

MUNSA'25

League of Nations

Agenda Item:

The Abyssinian Crisis

STUDY GUIDE

LEAGUE OF NATIONS



SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS

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Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed participants of the Model United Nations Conference of Sakıp Sabancı Anatolian High School 2025 ,

As Secretary-General, I am deeply privileged to be a part of a conference that upholds the values of education, excellence, and collaboration. Working alongside a team of incredibly talented individuals, I am enthusiastic about organizing an event that truly showcases the essence of our club. Our conference offers a diverse array of committees, including engaging crisis committees and a variety of topics spanning different time periods and regions.

Just like every year, this year's conference is being organized by SSAL MUN Club too. Our club's academic and organizational teams are working tirelessly to bring you the best MUN conference you've ever experienced. We believe that our conference will not only provide you with three unforgettable days but also significantly enhance your academic and personal development.

This year's MUNSA will feature 9 unique committees, each led by a team of passionate people. With that being said, the tenacious team of MUNSA'25, promises to challenge delegates to engage and think critically. Through our General Assembly committees GA1: DISEC and GA3: SOCHUM, two cooperation organizations which are the African Union and League of Nations, the main body and the most important committee of UN which is UNSC, the mysterious Consiglio dei Dieci and two crisis committees which are JCC and HCC; delegates will have access to a broad range of committee forms and topics. From this wide range of options, delegates have the opportunity to find a committee that fits their interests and matches their preferred style of debate.

On behalf of the Sakıp Sabancı Anatolian High School Model United Nations Club and the MUNSA'25 Team, I eagerly anticipate welcoming you all to our conference this September!

Mert Taşcı

Secretary-General, MUNSA 2025

Letter from the Under-Secretaries- General

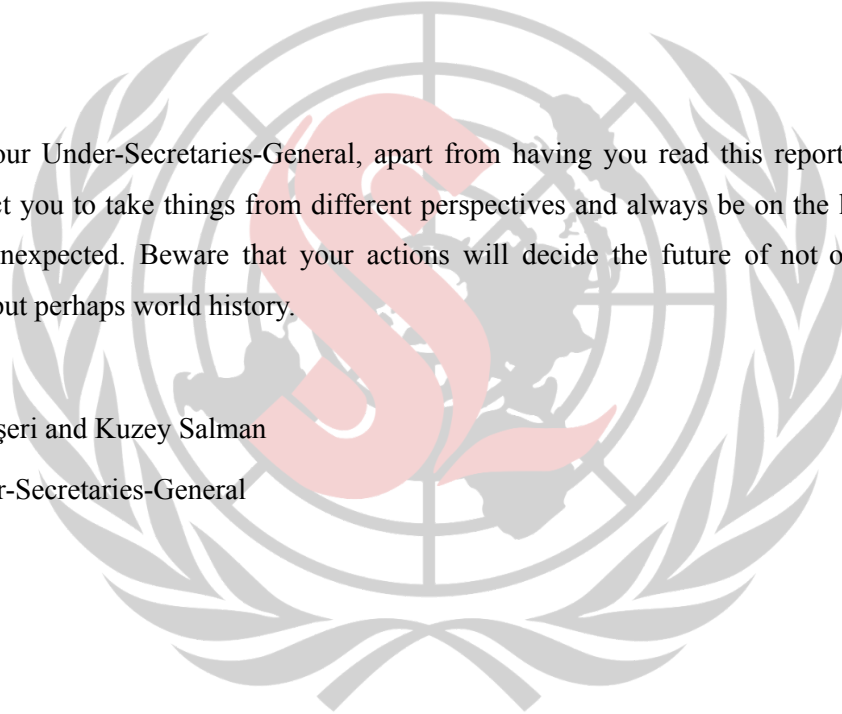
Delegations of the League, let this letter serve you as an executive summary to this report. The question of Abyssinia serves as a turning point in the League's history as it lamented the ineffectiveness of the League, ending its significance in the stage of global affairs.

