



## **The Sultaaric Assembly Background Guide**

Chair: Lahari Sundaresan

Co-Chair: Weston Ma

## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to KNIGHTMUN! My name is Lahari Sundaresan, and I'm currently a junior at North Penn High School. This will be my third year in Model UN and my third time chairing.

I've attended many conferences, including Harvard Model UN India 2024, where I represented Nepal and received the Diplomatic Commendation Award. I also serve as the secretary of my school's Model UN club. MUN has introduced me to so many amazing people and experiences, including a time when a friend and I chaired a group of sixth graders for their social studies assessment.

Outside of MUN, I love to dance, particularly in the classical style of Bharatanatyam that I've been training in for eight years. I usually try to find any opportunity to perform and hone my skills, whether it's in my living room or my school's multicultural celebrations. I also love to paint, though it can get quite messy. Being bilingual, I volunteer through a local religious center where I teach Tamil to younger students interested in learning to speak and write in the language.

I'm especially excited to chair this committee because it's so creative and unique, while also incorporating serious global issues of sanitation and infrastructure. I truly can't wait to see the ideas, debates, and unexpected twists you'll bring to the committee. Whether you're an experienced delegate or this is your first conference, don't be afraid to jump in, have fun, and think outside the box. Good luck preparing, and I can't wait to meet all of you at KNIGHTMUN!

Sincerely,

Lahari Sundaresan

USG of Delegate Affairs

KNIGHTMUN 2026

# THE WORLD OF SULTAAR

## Geography and Climate

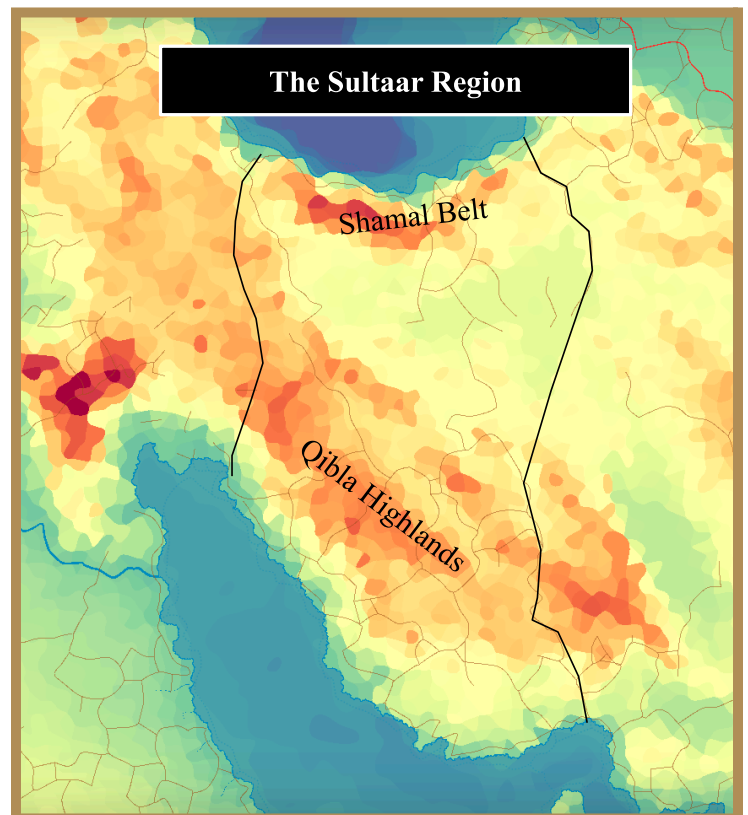
Sultaar is a continent of extremes. Stretching across a vast landmass bracketed by two shallow, saline seas, it is a place where geography has always determined destiny. The interior of the continent is dominated by the Raml al-Kabir, the Great Expanse, a rolling desert of sand, stone, and wind that covers roughly sixty percent of Sultaar's total territory. Temperatures in the Raml al-Kabir regularly reach levels lethal to the unprotected. Water does not fall here. It has not fallen in meaningful quantities for centuries.

