



Economic and Social Council Committee Background Guide 2022

Written by Chase Mitchell and Rio Shimamoto





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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022 National Model United Nations Japan Conference (NMUN • Japan)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Economic and Social Council Plenary (ECOSOC). Chase Mitchell is the Director and Rio Shimamoto is the Assistant Director. A long-time NMUN volunteer, Chase works as a finance manager for an international development company based in Washington, DC. Rio is a fourth-year student at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies and is currently pursuing her major in International Relations.

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

1. Addressing Food Security in a Globalized World
2. Promoting Sustainable Economic Participation of Youth

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 November 2022 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN • Japan Position Papers](#) page.

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

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 Marleen Schreier at dsg.japan@nmun.org.

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

Sincerely,

Chase Mitchell, Director
Rio Shimamoto, Assistant Director

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Committee Overview

Introduction

As per the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations (UN).¹ It serves as the primary body for policy dialogue on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health-related topics, advises and coordinates the activities its subsidiary bodies on these topics, and leads discussions on the implementation of the international development framework.² As such, ECOSOC is at the center of UN efforts to achieve the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) and key to the follow-up of several UN conferences and summits.³

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The main function of ECOSOC is to coordinate the activities of its subsidiary bodies and other UN specialized agencies working on sustainable development.⁴ Article 62 (1) of the *Charter of the United Nations* also allows ECOSOC to "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.⁵ ECOSOC may further call for or convene international conferences and hold special meetings on global development emergencies and humanitarian crises.⁶ A prominent example of this is the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which is held annually under the auspices of ECOSOC (apart from every fourth year, when it is held under the auspices of the General Assembly).⁷

Broadly speaking, the following non-exhaustive list summarizes ECOSOC's mandate:

- **ECOSOC will generally:** provide policy recommendations on matters related to sustainable development; coordinate efforts by its subsidiary bodies and UN specialized agencies; follow-up and review progress towards these activities; create commissions and convene international conferences.⁸
- **ECOSOC will not generally:** design and implement projects or programming on sustainable development; direct UN specialized agencies to develop or implement specific projects or programs; decide on budgetary matters of UN entities.⁹

Governance, Structure, and Membership

ECOSOC is comprised of 54 Member States, of which 18 are elected each year by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.¹⁰ ECOSOC proceedings are overseen by a President and four Vice-Presidents, which together comprise the Bureau.¹¹ The Bureau sets ECOSOC's agenda, devises action plans, and collaborates with the Secretariat on administrative duties.¹²

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *About us*. n.d.; *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 7.

² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *About us*. n.d.; *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 62.

³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *About us*. n.d.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. para. 47.

⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *About us*. n.d.

⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 62.

⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 62; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emerging Issues and Emergency Situations*. n.d.

⁷ United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *Structure*. 2022.

⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2021. p. 3.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *About us*. 2022; United Nations Development Programme. *Executive Board*. 2022; United Nations, General Assembly. *Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)*. n.d.

¹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (A/520/Rev.19)*. 2021. p. 39.

¹¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*. 1992.

¹² Ibid.

ECOSOC oversees the work of five regional commissions, eight functional commissions, 12 specialized agencies, six funds and programs, and several other related UN bodies.¹³ The functional commissions focus on specific issues and the regional commissions are geographically focused.¹⁴ Other subsidiary bodies include standing, ad hoc, expert, and other related bodies.¹⁵ Each subsidiary body adopts specific methods of work to align with its mandate, and methods are updated regularly.¹⁶ ECOSOC also allows for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to consult on the work of the UN.¹⁷ More than 6,000 NGOs have been granted ECOSOC consultative status, enabling them to attend and participate in various UN meetings, conferences, and special sessions and participate in international discussions.¹⁸

The ECOSOC meeting cycle lasts one year from July to July and is divided into four groups.¹⁹ The first group consists of the Partnership Forum and the Coordination Segment, which are held in February.²⁰ While the Partnership Forum aims to bring together a wide array of stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to academia and local governments to discuss and exchange ideas to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Coordination Segment is set up to coordinate the work of ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies and UN specialized agencies through general policy recommendations.²¹ The second group of meetings includes various fora established by ECOSOC, including the Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up and the Youth Forum among others, which take place between April and May of each year.²² The Development Cooperation Forum, which is also part of the second group, takes place every two years.²³ The third group comprises of the Operational Activities for Development Segment, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, and the Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development.²⁴ The fourth group focuses on the review of the implementation and progress towards the 2030 Agenda, comprising of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC, both of which take place in July at the end of a meeting cycle.²⁵ The ECOSOC meeting cycle is further complemented by the Management Segment in June, which focuses on procedural questions and considers the reports and recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and UN specialized agencies.²⁶

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Coordination Segment*. n.d. Retrieved 4 August 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/en/content/ecosoc-coordination>

This website contains information on the ECOSOC Coordination Segment. The General Assembly established the ECOSOC Coordination Segment per its resolution 75/290 A on the "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council" in 2021 to reinforce the coordinating role of ECOSOC within the UN system. The Coordination Segment website provides background information, video recordings, and a program overview. Thus, delegates will

¹³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Coordination Segment*. n.d.