League of Nations in this iteration of MUNSA is all about testing your ableness in preserving the already-decaying League against the perils that await with the Abyssinian Crisis. Here, do not expect the task given will be a matter of leisurely stroll, but a challenge where any and every expected and unexpected situations will appear just as the norm.

As your Under-Secretaries-General, apart from having you read this report (duh!) we expect you to take things from different perspectives and always be on the lookout for the unexpected. Beware that your actions will decide the future of not only the League, but perhaps world history.

Ege İşeri and Kuzey Salman

Under-Secretaries-General



Key Terms and Definitions

Abyssinia: Former name of Ethiopia.

Horn of Africa: The peninsula located in Africa, contains Ethiopia.

Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928: So-called ‘the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration’, termed 20 years of friendship and access to Aden Gulf and Indian Ocean across Italian territories.

Fourteen Points: The statements demanded for peace negotiations by the US president Woodrow Wilson after the First World War. Offered clear statements of war reasonings and banned closed-diplomacy between countries. Encouraged for armistice and diminishing arms race, and most importantly lead the way to embellishment of a general association of nations, afterwards heralded as League of Nations.

First Italo-Ethiopian War of 1895 First war amongst both parties. Resulted for Italian favour despite their terrible military effort, and Italy secured her first colonies in Horn of Africa, Eritrea and Somalia.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Committee

The League of Nations was the first intergovernmental organisation of the world that remained for implementation of overall peace and prevention of secret or concealed agreements out of public opinion. It was first founded and presented on 10th January 1920 in the Paris Peace Conference by the president of the United States of America, Mr Wilson who was holding the overall army industry economy back in the First World War. Since President Wilson has defined the concepts of peace in order to maintain the tranquil atmosphere after war and to establish an organisation, the remaining nations were quite desperate. Even the UK, Italy, France where both were in the Entente Powers with the United States were obligated to recognise the Fourteen Points by slipping away from their imperialist and colonialist policies. Although the United States did not join the League for self-intrinsics (due to its Congress's refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles). The League of Nations organisation was solving or at least reaching the international problems (including Abyssinian Crisis) in a conclusion for years until the Second World War which was the fundamental inspiration of the United Nations. As the template for modern global governance the League profoundly shaped the modern world.

League of Nations headquarters were based from 1st November 1920 in the Palais Wilson in Geneva, Switzerland, and from 17th February 1936 in the purpose built Palace of Nations, also in Geneva.

The League selected English, French, and Spanish as official languages and English and French as working languages.

The primary goals of League of Nations was including preventing wars through collective security and disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. Its other concerns included labour conditions, just treatment of native inhabitants, human and drug trafficking, the arms trade, global health, prisoners of war, and protection of minorities in Europe. Furthermore, the League of

Nations was based on non- confident world policies, arguments and agreements upon the worldwide public opinion. Therefore, The Covenant of the League of Nations was signed on 28 th June 1919 as Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, and it became effective



with the rest of the Treaty on 10th January 1920. Moreover, Australia was granted the right to participate as an autonomous member nation, marking the start of Australian independence on the global stage. The first meeting of the Council of the League took place on 16 January 1920, and the first meeting of the Assembly of the League took place on 15 November 1920.

When the League of Nations was established, it required some sort of supplements in order to provide world security and to react fleetly to unexpected situations. Most critically, the League lacked its own armed force and depended on the victorious Allied Powers of World War I (Britain, France, Italy and Japan were the initial permanent members of the Council) to enforce its resolutions, keep to its economic sanctions, or provide an army when needed. The Great Powers were often reluctant to do so. Sanctions could hurt League members, so they were reluctant to comply with them.

The League of Nations in the 1934-1935 eras, its number of members extended to 58 countries. After some failures and some great success in the 1920s, the League of Nations failed to prevent aggression of the future Axis Power in the 1930s. Since the United States has never joined the League and the aggression of Japan and Germany in 1933, its credibility to maintain peace was weakened. Furthermore, the League demonstrated an irresolute approach to sanction enforcement for fear it might only spark further conflict, further decreasing its credibility. One historical example is the Abyssinian Crisis where Italy attempted and succeeded in conquest of Abyssinia.

