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Economic and Social Council Plenary Background Guide 2021

Written and updated by: Tiffany Dao and Akiko Teramoto, Directors
Elias Ruf and Seth Davis, Assistant Directors



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13570 Grove Dr., Suite 294 • Maple Grove, MN 55311

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

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2021 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Economic and Social Council Plenary (ECOSOC). This year's staff is: Directors Tiffany Dao (Conference A) and Akiko Teramoto (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Elias Ruf (Conference A) and Seth Davis (Conference B). Tiffany is a legal assistant at a litigation law firm and studying for her Master of Studies in Law at the University of Southern California. Akiko received a BA in Foreign Studies from Kobe City University of Foreign Studies and is a MS Candidate in Global Affairs at New York University. Elias currently studies English, chemistry and social studies for teaching in secondary education in Erlangen, Germany. Seth holds a Bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Religious Studies from Alma College.

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

- I. The Socio-Economic Effects of Global Pandemics
- II. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Fragile States
- III. Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System

As a principal organ of the UN, 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, with particular emphasis on achieving the SDGs by 2030. To accurately simulate the committee, it will be important to focus on ECOSOC's coordination and policy guidance role, as opposed to the activities carried out by ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies.

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 2021 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 Chase Mitchell (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

Tiffany Dao, *Director*
Elias Ruf, *Assistant Director*

Conference B

Akiko Teramoto, *Director*
Seth Davis, *Assistant Director*

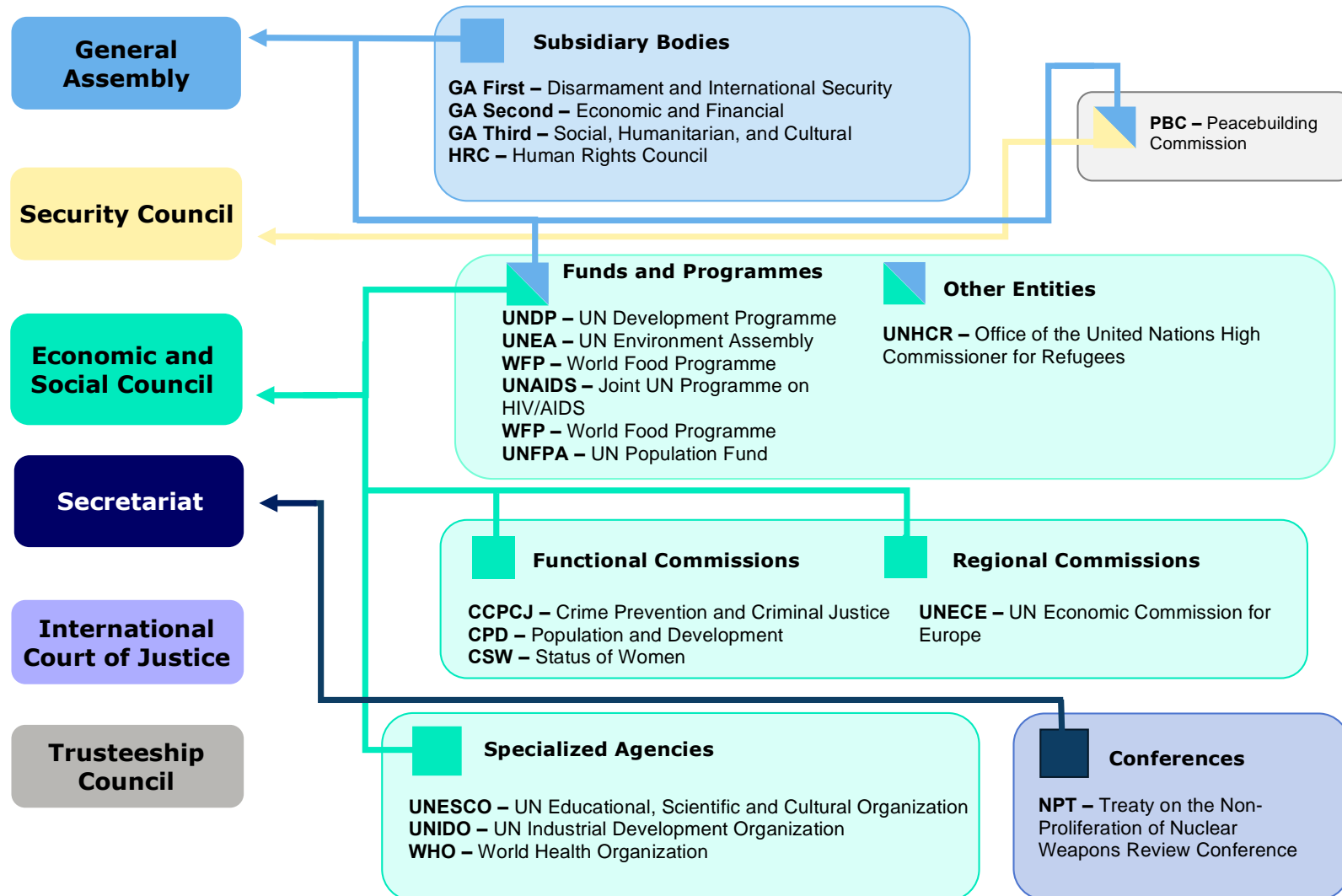


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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

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 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; notably, during 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, General Assembly adopted resolution 2847(XXVI), which amended Article 61 of the *Charter of the United Nations* by increasing ECOSOC membership from 27 to 54, in order to better reflect global economic and geographic diversity.⁵ In 1977, the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/197, “Restructuring of economic and social sectors of the United Nations System,” and sought to improve ECOSOC’s effectiveness by increasing coordination with its subsidiary bodies.⁶ To avoid any duplication of work due to broad mandates, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/227 (1995) on “Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields,” clarifying that its role is to provide policy guidance while ECOSOC’s focus is on coordination of implementation.⁷

Throughout the last decade, the General Assembly implemented additional reforms aimed at strengthening the working methods of ECOSOC.⁸ These reforms included an expansion of ECOSOC’s functions to enable it to take the lead on identifying and discussing emerging challenges, act as a policy forum for global leaders through the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and provide a platform of accountability for all levels of monitoring and reporting on universal commitments.⁹ An example of this is ECOSOC’s commitment to engaging youth in a partnership focused on ensuring the successful attainment of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁰ This partnership began when the 2010-2011 Year of Youth prompted the first ECOSOC sanctioned Youth Forum in 2012, a meeting that engaged youth and brought to light issues like unemployment for the younger generation.¹¹ The success of the first sanctioned ECOSOC Youth Forum has now resulted in a more structured and thorough annual forum.¹² In 2018, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/305, reiterating that ECOSOC’s work should be rooted in inclusivity, transparency,

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 New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2020.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶ UN General Assembly, *Restructuring the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System (A/RES/32/197)*, 1977.

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/RES/50/227)*, 1996.

⁸ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2018; 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.

⁹ UN ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods*, 2014.

¹⁰ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

and flexibility.¹³ The 2020 Youth Forum was slated to take place in mid-April 2020, but has since been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a new date to be announced at a later time.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ Seats are allocated to each of the following five regional groups of states: 14 to Africa, 11 to Asia and the Pacific; six to Eastern European; 10 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 These representatives are each elected for a one-year term at the end of each annual session in July.¹⁹ The Bureau is elected by the full Council annually in July.²⁰ The Bureau sets ECOSOC's agenda, devises action plans, and collaborates with the Secretariat on administrative duties.²¹ ECOSOC's presidency rotates among the regional groups.²² The current president is Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, who was elected on 23 July 2020.²³

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.²⁴ Organizational sessions are dedicated to administrative aspects, such as agenda setting and elections to the Bureau.²⁵ 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 Integration Segment, with each focusing on separate thematic aspects of the Council's work.²⁶ The addition of these five segments were mandated by General Assembly resolution 68/1 (2013) on "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council".²⁷ Each annual segment allows the plenary body to focus on specific agenda items and dedicate a specific number of working days to each segment.²⁸ The High-Level Segment and HLPF, established by General Assembly resolution 67/290 and jointly guided by ECOSOC and the General Assembly, focus on the implementation progress of the SDGs.²⁹ The Coordination Segment meets annually upon the discretion of the Council and focuses on carrying out the recommendations brought

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *UN75 Youth Envoy and ECOSOC Youth Forum Postponement Letter to Member States*, 2020.

¹⁵ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Members*.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

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 *Ibid.*

²³ UN ECOSOC, *President of ECOSOC*, 2020.

²⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*, 1992, p. 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁷ 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, p. 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁹ UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013; UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC High-level Segment*, 2019; UN, *High-Level Political Forum, Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*, 2019.

forth by the High-level Segment.³⁰ The Operational Activities Segment meets annually after “first regular sessions of the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system,” and focuses on providing guidance to ECOSOC on the implementation and strategies established by the General Assembly.³¹ The Humanitarian Affairs Segment is held in June and focuses on strengthening assistance from Member States on humanitarian emergencies with the additional goal of transitioning relief efforts towards development efforts.³² Lastly, the Integration Segment focuses on consolidating “all the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders and to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.”³³

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.³⁴ The two most common types of subsidiary bodies are functional, which focus on specific issues, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and regional commissions that focus on geopolitical topics, such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).³⁵ Other subsidiary bodies include standing, ad hoc, expert, and other related bodies.³⁶ Examples of subsidiary bodies include: the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which serves as a standing committee; the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which serves as an ad hoc body; and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which serves as an expert body.³⁷ Each subsidiary body has adopted specific methods of work to align with its mandate, and methods are updated regularly.³⁸

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

Article 62(1) of 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.³⁹ ECOSOC may also provide information and assist the Security Council when addressing humanitarian crises, including public health emergencies.⁴⁰ For instance, ECOSOC has continually addressed COVID-19 and held an informal briefing on “Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response” on 11 May 2020.⁴¹ 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.⁴² To further allow for coordination, a 2007 reform of ECOSOC brought forth by General Assembly resolution 61/16, 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.⁴³

³⁰ 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, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Functional Commissions*, 2014.

³⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 7.

³⁹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

⁴⁰ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² 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.

⁴³ UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)*, 2006.

In addition to overseeing its subsidiary bodies, ECOSOC's mechanisms allow for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to consult on the work of the UN.⁴⁴ There are more than 5,000 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.⁴⁵ By obtaining consultative status, these NGOs are allowed to provide insight to different UN bodies, discussion, and policies as they pertain to specialized topics and regions.⁴⁶ Applications for consultative status are considered by ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs, which was established in 1946 and is made up of 19 Member States.⁴⁷ The Committee on NGOs directly reports to ECOSOC on the procedural and substantive matters raised by NGOs.⁴⁸ ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 (1996) defines the principles, eligibility requirements, rules, procedures, obligations, and responsibilities for NGOs and the UN in establishing the consultative relationship.⁴⁹ While the Committee on NGOs has postponed its meetings due to COVID-19, at its 1 September 2018 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.⁵⁰

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Beginning ECOSOC's annual session, the Operational Activities Segment met from 19-22 and on 27 May 2020 to review the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 (2017), the "Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system," and resolution 72/279 (2018) on "Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system."⁵¹ The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities (QCPR) is a tool for Member States to provide policy recommendations to the UN development system and the 2020 QCPR was generally regarded as successful by participants.⁵² In the context of the QCPR, the Secretary-General called for shifting focus to "how the UN development system can ensure accelerated efforts as we embark on the Decade of Action for the SDGs."⁵³ The inputs generated by the Operational Activities Segment will be given to the General Assembly during its General Debate in fall 2020.⁵⁴

From 9-11 June 2020, ECOSOC's Humanitarian Affairs Segment met virtually under the theme "Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles."⁵⁵ The high-level panel discussions and events focused on areas affected by the pandemic, such as the treatment of internally displaced persons

⁴⁴ UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*.

⁴⁵ UN ECOSOC, *List of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council as of 1 September 2018 (E/2019/INF/5)*, 2018.

⁴⁶ UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; UN ECOSOC, *Consultative Relationship Between the United Nations and Non-governmental Organizations (E/RES/1996/31)*, 1996, pp. 53-61.

⁵⁰ UN DGC, *Concluding Session, Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations Recommends Status for 219 Groups, Adopts Report Containing 2020 Meeting Schedule*, 2019; UN DESA, *The Committee on NGOs, 2020*.

⁵¹ UN ECOSOC, *The 2020 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2020.

⁵² UN ECOSOC, *QCPR in 2020*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Chair's Summary*, 2020, p. 4.

⁵³ UN ECOSOC, *2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Chair's Summary*, 2020, p. 3.

⁵⁴ UN ECOSOC, *The 2020 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2020.

⁵⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2020.

(IDPs), innovation and new technology, and sexual and gender-based violence.⁵⁶ Additionally, a joint event by the Humanitarian Affairs Segment and the Operational Activities Segment addressed peacebuilding in humanitarian crises by looking at the Central Sahel to identify opportunities of further collaboration.⁵⁷

In preparation of the 2020 HLPF, the Secretary-General published his report on “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,” highlighting COVID-19’s effects on the global economy and vulnerable populations.⁵⁸ The report called for strengthened multilateralism in Member States’ COVID-19 pandemic response.⁵⁹ The 2020 annual HLPF was held from 7-16 July 2020 under the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.”⁶⁰ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, sessions were held virtually, and participants addressed how to achieve the SDGs while tackling the pandemic.⁶¹ As part of the 2020 HLPF, 47 Member States presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), outlining their progress on the SDGs.⁶² The draft ministerial declaration of the HLPF highlighted participants’ commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit’s Political Declaration, which was adopted in September 2019.⁶³ The draft declaration further recognizes the need for an immediate and global ceasefire, improved resilience, universal access to social protection and health services, and strengthened cooperation.⁶⁴ Additionally, former ECOSOC President Juul stated that the UN is committed to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic and “rebuilding better after the pandemic, with the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* as our roadmap.”⁶⁵ The theme for HLPF 2021 will be determined in September 2020 by the General Assembly.⁶⁶

Conclusion

ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating activities and programs through the expansive UN system towards the ultimate goal of sustainable development.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ The Council’s President, Munir Akram, stated in his July 2020 inauguration speech that unity and cooperation is needed in addressing

⁵⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2020.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Joint Informal Event of the Operational Activities and Humanitarian Affairs Segments Transition from Relief to Development: The Multidimensional and Interconnected Challenges in the Central Sahel Region: Reducing Needs, Risks and Vulnerabilities for People Through Closer Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Collaboration*, 2020, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/59)*, 2020, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁰ UN ECOSOC, *High-Level Political Forum 2020 Under the Auspices of ECOSOC*, 2020.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Segment of the 2020 Session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Convened Under the Auspices of the Council, on the Theme “Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development”*: Advance Version (E/2020/L.20–E/HLPF/2020/L.1), 2020, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-7.

⁶⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Statement by President of ECOSOC Mona Juul on the Adoption of the Draft Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development Convened Under the Auspices of the Council Through Silence Procedure on 17 July 2020*, 2020, p. 1.

⁶⁶ IISD, *Member States Consider 8-Goal Review for 2021 HLPF*, 2020.

⁶⁷ Educational Broadcasting Corporation, *Kofi Annan – Center of the Storm: Who Does What?*, 2016.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

issues ranging from COVID-19 to climate change.⁶⁹ Specifically, President Akram has designated three themes as ECOSOC's priority: financing COVID-19, climate, and SDG responses; "sustainable infrastructure development"; and applying science and technology for "sustained, efficient and sustainable growth".⁷⁰

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

This report was published in accordance with the changes and reforms that were made to allow ECOSOC to better fulfil its mandate. The report outlines the key points made within General Assembly resolution 68/1 (2013) and the new set of priorities for ECOSOC in addressing global issues. Additionally, the chart included in the document highlights the yearly schedule of ECOSOC as well as its meeting structure. Delegates would find this useful in understanding ECOSOC's current mandate and structure that extends beyond Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-eighth session. (2013). *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)*. Retrieved 14 July 2020 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/68/1>

While Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations established the foundation of ECOSOC that is held to this day, its operational work and priorities have shifted along with the change in the UN's priorities. General Assembly resolution 68/1 strengthened ECOSOC's role within the UN system, and revised the segment system of ECOSOC, changing it to its current five segment approach, and establishing high-level and multi-stakeholder forums. It is highly recommended that delegates familiarize themselves with the content of this monumental resolution to understand the current foundation of ECOSOC.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2020). *Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development, Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/59)*. Retrieved 18 July 2020 from: <https://undocs.org/e/2020/59>

This Report of the Secretary-General was published on 8 May 2020 in preparation for the 2020 HLPF. In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the report notes key areas that can have a significant socioeconomic impact on people's wellbeing. In line with the provisional agendas, the report also addresses areas such as energy and extreme poverty. Delegates would find this document useful in understanding the priorities of ECOSOC and the background of HLPF 2020.

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⁶⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Statement by President of ECOSOC Munir Akram on the 2021 Organizational Session: First Informal Meeting Election of the Bureau of ECOSOC on 23 July 2020*, 2020, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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I. The Socio-Economic Effects of Global Pandemics

“At times of crisis, there is a tendency to turn inwards, and focus on our own countries, communities and homes. But as we have seen, this pandemic requires decisive and urgent collective action from the global community, and from each and every one of us.”⁷¹

Introduction

Communicable diseases pose a significant challenge to the international community and threaten international health security as they emerge without warning and spread quickly in a globalized world.⁷² The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies infectious disease outbreaks as either epidemics or pandemics.⁷³ The term “epidemic” refers to disease outbreaks in a specific region or area whereas the term “pandemic” only includes outbreak events that spread on a global scale and affect a significant part of the world’s population.⁷⁴ Tuberculosis, the Ebola virus disease, and HIV/AIDS are some of the most prominent epidemic occurrences of the 21st century, yet each vary significantly in case numbers, form of transmission, transmission rates, and fatality rates.⁷⁵ There have only been two global pandemics in the 21st century, one of which was the 2009 pandemic caused by an influenza A(H1N1) virus that resulted in up to 400,000 deaths in its first year.⁷⁶ The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2, a severe acute respiratory syndrome, is a global health crisis unlike any other since the foundation of the United Nations.⁷⁷

The United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines socio-economic effects of global pandemics as the negative consequences of measures put in place to stop the spread of the disease resulting in social and economic instabilities.⁷⁸ Potential measures include mandatory quarantines, regional lockdowns, travel restrictions, and school closures especially affecting vulnerable populations such as children, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness.⁷⁹ In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, these measures are causing a global recession with deep social and economic consequences with so far up to 25 million jobs lost, a labor income deficit ranging from USD 860 billion to USD 3.4 trillion due to a slowdown in manufacturing, trade, and purchasing power, disrupted supply chains, and capital shortages, especially in already fragile developing states.⁸⁰ Socio-economic impacts of pandemics also entail a profound negative effect on sustainable development efforts and partnerships and hinders ECOSOC from achieving its main objectives, as the already limited financial resources are allocated increasingly to the pandemic response.⁸¹

International and Regional Framework

Article 62 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) provides that international health matters fall within the purview of ECOSOC’s mandate.⁸² Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) highlights the right to a standard of living and personal well-being, including access to medical care and social services.⁸³ A pandemic and its socio-economic consequences not only threaten the right

⁷¹ UN ECOSOC, *Briefing on COVID-19: Remarks by the President of the Economic and Social Council*, 2020, p.1.

