

ASK THE CANDIDATES: QUESTIONS ABOUT GLOBAL ISSUES AND THE UN

The leaders we elect in November at the local, state and federal level will all play a role in advancing issues that affect all people everywhere. Whether you are passionate about protecting the planet from the threat of climate change, promoting human rights for all, preserving democracy, ensuring our collective global health security, or maintaining America's leadership role in the world, the candidates need to hear from you. Below are a series of suggested questions that you can ask your candidates at a town hall or debate.

TOPIC: COMMIT TO REMAIN ENGAGED WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE UN

Background: Seventy-five years ago, in the wake of World War II, the international community came together to establish the United Nations, an organization dedicated to preventing war, protecting international peace and security, promoting universal human rights, and spurring cooperation between countries on a range of common economic, health, and humanitarian challenges. The United States played a pivotal role in the UN's creation and has been a key member state ever since. However, over the past four years, the U.S. has accrued more than \$1 billion in debt on our dues to the organization; pulled out of five UN entities; and, most recently, has moved to withdraw from the World Health Organization in the middle of a global pandemic. These actions undermine U.S. credibility and put our national interests at risk.

Question: Do you believe it is important for the U.S. to engage with international organizations like the United Nations? If elected, what will you do to ensure that the U.S. maintains an active seat at the table at these institutions?

TOPIC: DOUBLE DOWN ON THE GLOBAL GOALS

Background: In 2015, the international community came together and agreed on 17 Sustainable Development Goals to help guide international development policies through 2030. Focused on poverty reduction, gender equality, good governance, environmental protection, and access to clean water and food, among other things, the Global Goals are an important "to-do list" as we seek to create a healthier, more equitable, and more stable world. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the global health and economic disruptions it has caused have set back progress on these efforts.

Question: If elected, will you commit to ensuring that the achievement of these goals by 2030 are a priority? How will you work to implement them?

TOPIC: STAND WITH WHO AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Background: Diseases do not recognize borders, so addressing them requires global coordination. Since its founding in 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) has played a critical role in responding to an array of global health challenges—from successfully eradicating smallpox, to combating malaria, polio, and HIV/AIDS, and Ebola—by marshalling the knowledge, will, and resources of the international community. The benefits of this approach can also be seen from the agency's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the outset of the crisis, WHO has been a critical provider

of supplies and tests, distributing 1.5 million diagnostic kits and millions of items of PPE to dozens of countries during the first three months of the pandemic; designed, refined, and distributed technical guidance for communities, hospitals, and public health authorities around the world; carried out public awareness campaigns in dozens of languages in 149 countries; and, through its “Solidarity Trial,” has been working to enable rapid and accurate research on the effectiveness of potential therapeutics. While people around the world—including millions of Americans—stand to benefit from these activities, the Trump Administration has moved to withdraw the U.S. from the WHO.

Question: Do you think it is wise for the U.S. to abandon the WHO in the middle of a global pandemic? Will you speak up and consider reversing course and allowing the U.S. to retain its membership?

TOPIC: PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR KEY CRISES

Background: Yemen continues to experience the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with nearly 80% of the population reliant on some form of aid. UN humanitarian agencies like the World Food Program, UNICEF, and UNFPA are playing a central role in the response, providing food, medical care, clean water, and other lifesaving services to millions of people around the country. The UN is at work in a number of other humanitarian emergencies as well, from Syria and Iraq, to South Sudan, the Sahel region of West Africa, and Venezuela. Unfortunately, these efforts are critically underfunded; the UN’s Yemen response plan for 2020, for example has only received 21% of the funds it requested from member states. The U.S. is the largest contributor to UN humanitarian relief operations in the world, but clearly we can do more.

Question: If elected, what will you do to ensure that vulnerable populations in these countries receive the relief they need in order to survive?

TOPIC: PLEDGE TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION

Background: Communities everywhere continue to experience record-breaking climate impacts—from deadly wildfires to devastating storms. These effects will only worsen without greater climate action. Luckily, the world has a plan to act on the science: the Paris Agreement. Nearly four years ago, 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement, a historic, global action plan to tackle climate change. The agreement gives the world a framework for avoiding dangerous impacts of climate change by “limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.” While the U.S. has begun the withdrawal process from the Agreement at the federal level, across the U.S., local action at the city and county level continues to drive progress on climate change forward.

Question: Do you believe that the U.S. must take action to avert the worst impacts of climate change? How will you do your part to stand by the Paris agreement if elected?

TOPIC: SUPPORT FOR UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Background: UN peacekeeping operations are deployed to conflict zones around the world to separate warring parties, protect civilians, ensure delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance, support free and fair elections, and engage in other activities that contribute to a sustainable peace. While the U.S.—as a permanent, veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council—has final say over the decision to deploy peacekeepers, we contribute almost no troops to these missions (currently less than 30 uniformed personnel out of a total force of more than 80,000). Moreover, UN operations have been found by the Government Accountability Office to be one-eighth the cost of deploying American soldiers. Nevertheless, despite the fact that rs.

Question: Do you believe that UN peacekeeping is an effective tool for mitigating conflict and promoting our national security interests abroad? Truly great nations pay their bills and don't stiff their allies, so what will you do to address the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of debt we've accumulated?

TOPIC: PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Background: Progress in achieving gender equality (Sustainable Development Goal 5) continues to lag behind other areas. Secretary-General Guterres has made it his mission to achieve gender parity at the United Nations but achieving gender equality will take much more work and sustained efforts. From ensuring the right of women to quality healthcare so they have the right to choose the size and timing of their families and are represented in parliaments and the highest level of the private sector to breaking down the systems that kept women and girls from accessing economic systems and free from violence, it will take governments, civil society, faith-leaders, and the private sector all doing their part to ensure we achieve gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals themselves.

Question: Do you believe that gender empowerment and equality needs to be at the center of U.S. foreign policy? How do we make sure women and girls have full access to healthcare, economic empowerment, free from discrimination and violence to achieve a more equitable society?

