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General Assembly Second Committee

Background Guide 2018

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Chase Mitchell, Deputy-Secretary General



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2018 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, D.C. (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly Second Committee (GA2). This year's staff is composed of Director Caitlin Hopper and Assistant Director Alliyah Edwards. This is Caitlin's eighth NMUN conference, five of which she has served on staff. She currently lives in Washington D.C. and works at the International Food Policy Research Institute. Alliyah joined the NMUN community in Spring of 2015 and has been on staff since 2016. Alliyah is currently entering her senior year in which she will be receiving her degree in Political Science and Criminology with a minor in the Arabic language.

The topics under discussion for the General Assembly Second Committee are:

- I. Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries
- II. Ensuring Access to Affordable, Sustainable, and Reliable Energy for All

The Second Committee is the economic and financial committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Second Committee deliberates on matters of international development and economic policy, including sustainable development, financing for development, eradication of poverty, and international trade. All Member States are represented within General Assembly committees, which spurs diverse and comprehensive negotiations to address the topics at hand. The Second Committee strives towards consensus and adopts most resolutions without a vote before sending their report to the General Assembly Plenary.

We hope you will find this Background Guide useful as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We highly encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in-depth, as well as 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](#). Please take note of the [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the website and in the [Delegate Preparation Guide](#) regarding plagiarism, codes of conduct, dress code, sexual harassment, and the awards philosophy and evaluation method. Adherence to these guidelines is mandatory.

The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) are available to download from the NMUN website. This document includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure. It is thus an essential instrument in preparing for the conference, and a reference during committee.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, feel free to contact the Under Secretary-General for the committee, Leah Schmidt; the Deputy Secretary-General, Chase Mitchell; or the Secretary-General for the conference, Angela Shively. You can contact them by email at: usgleah.dc@nmun.org, dsg.dc@nmun.org, or secgen.dc@nmun.org.

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

Sincerely,

Caitlin Hopper, *Director*
Alliyah Edwards, *Assistant Director*



Committee Overview

“We must provide ideas for the redesign of policies to strengthen the impact on poverty and in employment, and on the promotion of structural change for a more sustainable future for all.”¹

Introduction

The General Assembly was created in 1945 by the *Charter of the United Nations*, which established the General Assembly as one of six principal organs and the main deliberative body of the organization.² The General Assembly is divided into six main committees, each of which addresses a specific thematic area.³ While differing in their areas of focus, the Main Committees share similar arrangements in structure, governance, membership, functions, and powers.⁴

The General Assembly Second Committee (Second Committee) is one of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly. A report is issued to the General Assembly Plenary for each item allocated to a Main Committee.

The Second Committee is designated as the economic and financial committee of the General Assembly, commonly referred to as ECOFIN.⁵ It addresses a variety of issues related to economic development, macroeconomic policy, globalization, the eradication of poverty, food security and agriculture, and sustainability, among others.⁶ The Committee is instrumental in addressing the root causes of global economic instability, and its work often corresponds with other bodies that work in development, including the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UN CTD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁷

Governance, Structure, and Membership

The role of the General Assembly is outlined in Chapter IV of the *Charter of the United Nations*, which allows the General Assembly to make recommendations that promote “international co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields.”⁸ The Charter also established that the General Assembly will be made up of all Member States of the United Nations.⁹ At present, there are 193 Member States as well as two observers.¹⁰ Each Member State in the General Assembly has one vote; observers, along with several entities and organizations, have received a standing invitation to participate in General Assembly meetings but may not vote.¹¹ As its resolutions are non-binding, the General Assembly has always sought to adopt resolutions by consensus rather than with a recorded vote, which requires a high level of collaboration and cooperation among Member States.¹²

The General Assembly meets annually, beginning with the General Debate in the third week of September.¹³ An agenda lays out the main areas for discussion by each of the Main Committees.¹⁴ The allocation of items on the agenda to each of the Main Committees, including the Second Committee, is the responsibility of the General Committee.¹⁵ The General Committee is formed by the President of the General Assembly and 22 Vice-Presidents

¹ UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly’s Second Committee – economic and financial issues*, 2013.

² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

³ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the special high-level meeting of the Council with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (New York, 14 and 15 April 2014) (A/69/83-E/2014/71)*, 2014.

⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 12.

¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*; UN General Assembly, *Observers*.

¹² UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*, 2018.

¹³ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 17.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (A/72/251)*, 2017.

¹⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011.

from different regional blocs.¹⁶ From January to September, the General Committee focuses on thematic debates, consultations, and meetings through organized working groups.¹⁷ During these Committee sessions, Member States can discuss and address solutions to specific topics.¹⁸

As a part of the UN reporting structure, there are five primary types of organizations that report to the General Assembly and its six Main Committees: subsidiary bodies, funds and programs, research and training institutes, related organizations, and other entities.¹⁹ The General Assembly receives and considers reports on ongoing topics and may take action on any of the items reported by these bodies, including ordering further study and investigation, creating a working group, or including it in documentation or resolutions drafted by the committee.²⁰ At the end of each year, each of Main Committee, including the Second Committee, submits a report to the General Assembly Plenary on each agenda item allocated to it, and the Plenary then considers each report and votes on the adoption of the included draft resolutions.²¹ The General Assembly also considers reports from the Secretary-General and other UN bodies.²²

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is an arm of the UN Secretariat that focuses on development.²³ Its work is often based on resolutions adopted by the Second Committee.²⁴ Work is also harmonized between the General Assembly and ECOSOC by the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, which also provides support for the Second Committee on development issues.²⁵ Unlike the Fifth Committee, the Second Committee does not address the allocation of funds.²⁶

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The General Assembly Second Committee derives much of its mandate from Chapter IX of the *Charter of the United Nations* which calls for the United Nations to promote “higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development.”²⁷ In line with this, the Second Committee plays a key role in setting sustainable development, employment, and poverty eradication policies for the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), which was adopted by General Assembly resolution 70/1 and established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁸ Additionally, Second Committee provides direction on states in special situations including least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDS).²⁹

As a normative and policy-setting body, the Second Committee works to develop norms and standards for the UN and Member States, including by supporting national legislation and policy.³⁰ The work of the Committee is chiefly substantive with the exception of its mission on the revitalization of the General Assembly where it aims to streamline the overall program of work of the General Assembly by updating working methods and reducing the number and length of draft resolutions.³¹

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Past Sessions*, 2018.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN DPI, *The United Nations System*, 2018.