⁷² WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Communicable diseases*, 2020.

⁷³ WHO, *Emergencies: Disease outbreaks*.

⁷⁴ CDC, *Principles of Epidemiology in Public Health Practice*, 2012.

⁷⁵ WHO, *Emergencies: Disease outbreaks*.

⁷⁶ WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Past pandemics*.

⁷⁷ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

⁷⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*, 2020, p.1.

⁷⁹ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 26.

⁸³ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

to health, but can be a threat to all human rights as a whole.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) strengthens the UN's pledge to secure this right to health and foster international cooperation in fighting social, economic, and cultural crises.⁸⁵ Article 12 of the ICESCR further establishes the commitment to prevent, treat, and control epidemics and other disease occurrences.⁸⁶

In 2015, the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) renewed the efforts against infectious diseases and their social and economic impacts by establishing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁸⁷ SDG 3 on good health and well-being addresses already existing epidemics, universal health coverage, “access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines,” and capacity-building in developing states in targets 3.3, 3.8, 3.B, and 3.D.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, multiple other goals and their targets are directly or indirectly linked to health such as 2.2 (child malnutrition), 4.1 (quality education), 6.2 (sanitation and hygiene), 11.6 (clean cities), and 17.19 (statistical capacity-building).⁸⁹ As ECOSOC stands at the center of the UN's efforts for sustainable development, overseeing the implementation of the SDGs is one of its core responsibilities.⁹⁰

In addition to the 2030 Agenda, the *Paris Agreement* (2015) and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development* (AAAA) (2015) are also essential guidelines for a pandemic response.⁹¹ As addressing climate change and reversing loss of biodiversity remain a priority, the *Paris Agreement* can guide governments in their economic pandemic response, creating a greener and more resilient world.⁹² In particular, article 7 on adaption and resilience in combination with articles 9-11 on finance, technology and capacity-building support for developing states go hand in hand with economic pandemic recovery efforts.⁹³ The AAAA is a framework focusing on all financing flows and policies in relation to economic, social and environmental priorities that are especially important in times of crisis.⁹⁴

Role of the International System

The socio-economic response to a pandemic is set within the United Nations Development System (UNDS) with ECOSOC at its center.⁹⁵ ECOSOC works as an inclusive platform involving and fostering collaboration between all Member States, the UN system, civil society, and youth.⁹⁶ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a key technical role in the UN's socio-economic recovery to a pandemic, relying on its experience with disaster response and epidemic disease outbreaks.⁹⁷ The WHO is leading health efforts with regards to scientific collaboration, universal access to treatment, and the immediate health response.⁹⁸ The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and its Resident Coordinator (RC) system are spearheading the socio-economic efforts within the UNDS.⁹⁹ Together with the UN Country Teams (UNCTs), RCs coordinate all relevant UN entities, such as the

⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

⁸⁵ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

⁸⁸ UN DGC, *Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*.

⁸⁹ WHO, *The Global Health Observatory*.

⁹⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

⁹¹ UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*, 2020, p.4.

⁹² UNFCCC, *Call to Action for a Climate-Resilient Recovery from COVID-19*, 2020.

⁹³ UNFCCC, *What is the Paris Agreement?*, 2020.

⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015.

⁹⁵ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

⁹⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*, 2020, p. 4.

⁹⁷ UNDP, *Covid-19 pandemic*.

⁹⁸ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

⁹⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*, 2020, p.1.

WHO for health and UNDP for socioeconomic support.¹⁰⁰ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretary-General set up the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, an inter-agency funding mechanism that focuses on ending the pandemic, mitigating the social and economic instabilities, and helping the recovery of Member States.¹⁰¹

In 2009, as a response to the H1N1 pandemic, the UN Secretary-General initiated the High-level Forum on Advancing Global Health in the Face of Crisis on “protecting vulnerable populations, building resilient health systems and enhancing coherence towards multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships”.¹⁰² In 2020, the UN Secretary-General also published the “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19” report highlighting the socio-economic disruptions of the pandemic early.¹⁰³ The report was followed by General Assembly resolutions 74/270 and 74/274 calling for global solidarity and cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.¹⁰⁴ *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19* (2020) further sets out to strengthen current efforts against a pandemic, such as improving health systems, establishing economic response and recovery programs, promoting community-led resilience and response systems with the help of RCs.¹⁰⁵

To address global emergencies and global disease outbreaks, ECOSOC periodically hosts special meetings such as the ones on SARS in 2003, the avian flu in 2005, and Ebola in 2014.¹⁰⁶ In 2020, ECOSOC hosted an informal briefing on *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response* to discuss policy solution for the COVID-19 pandemic while postponing the 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum and the 2020 Development Cooperation Forum.¹⁰⁷ The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020 was held under the theme of “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” to foster discussions on how to respond to the pandemic without neglecting the SDGs.¹⁰⁸ These discussions led to concrete policy guides for decision makers and practitioners in SGD-related topics ranging from innovative partnerships to the contribution of youth in developing States.¹⁰⁹

Partnerships for Development

95% of cases and deaths of the deadliest infectious disease globally, tuberculosis, occur in low- and middle-income states.¹¹⁰ In 2014, Ebola hit the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone the hardest and reminded the global community of the devastating socio-economic effects a disease outbreak can have.¹¹¹ This pattern reflects the limited resources and large number of highly vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income states that also puts them at a very high risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹² In addition, lower foreign investments, shrinking resource demands, and disrupted supply chains lead to more job losses and lower income in already instable socio-economic systems.¹¹³ One way to respond to these threats is through strong partnerships between policy-makers,

¹⁰⁰ UN DGC, *COVID-19 Reminds There Is No Time to Lose, Secretary-General Stresses, in Remarks to Economic and Social Council Operational Activities Segment*, 2020.

¹⁰¹ UNSDG, *The Secretary-General’s UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund*, 2020, p. 2.

¹⁰² UN General Assembly, *Global health and foreign policy (A/RES/64/108)*, 2009.

¹⁰³ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ UN General Assembly, *Resolutions of the 74th Session*, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*.

¹⁰⁷ UN ECOSOC, *All Events*; UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response Opening Remarks*, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ UN DESA, *High-Level Political Forum 2020 under the auspices of ECOSOC*.

¹⁰⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2020 session*, 2020, p. 1-3.

¹¹⁰ WHO, *Tuberculosis*, 2020.

¹¹¹ UN Economic Commission for Africa, *Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola on Africa*, 2015, p. X.

¹¹² WHO, *Support for developing countries’ response to the H1N1 influenza pandemic*, 2009.

¹¹³ OECD, *COVID-19 and Africa: Socio-economic implications and policy responses*, 2020.

the private sector, and civil society.¹¹⁴ With the help of the UN, these stakeholders can address a pandemic through macroeconomic solutions, financing and resources, and public representation.¹¹⁵

ECOSOC serves as the main platform on UN partnerships and participation and hosts the annual ECOSOC Partnership Forum.¹¹⁶ Its primary goal is to improve and build collaborations for sustainable development and enable knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resource sharing, especially in low- and middle-income states, as laid out in SDG Targets 17.16 and 17.17.¹¹⁷ In the context of a pandemic, these targets would translate into efforts that establish resources for healthcare worker training and strengthening healthcare systems in general.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, they would include measures to close information gaps and provide food and education.¹¹⁹ The 2018 ECOSOC Partnership Forum highlighted the use of big data, the large amount of passive data from digital products and services such as mobile phones and social media, for real-time tracking of disease outbreaks.¹²⁰ In April 2019, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), launched the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator in order to scale up partnership building globally.¹²¹

On a global level, health partnerships are primarily concerned with research and innovation to ensure global access to medications health data.¹²² Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) is a Global Health Partnership coordinating access to vaccines and strengthening countries' health and immunization systems by engaging with governments and the pharmaceutical industry in low- and middle-income states.¹²³ On a regional level, the African Union and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention formed a public-private partnership with the AfroChampions Initiative establishing the Africa COVID-19 Response Fund in March 2020.¹²⁴ The fund coordinates financial contributions making the purchase and distribution of key medical equipment and awareness campaigns possible in order to address the socio-economic impact caused by policy actions put in place to contain the spread of the pandemic.¹²⁵ On a local level, UN-Women is partnering with community-based women's organizations such as Prerona Nari Unnayan Sanggathan in Bangladesh.¹²⁶ The organization empowers civil society leaders, especially women, helps vulnerable communities in the fight against gender inequality and climate change, and provides employment and protective gear during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²⁷

The Role of Youth in Fighting Global Pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic, similar to the Ebola epidemic in 2014 and unlike the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, resulted in long lasting school closures and strict quarantine measures.¹²⁸ An analysis of the Ebola epidemic shows that school closures led to students dropping out, worse job prospects in the future, child labor and girls being at greater risk of sexual abuse and early marriage.¹²⁹ COVID-19 lockdown measures

¹¹⁴ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 20.

¹¹⁵ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020.

¹¹⁶ UN ECOSOC, *About us*; UN ECOSOC, *Partnerships*.

¹¹⁷ UN DGC, *Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*.

¹¹⁸ IISD, *ECOSOC Forum Explores Health Partnerships, Lessons for Post-2015 Development*, 2015.

¹¹⁹ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020.

¹²⁰ UN Global Pulse, *2018 ECOSOC Partnership Forum Discusses Role of Big Data for the SDGs, Focuses on Inclusivity and Resilience*, 2018.

¹²¹ UN DESA, *Partnerships against COVID-19 - Building back better, together*.