Even though the League failed to achieve its main goal of world peace, it did manage to build new roads towards expanding the rule of law across the globe; strengthened the concept of collective security, gave a voice to smaller nations; fostered economic stabilisation and financial stability, especially in Central Europe in the 1920s; helped to raise awareness of problems such as epidemics, slavery, child labour, colonial tyranny, refugee crises and general working conditions through its numerous commissions and committees; and paved the way for new forms of statehood, as the mandate system put the colonial powers under international observation.

Chapter 2

Introduction to the Agenda Item

2.1 State of East Africa

Italian presence in East Africa dates back to the 1880s with the First ItaloEthiopian War that ended disastrously for the Italians. Nevertheless, Italy had successfully established two colonies in the Horn of Africa which were Eritrea and Somaliland. Since then for the upcoming few decades, tensions between two states have remained relatively stable economic and diplomatic relations.

In 1925, there had been communications between Britain and Italy regarding the spheres of interests of both nations in Eritrea and Somaliland. The communications from the British side had granted the existence of Italian presence in these areas and Ethiopia's foreign affairs. These plans were then presented to Ethiopia which prompted a cry of protest to the League of Nations on 19th June. However, both the British and Italian delegation had the matter dismissed in the League before it could be discussed by claiming the notes to be misconstrued and backing off.

With the fascist rule in Italy dominating Italian politics, governors of the Italian colonies had also begun pursuing policies that would expand the imperial foothold and exploitation. The governor of Italian Eritrea, Jacopo Gasparini, focused on the exploitation of Teseney and an attempt to win over the leaders of the Tigre people against Ethiopia. The governor of Italian Somaliland, Cesare Maria de Vecchi, began a policy of repression that led to the occupation of the fertile Jubaland, and the cessation in 1928 of collaboration between the settlers and the traditional Somali chiefs.

2.2 Walwal Incident

As an aftermath of the cessation in 1928, which is often heralded as ItaloEthiopian Treaty of 1928¹, the border between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland was compromised as 21 leagues parallel to the Banaadir coast. In treaty's background, Italy and the United Kingdom initiated a joint commercial penetration of the Ethiopian Empire. By abusing Ethiopia, Italy intended to seize railways and Britain planned to construct a water irrigation road at the midst of Horn of Africa across Anglo-Sudanese colonies. Ethiopian representative Ras Tafari's yield of an outcry at League of Nations availed to turn British public opinion against the irrigation project, eventually British cancelled the project and left Italians alone in vain.

Both parties approached the treaty for their own will rather than an actual friendship. Whilst Italian governor Duce Benito Mussolini ventured to penetrate Ethiopian economically and implement Italian roads at Horn of Africa to strain Ethiopian commerce, Ethiopian representative Tafari Makonnen wished arbitration to diminish Italian pressure over Ethiopia but never intended to allow Italian pavements from sea to be built. Rather than giving up from his aim, Benito Mussolini eliminated Tafari's suspicion by giving a large Isotta Fraschini limousine, a luxurious Italian product that then sold in the United States for some 18,000 \$.³, along with many other gifts.

On 29 September 1934, Italy and Abyssinia released a joint statement renouncing any aggression against each other. On 22 November 1934, a force of 1,000 Ethiopian militia with three fitaurari⁴ arrived near Walwal and formally asked the Dubats garrison stationed there (comprising about 60 soldiers) to withdraw from the area. The Somali NCO leading the garrison refused to withdraw and alerted Captain Cimmaruta, the commander of the garrison of Uarder, 20 kilometres (12 mi) away, to what had happened. The next day, in the course of surveying the border between British Somaliland and Ethiopia, an Anglo–Ethiopian boundary commission arrived at Walwal. The commission was confronted by a newly arrived Italian force.