²⁰ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 12; UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Documentation: General Assembly*, 2018.

²¹ UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Documentation: General Assembly*, 2018.

²² UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Reports of Principal Organs to the General Assembly*, 2018.

²³ UN DESA, *About UN DESA*, 2018.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development*, 2018.

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *Administrative & Budgetary (Fifth Committee)*, 2018.

²⁷ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018; *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UNEG, *UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System*, 2014.

³¹ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018.



The Second Committee completes its work primarily through draft proposals and the submission of reports to the General Assembly Plenary as outlined in the committee's Organization of Work.³² The Committee has the ability to convene relevant conferences and summits on the global development agenda, and usually comes to a consensus on votes.³³ The Second Committee can also request the Secretary-General to submit reports on significant issues and can host side events.³⁴ This is useful in fulfilling the Committee's role of encouraging, strengthening, and improving the implementation of Member States' commitments in relation to development targets and SDGs in particular.³⁵

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

In recent years, major international agreements and documents have shifted the work of the Second Committee.³⁶ The *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, adopted at the end of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015, introduced a new approach to financing systems to support sustainable development.³⁷ At its 70th session in 2015, the Second Committee reaffirmed this document's commitments in draft resolution A/C.2/70/L.69, titled "International trade and development."³⁸ At that same session, the Committee adopted another crucial draft resolution expressing profound alarm over global climate change, in accordance with the statements contained in the outcome document of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the *Paris Agreement*.³⁹

During the 72nd session of the General Assembly, the Second Committee discussed dozens of agenda items on a broad range of topics including development issues, macroeconomic policy questions, globalization and interdependence, and the eradication of poverty.⁴⁰ On November 17th, 2017, the committee approved its first set of draft resolutions, which addressed issues related to the economic exploitation of the occupied Palestinian Territory, transportation and the SDGs, and World Bee Day, among others.⁴¹ By the end of November, the Committee went on to adopt another 35 draft resolutions, many of which have been on Second Committee's agenda for years, but some of which are being considered in a new light and modern context.⁴² A draft resolution written to combat illicit financial flows highlighted the need to address the potential use of cryptocurrencies for illicit purposes.⁴³ Another resolution highlighted the unique challenges faced by countries that are growing economically and start to receive less concessional lending and official development assistance.⁴⁴ Several resolutions called for the promotion of "a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization," a common refrain in Second Committee resolutions.⁴⁵ The Chair of the Second Committee highlighted at the end of the session that, for the first time since 2000, the

³² UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Second Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.2/71/L.1)*, 2016.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017.

³⁵ UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Second Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.2/71/L.1)*, 2016.

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ UN DPI, *Concluding Its Session, Second Committee Unanimously Approves 18 Resolutions (GA/EF/3444)*, 2015.

³⁹ UN DPI, *Draft Resolution Expressing 'Profound Alarm' over Global Rise in Greenhouse Gas Emissions among 14 Texts Approved by Second Committee (GA/EF/3443)*, 2015.

⁴⁰ UN DPI, *Second Committee Introduces 36 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Protecting Global Climate, Development Needs of Middle-Income Countries (GA/EF/3488)*, 2017.

⁴¹ UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 8 Resolutions including Text Calling upon Israel to End Exploitation of Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syrian Golan (GA/EF/3489)*, 2017.

⁴² UN DPI, *Concluding Session, Second Committee Passes 14 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Macroeconomic Policy, Trade Liberalization (GA/EF/3491)*, 2017; UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 21 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on External Debt Sustainability, Agriculture Development, Combating Illicit Financial Flows (GA/EF/3490)*, 2017.

⁴³ UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 21 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on External Debt Sustainability, Agriculture Development, Combating Illicit Financial Flows (GA/EF/3490)*, 2017.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid; UN DPI, *Concluding Session, Second Committee Passes 14 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Macroeconomic Policy, Trade Liberalization (GA/EF/3491)*, 2017.



committee had operated efficiently enough to conclude its work by the end of November – a significant feat as the General Assembly is seeking to operate more efficiently.⁴⁶

Many of the agenda items from the 72nd session will carry over to the 73rd session of the General Assembly Second Committee and several items that are considered biennially will automatically be placed on the agenda, including “Report of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme,” “Sustainable mountain development,” and “International migration and development,” among others.⁴⁷ Other agenda items will be established by the General Committee and the Second Committee as the 73rd session approaches.⁴⁸

Conclusion

As an essential component to the functioning of the UN, the role and work of the Second Committee is critical to addressing the international community’s priorities, including those established by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.⁴⁹ The Second Committee continues to streamline its work with the overarching goals of improving economic and financial systems worldwide and meeting the internationally agreed development goals.⁵⁰ Moreover, the Second Committee is increasingly seeking to utilize emerging trends and innovative ideas to promote the most effective solutions to ongoing economic and financial challenges.⁵¹ The Second Committee will continue to play a pivotal role in advancing efforts to promote sustainable development and address related issues.⁵²

⁴⁶ UN DPI, *Concluding Session, Second Committee Passes 14 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Macroeconomic Policy, Trade Liberalization (GA/EF/3491)*, 2017.

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee): Agenda items and periodicity*, 2018.

⁴⁸ Ibid; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011.

⁴⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018.

⁵⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945; UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)*, 2018.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.



Annotated Bibliography

Charter of the United Nations. (1945). Retrieved 6 May 2018 from: <http://www.un.org/en/charter-United-Nations/index.html>

The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document of the United Nations, created at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, which took place in 1945 in San Francisco, California, in the United States. An understanding of the Charter is critical to understanding the functions and abilities of the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. Delegates should pay particular attention to the Preamble and Chapters IV and IX, each of which directly impact the role and function of the General Assembly, and will ensure that they have an in-depth understanding of the General Assembly Second's mandate.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2017). *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*. Retrieved 6 May 2018 from: https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Peace-and-Security/United_Nations_Handbook_2017_18.pdf

This handbook provides a comprehensive look at the UN and its principal organs and committees. Delegates can find a detailed explanation of the structure, processes, and procedures of the Main Committees of the General Assembly in this source. The breakdown of the structure, membership, and functionality of these committees can be a useful point for delegates to begin their research and gain an overall understanding of where the committee falls within the UN framework. In particular, the detailed listing of all current membership and leadership of key committees, as well as the structure and reporting of subsidiary organs will be a useful starting point for understanding the complicate framework of UN action.

