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Economic and Social Council Plenary Background Guide 2020

Written by: Daniel Sweeney and Diego Padilla Mata, Directors
Jeffrey A. Hutchison and Allison Uhrick, Assistant Directors



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www.nmun.org • info@nmun.org • 612.353.5649

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Plenary. This year's staff is: Directors Daniel Sweeney (Conference A) and Diego Padilla (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Jeff Hutchison (Conference A) and Allison Uhrick (Conference B). Daniel will receive his Master's in International Development Studies in December 2019 and works in academic programs at the George Washington University. Diego is a biochemistry student with an interest in molecular biology. He is currently living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area, California. Jeff has a Bachelor's Degree in Geography with a Concentration in Global Studies, and works for local government in the Inland Empire. Allison holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and International Affairs from Stockton University. She plans to pursue a Master's Degree in Public Policy next fall.

The topics under discussion for the Economic and Social Council Plenary are:

1. 20-Year Review: UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
2. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020
3. Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System

As a principal organ of the United Nations, ECOSOC coordinates the activities of 14 specialized agencies, 13 regional and functional commissions, and over 3,900 civil society actors by commissioning studies and reports, monitoring the implementation of activities and initiatives, and encouraging cooperation and coherence among policy actions. In addition, ECOSOC coordinates funding mechanisms and takes the lead role in formulating policy goals and frameworks for short and long-term programs. ECOSOC is also the body primarily responsible for ensuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including hosting the annual High-Level Political Forum most years.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2020 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the ECOSOC Department, Aiskell Roman (Conference A) and Marleen Schreier (Conference B), at usg.ecosoc@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

Conference A

Daniel Sweeney, *Director*

Jeff Hutchison, *Assistant Director*

Conference B

Diego Padilla, *Director*

Allison Uhrick, *Assistant Director*

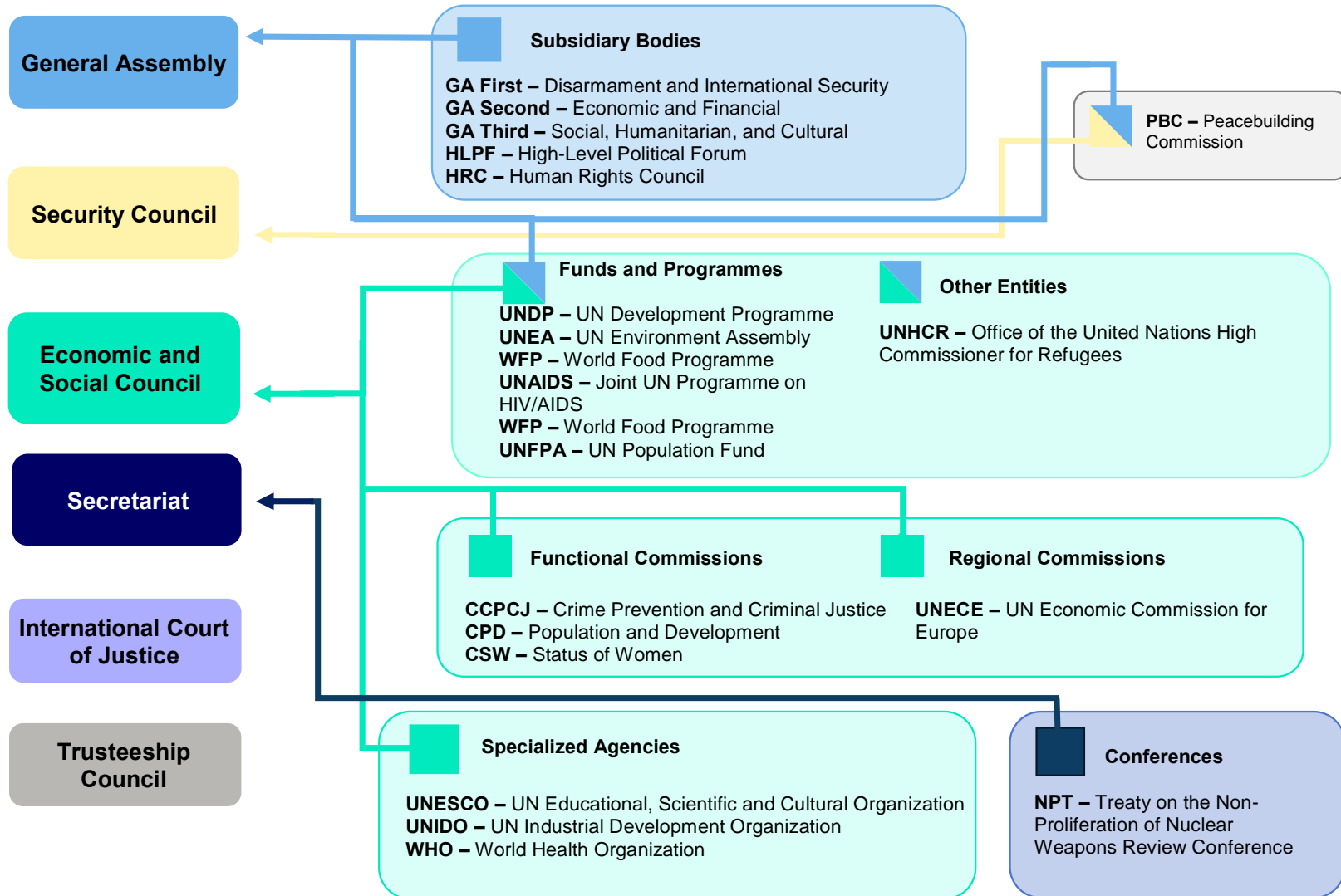


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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

Chapter X of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a founding body and one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN).¹ ECOSOC indirectly oversees the allocation of approximately 70% of UN resources through its oversight of 12 specialized agencies and 13 functional and regional commissions.² The Council is mandated to serve as the primary body for policy dialogue on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health-related topics; to advise and coordinate the activities of Member States and other UN entities on matters within this mandate; and to lead discussion on the implementation of the international development framework.³

ECOSOC has undergone several reforms since its inception. In the 1960s and 1970s, developing Member States worked to broaden the agenda of the UN and bring focus to new areas, including the promotion of development and the elimination of poverty.⁴ In 1971, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 2847(XXVI), which sought to amend Article 61 of the *Charter of the United Nations* to increase ECOSOC membership from 27 to 54 in order to better reflect the UN's economic and geographic diversity.⁵ The amendment became operative in 1973 after a sufficient number of Member States had ratified the document.⁶ In 1977, the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/197 to address the "Restructuring of economic and social sectors of the United Nations System" and to improve ECOSOC's effectiveness by increasing coordination with its subsidiary bodies.⁷ To avoid any duplication of work due to broad mandates, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/227 in 1995, clarifying that its role is to provide policy guidance while ECOSOC's focus is on coordination of implementation.⁸ This interpretation was reinforced by General Assembly resolution 57/270 in 2002.⁹

Throughout the last decade, the General Assembly implemented additional reforms aimed at strengthening the working methods of ECOSOC.¹⁰ These reforms included an expansion of ECOSOC's functions and powers to enable it to take the lead on identifying and discussing emerging challenges; to act as a policy forum for global leaders, especially concerning the integration of sustainable development efforts; and to provide a platform of accountability for all levels of monitoring and reporting on universal commitments.¹¹ An important example of this is ECOSOC's commitment to engaging the youth in a partnership focused on ensuring the successful attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹² This partnership began when the 2010-2011 Year of Youth prompted the first ECOSOC sanctioned Youth Forum in 2012, which successfully engaged the youth and brought to light issues like unemployment for the younger generation.¹³ The success of the first sanctioned youth forum has now resulted in a more structured and thorough annual

¹ UN ECOSOC, *About ECOSOC*.

² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945; Educational Broadcasting Corporation, *Kofi Annan – Center of the Storm: Who Does What?*, 2016.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Rosenthal, *The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*, 2005, p. 20.

⁵ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2018.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)*, 2013.

¹¹ UN ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods*, 2014.

¹² UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

¹³ *Ibid.*

forum.¹⁴ In 2018, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/305 reiterating that ECOSOC “should be guided by the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, and flexibility.”¹⁵

Governance, Structure, and Membership

ECOSOC is comprised of 54 Member States, each of which is elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.¹⁶ The members are elected according to the geographical distribution of UN Member States that are meant to ensure representation from all regions and levels of development; seats are allocated to each of the following five regional groups of states: 14 to African, 11 to Asia and the Pacific, six to Eastern European, ten to Latin American and Caribbean, and 13 to Western European and Others Group.¹⁷ ECOSOC proceedings are overseen by a President, Vice-President, and Rapporteur, in tandem with a Bureau consisting of the President and four Vice-Presidents.¹⁸ All of these representatives are elected to one-year terms at the outset of each session.¹⁹ The Bureau is responsible for setting ECOSOC’s agenda, devising action plans, and collaborating with the Secretariat on administrative duties.²⁰ ECOSOC’s presidency rotates among the regional groups.²¹ The current Council President is Mona Juul, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway, who was elected on July 25 of 2019.²²

Each year, ECOSOC meets for one organizational session, which typically takes place anytime between February and July, and one substantive session, which usually occurs in mid-July.²³ Organizational sessions are dedicated to administrative aspects, such as agenda setting and elections to the Bureau.²⁴ During substantive sessions, meetings are divided into five segments, the High-Level Segment, the Coordination Segment, the Operational Activities Segment, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, and the General Segment, with each focusing on separate thematic aspects of the Council’s work.²⁵

ECOSOC oversees 14 subsidiary bodies and forums that hold their own sessions and provide recommendations, draft resolutions, and annual reports to the Council and, in some cases, to other bodies.²⁶ The two most common types of subsidiary bodies are functional, which focus on specific issues, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, and regional commissions that focus on geopolitical topics, such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.²⁷ Other subsidiary bodies include standing, ad hoc, expert, and other related bodies.²⁸ Each subsidiary body has adopted specific methods of work to align with its mandate, and methods are updated regularly.²⁹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 68/1 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/72/305)*, 2018, p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3; UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Members*.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 68/1 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/72/305)*, 2018, p. 3; UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Members; Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

¹⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*, 1992.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Bureau*.

²¹ Ibid.

²² UN ECOSOC, *President of ECOSOC*, 2019.

²³ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶ UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Functional Commissions*, 2014.

²⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 7.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The *Charter of the United Nations* mandates that ECOSOC “may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters,” including human rights and freedoms, to present to the General Assembly and to UN specialized agencies.³⁰ ECOSOC may also provide information and assist the Security Council when addressing humanitarian crises, such as in natural disaster response.³¹ Most recently, a special meeting was convened in April 2019 to respond to Cyclone Idai and the negative impact it may have on progress made towards SDGs in the affected countries.³² As emphasized by recent reforms accentuating this role, ECOSOC also provides coordination, monitoring, and advice to UN programs, agencies, and funds on international development policies and their implementation.³³ To further allow for coordination, a 2007 reform of ECOSOC established the High-Level Segment, an annual meeting that brings together representatives from governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society to discuss development cooperation.³⁴

In addition to overseeing its subsidiary bodies, ECOSOC’s mechanisms allow for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to consult on the work of the UN.³⁵ There are more than 3,900 NGOs that have been granted ECOSOC consultative status, allowing them to attend and participate in various UN meetings, conferences, and special sessions and participate in international discussions.³⁶ Applications for consultative status are considered by ECOSOC’s Committee on NGOs, which was established in 1946 and is comprised of 19 Member States.³⁷ The Committee on NGOs directly reports to ECOSOC on the procedural and substantive matters raised by NGOs.³⁸ ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 of 1996 defines the principles, eligibility requirements, rules, procedures, obligations, and responsibilities for NGOs and the UN in establishing the consultative relationship.³⁹ In the latest report from the June 2019 session, the Committee granted consultative status to 219 NGOs, deferred an additional 198 NGOs for consideration in 2020, and reviewed quadrennial reports of suspended NGOs, which resulted in the reinstatement of 37 organizations and the removal of 115 organizations.⁴⁰

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Beginning with the Operational Activities Segment, from 21-23 May 2019, several ECOSOC subsidiary organs, including the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Forum for Financing and Development, reflected on the Council’s focus on a united global approach of repositioning the UN development system and strategies for achieving the SDGs by 2030.⁴¹ The biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) met most recently for the 6th time from 21-22 May 2018, with discussions placing additional emphasis on future action and policy to assist economically and socially vulnerable peoples.⁴² On 20 March 2019, DCF held a minor event to discuss policy innovations

³⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

³¹ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*, 2016.

³² UN ECOSOC, *Presidential Statement on the Occasion of the ECOSOC Special Meeting Response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, 2019.

³³ UN ECOSOC, *Progress in the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 67/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (E/RES/2013/5)*, 2013, p. 1; UN ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods*, 2014.

³⁴ UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)*, 2006.

³⁵ UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ UN DESA, *Committee on NGOs Convenes for First Session of 2014*, 2014; UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*; UN ECOSOC, *Consultative Relationship between the United Nations and Non-governmental Organizations (E/RES/1996/31)*, 1996, pp. 53-61.

⁴⁰ UN DGC, *Concluding Session, Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations Recommends Status for 219 Groups, Adopts Report Containing 2020 Meeting Schedule*, 2019.

⁴¹ UN ECOSOC, *2019 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2019.

⁴² UN ECOSOC, *6th Biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum*, 2018.

through South-South and triangular cooperation by looking into tax cooperation strategies and resource mobilization, as well as developing better disaster risk reduction strategies.⁴³

The 2019 Partnerships Forum showcased the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms that could be used to more effectively implement SDGs.⁴⁴ From 15-18 April 2019, the Forum on Financing for Development met to review the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (2015) on financing sustainable development.⁴⁵ The resulting report recommended three pillars of action: facilitate the use of all financial resources including innovative options at all levels, improve and align incentives for public and private actors with sustainable development, and operationalize financial frameworks.⁴⁶ Following the most recent Humanitarian Affairs Segment, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2019/L.6 on “strengthening humanitarian action: next steps to advance localization and engage communities for a more inclusive and effective humanitarian response,” (2019) which calls for humanitarian agencies to strengthen preparedness, humanitarian response times, and to focus on resilience in at-risk communities.⁴⁷

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held its 18th session from 22 April – 3 May 2019 to address ways to increase indigenous peoples participation and implement the UN system-wide plan of action for indigenous peoples.⁴⁸ On 8 July 2019, the UN Headquarters hosted the 2019 Integration Segment and focused on its theme of “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.”⁴⁹ The 2019 High-Level Segment, held on 19 July, continued with the theme and concluded that there was a need for universal social protection measures and mechanisms to encourage participation and protect those exercising their rights.⁵⁰

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) serves as a space in which the international system can review progress on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and provides governments an opportunity to discuss their efforts.⁵¹ The 2019 HLPF reviewed progress made on SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reducing inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).⁵² During the HLPF, the UN Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake, stressed the importance of including youth, which is now the most educated and “globally-minded in history,” in order to realize the goals set in the 2030 Agenda.⁵³

Many Member States presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the 2019 HLPF, which in turn revealed that the all Member States may benefit from expanding the time allotted to discussing the outcomes of the VNRs.⁵⁴ Many Member States expressed the need to shift the global approach towards SDGs, so as to ensure that no country is left struggling to meet the goals set by the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁵ On

⁴³ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting the Strategic Role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve the 2030 Agenda*, 2019.

⁴⁴ UN ECOSOC, *2019 Partnerships Forum*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Development Cooperation Forum*, 2019.

⁴⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Follow-up and Review of the Financing for Development Outcomes and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/FFDF/2019/3)*, 2019.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ UN ECOSOC, *2019 Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Theme for the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the 2019 Session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2019/L.6)*, 2019.

⁴⁸ UN DESA, *18th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, 2019.

⁴⁹ UN ECOSOC, *2019 Integration Segment: Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality*, 2019.

⁵⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2019/65)*, 2019.

⁵¹ UN ECOSOC, *Compilation of Main Messages for the 2018 Voluntary National Reviews (E/HLPF/2018/5)*, 2018.

⁵² UN DESA, *High-Level Political Forum 2019 Under the Auspices of ECOSOC*, 2019.

⁵³ Envoy of Youth, *2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

⁵⁴ UN DESA, *Lessons Learned from the first cycle of the HLPF and Messages for 2019 HLPF Summit: What should Heads of State and Government Know and how can we Improve the HLPF?*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Expert Group Meeting Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*, 2019.

⁵⁵ UN DESA, *Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the HLPF and Messages for 2019 HLPF Summit: What Should Heads of State and Government Know and how can we Improve the HLPF?*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Expert*

23 September 2019 the Global Climate Action Summit took place followed by the SDG Summit on 24-25 September 2019 in New York where several Member States came forward and presented viable plans of action to implement the SDGs by 2030 and help Member States to significantly reduce greenhouse gas and CO₂ emissions over the next decade.⁵⁶

Conclusion

ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating activities and programs through the expansive UN system towards the ultimate goal of sustainable development.⁵⁷ The Council has demonstrated a commitment to mobilizing resources and building efforts to address key priority issues, including the promotion of development and the formation and maintenance of international partnerships, such as partnerships with business entities for the purpose of funding development initiatives.⁵⁸ It has also collaborated with other UN entities to promote progress on development frameworks and the SDGs while also becoming a global platform for youth to contribute to sustainability discussions.⁵⁹ The Council's President Juul stated during her July 2019 inauguration that her priorities are to provide more predictable funding for the body, as well as more accountability and transparency, as it is her belief that the committee's credibility depends on the value for people and therefore should secure a future with fact-based and action-oriented initiatives.⁶⁰

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http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunc/pdf14/the_new_ecosoc_31_march_2014.pdf

This report details the reforms adopted by the General Assembly on the work of ECOSOC in 2013. Particularly, these reforms enhanced the role of the Council as a leader in policy dialogues and recommendations; introduced the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development; created a platform for accountability for universal commitments, monitoring and reporting on progress; and emphasized the need for greater cooperation among development agencies. This source will be helpful for delegates as this report summarizes the ways ECOSOC has planned to implement these reforms and follow through on creating a more accountable international system.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2019). *Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality. Report of the Secretary-General (E/2019/65)*. Retrieved 22 September 2019 from:

<https://undocs.org/E/2019/65>

Emphasizing the discussions and outcomes of the most recent high-level segments, the Ministerial declaration provides a brief summation of current and future work. Specific items that have been highlighted are the International Decade for Action: "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028, the New Urban Agenda, and the review of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. Additionally, the declaration states formal commitments by leaders and attendees of the segment to achieving sustainable development. This document can be of particular use to delegates when researching topics related to sustainable development and ECOSOC.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2019, May 6-7). *Expert Group Meeting Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*. Retrieved 11

Group Meeting Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2019.

⁵⁶ UN DESA, *SDG Summit 2019, 2019*; UN Climate Action Summit 2019, *UN Climate Action Summit 2019, 2019*.

⁵⁷ Educational Broadcasting Corporation, *Kofi Annan – Center of the Storm: Who Does What?*, 2016.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Repositioning the UN Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/124-E/2018/3)*, 2017.

⁶⁰ UN DGC, *New President of top UN Economic and Social Body to Push for Development Financing, Fundamental Freedoms 'for all'*, 2019.

August 2019 from:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23135Summary_of_EGM_on_HLPF_review_FINAL.pdf

This summary on a May 2019 Expert Group Meeting that focused on reviewing the efficacy of the HLPF since their inception during the Rio+20. This document offers a review of where the HLPF has succeeded and where it has work to do. The meeting also produced reviews on the success of VNRs and how to expand participation amongst stakeholders. This summary review offers delegates plenty of information specific to the HLPF and how they can improve going forward. Using this, delegates can better formulate policy ideas based on recommendations made after this expert meeting.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2019). *Follow-up and Review of the Financing for Development Outcomes and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/FFDF/2019/3)*. Retrieved 16 August 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/FFDF/2019/3>

This document offers information on what took place during the 2019 High-Level Segment. This report provides highlights policy ideas and other mechanisms to help Member States best work together. In regard to combating inequalities, this document offers action-oriented recommendations that would help protect vulnerable groups and create protection policies. Delegates would benefit from taking note of action items that came from this review to guide how they address any discussion on empowering people and inequalities.

United Nations, General Assembly & United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2017). *Repositioning the UN Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/124-E/2018/3)*. Retrieved 16 August 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/A/72/124>

This report by the Secretary-General was prepared in response to the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) as outlined in General Assembly resolution 71/243 (2016). It contains the Secretary-General's vision for the repositioning of the UN development system and was presented to the Economic and Social Council on 5 July 2017 for consideration. As the main body reviewing the implementation of the QCPR mandate, ECOSOC was highly involved in the drafting of the report through the ECOSOC Dialogue and will be influential in the finalization of the report through its Operational Activities Segment. Delegates should refer to this report to gain an understanding of ECOSOC's long-term aims and consider what short-term policies and coordinating efforts will help ECOSOC achieve these goals.

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I. 20 Year Review: UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was established in 2000 by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2000/22 with the first session taking place in May of 2002.⁶¹ The resolution established UNPFII as a subsidiary organ of ECOSOC with a mandate to provide expert advice to the Council on the development on indigenous peoples.⁶² To do this, UNPFII is made up of 16 individual members acting in their personal capacity with the first half being elected by ECOSOC Member States.⁶³ The second eight are nominated by indigenous peoples organizations and confirmed by the President of ECOSOC.⁶⁴ Because UNPFII's mandate is to provide expert advice to ECOSOC, its priorities and instructions have changed over the years.⁶⁵ Article 42 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) (UNDRIP) mandates UNPFII to follow-up on the declaration's implementation and to ensure the rights of indigenous peoples are respected.⁶⁶ As the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was adopted in 2015 by the international community, UNPFII has been important in ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are respected and included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁶⁷ Thus, it is essential to ensure that policies and practices of sustainable development in Member States do not exacerbate inequalities of indigenous peoples.⁶⁸ This is important because accomplishing the SDGs often has separate or additional aspects for native groups.⁶⁹ For example, the accomplishment of SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) requires the respecting of indigenous land rights, though that is not explicitly discussed in the targets and indicators.⁷⁰ Because the Forum works across the UN system, its work is reviewed by a number of different bodies, including the General Assembly.⁷¹ ECOSOC is specifically responsible for reviewing UNPFII's recommendations and turning them into concrete policy actions to enhance and ensure the sustainable development for indigenous peoples.⁷²

Indigenous peoples can refer to a broad spectrum of individuals, so the UN prefers not to adopt an official definition for this group as to respect the different histories and understandings globally.⁷³ However, UNPFII released a series of guidelines to help develop a common understanding amongst the international community including self-identification, historical continuity before and after settler societies, and distinct languages or social norms within a society.⁷⁴ In general, UNPFII prefers to identify rather than define indigenous peoples.⁷⁵ The UN estimates that there are over 370 million native persons across more than 5,000 different indigenous groups globally in 90 Member States.⁷⁶ Although making up 5% of the world's population, indigenous groups are frequently underrepresented and make up 15% of global poverty.⁷⁷ UNPFII and ECOSOC seek to work collaboratively to achieve the 2030 Agenda for indigenous peoples through careful review of recommendations from all previous sessions of the forum to develop policies which can work in all contexts.⁷⁸

⁶¹ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

⁶² UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2000/22)*, 2000.