The liveable world of Sultaar exists mostly at its margins. Along the northern coast, the Shamal Belt catches seasonal moisture, producing a thin strip of agriculture and dense settlement. In the southwest, the Qibla Highlands rise into cooler elevations where morning condensation gathers on cliff faces and feeds a network of wadis, seasonal rivers that carry water into the lowlands for a few months each year. Between these two productive zones, the continent's interior regions cling to existence through a combination of ancient underground aquifers, engineered infrastructure, and the condensation tower network that has defined Sultaar's political economy for the past four decades.

There are no great rivers in Sultaar. There is no Nile, no Euphrates, no resource so geographically concentrated that a single nation could control the entire supply. What water exists is fragmented, contested, and deeply unequal in its distribution. Some nations sit above aquifer systems that sustain millions. Others receive no natural water at all and depend entirely on infrastructure and trade.

## A Brief History of Water in Sultaar

For most of Sultaar's recorded history, water was a local problem. Settlements were built where water was. Nations that ran dry either collapsed, migrated, or conquered. The pre-Mirai period, roughly everything before the founding of the Assembly four decades ago, was characterized by low-level conflict over



access to aquifers, wadis, and coastal rainfall. Historians of Sultaar call this the Era of the Dry Wars, though most of the conflicts in question were less wars than chronic raids, sieges, and blockades that simmered for generations without resolution.

The technological breakthrough that changed everything was the development of the Atmospheric Condensation Tower in the workshops of the Engineers' Guild, a group of scholars and craftspeople based in what is now the Tarqeen Directorate. The first working tower was demonstrated in the year 1473, the beginning of the Mirai-era. It was a simple concept: a tall latticed structure coated in material that drew moisture from the atmosphere, condensed it, and channelled it downward into collection basins. Alone, a single tower produced modest quantities. Networked across a region, the towers could sustain significant populations in places that had no other source of water.

The technology spread rapidly, driven partly by trade and partly by political pressure. Nations that could not afford to develop their own towers either purchased access from those that could, or signed treaties that gave them a share of regional tower output in exchange for political and economic concessions. Within twenty years of the first tower's demonstration, the condensation network had become the backbone of Sultaar's water supply, and the question of who governed that network had become the central question of regional politics.

### **The Mirai Accord**

The Mirai Accord was signed forty-one years ago in the city of Mirai, a coastal trading hub on the Shamal Belt that had served as a neutral meeting point for Sultaar's competing powers for centuries. It was, by any measure, a remarkable achievement. After two years of negotiations involving representatives from nineteen nations, the Accord established the Sultaaric Assembly

as an international body with jurisdiction over the condensation tower network, created a framework for shared maintenance obligations, set pricing rules for water distribution, and established the principle that access to condensation output was a right of all Assembly members, not merely those wealthy or powerful enough to control towers directly.

The Mirai Accord closely mirrors the dynamics of international environmental and resource treaties such as the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the Nile Basin Initiative. In each case, international agreements built on goodwill and shared interest have struggled with enforcement, free-riding, and the tensions between national sovereignty and collective obligation. Delegates may draw on the history of these instruments when debating the future of the Mirai Framework.

The Accord's architects were idealistic, and the document reflects that idealism. It speaks of water as a shared inheritance of the Sultaari peoples. It includes language about equity, about the special obligations of well-watered nations toward those less fortunate, and about the collective responsibility of all

signatories to maintain the infrastructure on which everyone depends. It also contains, as its critics have always noted, almost no enforcement mechanisms. The Accord assumed good faith. It assumed that the nations of Sulaar, having seen what unchecked water competition produced, would choose cooperation. For roughly two decades, that assumption held.

## **The Long Decline**

The breakdown of the Mirai Framework was a decades-long erosion, driven by a combination of demographic pressure, technological stagnation, political competition, and the chronic underfunding of shared infrastructure that occurs when no single actor bears the full cost of neglect.