¹²² UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 20.

¹²³ WHO Regional Office for Europe, *GAVI Alliance*.

¹²⁴ Afrika-Verein der deutschen Wirtschaft, *African Union and African private sector launch COVID-19 Response Fund*, 2020.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ UN-Women, *As Bangladesh battles COVID-19 and the aftermath of Super Cyclone Amphan, women's organizations lead their communities through recovery*, 2020.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ UNICEF, *Through pandemics and epidemics, hope stays alive*, 2020.

¹²⁹ UN Economic Commission for Africa, *Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola on Africa*, 2015, p. X.

similarly threaten the success of the SDGs on education and decent work.¹³⁰ Nearly 1.57 billion children and youth were forced out of school with 500 million children excluded from distance learning solutions.¹³¹ In addition, a looming global recession will likely increase youth unemployment rates similar to the recession in 2008 of up to 40% in countries around the world.¹³²

When young people are given the opportunity to learn and thrive, they can become a driving force for development, locally and globally.¹³³ As “torchbearers” of the 2030 Agenda, young people are active partners and participants in its implementation and are therefore involved in the UN’s socio-economic response to a pandemic.¹³⁴ Specifically, youth are engaged in awareness-raising campaigns, health data collection, monitoring of communication with governments and businesses, and activist groups.¹³⁵ Furthermore, youth can help mitigate the socio-economic impact of a pandemic by volunteering, supporting vulnerable populations, and contributing as innovators.¹³⁶ Some youth initiatives go beyond the voluntary basis and have turned into youth-led social enterprises for technological and financial support.¹³⁷ For instance, the Co-Creation Hub in Nigeria is the first open-living lab for creative social tech ventures and it offers support in form of funding and research for COVID-19 related projects.¹³⁸ However, youth engagement is often not appropriately acknowledged and usually only the educated and well-connected are given the opportunity.¹³⁹

The UN Programme on Youth of DESA increases youth participation in decision-making processes of peace and development, raises awareness, and promotes their rights.¹⁴⁰ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supports initiatives globally by providing its network with partnerships with the private sector and regional partners, by engaging with governments, and helping through funding.¹⁴¹ Led by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is an initiative tying together resources and know-how to increase youth employment at global, regional, and local levels.¹⁴² ECOSOC hosts the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum giving young people the chance to voice their concerns and work with representatives of Member States and other stakeholders on achieving the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴³ After this year’s postponement, youth constituencies organized the Voices from ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020 cooperating with UN partners on the topic of resilient health-systems.¹⁴⁴ These health-systems would protect vulnerable groups, universal health coverage, and prioritize preventive measures.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

Disruption of social services and an economic breakdown during a pandemic affect societies around the world and can have a more devastating effect on the population than the disease itself.¹⁴⁶ The

¹³⁰ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, pp. 8-10.

¹³¹ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*, 2020, p. 32.

¹³² UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 18.

¹³³ UN DGC, *Youth*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ UNSDG, *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 18.

¹³⁷ UN DGC, *International Youth Day*.

¹³⁸ CcHub, *COVID-19 Support*.

¹³⁹ WHO, *International Youth Day 2020*, 2020.

¹⁴⁰ UN DGC, *Youth*.

¹⁴¹ UNESCO, *Youth, strategic partners during the COVID-19 crisis*, 2020.

¹⁴² ILO, *The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth*.

¹⁴³ UN DGC, *Youth*.

¹⁴⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Voices from the ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020*, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

consequences must be met with decisive action protecting businesses as well as livelihoods while following a sustainable, gender-equal, and carbon-neutral path.¹⁴⁷ Efforts on the national and sub-national level within existing structures in order to support vulnerable populations are vital.¹⁴⁸ ECOSOC, the major driver of the 2030 Agenda, continues to serve as an inclusive platform for governments, the UN system, civil society, and young people around the world to facilitate dialogue and achieve the SDGs.¹⁴⁹ This role is essential as socioeconomic, environmental, and behavioral factors continue to increase the risk of future pandemics.¹⁵⁰ In this context, the building of partnerships and youth engagement are of particular importance.¹⁵¹

Further Research

When considering the role of ECOSOC in responding to the socio-economic effects of global pandemic, delegates should consider the following: How are partnerships and collaborations addressing already existing socio-economic disparities in their pandemic response? How is ECOSOC dealing with different approaches for developed and developing states such as Small island Developing States (SIDS) and low and middle income countries? What is ECOSOC's role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises? How can ECOSOC make youth engagement more inclusive and effective? How is ECOSOC helping to close the technology and resource gap, especially in education? What can ECOSOC do to support youth enterprises?

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This report provides an overview over the current status of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals with up-to-date data indicators in the global indicator framework. It also takes the pre-COVID-19 data into account and shows that the global outbreak reverses the progress already made by Member States. Delegates looking for data on the status of specific or all Sustainable Development Goals before and after the COVID-19 outbreak will find this beneficial. In a socio-economic context, especially goals 4, 5, 8, 11, and 17 stand out as guidelines to a resilient post-pandemic future.

United Nations Development Programme. (2020). *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*. Retrieved 12 July 2020 from: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-framework-immediate-socio-economic-response-covid-19>

This report is the main framework for the United Nations' socio-economic response to COVID-19. It outlines important information on the COVID-19 pandemic, affected populations and the three-step plan: immediate development response, socio-economic support, and building back better. Furthermore, it explains how the UN intends to deliver the response within the next 12-18 month. Delegates should use it to gain a greater understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic's magnitude and UN's response structure.

World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Emergencies: Disease outbreaks*. Retrieved 18 August 2020 from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/en/>

In this source, WHO, the current main sources of information on global health matters, gives an overview of the most important disease outbreaks. Each disease has its own subtopic with detailed information in form of factsheets, data collections, descriptions, graphs, etc. Furthermore, WHO provides a list of networks and initiatives, stories, and a learning platform to improve the response to health emergencies. Delegates can use this

¹⁴⁷ UNDP, *A UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*, 2020, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Communicable diseases*, 2020.

¹⁵¹ UN ECOSOC, *Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2020 session*, 2020.

website to research all available information on past and ongoing epidemics and pandemics and cross reference relevant statistics. This source is particularly helpful when analyzing the severity of socio-economic consequences of a disease outbreak.

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. (2015). *Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola on Africa*. Retrieved 18 July 2020 from: <https://www.uneca.org/publications/socio-economic-impacts-ebola-africa>

This report assesses the socio-economic costs and their effect on growth and development prospects of the Ebola outbreak in affected West African countries in 2014. It underlines the need for countries and their partners to reconsider the development process, including decentralizing development efforts and not just structures. Delegates can use it to understand the devastating socio-economic effects of the most recent epidemic and compare it to the current situation under COVID-19 or other disease outbreaks.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2020). *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 response Informal Summary*. Retrieved 18 July 2020 from:

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2020/joining-forces-effective-policy-solutions-covid-19-response>

This outcome document is a summary of the ECOSOC meeting on “Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response” with the leadership and expertise of the wider UN system, including the normative and analytical work of the UN specialized agencies, to discuss policy solutions that countries can use to combat the pandemic, preserve advances made and get back on track towards the SDGs. Delegates hoping to gain a basic understanding of ECOSOC’s position and plans with regard to COVID-19.

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II. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Fragile States

Introduction

In 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” (2030 Agenda) which established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a universal framework meant to guide development through 2030.¹⁵² With 17 goals and 169 targets, including on gender inclusivity, climate resilience, economic cooperation, peacebuilding, and international partnerships, the SDGs offer aspirational guidance to Member States that they seek to achieve through national actions and plans.¹⁵³ Since 2015, the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has supported Member States in the achievement of the SDGs by fostering space for the exchange of knowledge and mutual learning.¹⁵⁴ Through conferences and global initiatives, ECOSOC introduces emerging topics that are relevant to SDG achievement, including pressing issues in post-conflict and/or fragile states where one-sixth of the world’s population live.¹⁵⁵

The international community has long debated how to define “post-conflict” and “fragile states.”¹⁵⁶ The World Bank has defined “post-conflict” as a measurement of efforts in rebuilding socio-economic frameworks and enabling peace through governance and the rule of law.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines “post-conflict recovery” as the return from instability and conflict to a position where Member States can make and implement a self-sustaining economic policy.¹⁵⁸ More recently, international development organizations have used “fragile states” to signify Member States that are in fragile social, economic, and/or political situations.¹⁵⁹ Fragile states may also have critical issues thwarting their progress on the SDGs, like weak rule of law, little to no peace, or exacerbated environmental issues caused by climate change.¹⁶⁰ There is also a perspective that states are fragile when there is low capacity to address human rights concerns due to governmental issues or a lack of political will.¹⁶¹ International organizations later aimed to expand the definition of fragile states to include a more multidimensional view of what it means to be a fragile state.¹⁶² The updated definition identified the importance of addressing specific types of fragility and vulnerability for a more focused understanding, including of violence, economic instability, and weak institutions.¹⁶³

Considering many definitions of fragile states were given by multinational organizations or UN-affiliated organizations, self-identified fragile states known as g7+ established their own definition in 2013.¹⁶⁴ The g7+ is a consortium of 20 Member States and are located largely in sub-Saharan Africa, but also include countries in Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, as well as other African sub-regions.¹⁶⁵ The g7+ utilizes a “spectrum approach” to determine which states are considered fragile, allowing Member States to define fragility within their own context to provide a sustainable pathway towards stability and development.¹⁶⁶ For example, one fragile state may face drought, conflict, and terrorism, whereas another may only face

¹⁵² UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁵³ UN DESA, *The 17 Goals*, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Sustainable Development*

¹⁵⁵ UN Chronicle, *Accelerating Development in Fragile States: The Role of the OECD Development Assistance Committee*, 2015.