⁶³ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

⁶⁶ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*, 2007.

⁶⁷ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

⁶⁸ DeLuca, *What Do the Sustainable Development Goals Mean For Indigenous Peoples?*, 2017.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Update on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2019.

⁷¹ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ UNPFII, *Who are Indigenous Peoples?*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

International and Regional Framework

UNPFII was officially established by ECOSOC resolution 2000/22 (2000) and was recognized as having achieved a key goal in the first international decade for indigenous peoples.⁷⁹ The resolution provides minimal specific guidance as to the mandate of UNPFII other than establishing it as an expert body to provide recommendations to ECOSOC.⁸⁰ At the 18th session of UNPFII (E/2019/43), the forum asked that Member States of ECOSOC review previous recommendations and has welcomed independent organizations which track the progress of its recommendations.⁸¹ Additionally, in the report of its latest meeting, UNPFII noted that there were still heavy inequalities for indigenous peoples with regards to sustainable development.⁸² This included a lack of respect for indigenous land rights and minimal opportunities for native children to attend schools in their language.⁸³ As UNPFII continue to make recommendations, ECOSOC will have a greater quantity of policy options to review in ensuring sustainable development for indigenous peoples.⁸⁴

The rights of all peoples, including indigenous groups, are initially enshrined in foundational documents, the most notable of which is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR).⁸⁵ However, when considering the rights of indigenous peoples, it is often the case that separate considerations need to be made because of unique challenges they face.⁸⁶ Indigenous children in particular face increased forms of discriminations that extend to not having access to education in their own language.⁸⁷ Additionally, institutionalized practices in certain societies often lead to higher rates of violence against women, detention of indigenous protestors, and other systemically racist practices.⁸⁸ Recognizing this, the UN General Assembly adopted UNDRIP in 2007 to more adequately address discuss and address these challenges.⁸⁹ In addition to reaffirming that indigenous peoples have equal access to the rights outlined in the UDHR, it also discusses issues of regional autonomy for native persons.⁹⁰ Article five of UNDRIP specifically outlines the right of indigenous peoples to maintain their own legal, political, and economic structures while participating in a Member States' larger structures.⁹¹ This is particularly important given that indigenous peoples often have distinct legal frameworks that can come into conflict with the laws of their own Member State.⁹² This includes land rights, as indigenous peoples often do not view ownership in the same way as the states in which they exist.⁹³ Frequently, resource rich territories such as lakes are considered communally owned and maintained which means they do not have any legal record of ownership with the state.⁹⁴ This leaves them vulnerable to having their environmental rights violated since the record of ownership is cultural and not written.⁹⁵ International Labour Organization Convention 169 on *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* (C169) (1989) addresses this in detail with a significant portion dedicated to land rights of indigenous peoples, noting that it is important to ensure total economic

⁷⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* (2000/22), 2000.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ UNPFII, *Report on the Eighteenth Session* (E/2019/43), 2019, p. 8.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)), 1948.

⁸⁶ UN DESA, *Children and Youth*.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UN DESA, *Human Rights*.

⁸⁹ UN DESA, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

⁹⁰ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (A/RES/61/295), 2007, p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹² Perera, *Land and Cultural Survival*, 2009.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

development.⁹⁶ Member States ratifying C169 commit to ending discriminatory practices that affect indigenous peoples and more effectively consult these groups in policy decisions.⁹⁷

Regional organizations have committed to ensuring the rights and principles set out in UNDRIP are carried out in local contexts, including the Organization of American States (OAS).⁹⁸ In 2016, OAS adopted the *American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to help provide regional follow-up to UNDRIP and ensure its implementation in the Western Hemisphere.⁹⁹ This includes ensuring the protection of collective rights for indigenous peoples and protections against racism.¹⁰⁰ It also addresses other such issues as the right of indigenous peoples to self-identify and access education in their own language.¹⁰¹

Role of the International System

UNPFII works across the UN system to ensure indigenous peoples are adequately represented and their unique challenges and perspectives are included.¹⁰² As the body designated with the main responsibility to ensure indigenous voices are heard within the UN, UNPFII's work goes further than ECOSOC.¹⁰³ In 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/321 on "Enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them" to require future resolutions to greater include indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁴ As part of this resolution, UNPFII was placed in the lead role to ensure that this consultation was taking place.¹⁰⁵ Further, General Assembly resolution 57/191 (year) gives the General Assembly power to approve UNPFII's Secretariat and places it under the Division for Inclusive Social Development and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).¹⁰⁶ This same resolution created a trust fund on indigenous issues which supports UNPFII financially.¹⁰⁷ While ECOSOC is responsible for reviewing the work of UNPFII, the forum's mandate goes well beyond the commission.¹⁰⁸

ECOSOC has a primary responsibility for ensuring global sustainable development and achieving the SDGs.¹⁰⁹ To achieve these objectives, ECOSOC administers the annual High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, though every fourth year it is run through the General Assembly.¹¹⁰ As part of this, ECOSOC consults with a number of regional, technical, and expert commissions with the responsibility of developing and advising the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.¹¹¹ In practice, this means that ECOSOC reviews the work of its subsidiary organs like UNPFII by turning their recommendations into concrete policy.¹¹² Further, ECOSOC works to coordinate across UN agencies in an effort to ensure sustainable development is achieved at the economic, social, and environmental level for all peoples.¹¹³

⁹⁶ ILO, *C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*, 2017.

⁹⁷ ILO, *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*, 2013, p. 1.

⁹⁸ OAS, *American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2016.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ UN DESA, *Participation of Indigenous Peoples at the UN*.

¹⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *Enhancing the Participation of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives and Institutions in Meetings of Relevant United Nations Bodies on Issues Affecting Them (A/RES/71/321)*, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2000/22)*, 2000.

¹⁰⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

¹¹⁰ UN DESA, *High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*.

¹¹¹ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

¹¹² UN ECOSOC, *About Us*.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

While UNPFII is considered to be in the lead of promoting the rights of indigenous peoples at the UN, there are other bodies that have similar responsibilities.¹¹⁴ In 2001, the Commission on Human Rights appointed the first Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹¹⁵ The current Special Rapporteur is Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, an indigenous person from the Philippines.¹¹⁶ He is responsible for promoting good practices between governments and indigenous peoples, reporting on human rights for indigenous communities, and conducting studies on topics of particular importance to indigenous peoples.¹¹⁷ Another important UN body discussing native persons is the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP).¹¹⁸ EMRIP has a similar responsibility to UNPFII in that it is comprised of seven experts working in their individual capacity to advise the Human Rights Council on indigenous issues.¹¹⁹ In order to ensure coordination between these bodies, EMRIP invites the Special Rapporteur and representatives from UNPFII to attend all of its sessions, usually held in July.¹²⁰ Additionally, EMRIP may also invite representatives from Member States, indigenous peoples civil society organizations (CSOs), and other multi-laterals to ensure cooperation amongst agencies.¹²¹

In 2014, the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held as part of the result of General Assembly resolution 65/198 (2010) to help share best practices for ensuring equality of native persons.¹²² As part of the outcome document for that conference, ECOSOC adopted a System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) to achieve UDHR after consultation with UNPFII (E/C.19/2016/5) (2016).¹²³ The SWAP includes six main elements to support the implementation of UNDRIP, ensuring the 2030 Agenda for indigenous peoples, establishing standards for working with indigenous peoples in the UN system, developing capacity of Member States with indigenous peoples, and including native persons in processes.¹²⁴ As part of this, DESA has worked with UN agencies in addition to OAS, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, and other CSOs to fully implement SWAP.¹²⁵

UNPFII and the 2030 Agenda

As ECOSOC is the UN organ primarily responsible for the implementation of the SDGs at a global level, UNPFII has a responsibility to engage the commission and the HLPF to ensure the SDGs benefit indigenous peoples.¹²⁶ As one of the nine major groups consulted in the process of developing the 2030 Agenda, the Group of Indigenous Peoples was consulted in a systematic way to ensure specific challenges they face were considered in SDG indicators and targets.¹²⁷ This was considered an important step because indigenous peoples and issues were largely not considered in the Millennium Development Goals.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, indigenous peoples were only referenced six times in the final General Assembly resolution 70/1 titled “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2015) and only within two of the 17 goals.¹²⁹ Since the adoption of the SDGs, UNPFII has worked to ensure sustainable development for indigenous peoples by ensuring the inclusion of main priority issues for native persons, including the protection of natural rights.¹³⁰ Key recommendations by UNPFII to this point

¹¹⁴ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples at the UN*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ OHCHR, *Biographical information - Victoria Tauli-Corpuz*, 2019.

¹¹⁷ OHCHR, *Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2019.

¹¹⁸ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples at the UN*.

¹¹⁹ OHCHR, *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples at the UN*.

¹²² UN DESA, *World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*.

¹²³ UN ECOSOC, *System-wide Action Plan for Ensuring a Coherent Approach to Achieving the Ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2016.

¹²⁴ UN DESA, *System-wide Action Plan (SWAP)*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ UN DESA, *The Permanent Forum and the 2030 Agenda*.

¹²⁷ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda*.

¹³⁰ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

have included implementing UNDRIP through the 2030 Agenda, establishing consultative platforms for indigenous peoples, and acquiring disaggregated data with specific indigenous indicators.¹³¹ UNPFII has expressed concern that broad development policies towards achieving the 2030 Agenda are ineffective for indigenous peoples, and may sometimes have negative impacts.¹³² For example, the Group of Indigenous Peoples have commented on SDG 1 (no poverty), saying that full and equal global implementation based on the targets may actually be damaging to traditional economies.¹³³ This is one of the key reasons why UNPFII has recommended greater inclusion of indigenous peoples at HLPF gather culturally sensitive data.¹³⁴

UNPFII also helps to work at the national level since Member States are considered primarily responsible for the implementation of the SDGs.¹³⁵ In 2018, 10 out of 46 Member States specifically included data indigenous peoples in their VNRs at the HLPF.¹³⁶ In these reviews, large inequalities for indigenous peoples were reported noting that programs were not always implemented evenly.¹³⁷ The Major Group of Indigenous Peoples added to these reports by stating that renewable energy projects were often being developed on native lands without any meaningful consultation of the people living there.¹³⁸ These projects can be damaging to the local biodiversity of these lands, which are key to local development and economic structures.¹³⁹ UNPFII recommended that indigenous peoples be better included in early planning processes, as they possess the expertise to protect their local biodiversity.¹⁴⁰ In some cases, there have been distinct efforts within Member States to develop action plans to include indigenous peoples in national action plans (NAPs).¹⁴¹ Paraguay, for example, has been working to develop an entirely separate NAP for government institutions to follow with respects to indigenous peoples.¹⁴² This plan has been developed in consultation with 100 leaders from seven different indigenous groups in Paraguay.¹⁴³ Despite some of these positive steps within national governments, UNPFII remains concerned that there is minimal reflection of indigenous rights in NAPs overall and has recommended greater emphasis be placed by states.¹⁴⁴ This includes both Member States, which offered no data on indigenous issues and those that did.¹⁴⁵ Development of consultative platforms for indigenous peoples would help Member States include more data on indigenous issues in future VNRs.¹⁴⁶ As ECOSOC leads the HLPF three of every four years, it can provide greater attention to indigenous issues as recommended by the forum.¹⁴⁷

Although adopted in 2007, UNPFII has recommended that UNDRIP be fully implemented as part of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴⁸ This allows programs and policies of ECOSOC and other bodies to be culturally sensitive and respect the self-determination of indigenous peoples.¹⁴⁹ ECOSOC has effectively included indigenous persons at the HLPF and other events, including public accessibly conversations with native leaders on the SDGs in 2017.¹⁵⁰ Still, there remain significant opportunities for ECOSOC to ensure that

¹³¹ UN DESA, *The Permanent Forum and the 2030 Agenda*.