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. (2011). *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. Retrieved 6 May 2018 from:

http://www.unitar.org/ny/sites/unitar.org.ny/files/UN_PGA_Handbook.pdf

This guide is a practical introduction to the General Assembly, its different committees, and their relationship with each other and different UN system actors. It should provide delegates with a solid, comprehensive, and insightful way to leverage the UN system and staff to its full potential in finding solutions to the issues on the committee's agenda. Its straightforward and practical language provides useful technical information, as well as in-depth coverage of how the UN General Assembly functions throughout its programme of work.

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2017, November 30). *Concluding Session, Second Committee Passes 14 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Macroeconomic Policy, Trade Liberalization (GA.EF.3491)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 30 June 2018 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gaef3491.doc.htm>

This is the last set of meetings coverage on the Second Committee for the 72nd session of the General Assembly. In addition to providing information and short descriptions of several draft resolutions, it includes significant statements from Member States and makes note of any recorded votes. Delegates can use this coverage research the most recent substance of the Second Committee, in addition to its functions and most relevant resolutions.

United Nations, General Assembly. (2018). *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)* [Website]. Retrieved 30 June 2018 from: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/index.shtml>

This source is the official website of the Second Committee. It represents the main platform used by the Committee to give information about its role, functions and mandate, and in addition to its current activities and initiatives. Exploring this resource will enable delegates might deepen their knowledge on the previous sessions of this body and stay updated on upcoming documents, such as new draft resolutions and current news on General Assembly Second.

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United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2015). *The United Nations System* [Informative Chart]. Retrieved 30 June 2018 from: http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/pdfs/UN_System_Chart_30June2015.pdf

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2017, November 1). *Second Committee Introduces 36 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Protecting Global Climate, Development Needs of Middle-Income Countries (GA/EF/3488)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 6 May 2018 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gaef3488.doc.htm>

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2017, November 17). *Second Committee Approves 8 Resolutions including Text Calling upon Israel to End Exploitation of Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syrian Golan (GA/EF/3489)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 6 May 2018 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gaef3489.doc.htm>

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I. Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries

Introduction

Middle-income countries (MICs) are home to 70% of the world's population, 73% of the global poor, and are responsible for one-third of global gross domestic product.⁵³ The international community defines MICs as a Member State with a gross national income (GNI) of \$1,006 to \$12,235 per capita.⁵⁴ This middle-income categorization also distinguishes between lower-middle income countries whose GNI ranges from \$1,006 to \$3,955 and upper-middle income countries whose GNI ranges from \$3,956 to \$12,235.⁵⁵ MICs are a geographically diverse group with wide varieties of population and size, each with unique development needs.⁵⁶ 109 countries are currently considered MICs including lower-middle income countries such as Papua New Guinea and upper-middle-income countries such as Mexico.⁵⁷ MICs often however share a historical pattern of economic exploitation and fragmented industrialization carried out by colonial powers.⁵⁸

In recent years, MICs have faced high domestic inequality, lack of access to basic services, and chaotic urbanization patterns.⁵⁹ Inflows and outflows of foreign direct investment have increased in recent years due to enhanced partnerships between developing countries that promote capacity-building through the exchange of best practices, skills, resources, and technical assistance, also known as south-south cooperation (SSC).⁶⁰ Developed countries or multilateral organizations sometimes also support these partnerships, which is known as triangular cooperation.⁶¹ When a country first “graduates” from lower- to middle-income status, it typically sees a short-term rise in industry, though economists working with the United Nations Development Programme have found that this is not typically sustainable due to a lack of focus on sustainable economic growth.⁶² World Bank categorization and mobility between categories is not necessarily indicative of change in a country's need for aid.⁶³ Due to the heterogeneity of MICs, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly has called upon the international community to address the diverse and unique development needs of MICs, and to not employ a “one size fits all” approach to development.⁶⁴ Providing official development assistance (ODA) is an example of pro-development intervention.⁶⁵ ODA is the flow of resources between donor countries, typically between members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and recipient countries, that is intended to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries.⁶⁶ Diversified allocation methods that are founded on more than just income indicators is necessary to assist new MICs and address the needs of a highly diverse MIC category.⁶⁷

International and Regional Framework

One of the main objectives of the UN is to promote international development.⁶⁸ There are a number of international documents that have been adopted to promote development of MICs, including key aid effectiveness documents

⁵³ World Bank, *The World Bank In Middle Income Countries*, 2018.

⁵⁴ World Bank, *World Bank Country and Lending Groups*, 2018.

⁵⁵ World Bank Data Team, *New country classifications by income level: 2017-2018*, 2017.

⁵⁶ UNSSC & Hertie School of Governance, *UN Reflection Series 2016: Development Cooperation, Policy Advice and Middle Income Countries*, 2016, p. 62.

⁵⁷ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 2; World Bank, *World Bank Country and Lending Groups*, 2018.

⁵⁸ Acemoğlu & Robinson, *The economic impact of colonialism*, 2017.

⁵⁹ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 22; Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 12.

⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 6; UNDP, *Frequently Asked Questions: South-South and Triangular Cooperation*, 2014, p. 2.

⁶¹ UNDP, *Frequently Asked Questions: South-South and Triangular Cooperation*, 2014, p. 2.

⁶² UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 59.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁶⁴ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/RES/72/230)*, 2017, pp. 3-5.

⁶⁵ UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 124.

⁶⁶ OECD, *Official development assistance – definition and coverage*, 2018.

⁶⁷ UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 31.

⁶⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

from providers of development assistance such as OECD's *Paris Declaration* (2005) and the *Accra Agenda for Action* (AAA) (2008) and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (AAAA) (2015).⁶⁹ These documents recognize the contributions of MICs as both providers and recipients of financial assistance, and highlight the importance of adapting commitments in order to effectively address the diverse needs of MICs.⁷⁰ The AAAA discusses the importance of diversifying development methodologies in order to effectively address the development needs of MICs, and encourage shareholders in international financial institutions (IFIs) to develop more concise "graduation" policies that help a newly-categorized MIC to gradually and systematically adjust to its new economic reality.⁷¹ It also highlights the challenges that MICs face in achieving sustainable development.⁷² The *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) calls for the inclusion of MICs in international economic decision-making, norm-setting, governance, and addressing their unique realities.⁷³ The 2030 Agenda also highlights the importance of sharing experiences, improving coordination, and focusing support on MICs within UN development organizations, IFIs, regional organizations, and other stakeholders.⁷⁴