The first signs appeared roughly fifteen years ago, when independent assessments of the condensation tower network began reporting widespread maintenance deficits. Towers built in the Accord's early years were aging without systematic replacement. The hydrophilic coatings that made the towers function degraded over time and required periodic renewal; in many regions, renewal schedules had slipped years behind. Structural components showed metal fatigue. Collection basins in several regions reported contamination from cracking distribution pipes. The Assembly's Technical Secretariat produced report after report documenting these deficiencies. The reports were acknowledged, discussed, and largely ignored.

The political reasons for the neglect were not difficult to identify. Wealthy nations with secure natural water supplies had little immediate incentive to fund costly repairs on towers that primarily served poorer regions. Nations that relied heavily on tower output lacked the resources to fund repairs themselves and lacked the political leverage to compel wealthier states to contribute. The Accord's cost-sharing formula, written for a different era and a smaller network, had never been updated and was regarded by most participants as outdated, but no consensus existed on what should replace it.

The decline accelerated roughly five years ago when three major tower clusters in the interior of the continent went into what the Technical Secretariat termed critical degradation, a polite phrase for the practical cessation of significant output. The populations dependent on those clusters did not disappear. They moved. The resulting displacement, involving hundreds of thousands of people over several years, created the first significant water refugee populations in Sultaar's modern history and introduced a dimension of human suffering to what had previously been treated as a technical and financial problem.

Today, the Assembly convenes in a moment of genuine crisis. Roughly thirty percent of the condensation tower network is operating at below half capacity. Seven towers have gone entirely dark. The water refugees of the interior have become a continental issue, with receiving

nations struggling to absorb arrivals and some beginning to close their borders. Bilateral water deals struck outside the Accord framework are proliferating, creating a patchwork of private arrangements that further undermine collective governance. And the old Accord, written forty-one years ago in a different world, offers no clear path forward.

## REGIONS OF SULTAAR

For the purposes of the Sultaaric Assembly, Sultaar's nations are organized into five regional groupings. These groupings reflect shared interests, historical relationships, and geographic proximity. They are not permanent alliances. Nations within a region may agree on some questions and disagree sharply on others.

### **The Shamal Region**

The Shamal Compact consists of the four largest and wealthiest nations on Sultaar's northern coast: the Tarqeen Directorate, the Sultanate of Kassaran, the Bosphali Republic, and the Free City of Mirai. These nations collectively control the majority of Sultaar's industrial capacity, the original home of condensation tower technology, the continent's most important trading port, and the largest natural water reserves accessible from the Shamal Belt's seasonal rainfall.

The Tarqeen Directorate, as the birthplace of condensation technology, has a complex stake in the network's future: It profits from tower maintenance contracts, fears losing that revenue if the network collapses or is replaced, and aims to avoid being blamed for the network's current failures. Kassaran is wealthy, conservative, and fundamentally skeptical of any framework that obliges it to subsidize poorer nations' water access; its negotiating position historically emphasizes national sovereignty and market-based water pricing. The Bosphali Republic is more progressive and has historically been an advocate for stronger collective governance, though its enthusiasm for funding redistribution is tempered by its own fiscal pressures. Mirai, as the Accord's founding city and the Assembly's permanent host, has a symbolic and institutional stake in the survival of some form of multilateral framework, whatever its other interests.

### **The Interior Region**

The interior region is the largest grouping by number of nations, comprising eight mid-sized states spread across the transitional zones between the desert and the productive margins. These nations, which include the Emirate of Harafan, the Duranni Confederation, the three city-states of the Wadi Corridor, and the twin republics of Salim and Qaseem, are the

countries most directly dependent on the condensation tower network and most severely affected by its decline.