The British members of the boundary commission protested but withdrew to avoid an international incident. The Ethiopian members of the boundary commission,

however, stayed at Walwal. From the 5th of December to the 7th, for reasons which have never been clearly determined, there was a skirmish between the garrison of Somalis, who were in Italian service, and a force of armed Ethiopians. According to the

¹ A unit of measurement which was formerly common in Europe and America. Twentyone leagues refer to approximately 118 kilometres.

² One of the most powerful non-imperial titles in Abyssinia, mostly equated to “prince” or “duke”. Abyssinia was ruled by Queen Zewditu I, who was sending Ras as the representative of the empire.

³ Equivalent to 330,000 \$ US in 2024.

⁴ Ethiopian military-political commanders

Italians, the Ethiopians and the Somalis were in an armed conflict. According to the Ethiopians, the Italians attacked them and were supported by two tanks and three aircraft. In the end, approximately 107 Ethiopians and 50 Italians and many Somalis were killed.

Neither side did anything to avoid confrontation; the Ethiopians repeatedly menaced the Italian garrison with the threat of an armed attack, and the Italians sent two planes over the Ethiopian camp. One of them fired a short machine-gun burst, which no one on the ground noticed, after the pilot saw Captain Cimmaruta in the midst of the Ethiopians and thought that he had been taken prisoner by them. On 6 December 1934, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia protested the Italian aggression at Walwal. On 8 December, Italy demanded an apology for Ethiopian aggression, and on 11 December, it followed up that demand with another for financial and strategic compensation.

On 3 January 1935, Ethiopia appealed to the League of Nations for arbitration of the dispute arising from the Walwal incident. However, the League’s response was inconclusive. A subsequent analysis by an arbitration committee of the League of Nations absolved both parties of any culpability from all events.

Shortly after Ethiopia’s initial appeal, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Laval and British Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare met with the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, in Rome. On 7 January 1935, a meeting between Laval and Mussolini resulted in the Franco-Italian Agreement, which gave Italy parts of French Somaliland

(now Djibouti), redefined the official status of Italians in French-held Tunisia and essentially gave Italy a free hand in dealing with Ethiopia. In exchange, France hoped for Italian support against Germany.

On 25 January, five Italian askaris were killed by Ethiopian forces near Walwal. On 23 February, Mussolini began to send large numbers of troops to Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, the Italian colonies that bordered Ethiopia to the northeast and the southeast respectively. There was little international protest in response to the military build-up.

On 8 March, Ethiopia again requested arbitration and noted the Italian military build-up. Three days later, Italy and Ethiopia agreed on a neutral zone in the Ogaden. On 17 March, in response to the continued Italian build-up, Ethiopia again appealed to the League for help. On 22 March, the Italians yielded to pressure from the League to submit to arbitration on the dispute arising from the Walwal incident but continued to mobilise its troops in the region. On 11 May, Ethiopia again protested the ongoing Italian mobilisation.

Between 20 and 21 May, the League held a special session to discuss the crisis in Ethiopia. On 25 May, a League council resolved that it would meet if no fifth arbitrator had been selected by 25 June or if a settlement had not been reached by 25 August. On 19 June, Ethiopia requested neutral observers.

From 23 to 24 June, the United Kingdom tried to quell the crisis by sending Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden to try to broker a peace agreement. The attempt was unsuccessful, and it became clear that Mussolini was intent on conquest. On 25 July, the United Kingdom imposed an embargo on arms sales to both Italy and Ethiopia. Many historians believe that the embargo was a response to Italy's decree that it would view arms sales to Ethiopia as an act of unfriendliness toward Italy, but other observers believe that the United Kingdom was protecting its economic interests in East Africa. The United Kingdom also cleared its warships from the Mediterranean Sea, which allowed Italy further unhindered access to East Africa.

On 26 July, the League confirmed that no fifth member of the arbitration panel had been selected. On 3 August, the League prevented arbitration talks from being held on

the sovereignty of Walwal.