Due to increased discussion on the development needs of MICs, the Secretary-General has paid increased attention to development cooperation with MICs in their reporting over the past five years.⁷⁵ The most recent Secretary-General Report on "Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries" was adopted at the 72nd session of the General Assembly and covers a variety of issues including macroeconomic trends and development challenges facing MICs, the role of the intergovernmental organizations with MICs, and recommendations to promote development both for the international community and MICs.⁷⁶ The international community also looks to reports such as the UN's collaborative *World Economic Situation and Prospects* annual report and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) *World Economic Outlook* report as resources to predict upcoming economic trends that will affect the global economy and development in the short term.⁷⁷ At the 72nd session of the General Assembly, the General Assembly Second Committee also considered a draft resolution on development cooperation with MICs, which highlights the importance of innovative development practices and solidarity between developing countries and calls for a high-level meeting of the General Assembly to discuss challenges faced by MICs.⁷⁸

Role of the International System

The General Assembly Second Committee is the General Assembly body that addresses issues affecting MICs.⁷⁹ Over the course of 2017, Second Committee noted the particular need to highlight the diversity of MICs and address the specific development needs of MICs.⁸⁰ Other UN entities have also undertaken a number of innovative development initiatives in order to support the unique needs of MICs.⁸¹ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has implemented field-based anti-corruption advisors in many countries that help to strengthen regional

⁶⁹ The Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, 2005, pp. 18, 21; UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015, [p. 21](#).

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, [pp. 7, 11](#).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, [pp. 28-29](#).

⁷⁵ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/RES/70/227)*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/RES/68/265)*, 2013.

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017.

⁷⁷ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, 2018; UN DESA et al., *World Economic Situation and Prospects: 2018*, 2018.

⁷⁸ UN General Assembly Second Committee, *Development Cooperation with middle-income countries (A/C.2/72/L.60)*, 2017, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁹ UN DPI, *Second Committee Introduces 36 Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Protecting Global Climate, Development Needs of Middle-Income Countries (GA/EF/3488)*, 2017.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ UN Development Policy and Analysis Division, *Background materials to the report of the Secretary-General on Development Cooperation in Middle Income Countries*, 2017.

coordination, promote SSC, and engage with the public sector, private sector, and civil society.⁸² The UNODC also works to combat poverty and promote sustainable development.⁸³ The United Nations Industrial Development Organization's Programme for Country Partnerships works with national development agendas of MICs and focuses on specific industries with growth potential, thereby accelerating sustainable industrial development.⁸⁴

Other international entities, civil society, and regional organizations also play an important role in development cooperation with MICs.⁸⁵ Currently, MICs are the largest segments of the World Bank's clients, making up 109 of 189 Member States.⁸⁶ The World Bank Group typically invests in infrastructure, sustainable energy, improved urban services, and strengthened connectivity to enable capital inflows within MICs.⁸⁷ The IMF works with MICs to ensure macroeconomic stability, promote international trade, support high employment growth, and stimulate sustainable economic development.⁸⁸ The European Union has shifted its aid to MICs away from financial assistance and towards establishing social protection systems.⁸⁹ The Asian Development Bank has both country programs and corporate strategies in place to bolster economic growth in the region.⁹⁰ The African Union has seen significant development within the region, with initiatives under the *Malabo Declaration* (2014) projected to boost almost all African countries to MIC status by 2050.⁹¹ Finally, civil society organizations can also assist MICs with economic and social development through capacity building, increased accountability of governments, and providing public goods.⁹²

The middle-income trap and other challenges facing MICs

Due to the challenges facing MICs, economic growth often plateaus after a reaching middle-income status.⁹³ For example, many Latin American countries have spent over half a century categorized as an MICs, unable to move into the high-income category.⁹⁴ This is due to an economic phenomenon often known as the "middle-income trap."⁹⁵ The middle-income trap is the slowing of an MICs economic growth after reaching middle-income status, often due to underdeveloped or nonexistent production and industry sectors.⁹⁶ There are three main types of industry which influence national economies: primary, secondary, and tertiary.⁹⁷ Primary production industry typically involves mining, forestry, fisheries, and agriculture; secondary production involves manufacturing and assembly; and tertiary production refers to commercial and service sector jobs.⁹⁸ New MICs typically experience a sharp fall in primary production sectors, which are typically the backbone of a low-income country's economy, in favor of tertiary production due to sudden growth in service sector demand.⁹⁹ Technology-intensive production in more developed countries has left MICs unable to keep pace with industrialized countries, and MICs rarely experience a proportionate rise in secondary sector productivity.¹⁰⁰ In order to avoid the middle-income trap countries such as Uganda are pushing national development plans to center around agricultural development, rather than transitioning directly to the tertiary industry sector.¹⁰¹ Global competitiveness has also intensified significantly over the past 30

⁸² Ibid, p. 36.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 32.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Glennie, *The role of aid to middle-income countries: a contribution to evolving EU development policy*, 2011, p. 17.

⁸⁶ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 19.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 20.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 21.

⁸⁹ Piccio, *It's (almost) final: EU to slash aid to middle-income countries*, 2014; OECD, *Launch of the European Union Social Protection Systems Programme for inclusive societies in low- and lower-middle-income countries*, 2018.

⁹⁰ Asian Development Bank, *The Asian Development Bank's Engagement with Middle-Income Countries*, 2016, p. 19.

⁹¹ International Food Policy Research Institute, *Report: Africa is projected to have just one low income country by 2050*, 2015.

⁹² Glennie, *The role of aid to middle-income countries: a contribution to evolving EU development policy*, 2011, p. 17.

⁹³ Eichengreen et al., *Is economic growth in middle-income countries different from low-income countries?*, 2017.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 59.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ BBC, *Primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors*, 2014.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ African Union, *Agriculture at the Centre of Uganda's Push to Middle Income Status by 2020*, 2017.

years.¹⁰² MICs now have to compete with low-wage countries while also developing the capacity to compete with technology-intensive production.¹⁰³ The rate of technological change has increased, production costs have decreased, and there are high levels of competition in both low-tech and high-tech goods.¹⁰⁴ Due to this economic vulnerability, MICs can also be more exposed to commodity price fluctuations and global financial crises.¹⁰⁵

Long-term, inclusive initiatives and economic diversification can help to bring systemic change and foster national and local ownership contribute to successful development interventions.¹⁰⁶ Capacity-building remains particularly important for MICs.¹⁰⁷ Financial support from international actors such as the UN Development System, bilateral donors, IFIs, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can assist MICs in catalyzing their own economic, social, and structural transformation.¹⁰⁸ Non-financial assistance such as technical assistance can strengthen public policy and the sharing of best practices, which also stimulates capacity-building within MICs.¹⁰⁹ Investment in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and capacity building through effective and efficient fiscal policy can assist in advancing MIC productivity, and diversifying its economy and workforce skillsets.¹¹⁰