¹⁵⁶ ILO, *Selected Definitions and Characteristics of ‘Fragile States’ by Key International Actors*, 2016, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ IBRD, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank*, 1998, pp. 40-41.

¹⁵⁸ UNDP, *Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity*, 2008, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ ILO, *Selected Definitions and Characteristics of ‘Fragile States’ by Key International Actors*, 2016, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ IFAD, *Defining and Measuring State Fragility*, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations*, 2007, p. 2.

¹⁶² OECD, *States of Fragility 2015*, 2015, p. 43.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁴ g7+, *The g7+ group*, 2013.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ g7+, *Note on Fragility Spectrum*, 2013, p. 9.

fragility as a result of rising sea-levels.¹⁶⁷ In addition, the spectrum approach supports Member States in adapting their strategic priorities and measurable indicators to fit their specific context.¹⁶⁸ These frameworks can then be replicated by fellow fragile states to measure progress on national priorities and the SDGs.¹⁶⁹ For example, five g7+ countries, namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Timor Leste, have complemented the SDG indicators by developing fragility assessments, some of which are now used by other fragile states to develop country-specific development indicators.¹⁷⁰

In 2008, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicated that 56 states are considered fragile, and 15 of those are considered to be extremely fragile.¹⁷¹ OECD's multidimensional view of fragility includes what it views as the root causes of instability, which can include political, societal, economic, environmental, and security issues.¹⁷² OECD has also highlighted that the SDGs will only be achieved if Member States are proactive about addressing the drivers of fragility.¹⁷³

In 2018, 82% of fragile and conflict-affected states were off track to achieve SDG targets by 2030.¹⁷⁴ One challenge for monitoring SDG achievement in fragile and conflict-affected states is that there are no explicit references to post-conflict or fragile states in the SDG targets and indicators.¹⁷⁵ While the 2030 Agenda references the need for interventions in post-conflict countries in clauses 22, 35, 42, and 64, including through the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and state building, limited frameworks exist at the global level to support fragile and conflict-affected states in tracking human development progress.¹⁷⁶

International and Regional Framework

From 2000 to 2015, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) guided the international community towards a more inclusive and developed world.¹⁷⁷ While the MDGs did not address fragile states, in one instance, the *MDG Acceleration Framework Toolkit* called for the expansion of conflict and post-conflict programming to achieve universal primary education.¹⁷⁸ During the 2010 MDG Review Summit, international experts noted that, despite receiving substantial aid in fragile and post-conflict states, there was little progress on the MDGs due to a lack of addressing conflict and fragility.¹⁷⁹ Guided by lessons learned from the MDGs, the SDGs recognized that sustainable development cannot be realized without the establishment of peace and security.¹⁸⁰ To address this, groups like the g7+ have been calling for the inclusion of fragility in all of its forms to guide SDG prioritization efforts.¹⁸¹ This includes fragile states establishing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to monitor national and sub-national SDG implementation.¹⁸² Before 2015, this was a challenge because Member States that were affected by fragility often did not have access to M&E systems to track for their development progress.¹⁸³

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁷¹ OECD, *States of Fragility 2018*, 2018, p. 84.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 82-83.

¹⁷³ OECD, *States of Fragility 2018: Highlights*, 2018, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ International Rescue Committee, *SDG Progress: Fragility, Crisis and Leaving No One Behind*, 2018, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ UN IAEG-SDGs, *Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1)*, 2016, pp. 2-25.

¹⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁷⁷ UNDP, *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, 2000.

¹⁷⁸ UNDP, *MDG Acceleration Framework*, 2011, p. 39.

¹⁷⁹ *Millennium Development Goals: Fragile States Claim Summit Outcome Off-Target*, The Guardian, 2010.

¹⁸⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁸¹ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *g7+ Selects 20 Indicators for Data Collection*, 2016.

¹⁸² UNDP, *UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States*, 2016, p. 35.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 35.

In the *Paris Agreement* (2015), Member States acknowledged the importance of adapting national and international climate goals to align with the priorities of states most susceptible to climate fragility.¹⁸⁴ In line with a multidimensional approach to fragility, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has noted that mainstreaming climate-fragility into existing projects and programs can contribute to proactive peacebuilding.¹⁸⁵ This sentiment from the *Paris Agreement* was used at a 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), where a session titled “Climate, Fragility and the SDGs: Lessons from Lake Chad” was organized by the European Union Delegation to the UN.¹⁸⁶ With Lake Chad diminishing in size by 90% since the 1960s due to overuse and climate change, 10 million people are facing food insecurity, conflict, terrorism, and displacement exacerbated by a drying Lake Chad Basin.¹⁸⁷ In this regard, the session fostered dialogue on climate change and conflict’s impact on reversing development gains and impeding prospects for achieving the SDGs in the Lake Chad Basin.¹⁸⁸

Role of the International System

Each year ECOSOC holds various events and forums to promote the achievement of the SDGs in all Member States, including those considered fragile.¹⁸⁹ During the 2018 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, Mahmoud Mohieldin, Senior Vice President of the World Bank Group, highlighted that a \$13 billion increase towards financial innovation would result in strengthened support to the SDGs, particularly in poorer countries and fragile states.¹⁹⁰ ECOSOC also held the 2018 Development Cooperation Forum where Member States noted that South-South climate cooperation can support SDG achievement by establishing information exchange and enhanced reporting and verification systems.¹⁹¹ Additionally, ECOSOC continues to emphasize the importance of yearly Youth Forums where sessions address pressing issues affecting young persons in fragile states, like job insecurity.¹⁹² Similarly, ECOSOC has utilized the HLPF as an opportunity to address issues pertinent to achieving the SDGs in fragile states.¹⁹³ During the 2020 HLPF, the UN Secretary-General released a progress report of the 17 SDGs that noted that least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), and Member States in humanitarian or fragile situations “stand to be hit hardest” by the COVID-19 pandemic, because of fragile health systems, limited financial resources, and dependence on international trade.¹⁹⁴ One of these major halts in progress was on global education priorities, including SDG 4 (quality education), in fragile states due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected 1.6 billion children and youth as of October 2020.¹⁹⁵

The g7+ continues to be an important advocate for SDG progress in fragile states.¹⁹⁶ In May 2017, members of the g7+ met in Dili, Timor Leste to discuss “A Roadmap for Sustainable Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States.”¹⁹⁷ The outcome document, *Joint Communiqué: A New Chapter and Revitalized Partnership*, suggested a fragile-to-fragile cooperation approach to achieve the SDGs in

¹⁸⁴ UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement*, pp. 10, 13, 17.

¹⁸⁵ UNEP, *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*, 2019, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Climate Diplomacy Initiative, *Climate, Fragility and the SDGs: Lessons from Lake Chad*, 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Africa Renewal, *Drying Lake Chad Basin Gives Rise to Crisis*, 2019

¹⁸⁸ Climate Diplomacy Initiative, *Climate, Fragility and the SDGs: Lessons from Lake Chad*, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ UN ECOSOC, *All Events*, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ World Bank Group, World Bank Group. (2018, April 24). *Speech by Senior Vice President Mahmoud Mohieldin at UN ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development on 24 April 2018, in New York*, 2018.

¹⁹¹ UN ECOSOC, *2018 Development Cooperation Forum Schedule of Side-Events and Meet-ups*, 2018.

¹⁹² 6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, *End Poverty in all its Forms and Create Decent Jobs for Youth*, 2017, pp. 1, 4-5.

¹⁹³ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *UN Secretary-General Releases 2020 SDG Progress Report*, 2020.

¹⁹⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ UNESCO, *Global Monitoring of School Closures caused by COVID-19*, 2020.

¹⁹⁶ Government of Timor-Leste, *Global Conference on the 2030 Agenda produces Dili Communiqué*, 2017.

¹⁹⁷ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *g7+ Discusses SDG Implementation in Fragile States*, 2017.

fragile and conflict-affected Member States.¹⁹⁸ This led to the adoption of the *Dili Declaration: A New Vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding* (2010), which outlines the purpose and objectives of the g7+.¹⁹⁹ To achieve their national goals and the SDGs, the g7+ cooperate amongst themselves as well as with various other countries and international organizations.²⁰⁰ For example, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) provided a platform for the g7+ to outline how private sector investment in conflict-affected states can support achieving SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).²⁰¹ In addition, g7+ engaged Cargill, a food, agriculture, nutrition, and risk management company, in Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa industry to strengthen its value chain and 43 cocoa cooperatives and provide support for 70,000 farmers.²⁰² To support fragile-to-fragile state cooperation, the g7+ Secretariat promotes dialogue on the use and adaptation of the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals, which provide a framework for the formulation of national development strategies linked to legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations, and revenues and services.²⁰³

In tandem with ECOSOC, other UN bodies made important contributions on the stability of fragile states and their SDG success, like UN Peacekeeping.²⁰⁴ Since 1948, UN Peacekeeping has supported Member States by protecting civilians, preventing conflicts, building rule of law and security operations, promoting human rights, and promoting women, peace and security.²⁰⁵ Peacekeeping mandates are set by the Security Council and their operations are overseen by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).²⁰⁶ UN Peacekeeping supports the achievement of SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) by establishing peace operations, like the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which has supported local authorities and facilitated the training of local stakeholders on monitoring and addressing human rights violations.²⁰⁷ Beyond this, many countries that have peacekeeping missions are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to extreme temperatures and rising sea levels.²⁰⁸ Noted by the Security Council, seven of 10 countries that are most vulnerable and least prepared to deal with climate change currently host a peacekeeping operation or special mission.²⁰⁹

In addition, UNDP supports all UN field offices, or UN Country Teams, in the implementation of UN INFO, an online system established in 2019 to monitor and track SDG targets and indicators at national, regional, and global levels.²¹⁰ UNDP assists Member States in the development of online planning, monitoring, and reporting platforms to coordinate and track all country-level programmatic activities.²¹¹ In Benin, for example, UN INFO is being utilized to understand what organizations are providing funding for projects implemented in the country, to which organization the funds are going, and with which SDG the projects are aligned.²¹²

Civil society organizations (CSOs) support fragile states in various ways, including through the development of national and regional networks for monitoring SDG implementation in g7+ Member States.²¹³ These networks include systematic reviews and meetings to report on SDG progress and

¹⁹⁸ Government of Timor-Leste, *Global Conference on the 2030 Agenda produces Dili Communiqué*, 2017.