¹³² DeLuca, *What Do the Sustainable Development Goals Mean For Indigenous Peoples?*, 2017.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ DeLuca, *What Do the Sustainable Development Goals Mean For Indigenous Peoples?*, 2017.

¹³⁵ UN DESA, *The Permanent Forum and the 2030 Agenda*.

¹³⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Update on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2019, p. 6.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ DeLuca, *What Do the Sustainable Development Goals Mean For Indigenous Peoples?*, 2017.

¹⁴¹ UN ECOSOC, *Update on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2019.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ UN DESA, *The Permanent Forum and the 2030 Agenda*.

¹⁴⁷ UN DESA, *Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

¹⁴⁸ DeLuca, *What Do the Sustainable Development Goals Mean For Indigenous Peoples?*, 2017.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ UN DESA, *Indigenous Voices about SDGs – 2017*.

the inclusion of the Major Group of Indigenous Peoples turns into culturally sensitive practices as part of the post-2030 agenda.¹⁵¹

Preparing for the Theme of the 19th Session of UNPFII

From 13-24 April 2020, UNPFII will conduct its 19th session 20 years after the adoption of ECOSOC resolution 2000/22.¹⁵² The theme of this session will be “Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing SDG 16.”¹⁵³ This is a particularly important topic in the implementation of UNDRIP, as fulfilling SDG 16 has different meanings for indigenous peoples.¹⁵⁴ Since indigenous peoples right to their own land is often unrecognized, it is difficult for them to culturally appropriate strong institutions.¹⁵⁵ Targets 16.1-3 of SDG 16 on (peace, justice, and strong institutions) are related to reducing violence and promoting the rule of law for all individuals.¹⁵⁶ Because indigenous people, especially children, are far more vulnerable to forms of physical and institutionalized violence this merits special considerations to ensure SDG 16 is achieved for them.¹⁵⁷ However, Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz expressed that security among indigenous peoples cannot exist without the ability to manage and control their own lands.¹⁵⁸ Arctic indigenous peoples who rely heavily on biodiversity and collective ownership of waters are often unable to implement rule of law when companies extract these resources and denigrate the ability of native persons to use these resources for their own purposes.¹⁵⁹ When their own justice systems are undermined, it is difficult to ensure that SDG 16 can be fulfilled for indigenous peoples.¹⁶⁰ Further, greater attention to traditional values and norms are respected has been shown to allow for stronger indigenous institutions.¹⁶¹ This has been one of the key reasons why full implementation of UNDRIP has become such a priority as it calls explicitly for indigenous legal and economic institutions to be respected in addition to upholding collective rights.¹⁶² At the 17th session of the UNPFII, the forum recommended that ECOSOC address the issue of collective rights further in fulfilling the SDGs, including SDG 16.¹⁶³ This recommendation was again made in the 18th session of the UNPFII, noting that ECOSOC should review suggestions from all previous sessions.¹⁶⁴ UNPFII noted in its recommendations for the 18th session that by utilizing more of the traditional knowledge in planning which indigenous peoples possess, it can help them fulfill SDG16.¹⁶⁵ Specifically, UNPFII made the recommendation that because indigenous peoples are typically better stewards of their own biodiversity, allowing for greater self-determination in native communities ensures that they have their own strong institution that fulfills SDG16, in part.¹⁶⁶ However, it also has the ancillary impact of ensuring other aspects of the 2030 Agenda, such as SDG 13 on climate action, are fulfilled for all peoples, including indigenous groups.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵¹ UN ECOSOC, *Update on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2019.

¹⁵² UN DESA, *UNPFII Nineteenth Session: 13–24 April 2020*.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*, 2007.

¹⁵⁵ Mwangi, *Indigenous Peoples Have a Crucial Role in Implementing SDG 16, Concludes Permanent Forum*, 2019.

¹⁵⁶ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 16*.

¹⁵⁷ UN DESA, *Human Rights*.

¹⁵⁸ Tauli-Corpuz, *Security among Indigenous Peoples*, 2007, p. 67.

¹⁵⁹ Hossain, *Securitizing the Arctic Indigenous Peoples: A Community Security Perspective with Special Reference to the Sámi of the European High North*, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Tauli-Corpuz, *Security among Indigenous Peoples*, 2007, p. 68.

¹⁶² Hossain, *Securitizing the Arctic Indigenous Peoples: A Community Security Perspective with Special Reference to the Sámi of the European High North*, 2016.

¹⁶³ UN DESA, *UNPFII17 Adopted Recommendations on Collective Rights to Lands, Territories, and Resources*, 2018.

¹⁶⁴ UNPFII, *Report on the Eighteenth Session (E/2019/43)*, 2019.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Not listed explicitly as an indicator or target for SDG 16, but equally important to its fulfillment for indigenous peoples is environmental justice.¹⁶⁸ ECOSOC has recognized the development as one of the three pillars of development though not yet in the completion of SDG 16.¹⁶⁹ However, development projects designed to aid the environment tend to frequently have adverse impacts for indigenous groups.¹⁷⁰ This is frequent since there are often no legal holdings recognized by Member States, so it is easy to overlook indigenous groups who maintain that territory through collective rights.¹⁷¹ Since greater respect for environmental rights of indigenous peoples requires more consultation with native groups, it does present an opportunity to achieve the targets of SDG 16 and to ensure equal participation.¹⁷² This is in line with other recommendations UNPFII has made to ECOSOC regarding the consultation of indigenous peoples in developing policies.¹⁷³

Conclusion

As UNPFII approaches the 20th year since its establishment, it has recommended that ECOSOC do a full review of previous suggestions from the forum.¹⁷⁴ Particularly as it pertains to achieving the post-2015 development agenda, special considerations for indigenous groups need to be made because of unique challenges they face.¹⁷⁵ This particularly applies to land rights and environmental justice, which are not explicitly referenced in the SDGs but are necessary for full achievement, including SDG 16.¹⁷⁶ As the body responsible for ensuring the completion of the SDGs and reviewing the work of UNPFII, ECOSOC has a unique opportunity to ensure that indigenous peoples are consulted and their unique circumstances are considered in policy-making decisions.¹⁷⁷

Further Research

When considering how ECOSOC can better review the work of UNPFII, delegates should consider the following: How can ECOSOC more effectively consult indigenous peoples in decision-making processes? What recommendations or expert advice have UNPFII made to ECOSOC that still have not been fully implemented which the commission and HLPF should consider? How can ECOSOC include UNDRIP into the post-2015 development agenda? How should the HLPF ensure greater discussion of indigenous peoples in Voluntary National Reviews? What can ECOSOC do in advance of the 19th session of UNPFII in considering its theme? How can environmental justice, collective rights, and other aspects specific important to achieving SDG 16 for indigenous peoples be better discussed at future HLPFs?

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Permanent Forum*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2.html>

This website from the DESA section on indigenous peoples highlights the responsibilities and structures of UNPFII. This includes links to information on the mandated areas of UNPFII and information on the most pressing issues facing indigenous peoples. It serves as a source for a basic understanding of the forum and allows quick access to more detailed and important information, including summary reports of each UNPFII session.

¹⁶⁸ UNEP, *UN Environment Stands up for Indigenous People in their Fight for Environmental Justice*, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

¹⁷⁰ Perera, *Land and Cultural Survival*, 2009, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 16*.

¹⁷³ UNPFII, *Report on the Eighteenth Session (E/2019/43)*, 2019.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ UN DESA, *Human Rights*.

¹⁷⁶ UN DESA, *UNPFII17 Adopted Recommendations on Collective Rights to Lands, Territories, and Resources*, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ UN DESA, *Permanent Forum*.

Delegates hoping to gain a basic understanding of the forum and access more other primary source documents will find this beneficial.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2000). *Establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2000/22)*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/e/res/2000/22>

This resolution led to the creation of UNPFII and outlines its mandate, responsibilities, and key areas of focus. It also outlines how the forum is supposed to operate including funding, membership, and meeting frequency. It should be used to understand the role of UNPFII within ECOSOC and the broader UN system in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Additionally, it describes how UNPFII interacts with other parts of the UN system to promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-first session. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/61/295>

This document is one of the first resolutions specifically outline the rights of indigenous peoples. It affirms the UDHR for indigenous peoples and makes special recognition of the challenges, which they face. This document has helped informed the post-2015 development agenda for indigenous peoples and should be looked at when trying to establish policies for achieving the SDGs. Delegates should use it to gain greater understanding of how the UN system works to protect indigenous peoples.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. (n.d.). *Who are indigenous peoples?*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

This document, from UNPFII, contains a description of how the forum identifies indigenous peoples. Because UNPFII is designed to focus on the rights of specific people instead of a topic like other UN bodies, it is important to understand how the forum sees the scope of its mandate. This document also helps describe some of the challenges which indigenous peoples face. Delegates can use it to understand these challenges and who the mandate of UNPFII is designed to cover.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. (2019). *Report on the Eighteenth Session (E/2019/43)*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/43>

This report outlines the topics discussed at the most recent session of UNPFII and outlines a draft agenda for the next session scheduled to take place in April 2020. This draft agenda calls upon an international expert group meeting on the also theme of SDG 16 for the next session and recommendations to ECOSOC for strengthening the rights of indigenous peoples. Specifically, within this theme, it describes unique aspects of indigenous issues and how it relates to achieving the goal. Delegates can use this for understanding how UNPFII operates, what its current priorities are, and gain insight into how ECOSOC works with the forum.