On 12 August, Ethiopia pleaded for the arms embargo to be lifted. On 16 August, France and the United Kingdom offered Italy large concessions in Ethiopia to try to avert war, but Italy rejected the offers. On 22 August, the United Kingdom reaffirmed its commitment to the arms embargo.

On 4 September, the League met again and exonerated Italy and Ethiopia of any culpability in the Walwal incident on the ground that each nation had believed Walwal to be in its own territorial borders. On 10 September, Laval, Eden and even Hoare agreed on limitations to sanctions against Italy.

On 25 September, Ethiopia again asked for neutral observers. On 27 September, the British Parliament supported the initiative of Konni Zilliacus and unanimously authorised the imposition of sanctions against Italy if it continued its policy towards Ethiopia.

2.3 Ethiopian Isolation

Ethiopia was one of the independent countries in the Africa Union during the Scramble for Africa where European colonists were dividing Africa for decades of colonisation. Ethiopia implemented a closed policy during that period. In 1896, Ethiopia won the Adwa War by defeating invader Italy on Ethiopian lands. Therefore, Ethiopia used a limited policy towards the outside countries for a long time until the Abyssinian Crisis. In 1935, while Italy was invading Ethiopia the League of Nations was insufficient to prevent the problem. Britain and France's positioning against German expansionist policies rendered Italy as an ally, hence left Italy on its own when it came to their expansionist policies in the Horn of Africa.

2.4 The Progress of the War and Invasion

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War began on 3 October 1935, when Italian forces under Marshal Emilio De Bono invaded Ethiopia from Eritrea without declaring war. Italy quickly took Adigrat and Adwa by 6 October with its 100,000 men and 25,000 Eritrean troops, employing tanks, aircraft, and superior logistics. Ethiopia's 800,000-man army, led by Emperor Haile Selassie, relied on outmoded weapons and was vastly outnumbered. De Bono's slowness led to his replacement in November 1935 by General Pietro Badoglio, who accelerated the campaign.

Ethiopia launched the Christmas Offensive in December 1935 to cut off Italian supply lines with guerrilla warfare, but Italian air bombing and the use of mustard gas drove back the attack. The fortunes were reversed at the Battle of Maychew in March 1936, when Badoglio's troops routed Haile Selassie's army using chemical weapons and artillery. Meanwhile, General Rodolfo Graziani advanced from Somaliland and captured Harar in April 1936. Addis Ababa fell on May 5, 1936, and Ethiopia was added as Italian East Africa, though resistance lasted until 1941. The war demonstrated the inequality in military power and the League's powerlessness to do anything, as Ethiopian losses varied between 275,000-760,000 compared to 10,000 Italian losses.

Chapter3

Country Positions

3.1 British Empire and her overseas territories

Britain, combined with her colonies and commonwealth states, captures a staggering hold within the political realm of the League. The leading position of Britain therefore puts enormous pressure towards her to act in a stabilising manner. Yet, her politics are mingled from preserving the League to fostering and stabilising her ever-delicate colonial estates, to painstakingly mediate the rise of Hitler's Third Reich and other mainland European policies, to lastly scrap whatever left of a now-broken alliance between France and Italy. It is important to note that her and France's fear of German aggression enabled Italian expansion against Abyssinia.

3.2 Italy

Italy, under Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, initially joined the League in 1920 but increasingly viewed it as an obstacle to its colonial expansionist ambitions. By the 1930s, Italy adopted a confrontational stance, using the Walwal Incident as a pretext to invade Abyssinia while demanding the League recognize it as a 'civilizing mission'. Italy strongly aimed to enlarge her colonial possessions, portraying it as a part of her Mare Nostrum policy, and rejected League sanctions.

3.3 Abyssinia

Abyssinia was one of the independent countries in the Africa Union during the Scramble for Africa where European colonists were dividing Africa for decades of colonisation. Abyssinia implemented a closed policy during that period. In 1896, Ethiopia won the Adwa War by defeating Italy. Hence, she used a limited policy towards the outside countries for a while until the Crisis.