¹⁹⁹ International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, *A New Vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding*, 2010.

²⁰⁰ International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, *Participating Countries and Organisations*, 2020.

²⁰¹ International Finance Cooperation & World Bank, *Generating Private Investment in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Areas*, 2019, p. 9.

²⁰² Cargill, *Farmer Cooperatives in Cote d'Ivoire to Benefit from Access to Affordable Funding*, 2015.

²⁰³ International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, *A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, 2013.

²⁰⁴ UN Peacekeeping, *Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16*, 2020.

²⁰⁵ UN Peacekeeping, *What is Peacekeeping?*, 2020.

²⁰⁶ UN Peacekeeping, *Department of Peace Operations*.

²⁰⁷ UN Peacekeeping, *Promoting Human Rights*, 2017.

²⁰⁸ UN DGC, *Climate Emergency 'A Danger to Peace'*, *UN Security Council Hears*, 2020.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ UN SDG, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework*, 2019, p. 5.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²¹² UNDP, *Linking Investments, Partners, and the Sustainable Development Goals in Country*, 2019.

²¹³ UNDP, *UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States*, 2016, p. 47.

challenges.²¹⁴ For example, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) has highlighted the impact statistical development contributes to reducing fragility of states and achieving the SDGs.²¹⁵ By strengthening access and use of data, PARIS21 seeks to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and improve Member States' capacity for data collection, dissemination, and use, specifically on issues that create fragility.²¹⁶

Establishing Peace to Achieve the SDGs in Fragile States

Violent conflict is one of the largest factors decreasing progress on the SDGs in fragile states.²¹⁷ To address this, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted two identical resolutions in 2016 on peacebuilding: General Assembly resolution 70/262 (2016) and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on "Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture."²¹⁸ These resolutions expanded the commonly used definition of peacebuilding and introduced the concept of "sustaining peace."²¹⁹ This term is understood as "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account," and involves activities that aim to 1) prevent the "outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict," 2) address "root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities," and 3) ensure "national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development."²²⁰ With over 36 SDG targets directly linked to peace, justice or inclusivity, an integrated approach to peacebuilding can be utilized to create progress on national and international economic, education, health, gender, and human rights priorities.²²¹ However, barriers to peacebuilding, like conflict or an absence of rule of law, can delay and prevent progress towards achieving the SDGs in fragile states.²²²

Considering over 60% of the world's poor will be living in states that are considered fragile by 2030, financing for development remains a priority to achieve the SDGs.²²³ Currently, the financing gap for SDGs in low-income countries is estimated to be, on average, in excess of 14% of a country's gross domestic product (GDP), even though post-conflict and fragile states attract about 30% of total annual official development assistance (ODA).²²⁴ To support the achievement of the SDGs in fragile states, the UN Peacebuilding Fund recommends a strong emphasis be placed on SDG 16 to enable achievement of other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda.²²⁵ In one instance, community leaders in Nigeria launched an initiative to create local police forces in eight target communities.²²⁶ By fostering collaboration between women and youth, security and defense institutions and local authorities, these communities in Nigeria worked together to expand access to water and sanitation, land rehabilitation, tree planting, sports, and awareness campaigns which resulted in improvements to everyday life.²²⁷

To address barriers that limit or prohibit peacebuilding, many Member States have established national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to promote and monitor the implementation of international human

²¹⁴ UNDP, *UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States*, 2016, p. 47.

²¹⁵ PARIS21, *Statistical Capacity Building in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*, 2016, p. 5.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²¹⁷ World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018, p. xi.

²¹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (A/RES/70/262)*, 2016; UN Security Council, *Overview of Security Council Resolutions (S/RES/2282)*, 2016.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ UN Peacebuilding Fund, *Peacebuilding Fund Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2019, p. iii.

²²¹ New York University Center on International Cooperation, *SDG Targets for Fostering Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, 2016, p. 4.

²²² UN PBSO & UNDP & UN EOSG, *TST Issues Brief: Conflict Prevention Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance*, 2015, p. 10.

²²³ World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018, p. 1.

²²⁴ Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa, *Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: The State of Play and Policy Options*, 2020, p. 13; OECD, *Creditor Reporting System*, 2020.

²²⁵ UN Peacebuilding Fund, *Peacebuilding Fund Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2019, p. 8.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

rights standards at the national level.²²⁸ NHRIs work with national governments in support of peacebuilding processes by aligning national priorities with human rights agreements, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966).²²⁹ NHRIs also work with governments on SDG planning, implementation, and reporting to ensure there is consideration of human rights approaches.²³⁰ NHRIs in fragile and failed states can have reduced effectiveness or be undermined when human rights are not promoted.²³¹ UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have indicated that this can cause peacebuilding processes to exclude marginalized groups like women, youth, LGBTQ+ persons, asylum seekers, displaced persons, immigrants, stateless persons, and others.²³² This perspective led former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to state that, “inclusivity and institution-building are critical in preventing relapse into violent conflict and produce more resilient Member States and societies” and that “exclusion is one of the most important factors that trigger a relapse into conflict.”²³³

Combatting Climate Fragility to Achieve SDG 13

Facing increased land degradation, drought, food insecurity, and poverty, 70% of climate-vulnerable Member States are considered to be extremely fragile.²³⁴ To adapt and mitigate these challenges, the UN monitors SDG targets under SDG 13 (climate action), including target 13.1, which aims to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related disasters.²³⁵ UN reports predict that climate change will disrupt the food supply-chain, especially in fragile states, increasing prices and market volatility and heightening the risk of protests, rioting, and civil conflict.²³⁶ This not only jeopardizes recent development gains in combatting food insecurity and sustainable agriculture but also intensifies existing challenges that many fragile states face, such as loss of livelihood.²³⁷ Fragile states like Comoros are working to increase their communities’ adaptability to climate change to address these issues.²³⁸ For example, some countries are using drip irrigation kits and retention tanks that collect and hold rainwater with the goal of earning higher crop yields.²³⁹ By establishing national water and adaptation policies and implementing such projects, Member States are making progress on target 13.2.1, integration of climate change into national policies.²⁴⁰

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 92% of extremely fragile states and 100% of fragile states were progressing or on track to meet their SDG 13 commitments by 2030.²⁴¹ With global SDG delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OECD has indicated that fragile states are now at risk of not achieving SDG 13 by 2030 even though they have contributed the least to climate change.²⁴² Similarly, at the 2020 Petersberg Climate Dialogues, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed fragilities in the international community that are causing the SDGs to be under threat from being realized.²⁴³ The Secretary-General noted that some fragile states are unable to address climate-driven migration, the disruption of ecosystems, and coastal flooding because there is a critical

²²⁸ UN OHCHR, *OHCHR and NHRIs*, 2020.

²²⁹ Global Alliance, *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+*, 2019, p. 34.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²³¹ UNDP & OHCHR, *UNDP-OHCHR Toolkit for Collaboration with National Human Rights Institutions*, 2010, p. 95.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. x.

²³³ UN Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2012.

²³⁴ Climate Security Expert Network, *Climate-Fragility Policy Paper: Climate Change in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Fund*, 2020, pp. 6-7.

²³⁵ Ritchie et al., *Measuring Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2019.

²³⁶ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015, pp. 4-5.

²³⁷ UNDP, *UNDP Support to the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 13*, 2016, p. 4.

²³⁸ Global Environment Facility, *Least Developed Countries Fund: Financing Adaptation Action*, 2016, p. 12.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁴¹ OECD, *State of Fragility Report 2020: Table 1.1*, 2020.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ UN SG, *Secretary-General’s Remarks to Petersberg Climate Dialogue*, 2020.

gap of USD 100 billion per year that would be needed to successfully mitigate and adapt to climate change.²⁴⁴

Conclusion

Following the guidance and self-identified needs of fragile states, root causes of conflict can be addressed and SDG targets and national priorities can be realized by 2030.²⁴⁵ Often faced with instability, political turmoil, and climate-driven insecurities, like a lack of food, water, and livelihood, engaging with fragile states poses unique opportunities to support vulnerable populations and the achievement of the SDGs.²⁴⁶ With a lack of international frameworks and guidance on partnering with fragile states, ECOSOC has aimed to host events and provide space for dialogue on fragility, taking special consideration of individual contexts.²⁴⁷ As the UN body mandated to support socio-economic development, ECOSOC has the opportunity to foster knowledge sharing and acceleration efforts to achieve the SDGs in fragile states, including on peacebuilding's contributions to SDG achievement and the challenges that climate change adds to achieving SDG 13.²⁴⁸

Further Research

When delegates are further researching this topic, it is important to understand the needs and challenges of SDG achievement in fragile states and to consider the following questions: How can ECOSOC further engage fragile states in supporting the achievement of the SDGs in fragile contexts? What other SDGs could be streamlined with international cooperation in fragile states? What funding mechanisms and development partners exist to support fragile states in the achievement of national priorities and the SDGs? What role can ECOSOC play in providing a platform for SDG achievement in fragile states before 2030?