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II. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

Introduction

The *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020* is an action plan adopted by the United Nations (UN) at the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011.¹⁷⁸ The action plan is more widely known as the *Istanbul Programme of Action* (IPoA), referencing the adoption of the 2011 *Istanbul Declaration* at the conference and its full commitment to implement the *Programme of Action*.¹⁷⁹ The IPoA conceptualizes a vision and strategy for the international community to follow by providing assistance and sustainable development opportunities for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) over the next decade.¹⁸⁰ IPoA places a strong focus on helping a LDCs become more productive actors, in terms of trade, economic, social, and human development in the international community.¹⁸¹ The overarching goal of the IPoA is to help LDCs overcome structural challenges that may be contributing to each country's poverty while working towards achieving international development goals.¹⁸² Today the IPoA places a special focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹⁸³ The IPoA specifically aims to guide the 47 countries classified as LDCs in the world to meet certain criteria for graduating to developing country status.¹⁸⁴ While LDCs are found around the world, the majority of LDCs are located in Africa, where 33 are found.¹⁸⁵ Nine LDCs are located in Asia, four LDCs are found in Oceania, and one LDC is found in Latin America and the Caribbean region.¹⁸⁶ The three criteria for graduation are: a gross national income above \$1,025 per capita for three years, strengthened human resources based on health and education, and reduced economic vulnerability.¹⁸⁷ LDC graduation is approved and finalized by both the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹⁸⁸

Since its introduction, Member States and other actors in the UN system have worked to fully implement the IPoA by its 2020 deadline.¹⁸⁹ Comprehensive monitoring and follow-up measures on implementing the IPoA are introduced at the national, regional, and international levels, which are then implemented by local governments and civil society organizations.¹⁹⁰ Based on the 2016 *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020*, many LDCs made considerable progress

¹⁷⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020* (E/2011/L.16), 2011.

¹⁷⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action—2011*, 2019; Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, *Draft Istanbul Declaration: Renewed and strengthened global partnership for the development of least developed countries* (A/CONF.219/L.1), 2011.

¹⁸⁰ UN General Assembly, *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries* (A/RES/66/213), 2012.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² UN General Assembly, *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020* (A/RES/70/294), 2016.

¹⁸³ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action—2011*, 2019.

¹⁸⁴ UN CDP & UN ECOSOC, *List of Least Developed Countries (as of December 2018)*, 2018.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ UN DESA & UN CDP, *The Least Developed Country Category: 2018 Country Snapshots*, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ UN DESA, *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators*.

¹⁸⁸ UN CDP & UN DESA, *Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures*, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries* (A/RES/66/213), 2012.

¹⁹⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020* (E/2011/L.16), 2011.

in achieving sustainable development outcomes.¹⁹¹ However, LDCs are still struggling in areas of agriculture, infrastructure, trade, and human development.¹⁹² With the end of the decade quickly approaching, Member States are strongly encouraged by ECOSOC and the rest of the UN system to reaffirm their commitment to the IPoA and a global partnership for sustainable development, with a focus on poverty eradication and promoting inclusive growth for the poorest and most vulnerable.¹⁹³

International and Regional Framework

The term “least developed country” was first coined in the 1971 UN General Assembly resolution 2768 (XXVI), “Identification of the least developed among the developing countries.”¹⁹⁴ The term first appeared in a clause referring to the first approved list of countries considered for the LDC category.¹⁹⁵ The needs of LDCs have since been at the forefront of several documents.¹⁹⁶ Adopted in 2002, the *Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development* called upon Member States to provide market access for LDCs with no limitations, as well as to provide better foreign direct investment.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, Member States who provide official development assistance (ODA) were encouraged to contribute 0.2% of their gross national product to LDCs as a form of aid.¹⁹⁸ Following the Monterrey Consensus, the 2002 *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* called Member States to action by increasing their financial support to LDCs in areas of infrastructure, transportation, health, energy, and communications.¹⁹⁹ In addition to the Monterrey commitments, the 2008 *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development* highlighted areas of domestic resource mobilization, international trade, addressing systemic issues of health and poverty, and increasing international technical cooperation for development.²⁰⁰

In 2015, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* highlighted the need for increased international support for disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts within LDCs.²⁰¹ In addition, the 2015 *Paris Agreement* emphasized strengthening LDCs both economically and socially to mitigate the effects of climate change, and also called upon Member States to increase funding and access to technologies for LDCs.²⁰² LDCs are also addressed in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted in 2015 by the UN General Assembly.²⁰³ Several targets of the SDGs refer to LDCs in particular, which include: improving productive capacities in agriculture for SDG 2 (zero hunger); expanding infrastructure and energy for SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy); improving LDCs’ gross domestic product (GDP) by 7% for SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth); and improving access to communication and information technology in LDCs for SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure).²⁰⁴

¹⁹¹ UN General Assembly, *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/RES/70/294)*, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Identification of the Least Developed among the Developing Countries (A/RES/2768 (XXVI))*, 1971.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ International Conference on Financing for Development, *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/CONF.198/11)*, 2002, p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ World Summit on Sustainable Development, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.199/20)*, 2002, pp. 17-24, 47.

²⁰⁰ UN-NGLS, *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development adopted as outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus*, 2008, p. 1.

²⁰¹ UN General Assembly, *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*, 2015.

²⁰² COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

²⁰³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Since 1981, the UN hosted four conferences centered around LDCs.²⁰⁵ The first conference, held in Paris, adopted the IPoA's first iteration, the *Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries*, which contained guidelines for domestic action by LDCs complemented by international support measures, including financial aid and food assistance.²⁰⁶ Despite support measures taken by ODA providers in areas of trade, debt relief, and aid, the LDCs' economic situation worsened throughout the 1980s.²⁰⁷ Domestic policy shortcomings, natural disasters, and external debt servicing were factors which contributed to the economic decline of LDCs.²⁰⁸ The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), established at the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, oversees and monitors the implementation of the LDC-related programmes of action (PoAs), including the IPoA, through its annual meetings and reports from Member States.²⁰⁹ The Fourth Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the most recent conference hosted by Turkey in 2011, adopted the IPoA.²¹⁰ The UN General Assembly decided to hold the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021 with the adoption of resolution 73/242 "Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries" with its outcome framing the efforts of the international community for the next decade.²¹¹

Role of the International System

In preparation for the 2021 conference, the UN-OHRLLS led a comprehensive IPoA implementation appraisal for LDCs.²¹² It was determined that LDCs were still lacking in areas of food security, employment opportunities, and infrastructure, and recommended that Member States reaffirm their commitments in aiding LDCs.²¹³ Additionally, UN-OHRLLS assists the Secretary-General in ensuring that all relevant UN bodies are fully involved in implementing the PoAs through midterm review reports on progress.²¹⁴ UN-OHRLLS provides advocacy work and mobilization support for both domestic and international financial resources to LDCs.²¹⁵ For example, UN-OHRLLS advocates for developed countries to aid LDCs in rebuilding infrastructure after natural disasters.²¹⁶ Similarly, the UN General Assembly established the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries in the 2016 resolution 71/25.²¹⁷ The newly established Technology Bank makes scientific and technological solutions more accessible for LDCs to use in the development process.²¹⁸

As per the *Charter of the United Nations*, ECOSOC promotes higher standards of living, full employment opportunities, and economic and social progress, which the Council recognizes are areas still in need of improvement in LDCs before the end of the decade.²¹⁹ Additionally, ECOSOC is in charge of the list of LDCs, and submits recommendations to the General Assembly every three years to either add a Member

²⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/66/213)*, 2012.

²⁰⁶ UN DGC, *Outcomes on Least Developed Countries*.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ UN General Assembly, *Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/56/227)*, 2001.

²¹⁰ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action—2011*, 2019.

²¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/73/242)*, 2018.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ UN-OHRLLS, *About UN-OHRLLS*, 2019.

²¹⁵ UN-OHRLLS, *UN-OHRLLS Mandate for Least Developed Countries*, 2019.

²¹⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *About UN-OHRLLS*, 2019.

²¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/71/251)*, 2016.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ UN ECOSOC, *About ECOSOC*; UN ECOSOC, *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (E/RES/2019/3)*, 2019.

State to the LDC list, or to approve an LDC for graduation to developing country status.²²⁰ Should a Member State appear on the list of LDCs, the State gains and benefits from development financing, preferential market access, and technical assistance for integrating the State's trade into future budget strategies and development plans.²²¹ ECOSOC also holds an Annual Ministerial meeting on LDCs each September.²²² In the most recent session in 2018, it was agreed upon by the Council that graduation should not be seen as a goal for LDCs, but as a stepping stone in a State's developing path.²²³ It was acknowledged that even among graduating LDCs, certain LDC-specific challenges still remained, which included a small economy and high vulnerabilities to climate change.²²⁴ The Council recommended an improvement to accessible energy in LDCs, which would be beneficial in reducing poverty and enhancing access to health and education services.²²⁵ States also renewed their commitment to supporting LDC graduation and assistance in providing smooth transition strategies for LDCs.²²⁶

The Committee for Development Policy (CDP) reviews LDCs' status and constantly monitors their progress, even after an LDC graduates.²²⁷ The CDP additionally provides policy advisory services and training activities for Member States to promote strengthening sustainable growth throughout LDCs.²²⁸ The CDP developed the Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries, which provides stakeholders in LDCs access to loans, projects, and grants from financial development organizations and university programs.²²⁹ In establishing a country's readiness to graduate, the CDP relies on two additional reports: an ex-ante impact assessment, prepared by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in consultation with the country and its development partners and a vulnerability profile.²³⁰ In the CDP's annual report to ECOSOC's High-Level segment from March 2019, the committee's chair stressed the importance of developing states taking action to reduce inequalities and promote inclusion and human rights to ensure the most vulnerable countries are not left behind at the end of the decade.²³¹ In addition, the chair presented CDP's recommendations of action for the new PoA for LDCs.²³² The recommendations include adopting a new framework which fully aligns with the 2030 Agenda, organizing the PoA around expanding productive capacity, reflecting and supporting graduation, and reaffirming commitments to addressing vulnerabilities in LDCs.²³³

Youth Development in Least Developed Countries

Nearly 60% of the population in LDCs is under the age of 25.²³⁴ The youth living in LDCs currently face serious economic, social, and human development challenges, especially in the areas of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.²³⁵ These factors pose serious constraints to LDCs' efforts in making progress which has led to essential services in sanitation, education, and health being inaccessible and to participation in economic and political life stagnating.²³⁶ Because of this, LDCs are considerably lagging behind in

²²⁰ UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries*.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² UN-OHRLLS, *Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries*, 2018.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ UN-OHRLLS, *Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries*, 2018.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ UN DESA, *About Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy*.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ UN CDP, *Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries*.

²³⁰ UN CDP, *Report on the Twentieth Session (E/2018/33)*, 2018.

²³¹ UN CDP, *Report on the Twenty-First Session (E/2019/33)*, 2019.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ UN CDP, *Input to the Preparations for the Next Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries*, 2019.