¹⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies*. n.d.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/75/290 A)*. 2021. p. 9.

¹⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*. 2022.

¹⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2021. p. 23.

¹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/75/290 A)*. 2021. pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 4-5.

²¹ Ibid. p. 5.

²² Ibid. p. 5.

²³ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁶ United Nations, 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. 6.

find this website useful to help them understand how ECOSOC takes up its coordination role in practice.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies*. n.d. Retrieved 17 August 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/ecosoc-subsidiary-bodies>

This website presents a list of all ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, including its regional commissions, functional commissions, and expert bodies, standing committees and ad hoc bodies. It also presents a timeline of sessions of ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies and includes links to the respective sessions and bodies. For delegates, this website is the ideal starting point to explore the wider ECOSOC system and research the various subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC. Additionally, delegates will be able to use this website to inform themselves about the ongoing review process of the subsidiary bodies.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2021. Retrieved 25 August 2022 from: https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2022doc/ecosoc-brochure-12_2021.pdf

This brochure provides a snapshot overview of ECOSOC, its mandate, and modalities as well as actions in 2022. It compiles the most relevant and recent information on ECOSOC into one publication and presents that information in a succinct and visually appealing manner. Delegates might find this brochure useful as it provides a comprehensive, yet succinct introduction to how ECOSOC functions.

United Nations, General Assembly. *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/75/290 A)*. 2021. Retrieved 4 August 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/290%20A>

This General Assembly resolution is the latest of a series of resolutions aimed at strengthening the role of ECOSOC within the UN system. It introduced reforms to the governance structure of ECOSOC that divided the ECOSOC meeting cycle into four groups in addition to the Management Segment. It further replaced the Integration Segment with the Coordination Segment. While the reform process of ECOSOC is constantly evolving, this resolution will help delegates understand the rationale behind the current governance structure of ECOSOC.

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United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2021. Retrieved 25 August 2022 from: https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2022doc/ecosoc-brochure-12_2021.pdf

United Nations, General Assembly. *Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)*. n.d. Retrieved 17 August 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fifth/index.shtml>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Enlargement of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/2847(XXVI))*. 1971. Retrieved 17 August 2022 from: [http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2847\(XXVI\)](http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2847(XXVI))

United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. Retrieved 4 August 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/1>

United Nations, 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. Retrieved 18 August 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/305>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/75/290 A)*. 2021. Retrieved 4 August 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/290%20A>

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United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *Structure*. 2022. Retrieved 25 August 2022 from: <https://hlpf.un.org/structure>

1. Addressing Food Security in a Globalized World

“Food is national security. Food is economy. It is employment, energy, history. Food is everything. If we approached many of today’s issues understanding this importance, we’d be making much better decisions.”²⁷

Introduction

The extent to which food security is intertwined with globalized systems has steadily increased as the international community has become more connected.²⁸ In the modern era, no country is food independent – every state relies on trade to meet its food needs.²⁹ Globalization has led to lower food prices as regions have specialized in the production of certain foods and also allows for greater food availability, especially of what are normally seasonal agricultural products.³⁰ While these benefits are significant, there are also new risks as international events can significantly disrupt food systems.³¹

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant global supply chain issues, limiting food supply in numerous countries and increasing global food prices.³² In parts of Europe, many crops went unharvested as international migrant workers were inhibited by new restrictions or unwilling to travel and risk infections.³³ Food processing also became difficult due to lockdowns and an inability to adapt working conditions to COVID-19-related restrictions.³⁴ In Canada, for example, poultry output was reduced by over an eighth.³⁵ Food transportation and logistics were affected for nearly all food types as border controls and air freight restrictions made transporting food across borders more difficult and expensive, resulting in both a reduction in food exports and supply and a price increase.³⁶

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has also increased food prices, with some countries having increases of over 15%.³⁷ Trade was significantly disrupted as many countries imposed sanctions on Russia, some of which banned the import of food and fertilizer.³⁸ Russia itself partially banned its own wheat exports and blockaded Ukrainian ports, inhibiting Ukraine to export wheat and numerous other food products.³⁹ Farm equipment and fields have been destroyed by shelling and combat, food products have been stolen, and at points nearly a third of Ukraine’s agricultural land was either occupied or unsafe.⁴⁰ In some Ukrainian regions, wheat production is down over 90%.⁴¹ Prior to the conflict, Ukraine and Russia produced a combined 30% of the global supply of wheat and barley, with around 400 million people directly relying on Ukrainian exports to be food secure.⁴²

Food security exists when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” and

²⁷ Andrés. National Geographic. *Why Food is Everything*. 2015.