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According to a group of self-identified fragile states known as the g7+, fragility should be seen on a spectrum. As indicated in this report, fragility can present itself in a variety of contexts, including political instability, recurring and ongoing conflict, climate-related disasters, etc. According to the g7+, this approach to fragility allows for closer alignment to national and local situations and provides an opportunity for focused interventions and partnerships. This source will help delegates understand how fragile states define themselves and how they aim to measure progress towards their national priorities and the SDGs.

International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. (2010). *A New Vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding*. Retrieved 23 August 2020 from: <https://www.c-r.org/resource/dili-declaration-new-vision-peacebuilding-and-statebuilding>

The Dili Declaration outlines perspectives on peacebuilding and state-building from members of developing and fragile states. Highlighting actions from Member States to implement and maintain the declaration, the Dili Declaration calls for a collaborative approach to peacebuilding to ensure there is both sustainability and stability. In line with the achievement of goals, the Dili Declaration is founded on overcoming major challenges that fragile states face when trying to achievement national priorities and the global development priorities. Delegates can use this declaration to better understand

²⁴⁴ UNFCCC, *Roadmap to US\$100 Billion*, 2016, p. 6.

²⁴⁵ g7+, *Note on Fragility Spectrum*, 2013, p. 9.

²⁴⁶ IFAD, *Defining and Measuring State Fragility*, 2018.

²⁴⁷ UNDP, *UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States*, 2016, p. 28.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

major challenges fragile states face and solutions that could be implemented to achieve their priorities.

International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. (2013). *A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*. Retrieved 19 July 2020 from: https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/media/filer_public/07/69/07692de0-3557-494e-918e-18df00e9ef73/the_new_deal.pdf

The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States outlines specific Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) to support the Member States in the transition from conflict and post-conflict situations towards peacebuilding and state-building. Showcasing a way to build mutual cooperation, the New Deal highlights strengthen country systems, transparency, risk-sharing, and capacity building. Delegates will find this document useful to better understand international guidelines that serve to support fragile states transition to peace and state-building.

United Nations Environment Programme. (2018). *Monitoring and Evaluation: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks: Linking Peacebuilding, Climate Change Adaptation, and Sustainable Livelihoods*. Retrieved 19 July 2020 from:

https://postconflict.unep.ch/Climate_Change_and_Security/Monitoring_Evaluation_Note.pdf

To support strengthened evidence-based M&E of climate related issues in fragile contexts, UNEP outlines how to establish measurable, cross-sectoral interventions. With a primary focus on adaptation and peacebuilding, UNEP highlights climate fragility as a cross-cutting and multi-faceted issue and provides recommendations on how countries can monitor the issue more holistically. Delegates should refer to this report to gain an understanding of monitoring and evaluation in the context of climate fragility.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). *States of Fragility 2018*. Retrieved 19 July 2020 from: https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/OECD%20Highlights%20documents_web.pdf

The States of Fragility 2018 report outlines the unique challenges that fragile states face when trying to achievement global development priorities like the SDGs. Expanding beyond OECD's first States of Fragility document, this report expands on a multi-dimensional view of fragility with the purpose of adapting fragility definition to fit the context of specific countries. Delegates are encouraged to view and understand the root causes of fragility, as well as to understand the role of international organization in combatting global fragility.

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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.”*²⁴⁹

Introduction

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.²⁵⁰ However, the understanding of this definition has been changed over time to better integrate gender as a spectrum, rather than as a binary concept referring to only men and women.²⁵¹ 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.²⁵² 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.²⁵³ 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.²⁵⁴ Further, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), gender mainstreaming is a set of specific, strategic approaches and technical and institutional processes adopted to achieve the broader, overarching goal of gender equality.²⁵⁵

Gender mainstreaming is a driving force for positive change and has multiple benefits.²⁵⁶ 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.²⁵⁷ Gender equality in political participation, particularly women’s increased participation in the decision-making processes at the local and national levels improves the development of policies and programs.²⁵⁸ Gender mainstreaming also allows for the addition of gender sensitive, inclusive, and often women-specific programs to expansive topics, like climate change, increasing the support of both women’s issues related to climate change and the broader issue itself.²⁵⁹ In 2019, the UN focused on expanding organizational reform for gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in operational activities, and strengthening accountability for gender mainstreaming at the entity level.²⁶⁰ Due to these efforts, as of 2020, 62 UN entities met or exceeded requirements for gender-responsive performance management, up from 57 in 2018.²⁶¹ Yet, only 2.03% of the UN’s development budget is dedicated to women’s issues, empowerment, and mainstreaming.²⁶² UN Secretary-General António Guterres also highlighted the need to accelerate the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) through data

²⁴⁹ 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.

²⁵⁰ 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.

²⁵¹ Gender Spectrum, *Understanding Gender*.

²⁵² UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3)*, 1997, p. 28.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁵⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2019/2)*, 2019, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming*.

²⁵⁶ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming*, 2014, p. 16.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁶⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/50)*, 2020, pp. 2-18.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁶² IISD, *Report Analyzes UN System’s Progress on Gender Equality*, 2019.

analysis on how to integrate gender sensitive policies and use resources toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁶³

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.²⁶⁴ CEDAW recognized women’s issues needed to be addressed economically, politically, and socially to ensure gender equality.²⁶⁵ Building on the principles developed in CEDAW, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* developed twelve focal points to achieve gender equality ranging from poverty, healthcare, and education, to violence against women and girls.²⁶⁶ A core method to achieve gender equality on these topics was the inclusion of gender perspectives into the implementation efforts within all twelve areas.²⁶⁷

In 1997, ECOSOC adopted the agreed conclusions 1997/2 including the topic on “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.²⁶⁸ The resolution directed the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 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.²⁶⁹ UN 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.²⁷⁰ In 2020, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2020/50, 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, strengthening accountability and improving performance within the UN system for gender mainstreaming.²⁷¹

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).²⁷² 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.²⁷³ This resolution also developed the framework for sex-disaggregated data in conflict zones, peace-building efforts, and the protection of persons from violence.²⁷⁴ The UN General Assembly’s systematic approach in resolution 70/1 (2015), “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, established the SDGs and included women in all

²⁶³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2020/50)*, 2020, p. 20.

²⁶⁴ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995, p. 3.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 27-35.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 27-35.

²⁷⁰ 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.

²⁷¹ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/50)*, 2020.

²⁷² UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*, 2000.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ USIP, *What is UNSCR 1325?*

facets of development.²⁷⁵ SDG 5 is a stand-alone goal on gender equality containing targets for ending discrimination, eliminating violence against women and girls, and increasing women's participation in leadership politically, economically, and socially.²⁷⁶ 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.²⁷⁷ For example, the SDGs look at specific topics with gendered impacts, such as poverty, hunger, HIV infections, family planning, gender wage gaps, and education.²⁷⁸ Hence, the 2030 Agenda contributes to more comprehensive gender equality efforts to be mainstreamed throughout the UN system.²⁷⁹

Regionally, the African Union (AU) Gender Strategy further includes mainstreaming of gender perspectives on the regional and national levels by seeking to reduce inequality in accordance with the SDGs and the Africa 2063 framework.²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹ Furthermore, the European Commission's *Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025* focuses on actions to include gender mainstreaming and intersectionality within the European Union in accordance with the organization's external policy on gender equality and women's empowerment.²⁸² Key objectives of this strategy include ending gender-based violence, closing gender gaps in the labor market, and achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy.²⁸³

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.²⁸⁴ 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.²⁸⁵ 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.²⁸⁶ In 2018, UN-Women developed UN-SWAP 2.0, which built upon the success of UN-SWAP 1.0, and included more targets.²⁸⁷ 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.²⁸⁸ Data collated from UN-SWAP 2.0, as it was with UN-SWAP 1.0, is presented to ECOSOC through the UN Secretary-General's annual report on the UN system's progress on gender mainstreaming.²⁸⁹

²⁷⁵ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 18.

²⁷⁶ UN SDG Knowledge Platform, *Sustainable Development Goal 5*; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 18.

²⁷⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁷⁸ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 14.

²⁷⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁸⁰ African Union, *African Union Gender Strategy (2018-2027)*, 2018; African Union's NEPAD, *Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life*.

²⁸¹ African Union, *African Union Gender Policy (2018-2027)*, 2010, p. 14.

²⁸² European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, 2020.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *System-wide Coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010; UN-Women, *About UN-Women*.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ UN-Women, *Promoting UN Accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)*.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ UN-Women, *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the United Nations Entities (UN-SWAP 2.0)*, 2018.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2019/2)*, 2019.

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.²⁹⁰ In 2006, ECOSOC focused on capacity building for gender mainstreaming by calling for training to be mandatory, supported by senior staff, and using the training to address gaps between policy and practice.²⁹¹ 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.²⁹² 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 2014.²⁹³ Since 2015, ECOSOC's main focus is: to increase funding; to develop capacity; to support UN-SWAP 1.0 and 2.0; and to promote partnerships between UN agencies, civil society organizations, and Member States to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the UN system.²⁹⁴

ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies also work towards mainstreaming a gender perspective within their own bodies of work.²⁹⁵ ECOSOC's main regional bodies, including the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) are all undertaking efforts to mainstream gender perspectives within their body of work, as well as provide resources to Member States on gender mainstreaming.²⁹⁶ 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.²⁹⁷ ESCAP also provides a mechanism for its Member States to share barriers and best practices for gender mainstreaming, improving the capacity for the region.²⁹⁸ Additionally, ECLAC published a study titled *Gender Mainstreaming in National Sustainable Development Planning in the Caribbean* in 2020, which assessed the status of gender mainstreaming in the policy framework of the ECLAC Member States.²⁹⁹ Today, 15 out of the 29 Member States in ECLAC have medium- or long-term national development plans; however, only 11 Member States have gender equality policies or related action plans.³⁰⁰ Through this publication, ECLAC stressed that governments, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, must secure high-level commitment to gender and development priorities, action programs, and resources for implementation, and collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.³⁰¹ Similar efforts are also being undertaken by each regional subsidiary body, providing technical guidance to Member States, strengthening capacity, and providing a forum to share best practices.³⁰²

²⁹⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2001/41)*, 2001.