The Changing Role of MICs

Due to increased economic capacity, MICs often act as both recipients and providers of international aid.¹¹¹ Some MICs, despite income category graduation and economic development, still require large-scale financial assistance in order to reduce poverty and promote development.¹¹² Others only require small amounts of financial assistance, and benefit mainly from technical support and cooperation.¹¹³ Through SSC and triangular cooperation, MICs have steadily become more influential internationally and are increasingly becoming financial assistance providers themselves.¹¹⁴ When MICs engage in SSC, it changes the dynamics of international cooperation.¹¹⁵ Cooperation between two developing countries often promotes greater recipient ownership and creates horizontal, rather than hierarchical, cooperation.¹¹⁶ These horizontal financial relationships can not only empower developing countries and reinforce SSC, but can also diversify resources and expertise within these partnerships.¹¹⁷ The technical assistance provided by MICs may also be more regionally-appropriate and cost-effective for developing countries who would otherwise receive funds only from traditionally upper-income economies.¹¹⁸

Case Study: The New Development Bank

Due to their regional hegemony and emerging economic prominence, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are becoming more influential in the global economy.¹¹⁹ At the 4th BRICS Summit in 2012, the creation of a multilateral development bank that is run by developing countries for developing countries was first

¹⁰² UNDP et al., *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013*, 2013, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ UNSSC & Hertie School of Governance, *UN Reflection Series 2016: Development Cooperation, Policy Advice and Middle Income Countries*, 2016, p. [11](#); UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. [13](#).

¹⁰⁷ Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. [13](#).

¹¹¹ Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 24; UNSSC & Hertie School of Governance, *UN Reflection Series 2016: Development Cooperation, Policy Advice and Middle Income Countries*, 2016, p. 85.

¹¹² Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 16.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ UNSSC & Hertie School of Governance, *UN Reflection Series 2016: Development Cooperation, Policy Advice and Middle Income Countries*, 2016, p. 85.

¹¹⁵ Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 25.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Van Agtmael, *Think Again: The BRICS*, Foreign Policy, 2012.

considered.¹²⁰ This proposal came to fruition in 2014, when BRICS formed the New Development Bank (NDB).¹²¹ Its foundational document states that the NDB's goal is to "strengthen cooperation among BRICS and supplement the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development, thus contributing to collective commitments for achieving the goal of strong, sustainable, and balanced growth."¹²² In its short existence, the NDB is already rising to meet a largely unmet demand of MIC infrastructure development.¹²³ The NDB is currently operating 13 projects which total budget of over USD \$3.4 billion which are focused on renewable energy, water, irrigation, agriculture, and sanitation; rural development; and transportation infrastructure.¹²⁴ Despite the developing status of BRICS, the NDB quickly proved its viability.¹²⁵ As a bank that has been established and governed by non-western developing states, the NDB has completely revolutionized the status quo of IFIs.¹²⁶ Though the NDB is not challenging the existing economic order or commonly-accepted practices, it is certainly challenging the traditionally western-held hierarchy of international funding.¹²⁷ Despite this, there continues to be concerns from IFI actors and some NGOs on how the NDB and other emerging IFIs will disrupt the already established social and environmental standards of international financing for development.¹²⁸ The NDB has repeatedly stated its intent to follow widely accepted lending standards, though it may diverge from these standards while investing in infrastructure, particularly when it comes to safeguards and investment guarantees.¹²⁹

Conclusion

Though the international community continues to support MICs throughout economic transition, traditional financial aid is not always a measured and appropriate response to the conditions MICs are facing.¹³⁰ MICs need individualized assistance and effective aid in order to promote economic development and implement the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹³¹ Despite this, MICs continue to challenge existing economic difficulties and norms presented to them by the international community.¹³² Continued development cooperation by and for MICs is necessary to promote global economic progress and the achievement of international development goals.¹³³

Further Research

In determining what actions to take regarding development cooperation with middle income countries, delegates should consider the following questions: According to the World Bank's categorization system, what is your country's income level? Is there a pattern of income levels in your region? Is your country or organization involved in international financial assistance? What can the UN do to improve development assistance to MICs? What changes are necessary to assist economic transition and growth? How can the international community foster SSC or triangular cooperation? What does successful SSC and triangular cooperation look like?

¹²⁰ New Development Bank, *About Us: History*, 2018.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Swanson & Verma, *Move Over, IMF: BRICS Bank Aims to Rewrite the Rules of Development*, Foreign Policy, 2014.

¹²⁴ New Development Bank, *List of All Projects*, 2018.

¹²⁵ Chen, 3 Reasons the BRICS' New Development Bank Matters, *The Diplomat*, 2014.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid*; Borges, *The BRICS' New Development Bank and the integration of human rights into development cooperation: a new era or more of the same?*, 2014.

¹²⁸ Wang, *New Multilateral Development Banks*, 2016, p. 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/RES/72/230)*, 2017, p. 3.

¹³¹ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 1.

¹³² Alonso et al., *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*, 2014, p. 5.

¹³³ UN General Assembly, *Development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329)*, 2017, p. 1.



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Retrieved 5 March 2018 from: <http://www.undocs.org/a/res/72/230>

This is the most recent General Assembly resolution adopted regarding development cooperation with MICs. It is an excellent resource to gain knowledge of the international community's current priorities for MICs. It calls for continued camaraderie and partnerships between developing countries, innovative development approaches, and a high-level meeting to discuss challenges facing MICs. Delegates can utilize this document to gain a solid understanding on what actions may be taken regarding development cooperation with MICs, as well as understand useful precedents regarding MIC cooperation in the international community.

United Nations General Assembly, Seventy-second session. (2017). *Development cooperation with middle-income countries: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/329)*. Adopted on the report of the Second Committee (A/72/150).

Retrieved 5 March 2018 from: <http://undocs.org/A/72/329>

As the most recent Secretary-General report on this topic, this document is an excellent tool to gain an up-to-date understanding of development cooperation with MICs. It includes summaries of past documents on development cooperation with MIC and recent economic trends; and highlights the importance of sustainable development. There's also an extensive list of existing initiatives within the UN system that engage with MICs, which can shed light on possible actions for delegates in committee.