Interior nations vary significantly in their specific circumstances. Harafan and the Duranni Confederation have significant populations and some natural resources, giving them genuine political weight but also real financial strain. The Wadi Corridor city-states are small, economically specialized, and acutely vulnerable; their entire existence depends on functioning towers. Salim and Qaseem have historically been rivals for regional influence within the League and bring competing visions of what water governance should look like.

What unites the Interior League is a shared conviction that the current system is failing them specifically and that whatever replaces it must include stronger guarantees of access, binding maintenance obligations, and some form of redistribution from water-rich nations. They are the natural constituency for a strong, enforceable international framework. Their challenge is that they lack the resources to build that framework on their own and must convince wealthier nations to accept constraints on their own behavior.

### **The Qibla Highlands**

The Qibla Highlands represent the five nations of Sultaar's southern elevation zone: the Highland Republic of Atham, the Principalities of Zafar, the Idrisi Confederation, and the two border territories of Jabal and Wadi Safra. These nations have a unique geographic position. The Qibla Highlands receive significantly more natural moisture than the rest of Sultaar's interior, and the wadi systems that flow from the highlands carry water into the lowlands during the seasonal rains. This gives Highlands Pact nations a degree of water independence unusual in Sultaar.

The Highlands members have historically been ambivalent about the condensation tower system. They neither created it nor depended on it as heavily as the Interior League. Their concern is different: The wadis that flow from their highlands cross international borders, and downstream nations have repeatedly sought to formalize claims on that water through the Accord's framework. The Highlands have resisted any move to bring naturally occurring water flows under Assembly jurisdiction, insisting that the Accord covers only artificial condensation output. This distinction, which downstream nations regard as self-serving, is a significant fault line in Assembly politics.

### **The Dust Region**

The Dust Region is a political grouping that emerged within the Assembly roughly fifteen years ago as the condensation network began its decline. Its four members, the territories

of Ramlat, the Nafud Collective, Sirocco, and the Barren Reaches, share a single defining characteristic: they have no significant natural water sources and the towers serving their regions have suffered the most severe degradation. These are the nations producing the water refugees now crossing Sultaar's borders.

The Dust Nations are the weakest actors in the Assembly by almost every conventional measure. They have small economies, limited military capacity, and negligible leverage in bilateral negotiations. What they have is the political and moral weight of a visible humanitarian crisis. Their populations are suffering in ways that are difficult to ignore and impossible to deny. Their strategy at the Assembly is necessarily one of coalition-building and moral appeal: they need wealthier nations to act out of either genuine solidarity or the practical recognition that unmanaged water refugee flows will eventually become everyone's problem.