²³⁴ UN-OHRLLS, *Mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: A Toolkit*, 2016, p. 49.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

achieving most internationally agreed development goals.²³⁷ Improving youth development is a priority area of the IPoA.²³⁸ The goals and targets for youth development in the IPoA include: the full participation of youth in society and in decision-making processes; improving youth educational and skills capacity for employment and decent work; and encouraging youth participation in the economy by improving access to employment and volunteer opportunities.²³⁹ Factors such as limited education, high youth unemployment, and minimal working skills contribute to considerable youth underemployment among LDCs, with employment-to-population ratios of youth shown to be considerably lower in most LDCs compared to developing Member States.²⁴⁰

According to the 2019 Secretary-General report on the implementation of the IPoA submitted to the General Assembly and ECOSOC, minimal progress has been made in achieving the youth development goals.²⁴¹ Job creation is weak and insufficient for the rapid growth of the youth population, which has increased low productivity rates and struggles to search for decent work.²⁴² This is due to the lack of educational resources available for young people living in LDCs.²⁴³ The education systems in LDCs are considerably weak due to a lack of financial resources, schools, and teachers, leading many adolescents to prematurely leave school before developing skills for the labor market.²⁴⁴ In recent years, the number of out-of-school youth 15 years of age and older has increased while the out-of-school population of primary and lower secondary school age as decreased.²⁴⁵ The Secretary-General reports that approximately 60% of LDCs adopted national youth policies.²⁴⁶ However, these policies are not yet fully effective and inclusive.²⁴⁷ There have been attempts to address the issues of education in LDCs in the past, particularly through the Education for All Global (EFA) action plan.²⁴⁸ The EFA was adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000 with the goal of improving education and ensuring more young people attended school by 2015, but none of the targets were achieved.²⁴⁹ Despite attempts at promoting education, such as improving technologies in the classroom, the EFA action plan showed that political drive is essential for promoting youth education.²⁵⁰

To assist in meeting the youth development goals of the IPoA, the ECOSOC Youth Forum meets in April each year and is the largest youth gathering at the UN.²⁵¹ The Youth Forum serves as a channel for youth and government officials to discuss areas of global youth engagement on global issues.²⁵² Co-organized by UN DESA and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the theme of the 2019 Youth Forum, "Empowered, Included, and Equal," focused on the importance of including youth engagement in global discussions.²⁵³ The forum also focused on promoting partnerships between Member States and civil society to assist in supporting and empowering youth active engagement all over the world, including the youth population in LDCs.²⁵⁴ The forum held three interactive discussions, which included "Youth

²³⁷ UN-OHRLLS, *Mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: A Toolkit*, 2016, pp. 49-50.

²³⁸ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action—2011*, 2019.

²³⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (E/2011/L.16)*, 2011.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*, 2019, p. 7.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁴⁸ UNESCO, *World Education Forum Final Report*, 2000.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ UN OSGEY, *2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

²⁵² UN ECOSOC, *2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

2030: With and For Young People,” “Investing in Youth Development: Financing and other Means of Implementation,” and “Looking to the Future: A Dialogue on the High-Level Political Forum Summit.”²⁵⁵ From these interactive discussions, youth delegates developed key messages for the forum.²⁵⁶ Education should be recognized beyond economic reasoning to enable learners to become agents of sustainable change and the driving force for social progress.²⁵⁷ Youth should be provided with technological tools and mentorship to develop their own ideas and innovations.²⁵⁸ The forum recommended that youth-serving organizations should be provided with a platform to support future youth leaders.²⁵⁹

Disaster Risk Reduction in Least Developed Countries

While all Member States are vulnerable to natural disasters, LDCs are particularly vulnerable.²⁶⁰ Disasters can have a significant impact or, in extreme cases, completely destroy development gains built over the span of decades.²⁶¹ The risk of losing funds in extreme weather events now surpasses the rate at which those funds are being created.²⁶² According to the Secretary-General’s 2019 report “Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,” climate change, natural disasters, and other extreme weather events seriously hampered agricultural productivity in LDCs, which is made worse by inadequate infrastructure and limited DRR capabilities.²⁶³ Between 2011 and 2017, the number of undernourished people living in LDCs rose from 26.7% to 29.9% due to the impact of natural disasters and extreme weather events.²⁶⁴ Hurricanes and tropical cyclones in 2018 were among the most costly and intense in terms of strength and wind speeds, affecting nearly 1.5 million people in LDCs.²⁶⁵ Annual losses in LDCs from disasters averaged about 8.5% of LDCs’ GDP.²⁶⁶ For example, an estimated 780,000 homes and businesses in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic were affected by extreme flooding from Tropical Storm Son-Tinh in 2018.²⁶⁷ Additionally, extreme flooding events affected parts of Eastern Africa in April 2018, which included Somalia, and Ethiopia.²⁶⁸ ECOSOC held an emergency meeting in April 2019 in response to Cyclone Idai impacting Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.²⁶⁹ ECOSOC’s President wrote in a statement that devastation caused by Idai threatened to reverse progress made towards achieving the SDGs.²⁷⁰ He called for Member States to mobilize efforts and provide monetary and food aid to the affected areas, as well as improve efforts to prevent displacement in disaster areas.²⁷¹

The IPoA recognizes that DRR strategies are crucial for sustainable development, and that more commitments and action for DRR will assist in accelerating development, protect investments, and reduce poverty.²⁷² There has been an increase in awareness by international governments for the need for enhanced international cooperation in disaster response, but a lack of clear rules or procedures to

²⁵⁵ UN ECOSOC, *8th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum*, 2019.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ UNISDR, *UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda: Disaster Risk and Resilience*, 2012, p. 3.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁶³ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*, 2019, p. 5.

²⁶⁴ Segal, *Food Security in the Least Developed Countries*, 2011.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*, 2019, p. 9.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁶⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Presidential Statement on the Occasion of the ECOSOC Special Meeting: Response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, 2019.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Inter-Parliamentary Union & UNISDR, *Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development*, 2012.

regulate international aid remains.²⁷³ Because of this, many Member States who face conflict or natural disasters face unnecessary delays and a lack of quality in humanitarian aid, especially in LDCs.²⁷⁴ To save recovery costs, ECOSOC and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction supported LDCs developing new DRR and climate adaptation strategies and integrating them into the SDGs.²⁷⁵ Additionally, ECOSOC called for an increase in DRR and humanitarian aid in the 2017 resolution “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.”²⁷⁶ The resolution calls for Member States to take action by collaborating with humanitarian and development organizations in building new risk-management tools for measuring the different vulnerabilities of Member States, particularly LDCs, and to increase the networking of DRR centers to improve disaster preparedness measures.²⁷⁷ Additionally, the resolution called for improvements to the Index for Risk Management to include more data regarding environmental impacts in both national and regional contexts.²⁷⁸

The 2019 Climate Action Summit held a special session called “LDC 2050.”²⁷⁹ The Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), an organization established by LDCs, adopted this initiative with a vision to lead LDCs onto a pathway to climate-resilient development by 2030 and to deliver net-zero emissions by 2050 to ensure LDC societies and ecosystems can thrive.²⁸⁰ To achieve this vision, LIFE-AR calls for LDCs and developing countries to support the emergence of climate-resilient people living in inclusive and poverty-free societies, climate-resilient and prosperous economies, and sustainably managed landscapes and ecosystems, which are less vulnerable to climate stresses and shocks.²⁸¹ The initiative additionally recommends the international community to provide finances to assist LDCs in achieving the SDGs, reduce transaction costs, ensure accountability behind LDC leadership, work with LDCs in the long term to strengthen national capacities, and invest in climate-resilient net-zero economies and technology.²⁸²

Conclusion

With only one year left for implementing the IPoA, Member States have shown a pattern of uneven progress in priority areas, with some areas of success and best practices, but also some constraints and slowdowns.²⁸³ If the aspirations of the IPoA are to be fulfilled, hard work is needed from the international community.²⁸⁴ LDCs, as well as other relevant UN bodies and LDC development partners, need to reaffirm their commitments and accelerate progress towards fully implementing the IPoA.²⁸⁵ When implementing the IPoA, Member States should continue to synergize implementing the IPoA closely with the 2030 Agenda, the *Paris Agreement*, and the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2020*.²⁸⁶

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*, 2019, p. 9.

²⁷⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/RES/2017/14)*, 2017, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ LIFE-AR, *LDC 2050 Vision: Towards A Climate-Resilient Future*, 2019.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Oxley, *Five Challenges for Least Developed Countries in the post-2015 Era*, 2016.

²⁸⁴ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*, 2019.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

Further Research

Delegates can further their knowledge by considering the following questions: How can Member States and LDCs better integrate youth development practices into implementing the IPoA? How can ECOSOC and its partners further promote improving an LDC's DRR strategies in the context of the IPoA? How else can youth development and DRR be used to promote implementing the IPoA? How else can the needs and challenges of each LDC be adequately addressed in the context of the IPoA as well as following PoAs?

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The Handbook contains three chapters addressing all types of information on the LDC category, including its history, a detailed explanation of the criteria for inclusion, tools to identify an LDC, and measurements for graduation to developing country status. The Handbook summarizes available international support measures, which include preferential market access for LDCs. This handbook is the primary source for a comprehensive overview of measurements, criteria, procedures, and sources for delegates to comprehend and expand their knowledge of the LDC category.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Policy & Analysis Division. (n.d.). *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators*. Retrieved 23 July 2019 from:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-criteria.html>

This website provides the three main criteria used to review the list of LDCs every three years. If a country classified as an LDC shows progress in areas of human protection, income, and economic vulnerability, ECOSOC and the General Assembly may allow the country to graduate to developing status. The website is a reliable source for delegates to understand the LDC graduation processes, and to identify certain indicators within the criteria to lead LDCs on the path to graduation.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2011). *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (E/2011/L.16)*. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from:

<https://undocs.org/e/2011/l.16>

The PoA is an action plan to reaffirm and enhance global support for LDCs in order to overcome economic and social challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution highlights the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships in furthering LDC developments. This action plan established the goal of overcoming the structural challenges LDCs face to eradicate poverty and move forward towards sustainable development.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2016). *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/RES/70/294)*. Retrieved 18 August 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/294>

This report provides a progress report of implementing the IPoA and the vulnerabilities LDCs still face. The report identifies resilience-building as a high priority for LDCs to successfully implement the PoA in the next year. The report provides an analysis of progress in achieving the targets of the PoA and provides recommendations for LDCs to reduce vulnerability and build resilience. This document is important for delegates to analyze the work previously done to implement the PoA and to identify new calls to action for LDCs.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-fourth session & United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2019). *Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/69-E/2019/12)*. Retrieved 23 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/e/2019/12>

The report provides an analysis of recent progress made in implementing the PoA, which covers its eight priority areas and goal of graduation from the LDC category. The report identifies actions and decisions by Member States on further PoA implementation, which includes a high-level midterm review of implementation. Additionally, the report highlights the work of other UN bodies and stakeholders, CSOs, and the private sector, which closes with recommendations for action from the Secretary-General.

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III. Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System

“If you are invisible in everyday life, your needs will not be thought of, let alone addressed.”²⁸⁷

Introduction

Gender equality is considered an important aspect to sustainable development; however at the current rate, it will take 108 years to achieve this.²⁸⁸ The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as the main coordinating body on gender mainstreaming, defined gender mainstreaming in 1997 as the assessment of how policies, programs, and legislation impacts men and women through all levels of development.²⁸⁹ Over time, the understanding of this definition has been changed to better integrate gender as a spectrum as opposed to a binary in mainstreaming perspectives.²⁹⁰ To achieve full gender equality, the creation of policies, programs, legislation, and gender-specific impacts must be observed and addressed to reduce systemic inequalities, including diversifying gender participation in all planning phases.²⁹¹ Additionally, mainstreaming calls for evaluations, targets, and measures of impact for all policies, programs, and legislation to ensure inequalities are being mitigated even after implementation.²⁹² Gender mainstreaming, however, does not remove the need for specific gender-focused programs and policies, such as policies to reduce the gender wage gap, or to prevent discrimination based on sex.²⁹³

Gender mainstreaming is a driving force for positive changes and has multiple benefits.²⁹⁴ For example, the inclusion of gender perspectives can reduce systemic inequalities that would adversely impact persons based on gender, improving the efficiency of aid, development, and funds.²⁹⁵ Women's participation in the decision-making processes at the local and national levels improves the development of policies and programs.²⁹⁶ Gender mainstreaming also allows for the addition of women-specific programs to expansive topics, like climate change, increasing the support level of both women's issues and the broader issue itself through gender inclusion.²⁹⁷ Even though the United Nations (UN) is working to fully incorporate gender mainstreaming, not all the UN System is fully reporting on the progress made.²⁹⁸ Only 23% of the UN System exceeds standards on gender mainstreaming, up from 9% in 2012.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres, in his report to ECOSOC in 2019, states that the UN System will require five years of capacity-building in order to report fully on the results of gender-mainstreamed programming.³⁰⁰ Within the same report, the SG also highlights that only 2.03% of the UN System's development budget and only 2.6% of UN personnel is dedicated to women's issues,

²⁸⁷ UN-Women, *Take Five: “If you are Invisible in Everyday Life, your Needs will not be Thought of, let Alone Addressed, in a Crisis Situation”*, 2018.