United Nations Development Policy and Analysis Division. (2017). *Background materials to the report of the Secretary-General on Development Cooperation in Middle Income Countries*. Retrieved 28 April 2018 from:

https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2017_AnnexMICsreport.pdf

This text is an excellent summary of UN development actions with MICs in the last 3 years. It outlines key development programs, policies, and strategies that are being carried out by UN bodies, regional bodies, and IFIs to strengthen development cooperation in MICs. This document can provide delegates with excellent examples of real-life action that has been taken regarding this topic including capacity-building initiatives, infrastructure development projects, and implementing good governance practices.

United Nations Development Programme et al. (2013). *Challenges of the Middle-Income Countries: Seoul Debates 2013* [Report]. Retrieved 7 March 2017 from: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/uspc/docs/MIC-Seoul-Report-2013.pdf>

This text contains three separate chapters regarding development cooperation with MICs. Though the content is mainly focused on the Republic of Korea, it applies global data and includes broad concepts regarding MICs and development cooperation. Delegates may look to this text to find data on aid recipient classification, changes in financial assistance over the past two decades, and simple explanations of challenges facing MICs, as well as possible implementation strategies of policies intended to strengthen development cooperation with MICs.

Alonso, J. A., et al. (2014). *Recipients and Contributors: Middle income countries and the future of development cooperation*. Retrieved 6 March 2018 from: <http://effectivecooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Recipients-and-Contributors-MICs-and-the-future-of-development-cooperat...pdf>

This document focuses on the changing roles of MICs. After establishing a strong understanding on the "traps" and "gaps" that MICs face, it delves into the intricacies of economic transitions. Delegates can gain a strong understanding of a newly-categorized MIC's journey through the gradual weaning of development aid to becoming a development aid-contributing country. This document also analyzes some issues within the international community regarding economic categorization of countries and the effectiveness of existing aid systems, including the need for a classification system that is not based solely on GNI.



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II. Ensuing Access to Affordable, Sustainable, and Reliable Energy for All

*“Energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. With access to energy, people can study, go to university, get a job, start a business – and reach their full potential.”*¹³⁴

Introduction

According to the United Nations’ (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), energy has the power to transform individuals’ lives, the economy, climate, and the earth as a whole.¹³⁵ Energy is a central component of national economies, security, climate change, food production, and access to energy increases incomes and quality of life.¹³⁶ Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy is a pillar of human development.¹³⁷ It is predicted that more than half the world (6.5 billion people) will be living in an urban area by 2050.¹³⁸ However, currently one-fifth of the world’s population does not have access to electricity, one in seven people lack access to clean and renewable energy, and over 3 billion people still rely on non-renewable resources for energy such as coal, oil, and gas, to power everyday tasks like cooking, cleaning, transportation, and sanitation.¹³⁹ These non-renewable resources are detrimental to the environment due to their by-products such as greenhouse gases, and also create indoor air pollution and resulting health issues for their users.¹⁴⁰ The General Assembly Second must consider how the global gap in achieving access to energy can be mitigated, in order to provide all people with needed affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy resources.¹⁴¹

International and Regional Framework

Over the last few decades, the international community has increasingly supported the goals of sustainable and accessible energy through framework documents such as the *Agenda 21* (1992), the *Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020* (IPoA) (2011), and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (2015).¹⁴² All three of these documents reference the importance of moving away from non-renewable energy resources and building economic capacity, national ownership, and infrastructure within developing countries in order to meet global energy goals.¹⁴³ *Agenda 21* encourages technology transfer, research, and financial assistance in order to bolster energy sectors within developing countries.¹⁴⁴ The IPoA focuses on building infrastructure within developing countries through increasing energy supply, renewable energy sources, and energy production in developing countries.¹⁴⁵ The IPoA also has set objectives to be reached before 2020 to better enhance developing countries including enhancing financial resources, promoting good governance, and reducing vulnerability of developing countries in the midst of natural disasters which all play a vital role in the maintenance and sustainability of energy.¹⁴⁶ Finally, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* emphasizes the positive impact that renewable energy, clean energy storage, energy efficiency, and public and private investment in energy could have for developing countries economically and politically.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁴ United Nations in India, *SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*, 2018.

¹³⁵ UN DESA, *Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*, 2017.

¹³⁶ UN Foundation, *What we do: Energy & Climate*, 2013.

¹³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017, p. 3.

¹³⁸ UNDP, *Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*, 2018.

¹³⁹ UN DESA, *Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*, 2017; UNDP, *Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*, 2018; UN DESA, *Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*, 2017.

¹⁴⁰ UN News, *UN chief Guterres highlights importance of sustainable energy in message to EXPO 2017*, 2017.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² UNCED, *Agenda 21*, 1992; UN General Assembly, *Our Common Future*, 1987; UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action-2011*, 2011; 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.

¹⁴³ UNCED, *Agenda 21*, 1992; UN General Assembly, *Our Common Future*, 1987; UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action-2011*, 2011.

¹⁴⁴ UNCED, *Agenda 21*, 1992, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ UN OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action-2011*, 2011, p. 11.

¹⁴⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action-2011*, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ 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.

In 1997, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met to discuss global issues that had emerged due to climate change.¹⁴⁸ The *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997)* was the result of this meeting; Kyoto centered around national responsibility in reporting and reducing carbon emissions and remains a central document in guiding the move towards global sustainable energy today.¹⁴⁹ Article 2 of the *Kyoto Protocol* emphasizes that achieving lower emission consumption will allow for the enhancement of energy productivity.¹⁵⁰ It also suggests that Member States who choose to partake in efforts should conduct research on their levels of emissions in their respective countries and work towards new ways to develop new and renewable forms of energy.¹⁵¹ After the *Kyoto Protocol*, the UNFCCC also developed the *Paris Agreement (2015)*, which is a key framework document that works to strengthen the global response to climate change and the threat it poses to the planet.¹⁵² Some of the key aspects of the *Paris Agreement* include mitigation of climate change, voluntary cooperation of all parties to stay involved in the efforts, financing and technology transfer, and capacity-building support.¹⁵³

The adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)* marked a new and previously unprecedented era of sustainability for the international community.¹⁵⁴ Providing the world with modern and sustainable energy is a core piece of the SDGs; Goal 7 focuses entirely on ensuring “access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all,” and has five specific targets to achieve this goal.¹⁵⁵ This SDG aims to enhance international cooperation on clean energy research and technology; increase the global share of renewable energy; double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and upgrade infrastructure and technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services in developing countries, all by 2030.¹⁵⁶ In addition to SDG 7, energy is also linked directly to other SDGs, including those regarding poverty eradication (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), and job creation (SDG 8).¹⁵⁷ SDG 12 is also key to the sustainability of energy as it works toward educating energy consumer on how to safely and efficiently consume resources in their respective areas.¹⁵⁸ SDG 13, which focuses on climate action, is also relevant as the continued burning of nonrenewable resources due to lack of energy alternatives is also a major source of air pollution.¹⁵⁹