3.4 Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

During the, the Soviet Union adopted a firm stance within the League of Nations, presenting itself as one of the few major powers consistently advocating for collective security. The USSR condemned Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia as an act of aggression and pushed for strong sanctions against Italy, including restrictions on oil exports and arms sales. The Soviets' decolonisation policy regulated the USSR's view upon the conflict. However, Moscow's calls for decisive measures were undermined by Britain and France, who sought to preserve their relations with Italy rather than risk driving it closer to Hitler. Although the Soviet Union's position aligned with the League's stated principles, its influence remained limited; Western powers largely disregarded Soviet proposals, reflecting both mistrust of the USSR and the League's growing impotence in addressing fascist expansion.

3.5 France

France also pursued a policy of appeasement against Italy during the crisis, prioritizing European interests over African interests. In January 1935, Foreign Minister Pierre Laval signed the Franco-Italian Agreement, whereby France granted Italy territorial concessions in French Somaliland and a "free hand" in Ethiopian affairs in exchange for potential Italian help in the event of a German threat. This was an expression of French interests in consolidating its defenses against Nazi Germany by the maintenance of the Stresa Front alliance with Britain and Italy. France supported the League's arms embargo but collaborated on the Hoare-Laval Pact in December 1935 to concede vast Ethiopian territory to Italy— a plan leaked and discarded due to public scandal. Diplomatically, France condemned the invasion verbally but avoided strong implementation of sanctions for fear of pushing Mussolini into the arms of Hitler. This restrained policy contributed to the League's own seal of doom, as France balanced colonial interests within Africa against urgent needs of anti-German alignment within Europe.

3.6 Germany

Germany, under Adolf Hitler, adopted an opportunistic attitude in the Abyssinian Crisis, exploiting the distraction to further its own rearmament and expansionist plans. Never a member of the League since withdrawing in 1933, Germany did not actively act but gained from the distraction of the League, which allowed Hitler to remilitarize the Rhineland in March 1936 without immediate interference.

Motives were to discredit the League and benefit from tensions among Britain, France, and Italy to advance Nazi ambitions. Germany provided Ethiopia with limited weapons at first to extend war and put pressure on Italy but later came to accept Italian hegemony in 1936 as things improved, leading to the Rome-Berlin Axis. Germany stood diplomatically neutral regarding the League and mocked its failure, regarding the crisis as evidence of the disintegration of the post-Versailles system. This was consistent with Hitler's revisionist policies, which aimed Germany to capitalize on the ensuing global confusion.

3.7 United States of America

The United States, after isolationism and non-membership in the League, took a position of neutrality in the crisis but morally condemned Italian aggression.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly condemned the invasion in October 1935, referring to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and implemented the Neutrality Act, which embargoed arms to both combatants. But the U.S. continued to sell oil and other non-combat materials to Italy, propping up the war effort. The motivations lay in domestic public opinion against fascism and imperialism, but economic interest and unwillingness to get involved in European affairs limited action.

Diplomatically, the United States indirectly supported League principles with rhetoric but avoided it, being respectful of policies of isolation following World War I. This avoidance highlighted the fragility of the League in the absence of American support, though Roosevelt's "moral embargo" appeals influenced some private restriction in trade with Italy.

Chapter 4

Questions to be Answered

- How effective were the economic sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations during the Abyssinian Crisis?
- To what extent should the League of Nations have considered military enforcement against aggressor states?
- How should the League have balanced Abyssinia's sovereignty with proposals suggesting its partition or partial occupation?
- In what ways did the actions of colonial powers within the League reflect double standards or hypocrisy during the Abyssinian Crisis?
- What were the long-term implications of the Abyssinian Crisis for the principle of collective security under the League of Nations?
- What roles did Britain and France play in the Abyssinian Crisis, and how did their national interests shape the League's response?
- Did the Abyssinian Crisis highlight a need for structural reform within the League of Nations?

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