²⁸⁸ World Economic Forum, *7 Surprising and Outrageous Stats about Gender Inequality*.

²⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, p. 28; UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/RES/55/71)*, 2001, p. 3.

²⁹⁰ Gender Spectrum, *Understanding Gender*.

²⁹¹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, p. 28.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming*, 2014, p. 16.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General, 2019*, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

empowerment, and mainstreaming.³⁰¹ Although ECOSOC highlighted the importance of accountability, monitoring, and results-based work on gender mainstreaming in 1997, it was not until 2012 that the UN System developed a unified System-wide mechanism.³⁰²

International and Regional Framework

The basis of gender mainstreaming draws from the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979), which called on Member States to end discrimination against women by acknowledging and acting upon issues and barriers to gender equality contained within their constitutions, legislation, and laws.³⁰³ CEDAW recognized women’s issues needed to be addressed economically, politically, and socially to ensure gender equality.³⁰⁴ Building on the principles developed in CEDAW, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* developed 12 focal points to achieve gender equality ranging from poverty, healthcare, education, and violence.³⁰⁵ A core method to achieve gender equality on the 12 topics was the inclusion of gender perspectives into the implementation efforts of all 12 areas.³⁰⁶

In 1997, ECOSOC adopted resolution 1997/2, “Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System,” which developed an official definition, guidelines, and methodologies for gender mainstreaming within the UN system.³⁰⁷ The resolution directed the Commission on the Status of Women to provide guidelines and technical support to the UN System, develop gender analysis best practices, create accountability from senior management, establish gender units and focal points, and create capacity development techniques for gender mainstreaming.³⁰⁸ General Assembly resolution 55/71 (2001) recognized the initial work done by ECOSOC, and officially requested ECOSOC to continue to be the main coordinating body for the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout the UN System.³⁰⁹ In 2019, ECOSOC adopted a resolution also titled “Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System” to continue work on the issue by focusing on building capacity within the UN System for gender mainstreaming.³¹⁰

Gender mainstreaming has been an important consideration in other UN bodies, including the Security Council, which recognized the importance of including women in peace-building and conflict resolution through adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).³¹¹ Women’s roles in conflict zones, and the specific challenges they face were discussed, focusing on lack of involvement within peace-building initiatives and the gender-based issues faced within conflict zones.³¹² This resolution also developed the framework for sex-disaggregated data in conflict zones, peace-building efforts, and the protection of persons from violence.³¹³ The General Assembly’s systematic approach in resolution 70/1 (2015), called “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, established the Sustainable Development Goals

³⁰¹ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019, p. 2.

³⁰² UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, p. 28; UN-Women, *Promoting UN Accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)*.

³⁰³ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995, p. 3.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 27-35.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 27-35.

³⁰⁹ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and Full Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly*, 2001, p. 3.

³¹⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, p. 2.

³¹¹ UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*, 2000.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ USIP, *What is UNSCR 1325?*

(SDGs) and included women in all facets of development.³¹⁴ SDG 5 (gender equality) contains targets for ending discrimination, eliminating violence against women and girls, and increasing women's participation in leadership politically, economically, and socially.³¹⁵ Furthermore, the SDGs contain 54 gender-specific indicators across the 17 goals, successfully mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout the SDGs, and subsequently across the UN System.³¹⁶ For example, the SDGs look at specific topics with gendered impacts, such as poverty, hunger, HIV infections, family planning, gender wage gap, and education.³¹⁷ Hence, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* contributes to more comprehensive gender equality efforts to be mainstreamed throughout the UN System.³¹⁸

Regionally, the African Union (AU) Gender Strategy further includes mainstreaming of gender perspectives within the regional and national levels by seeking to reduce inequality in accordance with the SDGs and Africa 2063 frameworks.³¹⁹ The policy focuses on development of gender mainstreaming capacity in all organs of the AU, mobilizing resources, and ensuring legal protection against discrimination based on gender.³²⁰ Furthermore, the European Union's (EU) *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020* utilizes gender mainstreaming as a core strategy to achieve gender equality in all policies, at all levels.³²¹ The EU's efforts focus on specific examples of mainstreaming within the EU, and identifying best practices and improvement areas.³²² Both regional bodies provide frameworks to their respective Member States, allowing for cohesive development of gender mainstreaming.³²³

Role of the International System

To increase efficiency and coordination of gender mainstreaming, UN-Women was created in 2010 to consolidate gender equality and gender mainstreaming efforts within the UN System and the international community.³²⁴ In 2011 UN-Women led the development of the System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP 1.0) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.³²⁵ UN-SWAP 1.0 created a systematic and measurable approach, collecting entity data and combining it into a single place, allowing for an overview on the current state of gender mainstreaming within the UN System.³²⁶ In 2018, UN-Women developed UN-SWAP 2.0, which built upon the success of UN-SWAP 1.0, and included more targets.³²⁷ UN-SWAP 2.0 additionally aligned the targets, metrics, and accountability to include the SDGs, creating accurate measurements of the work done on the SDGs in relation to gender mainstreaming.³²⁸ Data collated from

³¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 18.

³¹⁵ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 5*; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 18.

³¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

³¹⁷ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 14.

³¹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

³¹⁹ African Union, *African Union Gender Strategy (2018-2027)*, 2018; African Union's NEPAD, *Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life*.

³²⁰ African Union, *African Union Gender Policy (2018-2027)*, 2010, p. 14.

³²¹ European Commission, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020*, 2015.

³²² *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³²³ *Ibid.*; African Union, *African Union Gender Strategy (2018-2027)*, 2018; African Union's NEPAD, *Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life*.

³²⁴ UN General Assembly, *System-wide Coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010; UN-Women, *About UN-Women*.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ UN-Women, *Promoting UN Accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)*.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ UN-Women, *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the United Nations Entities (UN-SWAP 2.0)*, 2018.

UN-SWAP 2.0, as it was with UN-SWAP 1.0, is presented to ECOSOC through the SG's annual report on the UN System's progress on gender mainstreaming.³²⁹

Beginning in 2001, ECOSOC called for the development of action plans for each UN entity, in which they outlined a strategy to achieve gender mainstreaming within its body of work, including setting timelines and measurable goals.³³⁰ In 2004, ECOSOC reviewed resolution 1997/2 conclusions and reiterated its importance and additionally called for the development of training programs for gender analysis and gender units.³³¹ Furthermore, ECOSOC focused on capacity-building for gender mainstreaming by calling for training to be mandatory, supported by senior staff, and use the training to address gaps between policy and practice in 2006.³³² In 2011 ECOSOC called upon UN-Women to assume its role as the leader in accountability for gender equality, and called for the UN System to support the development of tangible reporting methods and increased data accumulation on gender mainstreaming.³³³ ECOSOC further concentrated on increasing financial support, resource allocation, and capacity development of agencies, personnel, and programs that focused on gender issues and mainstreaming in 2014.³³⁴ From 2015 onwards, ECOSOC's main focus is to: continue efforts to increase funding; develop capacity; support UN-SWAP 1.0 and 2.0; and to promote partnerships between UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and Member States to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the UN System.³³⁵

ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies also work towards mainstreaming gender perspective within their own bodies of work.³³⁶ ECOSOC's main regional bodies, including the Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are all undertaking efforts to mainstream gender perspectives within their body of work, as well as provide resources to Member States on gender mainstreaming.³³⁷ For example, in 2015 ESCAP released a 20-year review of the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, discussing the work Asian and Pacific Member States have taken on gender mainstreaming.³³⁸ ESCAP also provides a mechanism for Asian and Pacific Member States to share barriers and best practices for gender mainstreaming, improving the capacity for the region.³³⁹ UNECE's five-year plan *UNECE Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Supporting the SDGs implementation in the UNECE Region (2016-2020)* merges the SDGs, UN-SWAP 2.0, and mainstreaming within their program of work, including gender perspectives within technical guidance, expert meetings, and policy analysis with Member States, and utilizes and collects sex-disaggregated data.³⁴⁰ Similar

³²⁹ UN-Women, *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the United Nations Entities (UN-SWAP 2.0)*, 2018; UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019.

³³⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2001.

³³¹ UN ECOSOC, *Review of Economic and Social Council Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2004.

³³² UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2006.

³³³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2011.

³³⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2014.

³³⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019.

³³⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2001.

³³⁷ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Within the UN System*.

³³⁸ UN ESCAP, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific*, 2015.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ UNECE, *UNECE Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Supporting the SDGs Implementation in the UNECE Region (2016-2020)*, 2016, pp. 14-15.

efforts are being undertaken by each regional subsidiary body, providing technical guidance to Member States, strengthening capacity, and providing a forum to share best practices.³⁴¹

Capacity Development: Internal Success Towards Outward Progress

To fully implement gender mainstreaming throughout the UN System, capacity needs to be strengthened through funding efforts, staff expertise, training, parity, and development.³⁴² To increase financial support for gender mainstreaming and gender equality and provide best practices throughout the UN System, the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality was developed.³⁴³ ECOSOC also called upon the UN System to seek more sustainable and stable funding to ensure adequate funding each year, and avoid budget shortfalls.³⁴⁴ It also recommends UN entities to identify methods to increase the efficiency and potency of gender mainstreaming efforts utilizing current resources and funding, focusing on working within the current budget.³⁴⁵ ECOSOC gives particular attention to increasing investment for UN-SWAP 2.0 to improve data collection and reporting, which supports gender mainstreaming through detailed outcome monitoring to provide the groundwork for future efforts.³⁴⁶

ECOSOC has worked extensively since 1997 on developing UN staff capacity for gender mainstreaming through training activities, staff units with expertise on gender issues (gender units), and gender knowledge and expertise throughout the UN System.³⁴⁷ Efforts include mandatory training sessions for staff on gender issues and mainstreaming to ensure mainstreaming efforts continue to take place in an efficient manner, and the development of accessible gender units, which lend their expertise to the development of policies and programs throughout the UN System.³⁴⁸ Increasing the expertise of UN System staff improves the efficiency and rate of mainstreaming, and that expertise is shared with Member States.³⁴⁹ Further, as mainstreaming takes place at all levels of work, throughout the UN System, the creation of a gender knowledge base enables each entity and agency to develop gender mainstreaming in their own body of work.³⁵⁰

Gender parity, in which there are equal numbers of male and female employees, is another capacity-building technique to aid in the efforts of gender mainstreaming, enshrined within the *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* of 2017.³⁵¹ The Beijing Declaration specifically states that involving women in decision-making processes increases the mainstreaming of gender perspectives, and contributes to the overall discussion of women's empowerment.³⁵² UN-Women recognizes parity as essential to improving efficiency, impact, and credibility of an organization, including the UN System.³⁵³ While the UN has yet to

³⁴¹ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Within the UN System*.