Regional bodies are also working to obtain clean, sustainable, and affordable energy resources.¹⁶⁰ Currently, the European Union (EU) has been actively working towards sustainability and clean energy through cutting carbon dioxide emissions and working with its Energy Union to promote access to sustainable energy within its members.¹⁶¹ The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has an energy portal and forum which works to combine statistical indicators and accessible policy documents on energy to their members.¹⁶² The Economic and Social Commission for West Africa has a number of projects engaging the private sector in providing energy resources to members, and the Economic Commission for Africa has adopted several clean energy technologies policies in order to work towards the achievement of sustainable and affordable energy sources for all.¹⁶³

¹⁴⁸ UNFCCC, *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1997.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁵² COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

¹⁵³ UNFCCC, *Climate: Get the Big Picture*, 2018.

¹⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁵⁷ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2017, p. 22.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017, pp. 14, 15.

¹⁶¹ EU, *Energy*, 2018.

¹⁶² UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017, pp. 14, 15.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Role of the International System

In the General Assembly's seventy-second session in September 2017, the General Assembly Second Committee considered a wide variety of framework documents regarding affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy.¹⁶⁴ These documents included Secretary General report on *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all* (2017), which discussed possibilities for furthering the implementation of *Agenda 21* following the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; enabling the progress of the current UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024); and supporting the *Action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into Secretariat-wide operations and facilities management* (2017) in order to make UN operations and facilities more sustainable.¹⁶⁵ The General Assembly also adopted resolution 72/224 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.¹⁶⁶ This resolution encouraged members and other relevant stakeholders to support developing countries in energy sector cooperation and increase energy efficiency for clean, low-carbon, modern and sustainable energy systems and underscored the need for cleaner and more efficient cooking and heating methods.¹⁶⁷

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is also a global leader on the issue of sustainable energy and works to implement General Assembly's high-level recommendations.¹⁶⁸ The UNDP created the "Delivering Sustainable Energy in a Changing Climate: Strategy Note on Sustainable Energy (2017-2021)" (2016), which fully articulates the role of UNDP in the UN's work towards sustainable energy, and advocates for integrated "energy market transformation" by multiple stakeholders across sectors.¹⁶⁹ The UNDP assists countries aiming for energy sustainability through supporting the holistic development of various energy and production sectors at the local, national, regional, and global levels.¹⁷⁰ The UNDP also rejects stand-alone technology and industrial interventions in favor of complete solutions and unified approaches, as they state that energy is the "central factor of humanity."¹⁷¹

The United Nations Environment Agency (UNEA) is particularly active on the topic of affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy, and has supported stakeholder's financial contributions into renewable energy through providing targeted financial support and technical assistance.¹⁷² This support is key, as it was determined by the UNEA that the global investment in energy is growing immensely and it is necessary to now develop the of technical skills and the overall mobilization of climate investment through targeted initiatives in order to fully take advantage of this growth.¹⁷³ As the impact of energy on climate is a key consideration in environmental policy, the UNEA also helps to mobilize the growth of clean and sustainable energy through investment contributions, which in turn helps governments achieve their national goals.¹⁷⁴

On a regional level, the UN Economic Commission for Europe has a Committee on Sustainable Energy, which works to make the affordability and accessibility to energy for all persons as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁷⁵ This is done by producing resources and recommendations which are published and then given to

¹⁶⁴ UN ECE, *Committee on Sustainable Energy*, 2018.

¹⁶⁵ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/72/160)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/72/228)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into Secretariat-wide operations and facilities management*, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ UN General Assembly, *Ensuring Access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/RES/72/224)*, 2017.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ UNDP, *Delivering Sustainable Energy in a Changing Climate: Strategy Note on Sustainable Energy (2017-2021)*, 2016, p. 19.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² UNEP, *Energy Finance*, 2018.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ UN ECE, *Committee Objectives*, 2018.



policymakers in order to further their monitoring of their own carbon usage.¹⁷⁶ The Committee also works to guide work standards in regard to natural gas, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.¹⁷⁷ Though this is a European endeavor, the Committee is encouraging all stakeholders to become more proactive in the sustainability effort of clean energy and infrastructure, and the project presents a model example of the results of regional collaboration.¹⁷⁸

Sustainable Energy for Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations, such as women, low-income persons, and rural persons are more likely to face difficulties with accessing affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy due to lack of infrastructure, capacity, and proper resources.¹⁷⁹ According to the World Bank, energy is determined to be a pivotal factor in education, healthcare, and the economy, and eradicating poverty.¹⁸⁰ Currently, about 12% of the world's population consumes only 1% of the total global energy; this inequity is detrimental to health, education, and social & economic growth.¹⁸¹ These groups often have to travel long distances from their home in order to access energy, with the result being that many reside in urban slums as their only option.¹⁸² Individuals who live in urban areas due to insufficient energy infrastructure elsewhere are more likely to further sink into poverty as their economic deficits continue exacerbated by the lack of energy to power daily tasks essential to live even in urban areas.¹⁸³ Additionally, due to increased exposure to harmful byproducts and air pollution of non-renewable energy sources such as wood, charcoal, coal, dung, and waste on open fires, millions of people suffer from health issues associated with respiratory, cardiovascular, and other illnesses.¹⁸⁴

In addition to the challenges of achieving access to energy, many women and girls are also denied the opportunity to learn about or contribute to the advancement of energy.¹⁸⁵ Women suffer from the lack of educational opportunities and accessibilities to basic needs such as health care, job opportunities, and adequate pay, which is often not attainable without clean energy.¹⁸⁶ Vulnerable populations who have access to sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy throughout their schooling are typically better equipped to enter the workforce and achieve a high quality of life.¹⁸⁷

Promoting Sustainable Energy

Over the last few decades, the demand for energy has increased dramatically; however, an increasing number of energy alternatives have also become more feasible and affordable.¹⁸⁸ Through increasing access to electricity, reducing reliance on non-renewable energy resources, research on clean energy, technology transfer, and foreign direct investment, the targets under SDG 7 regarding innovation in the field of energy research may become achievable.¹⁸⁹ The use of wind, solar, and thermal energy sources are on the rise, albeit still at a lower level of popularity than traditional fossil fuels.¹⁹⁰ Costa Rica is currently on track for 100% of its power coming from national resources due to government investment in hydro, wind and geothermal resources; Kenya has become the first country in Africa to use geothermal power and currently has the highest number of solar power systems in the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ UN ECE, *UNECE joins the international Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road*, 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ World Bank, *Toward a Sustainable Energy Future for All*, 2013, p. 1.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ UNDP, *Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ World Bank, *Toward a Sustainable Energy Future for All*, 2013, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ UN DESA, *Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls*, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ UNDP, *Gender and Climate Change: Thematic Issues and Briefings and Training Modules*, 2017.