²⁹¹ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2006/36)*, 2006.

²⁹² UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2011/6)*, 2011.

²⁹³ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2014/2)*, 2014.

²⁹⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2019/2)*, 2019.

²⁹⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2001.

²⁹⁶ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Within the UN System*.

²⁹⁷ UN ESCAP, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific*, 2015.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ UN ECLAC, *Gender Mainstreaming in national sustainable development planning in the Caribbean*, 2020.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2020, p. 24.

³⁰² UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Within the UN System*.

Capacity Development: Internal Success Towards Outward Progress

To fully implement gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system, capacity needs to be strengthened through funding efforts as well as staff expertise, training, gender parity, and development.³⁰³ 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 created.³⁰⁴ As part of its responsibilities, this task force recommends financing targets, establishes baselines, and considers ways to meaningfully increase resources sustainably.³⁰⁵ ECOSOC also called upon the UN system to seek more sustainable and stable funding to ensure adequate funding each year, and avoid budget shortfalls.³⁰⁶ 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.³⁰⁷ Additionally, ECOSOC has given particular attention to the Gender Equality Marker (GEM) system, which is a tool used by organizations within the UN to track planned or actual financial investments or projects.³⁰⁸ Data gathered using GEM, as well as those from the UN-SWAP plans, can inform Member States and other development stakeholders about current trends and gaps related to gender equality.³⁰⁹ ECOSOC, along with the UN General Assembly, have also required the UN system to invest more in gender equality and the empowerment of women within the development and humanitarian spheres.³¹⁰

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.³¹¹ 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.³¹² The UN Women Training Centre in particular works to support the UN and other stakeholders to realize commitments to gender equality, the empowerment of women, and women's rights through training and education.³¹³ Increasing the expertise of UN system staff improves the efficiency and rate of mainstreaming, and that expertise is shared with Member States.³¹⁴ 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.³¹⁵

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* (2017).³¹⁶ As of 2017, 44.2% of staff in the UN are women, up from 42.8% in

³⁰³ 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.

³⁰⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/50)*, 2020, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ IISD, *Report Analyzes UN System's Progress on Gender Equality*, 2019.

³⁰⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, pp. 4-7.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

³⁰⁸ UN SDG, *UNCT Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note*, 2019.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 28-35.

³¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³¹³ UN Women Training Centre, *About Us*.

³¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3)*, 1997, pp. 33-34.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33; UN Gender Parity Task Force, *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*, 2017; UNESCO, *Gender Parity Index (GPI)*.

2015.³¹⁷ Among Under-Secretary-Generals and Assistant Secretary-Generals, 65 out of 189, or 34.4%, are women.³¹⁸ 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.³¹⁹ Additionally, ECOSOC recognizes barriers to gender parity, such as sexual harassment, that threatens to stall progress.³²⁰ Approximately, one third of UN employees responded to a 2019 internal survey reporting that they have experienced sexual harassment.³²¹ 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.³²² More effort is needed to develop capacity, but significant progress has been made in mainstreaming gender perspectives within the work of the UN system.³²³

Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Mainstreaming in Action

The development of the SDGs has increased gender mainstreaming efforts and capacity for the UN system, the international community, and ECOSOC, which is, as part of its mandate, the main driver behind implementation, action, and reporting on the SDGs.³²⁴ The UN Sustainable Development Group has also highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda and its goals providing a foundation for the achievement of gender equality and the rights of women across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development.³²⁵ Gender equality is an important element across all 17 SDGs given that when the lives of women and girls are improved, the benefits will affect society positively overall.³²⁶

Without full gender equality, the SDGs will not be met, and so the SDGs must also promote, create, and develop gender equality.³²⁷ Overall, the SDGs contain 54 gender-specific indicators across 11 different goals, covering topics such as education, health, employment, hunger, and climate action.³²⁸ 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.³²⁹ For example, within SDG 1 (no poverty), target 1.B highlights the importance of creating sound policy frameworks that are gender-sensitive to support further progress in poverty eradication efforts.³³⁰ While the SDGs were historic in the inclusion of women's issues and gender mainstreaming, SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 15 (life on land) do not contain gender-specific indicators.³³¹ Gender equality and the empowerment of women issues are also prevalent in these topics.³³² For example, access to affordable and clean energy is an issue that concerns women and girls, as more than half of all households globally rely on solid fuels

³¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system*, 2019, p. 9.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³¹⁹ UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995, p. 119.

³²⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2019, p. 3.

³²¹ Gharib, *Report Says 1 in 3 U.N. Staffers Has Been Sexually Harassed*, National Public Radio, 2019.

³²² UN Permanent Missions, *Secretary-General Updates on Action to Tackle Sexual Harassment*, 2018; UN Secretariat, *Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority*, 2019; UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*, 2020, p. 3.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

³²⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Promoting Sustainable Development*.

³²⁵ UN SDG, *Mainstreaming Gender: UN Common Programming Country Level*, 2017, pp. 6-7.

³²⁶ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 73.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³³⁰ UN DGC, *Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere*.

³³¹ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 52.

³³² UN-Women, *Why Gender Equality Matters Across All SDGs*, 2018, pp. 36-39, 43-44, 49-50, & 53-56.

for cooking indoors that compromise women's health and livelihoods.³³³ Therefore, UN-Women notes that in order to achieve the SDGs, gender mainstreaming needs to be fully implemented within all SDGs, especially on goals that fail to include gender indicators.³³⁴

Many agencies within the UN system have made large advancements on gender mainstreaming as part of their work on the SDGs.³³⁵ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) drew on the SDGs to develop a Gender Action Plan (GAP) (2017) to mainstream gender perspectives throughout UNFCCC's body of work.³³⁶ 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.³³⁷ In 2018, The United Nations Environment Assembly adopted a landmark resolution on gender quality, human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance.³³⁸ This resolution also requested that the UN Environmental Programme continues its efforts towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in its internal operations and programming by reviewing their policies and strategies.³³⁹ The United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) GAP for 2018-2021 mainstreams gender throughout its work, encompassing health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, education, and water and sanitation, as a method to improve the lives of children, and achieve the SDGs.³⁴⁰ Building upon its previous work, the Security Council adopted resolution 2242 (2015), citing the importance of gender perspectives in the realization of the SDGs and women's participation and leadership in achieving peace and security.³⁴¹ The resolution 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.³⁴²

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.³⁴³ 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.³⁴⁴ ECOSOC, in recent years, has focused on identifying and removing barriers to implementation, including lack of funding, gender parity, and capacity.³⁴⁵ 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.³⁴⁶ 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.³⁴⁷ The SDGs are a platform to enable widespread mainstreaming of

³³³ UN-Women, *Why Gender Equality Matters Across All SDGs*, 2018, p. 38.

³³⁴ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 72.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³³⁶ UNFCCC, *Establishment of a Gender Action Plan (FCCC/CP/2017/11/Add.1)*, 2017.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

³³⁸ UNEA, *Promoting Gender Equality and the Human Rights and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Environmental Governance (UNEP/EA.4/Res.17)*, 2019.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ UNICEF, *Gender Action Plan (2018-2021)*, 2018; UNICEF, *Gender Action Plan 2018-2021*.

³⁴¹ UN Security Council, *Women Peace and Security S/RES/2242(2015)*, 2015, p. 2.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 3-7.

³⁴³ UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Approaches in Development Programming: Being Strategic and Achieving Results in an Evolving Development Context*, 2013, p. 7.

³⁴⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/50)*, 2020, p. 4.

³⁴⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2019/2)*, 2019.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; UN-Women, *Gender Mainstreaming Approaches in Development Programming: Being Strategic and Achieving Results in an Evolving Development Context*, 2013, p. 7.

gender perspectives within the UN system's body of work.³⁴⁸ 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.³⁴⁹ But while significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done to fully mainstream a gender perspective throughout the UN system.³⁵⁰

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, specifically in regard to those that do not have gender-specific indicators? 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? How can gender mainstreaming efforts of existing programs, policies, and systems within the UN be improved?

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Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/2, this report published by the UN Secretary-General assesses progress on gender mainstreaming of the UN system at the global and country levels and in the operational activities of the UN development system. The information included in this report was primarily drawn from the System-Wide Action Plan and the UN Sustainable Development Group information management system. This report concludes by providing recommendations to UN entities to accelerate gender mainstreaming in the policies and programs of the UN system. Delegates will find this resource helpful because of the overview on progress and trends in gender mainstreaming, as well as current and emerging issues related to the issue. Further, the report effectively discusses the remaining gaps and challenges, which will be important for delegates to read as they research the issue at hand. Finally, this document can serve as a foundational document for delegates to begin their research on the topic.

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 2020 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-2-tn-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2841>

The UN System Wide Action Plan 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's and women's issues, and reduce gender inequality.

³⁴⁸ UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2019.

³⁵⁰ UN ECOSOC, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System (E/RES/2019/2)*, 2019.

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 2020 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 2020 from:

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

This foundational document recognizes the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and acted as a catalyst for international action on the issue of gender equality. 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 regard 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.

United Nations, General Assembly, Thirty-fourth session. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/34/830). Retrieved 16 July 2020 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/34/180>

By informally considering this 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.

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