³⁴² UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 28-35; UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019.

³⁴³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019.

³⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997* (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 28-35.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33; UN Gender Parity Task Force, *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*, 2017; UNESCO, *Gender Parity Index (GPI)*.

³⁵² UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995, p. 119.

³⁵³ UN-Women, *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the United Nations Entities (UN-SWAP 2.0)*, 2018.

achieve gender parity, particularly in field work operations, achieving gender parity will improve the UN System's overall efficiency and gender mainstreaming.³⁵⁴

Additionally, ECOSOC recognizes barriers to gender parity, such as sexual harassment, that threatens to stall progress.³⁵⁵ Approximately, 1/3 of UN employee responded to an internal survey reported experiencing sexual harassment.³⁵⁶ In response, the UN implemented new policies to reduce harassment, protect victims, and investigate accusations, including the creation of an investigatory team to probe accusations, and a dedicated hotline to allow victims to report sexual harassment.³⁵⁷ More effort is needed to develop capacity, but significant progress has been made in mainstreaming gender perspectives within the work of the UN System.³⁵⁸

Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Mainstreaming in Action

According to UN-Women, the development of the SDGs is an example of gender mainstreaming in action.³⁵⁹ The development of the SDGs has increased gender mainstreaming efforts and capacity for the UN System, the international community, and ECOSOC, as part of its mandate, is the main driver behind implementation, action, and reporting on the SDGs.³⁶⁰

Without full gender equality, the SDGs will not be met, and so the SDGs must also promote, create, and develop gender equality.³⁶¹ Overall, the SDGs contain 52 gender-specific indicators across 11 different goals, covering topics such as education, health, employment, hunger, and climate action.³⁶² The SDGs' cross-cutting gender indicators created a foundation for any organization working within a specific topic to include gender perspectives in the reporting, policies, and programs developed to address the topic.³⁶³ While the SDGs were historic in the inclusion of women's issues and gender mainstreaming, the topics of SDG 6 (clean water), SDG 7 (energy), SDG 9 (industry), SDG 12 (consumption and production), and SDG 14 (life on the land), and SDG 15 (life in the sea) do not contain gender-specific indicators.³⁶⁴ However, UN-Women notes that in order to achieve the SDGs, gender mainstreaming needs to be fully implemented within the SDGs, especially on goals that fail to include gender indicators.³⁶⁵

Many agencies within the UN System have made large advancements on gender mainstreaming as part of their work on the SDGs.³⁶⁶ The World Trade Organization (WTO), citing SDG 5, released a Joint Declaration calling for gender mainstreaming and equality to be included into trade agreements, and outlined the work the WTO will take to achieve full mainstreaming.³⁶⁷ Gender mainstreaming has also slowly increased in Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs), with 74 explicit gender-related provisions in

³⁵⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, p. 3; United Nations Gender Parity Task Force, *UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard*, 2019.

³⁵⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, p. 3.

³⁵⁶ Gharib, M., *Report Says 1 in 3 U.N. Staffers Has Been Sexually Harassed*, National Public Radio, 2019.

³⁵⁷ UN DGC, *Secretary-General Updates on Action to Tackle Sexual Harassment*, 2018.

³⁵⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019, pp. 2-3.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 2; UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

³⁶¹ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 2.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³⁶⁷ WTO, *Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment on the Occasion of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017*, 2017.

RTAs as of 2018, or 13% of the total RTAs included in the study from 1990 to 2018.³⁶⁸ In 1992, the North American Free Trade Agreement contained provisions for the elimination of employment discrimination based on sex, and equal pay.³⁶⁹ Currently the EU, New Zealand, and the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru) are all considering adding chapters on trade and gender into their RTAs.³⁷⁰ Additionally, the first bilateral trade agreement to include a standalone chapter on gender was developed in 2016 by Chile and Uruguay.³⁷¹

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) drew on the SDGs to develop a Gender Action Plan (GAP) to mainstream gender perspectives throughout UNFCCC's body of work.³⁷² The GAP focuses on five specific areas: capacity-building, gender parity in participation, consistent implementation, gender mainstreaming within the Paris Agreement, and the development of reporting and monitoring.³⁷³ The United Nations Environment Assembly's (UNEA) resolution UNEP/EA.4/L.21 recognized the impacts women and girls face from climate change and environmental degradation.³⁷⁴ This recognition provides the framework for UNEA to develop a Gender Equality and Environment policy and strategy that focuses on mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout UNEA's body of work.³⁷⁵ For the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, its decision to mainstream gender perspectives throughout its work on Cluster Development is derived from SDG 5, 8, and 9, and is paramount to promoting sustainable industrial development.³⁷⁶ The United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) GAP for 2018-2021 mainstreams gender through its work, encompassing health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, education, water, and sanitation, as a method to improve the lives of children, and achieve the SDGs.³⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Asian Development Bank, at the onset of the SDGs, partnered with UN-Women to establish a baseline for monitoring the implementation and progress of the SDGs, creating the first assessment of the region.³⁷⁸ Building upon its previous work, the Security Council adopted resolution 2242 (2015), citing the importance of gender perspectives in the realization of the SDGs, women's participation and leadership in achieving peace and security, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).³⁷⁹ Security Council Resolution 2242 (2016) calls for increased integration of gender mainstreaming, and the inclusion of women in the peace-building process, as well as utilizing gender expertise in the work of the Council.³⁸⁰

Conclusion

Gender mainstreaming has been an official strategy of ECOSOC for the UN System for over 20 years, which has led to significant progress towards gender equality.³⁸¹ Almost all of the UN System now reports on their progress in gender mainstreaming through UN-SWAP 2.0, and ECOSOC continues to utilize that information to further progress on gender mainstreaming.³⁸² ECOSOC, in recent years, has focused on

³⁶⁸ WTO, *Gender-related Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements*, 2018, pp. 4-5.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁷¹ Inter-American Development Bank, *Analysis of the Chile-Uruguay FTA*, 2017; International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, *An Opportunity for a Gender Equality Focus in Trade Policy?*, 2018.

³⁷² UNFCCC, *Establishment of a Gender Action Plan (FCCC/CP/2017/11/Add.1)*, 2017.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

³⁷⁴ UNEA, *Promoting Gender Equality and the Human Rights and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Environmental Governance (UNEP/EA.4/L.21)*, 2019.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ UNIDO, *Mainstreaming Gender in Cluster Development*, 2018.

³⁷⁷ UNICEF, *Gender Action Plan (2018-2021)*, 2018; UNICEF, *Gender Action Plan 2018-2021*.

³⁷⁸ Asian Development Bank, *Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific Baseline and Pathways for Transformative Change by 2030*, 2018, p. 4.

³⁷⁹ UN Security Council, *Women Peace and Security S/RES/2242(2015)*, 2015, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-7.

³⁸¹ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Approaches in Development Programming: Being Strategic and Achieving Results in an Evolving Development Context*, 2013, p. 7.

³⁸² UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019, p. 4.

identifying and removing barriers to implementation, including lack of funding, gender parity, and capacity.³⁸³ Part of ECOSOC's goals is to increase efficiency in gender mainstreaming without drawing on additional resources as well as increasing the general knowledge base of staff through regular training.³⁸⁴ The lack of capacity for gender mainstreaming has created gaps in implementation that need to be addressed, such as funding opportunities, resource allocation, staff capacity, and targeted and measurable programs and practices.³⁸⁵ The SDGs are a platform to enable widespread mainstreaming of gender perspectives within the UN System's body of work.³⁸⁶ Many agencies have developed historic policies and programs in an effort to achieve the SDGs, including recognizing specific gender-based challenges to implementation within their specific bodies of work.³⁸⁷ But while significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done to fully mainstream a gender perspective throughout the UN System.³⁸⁸

Further Research

Moving forward, delegates should consider questions such as: What are some ways in which ECOSOC can improve the UN System's capacity for gender mainstreaming without increased funding resources? How can gender be mainstreamed more thoroughly within the SDGs? In what ways can the UN System improve its data indicators to further identify adverse impacts occurring based on gender? What are specific limitations to the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the local level, and what actions can be taken to reduce those limitations? How can ECOSOC reduce the gap between policy and practice for gender mainstreaming?

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By informally considering the International Women's Bill of Rights, this convention establishes the rights of all women and girls, from access to education and healthcare, to participation in all social, political, and economic spheres. This convention created the framework for the development of policies and practices to reduce gender inequality, including the strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in the UN System. Delegates will gain a deeper understanding of gendered issues, why it is important to acknowledge such issues, and gain insights into the reasoning behind gender mainstreaming.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session. (2010). *System-wide Coherence (A/RES/64/289)*. Retrieved 21 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/64/289>

This General Assembly resolution seeks to provide cohesion and unity to practices, policies, and programs within the UN System. It also created UN-Women. Formed from multiple separate entities, UN-Women was mandated to provide technical support and guidance to Member States, and to lead the coordination of women's issues with the UN System. Delegates will rely heavily on reports, efforts, and policies developed by UN-

³⁸³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.; UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Approaches in Development Programming: Being Strategic and Achieving Results in an Evolving Development Context*, 2013, p. 7.

³⁸⁶ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 2.

³⁸⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

Women, and should use UN-Women as a research tool on the mainstreaming of gender perspectives within the UN System.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2018). *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in United Nations Entities (UN-SWAP 2.0)*. Retrieved 18 July 2019 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-2-framework-and-technical-guidance-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

The UN SWAP 2.0 is a unifying policy towards gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and women's issues addressed throughout the UN System. UN-SWAP 2.0 is an accountability framework designed to provide guidelines to the entities within the UN System to measure efforts done by the UN System on mainstreaming gender perspectives. Through targeted metrics, this document empowers UN-Women to hold the UN System accountable for the agreements and decisions made, and ensure all policies and programs seek to address men and women's issues, and reduce gender inequality. Delegates will understand the current measurements in which the UN System is evaluated for its work on gender mainstreaming, and will be able to identify where the UN System falls short, as well as where it excels.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2018). *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 20 July 2019 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/sdg-report-gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4332>

This document gives an in-depth examination of the SDGs' successes and shortfalls towards gender equality and mainstreaming. Every aspect of the 2030 Agenda is analyzed, measured, and reported on with readily available statistics. The document also includes steps to improve the SDGs, specific targets and indicators, data gathered, and methods used. Delegates will gain a large base of knowledge on how the SDGs relate to gender equality, the examples of mainstreaming contained within, and insights on what else needs to be done. Additionally, delegates will gain an understanding of the current modus operandi of the international community on improving gender mainstreaming.

United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from:

https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established the current definition of gender mainstreaming. It also developed the strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives as a means to reducing systemic inequalities in regards to gender, and is heavily cited in all documents relating to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives throughout the UN System. Delegates will gain historical understanding of the topic at hand, and understand the root definitions and principles related to mainstreaming gender perspectives.

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