¹⁸⁸ UNDP, *Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2017 p. 19;
UN DESA, *Progress of Goal 7 in 2017*, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ UNDP, *Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*, 2018.

world installed per capita; and Afghanistan has been partnering with German development agencies to install solar power across the northern provinces and build small-scale hydro plants.¹⁹¹

Civil society organizations and interagency partnerships such as the Secretary General’s Sustainable Energy for All (SEforAll) initiative also play a pivotal role in supporting the move towards accessible, affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy.¹⁹² SEforAll is a global initiative that works to support the core objectives of the SDG 7.¹⁹³ These objectives included the ability to ensure global accessibility to present-day energy services, multiplying the share of renewable energy in the global energy assortment, and expanding the world-wide rate of improvement in energy efficiency.¹⁹⁴ SEforAll works with world leaders and their respective governments, the private sector, and civil society leaders.¹⁹⁵ To date, more than 100 countries have showed their support by engaging with the organization through donations, building national strategies, and promoting future investment plans to deliver SEforAll’s main objectives.¹⁹⁶ Since its inception in 1998, the UN Foundation has also made efforts to assist with both the Millennium Development Goals and SDGs, working along-side the office of the UN- Secretary General, the UNFCCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and SEforAll.¹⁹⁷ Recently, SEforAll supported Tokelau, a small Polynesian territory in the central Pacific, in developing a national policy and strategy to increase energy efficiency through focusing on the renewable sector and partnering with New Zealand-based technology companies, which resulted in their surpassing the rest of the world in replacing fossil fuels.¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

Though incredible technological and diplomatic progress has been made towards ensuring affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy for all, there is still significant work that needs to be done to ensure global access to renewable and sustainable energy.¹⁹⁹ There are still more than 1.2 billion people in the world without proper access to energy and renewable resources currently, and lack of access to energy can exacerbate poverty, marginalization, pollution, and undereducation.²⁰⁰ With the need to ensure equitable access to affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy remaining, the General Assembly Second committee must remain focused in developing feasible solutions to the issue.²⁰¹

Further Research

In considering how to improve access to sustainable and affordable energy, delegates should consider the following question: How can the General Assembly Second Committee further support existing UN initiatives for sustainable energy? In what ways can existing practices with sustainable energy be improved? How can energy be better attainable for vulnerable populations? How can the UN foster better partnerships with private organizations to further technology and innovation in the development of sustainable energy? How can the international community better support the development of accessible energy sources in low-income communities?

¹⁹¹ Build Abroad, *The Use of Alternative Energy in Developing Countries is Growing*, 2018.

¹⁹² Sustainable Energy for All, *About us*, 2011; UN Foundation, *What we do: Energy & Climate*, 2013.

¹⁹³ Sustainable Energy for All, *About us*, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ UN Foundation, *What we do: Energy & Climate*, 2013.

¹⁹⁸ Wilson, *Pacific Island Sets Renewable Energy Record*, 2012.

¹⁹⁹ UN DESA, *Affordable and Clean Energy: Why it Matters*, 2018.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.



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Sustainable Energy for All. (2018). *The Organization* [Website]. Retrieved 6 March 2018 from: <https://www.seforall.org/our-mission>

This website introduces the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, now run by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. This independent organization aims to create partnerships between local, national, and regional agencies, and corporations. The ultimate goal of SEforAll is to promote access to clean and reliable energy, as well as encourage world leaders to come together to improve sustainability of the world, and it presents an excellent model of how innovative approaches can achieve this goal. This source will help guide delegates' research as it demonstrates some of the key work being done outside of the UN to achieve energy sustainability, and how the UN General Assembly Second could positively benefit from fostering inter-organization partnerships.

United Nations Foundation. (2013). *What we do: Energy & Climate* [Website]. Retrieved 7 March 2018 from: <http://www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/energy-and-climate/>

This source explains the importance of energy and the direct correlation it has in regard to climate change. This is also a useful resource to understand what actions the UN has taken to ensure clean, reliable, sustainable energy, and also includes key statistical data in relation to SDG 7. This website discusses the impact of energy and climate other sectors as well, such as women and children, global health, and other sectors, which will be useful for contextualizing delegates' further research.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2017). *Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all* [Website]. Retrieved 7 March 2018 from: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy>

This website provides an important introduction to Sustainable Development Goal 7, as well as relevant facts and figures that relate to sustainable energy. This website further discusses the targets that the United Nations plans to achieve within SDG 7, including universal access, and increased sustainability expanding infrastructure by 2030. This resources also provides additional research on the topic, including initiatives that are currently being implemented and a live news feed, which will allow delegates to gain a full understanding of what work is currently being done to reach the Sustainable Development Goal targets.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2017). *Progress of Goal 7 in 2017* [Website]. Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg7>

As SDG 7 is a pivotal to the topic at hand, this source provides delegates with the current progress on what goals have been reached and what the targets and indicators apply to this SDG. Some of these targets include proportion of population with access to electricity, investments in energy efficiency, and renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption. This source can showcase progress from year to year, as it currently shows the progress made from both 2016 and 2017, which will allow for delegates to see what has worked in the past and what can be improved in regard to sustainable energy and the UN's approach on this topic.

United Nations General Assembly, Seventy-Second session. (2017). *Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy for all (A/RES/72/224)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the Second Committee. Retrieved 02 July 2018 from: <http://undocs.org/a/res/72/224>

This resolution is a summary of some of the most recent and topical work that the General Assembly has done in regard to clean and sustainable energy for all. This source introduces other key documents that support the current work being done on the topic of sustainable energy, such as the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, the World Summit, and "the future we want" document that resulted from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and their impact on current policies. Delegates will find this a vital resource for guiding their foundational knowledge of the topic, particular in regards to seeing which key recommendations the UN General Assembly is currently championing.



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