreign policy, addressing the QARMAs above.

Position papers should be submitted to [insert submission method/deadline]. Delegates should be prepared to reference specific UN documents (by symbol, e.g., A/RES/44/34, A/HRC/RES/60/5) during formal and informal debate, and to distinguish clearly between established international law, non-binding guidance (such as the Montrreux Document), and proposals that remain under negotiation (such as the draft IGWG convention).

XI. Selected Sources and Further Research

Delegates and conference organisers may find the following primary sources useful starting points. All URLs should be verified as UN and institutional sites are periodically restructured.

UN General Assembly, International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, A/RES/44/34 (4 December 1989); UN Treaty Collection, treaties.un.org, Chapter XVIII.6.

Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 47 (1977), via the ICRC Treaties Database, ihl-databases.icrc.org.

Organisation of African Unity, Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa (Libreville, 1977).

UN Human Rights Council, mandate resolutions on the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, including A/HRC/RES/60/5 (2025); reports available via ohchr.org and the UN Digital Library (digitallibrary.un.org).

OHCHR, 'Mercenarism and Private Military and Security Companies,' ohchr.org — overview of the Working Group's mandate, reports, and calls for input.

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and ICRC, The Montrreux Document on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States Related to Operations of Private Military and Security Companies during Armed Conflict (2008); Montrreux Document Forum, mdforum.ch, hosted by DCAF (dcaf.ch).

International Law Commission, Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, with commentaries (2001), UN Doc. A/56/10.

International Court of Justice, Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States), Judgment, 1986 I.C.J. 14; Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro), Judgment, 2007 I.C.J. 43.

UN Human Rights Council, Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework on PMSCs — session reports and draft text, ohchr.org.

The Sentry, reporting on Wagner Group and Africa Corps operations and financing in Mali and the wider Sahel (thesentry.org).

This guide was prepared using publicly available UN documentation and reputable reporting current as of September 2026. Given the evolving nature of several situations discussed, delegates should verify recent developments against up-to-date primary sources before the conference.