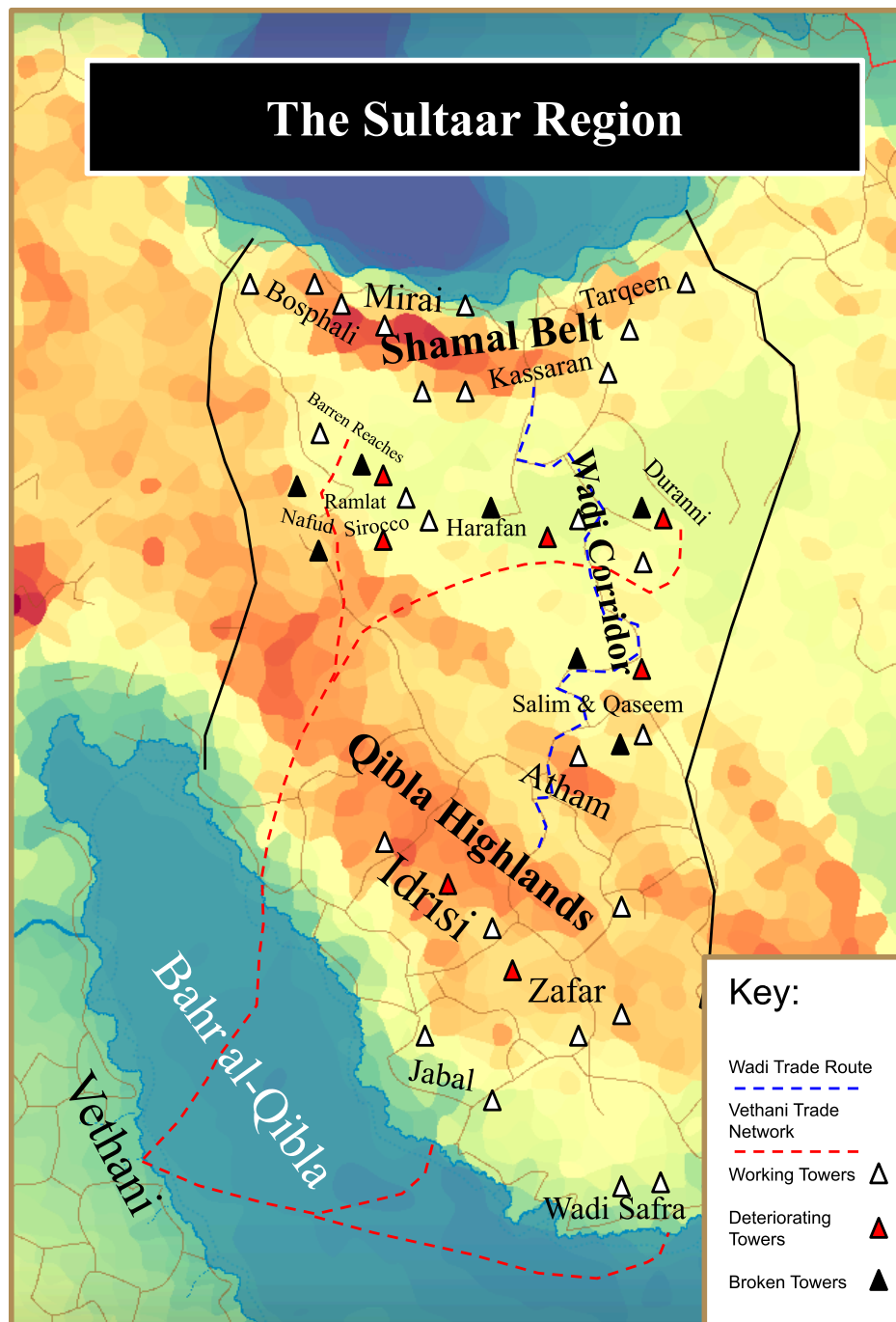
### The Vethani Delegation

The Vethani Dominion is not a member of the Sultaaric Assembly. It is a powerful external state located across the Bahr al-Qibla, the southern sea, whose interest in Sultaar's water crisis is a matter of significant controversy. The Vethani have been granted status at this session of the Assembly at the request of several interior nations that have entered into bilateral water and infrastructure agreements with Vethani commercial entities.

The Vethani presence divides the Assembly. Some nations welcome Vethani investment in new

The Vethani Dominion mirrors the role of external powers and multilateral lenders in developing regions, particularly the dynamics of Chinese Belt and Road infrastructure investment in Africa and Central Asia, or the conditions historically attached to IMF and World Bank lending. The tension between the practical benefits of external capital and the strategic costs of dependency is directly analogous to real-world debates about development finance.

condensation infrastructure as a practical solution to a crisis that the Assembly has failed to address on its own. Others regard Vethani involvement as a form of economic penetration, pointing to the conditions attached to Vethani water infrastructure loans, which typically include preferential trade terms, long-term operational control of the towers built with Vethani financing, and dispute resolution mechanisms that favour Vethani commercial interests. The question of what role, if any, external powers and private capital should play in Sultaar's water governance is one of the Assembly's most contentious open questions.



## THE ISSUE BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY

### Infrastructure Collapse and the Maintenance Question

The condensation tower network requires continuous maintenance to function. The hygroscopic materials that enable atmospheric water capture degrade over time. Structural components age. Distribution pipelines crack. None of this is surprising or unprecedented; every piece of engineered infrastructure requires upkeep. What is unprecedented in Sultaar is the scale of accumulated neglect and the absence of any agreed mechanism to address it.

The Mirai Accord's original maintenance framework assigned responsibility to the nation in whose territory each tower is physically located, with a cost-sharing formula that obligated all Assembly members to contribute to a central maintenance fund proportional to their water consumption. That formula was never revised. Today it produces a fund that covers approximately twenty-two percent of actual maintenance costs, according to the Technical

The maintenance funding gap in Sultaar mirrors real-world failures of collective infrastructure governance, including the chronic underfunding of UN peacekeeping operations, the COVAX vaccine distribution mechanism's reliance on voluntary contributions, and the failure of developed nations to meet their \$100 billion annual climate finance pledge made at Copenhagen in 2009. In each case, shared infrastructure that benefits all parties is inadequately funded because the costs of contribution are immediate and the costs of neglect are diffuse and deferred.

Secretariat's most recent estimate. The gap is filled, when it is filled at all, by impulsive bilateral arrangements, deferred repairs, and in some regions, nothing.

### Water Inequality and the Distribution

The Mirai Framework was designed to guarantee all Assembly members access to condensation output. In practice, access has always been unequal, and the inequality has widened steadily over the four decades since the Accord was signed. Nations in the Shamal region consume, on average, roughly four times the water per capita of nations in the Dust Nation Caucus, after accounting for condensation output, natural sources, and bilateral purchases. That gap reflects a combination of geographic advantage, economic power, and the cumulative effect of investment decisions that have systematically directed resources toward already well-watered regions.

The current crisis has sharpened these inequalities. As towers degrade and output falls, the reductions have not been distributed equally. Nations with the political and economic leverage to secure maintenance of the towers serving them have maintained relatively stable supplies. Nations without that leverage, predominantly the Interior and Dust Nation members,

have absorbed disproportionate cuts. The result is a situation in which the nations least responsible for the network's decline and least capable of absorbing shortfalls are experiencing the greatest impact.

The water inequality debate in Sultaar directly mirrors global debates about climate justice, development finance, and the obligations of wealthy nations toward those suffering the consequences of systemic failures they did not primarily cause. The concept of common but differentiated responsibilities, central to the Paris Agreement and other environmental frameworks, is directly applicable here. Delegates should also consider the IMF's special drawing rights allocation debates, the TRIPS waiver on COVID vaccines, and historical arguments about debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries.

### **Commodification and the Role of Private Interests**

The proliferation of bilateral water deals struck outside the Accord framework is one of the most significant developments of the past decade. As the Assembly's collective framework has failed to deliver adequate water security, individual nations have turned to alternative arrangements: direct purchase agreements with Shamal nations, infrastructure partnerships with Vethani commercial entities, and in some cases, contracts with private water brokers who operate entirely outside any international oversight.

The trend toward commodification of water, toward treating it as a good traded on market terms rather than a shared resource governed by collective obligation, is viewed very differently by different Assembly members. For nations with water to sell, bilateral deals are economically advantageous and preserve their freedom of action. For nations purchasing water on the open market, the arrangements provide short-term security but at significant long-term cost in both financial terms and political dependency. For the poorest nations who cannot afford market prices, the trend toward commodification is simply exclusion.

The Vethani infrastructure agreements add a further dimension. The towers built under Vethani financing are technically the most modern in Sultaar. They function better than the aging Accord-era infrastructure. But their operation is controlled by Vethani commercial entities under long-term lease agreements, and the water they produce is sold at prices that reflect commercial rather than

The commodification question mirrors real debates about water privatization, including controversies over private water concessions in Bolivia in the late 1990s, the role of private utilities in water management in sub-Saharan Africa, and the broader tension between market mechanisms and public goods provision. The Vethani model specifically resembles discussions about Chinese infrastructure investment in Africa and the Indo-Pacific, including debates about port agreements, strategic asset acquisition, and the long-term sovereignty implications of infrastructure dependency.

humanitarian logic. Nations that have entered these agreements have better water security than before. They have also surrendered a degree of sovereignty over critical infrastructure that is difficult to recover.

## **Governance Legitimacy and the Question of a New Framework**

The Mirai Accord is forty-one years old. The world it was written for no longer exists. The number of Assembly members has grown. The condensation network is six times larger than it was at the Accord's signing. The demographic and economic weight of different regions has shifted substantially. New technologies exist, both for water production and for the monitoring and enforcement of international commitments, that the Accord's architects could not have anticipated. And the Accord's core mechanisms – its cost-sharing formulas, its dispute resolution procedures, and its definition of member obligations – have not been substantively revised since the document was signed.

The result is a governance framework that almost no one defends as adequate. But agreement on the inadequacy of the current system does not produce agreement on what should replace it.

The governance legitimacy debate parallels discussions about reforming the United Nations Security Council, the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, the International Monetary Fund's voting structure, and the design of enforcement mechanisms in the Paris Agreement. In each case, the tension between effectiveness and sovereignty, between the power to act and the consent of the governed, has defined what international institutions can and cannot do.

## **Questions to Consider**

### **On Infrastructure and Maintenance**

- I. Who bears financial responsibility for maintaining the condensation tower network, and on what basis should costs be allocated?
- II. Should the Assembly establish a central operational body with direct authority over tower maintenance, or should responsibility remain with individual member states?
- III. What happens to nations that cannot meet their maintenance obligations? Should there be relief mechanisms, and what conditions should attach to them?
- IV. How should the Assembly address towers built under external financing agreements, particularly those where operational control is held by non-member entities?

### **On Distribution and Equity**

- I. Should the Assembly establish binding minimum water access standards for all member states, and if so, who enforces them?
- II. What obligations do water-surplus nations have toward nations experiencing shortfalls? Are those obligations legal, moral, or purely voluntary?

- III. How should the Assembly address the water refugees already displaced by infrastructure failure? What resettlement, compensation, or support obligations exist?
- IV. Should the new framework include any form of water pricing reform, and if so, how can pricing serve equity goals rather than undermining them?

### **On Commodification and External Actors**

- I. Should bilateral water deals struck outside the Accord framework be brought within Assembly oversight, restricted, or left to national discretion?
- II. What role, if any, should private entities and external powers play in Sultaar's water infrastructure? Under what conditions, and with what safeguards?
- III. How should the Assembly balance the practical benefits of external investment with the sovereignty risks of infrastructure dependency?

### **On Governance and Enforcement**

- I. Should a new framework include enforcement mechanisms, and if so, what form should they take? Sanctions? Dispute resolution bodies? Independent monitoring?
- II. How should voting and decision-making within the Assembly be structured to reflect both the principle of sovereign equality and the reality of unequal stakes?
- III. Is the Mirai Accord worth reforming, or does the Assembly need an entirely new foundational document?
- IV. How does the Assembly build a framework that will actually be complied with, given the history of non-compliance with the current one?

## **A Final Word**

The crisis before the Sultaaric Assembly is serious. The nations of Sultaar are arguing about whether millions of people will have water to drink, about who bears the cost of a collective failure, and about what international governance is actually capable of delivering when it is genuinely needed. These are not questions with clean answers, and no resolution this committee produces will satisfy everyone.

What the best resolutions will share is seriousness of purpose, specificity of mechanism, and honesty about trade-offs. It is not enough to call for equity without specifying what it requires of wealthy nations. It is not enough to demand enforcement without designing enforcement mechanisms that states will actually accept. It is not enough to invoke the common heritage of Sultaar without grappling with the reality that some members of that common heritage have benefited far more from the current system than others.

Come prepared. The Assembly is waiting.