²⁸ Benton. Royal Institute of International Affairs. *Food Security, Trade and its Impacts*. 2017.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Husain. United States Institute of Peace. *The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?* 2022.

³³ Szegedi. Deloitte. *COVID-19 has broken the global food supply chain. So now what?* 2022.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Husain. United States Institute of Peace. *The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?* 2022.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ United States Embassy in Luxembourg. *Putin’s Destruction of Ukrainian Farms*. 2022.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Husain. United States Institute of Peace. *The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?* 2022; United Nations, Security Council. *Lack of Grain Exports Driving Global Hunger to Famine Levels, as War in Ukraine Continues, Speakers Warn Security Council*. 2022.

relies upon four pillars: food availability, food access, food utilization, and stability.⁴³ The recent global crises have increased food *insecurity* significantly with the global prevalence of undernourishment increasing from 8.0% to 9.8% between 2019 and 2021.⁴⁴ The war in Ukraine is expected to exacerbate the problem.⁴⁵ The World Food Programme has projected a 17% increase of acute, in the countries where it operates.⁴⁶ This means an increase from 276 to 323 million people whose lives or livelihoods are in immediate danger as a result of hunger.⁴⁷

The crises are particularly damaging to less developed countries and their agricultural producers, most of which are small-scale (or smallholder) farmers that are not well resourced, produce low volumes of food, and whose own food security is often threatened due to external or global events.⁴⁸ On top of that, smallholder farmers are also already experiencing diminished output and challenges as a result of climate change, which is leading to difficulties in growing crops where they had previously thrived.⁴⁹ As global efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change have proven insufficient, models predict that increasing temperatures, changing rain patterns, and increasingly common extreme weather events will further threaten food security well into the future.⁵⁰ The United Nations (UN) continually discusses how to address the issue of food security and has done so since its inception.⁵¹

International and Regional Framework

In 1943, two years before its formal establishment as an international organization, the UN convened the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture, which set the foundation for the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1945.⁵² Three years later, the concept of an individual's right to be food secure was established in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), which established that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food."⁵³ The 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) augmented the UDHR by recognizing the "fundamental right to be free from hunger" and to that end calls for States parties to the Covenant to "improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources" and "ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need."⁵⁴

These human rights agreements were built upon by several frameworks specific to food security.⁵⁵ In 1974, the General Assembly convened the World Food Conference and adopted the *Universal*

⁴³ Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. *Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture*. 2011; Food Security Cluster. *Food Security in Emergencies*. n.d.

⁴⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*. 2022.

⁴⁵ Husain. United States Institute of Peace. *The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?* 2022.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. *Smallholder Farmers*. 2022; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Response to the Ukraine Crisis: Social Protection for Food Security and Nutrition*. 2022.

⁴⁹ Mbow et al. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*. 2019.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Issue, UN Milestones: Food and Nutrition*. 2022.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III))*. 1948.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. 1966.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Issue, UN Milestones: Food and Nutrition*. 2022.

Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, reaffirming the right to be free from hunger and malnutrition and establishing several responsibilities for Member States, including the “fundamental responsibility of Governments to work together for higher food production and a more equitable and efficient distribution of food between countries and within countries.”⁵⁶ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the UN held several conferences on food security and agriculture, culminating in the 1996 World Food Summit, which produced the *Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action*.⁵⁷ The *Rome Declaration and Plan of Action* pledges to end hunger and sets the goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015.⁵⁸ Its seven commitments sought to guide national and international action to improve global food security.⁵⁹ The *Rome Declaration* also informed the process of establishing internationally agreed development goals, which led to the 2015 target being incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁶⁰ In 2009, a follow-up conference was held, producing the 2009 *Rome Declaration on World Food Security* and a new set of principles that focus on international collaboration.⁶¹ When the 2015 deadline was reached, the international community had missed the target, having reduced the number of undernourished people in developing countries from 23.3% to 12.9%.⁶² Following the MDGs, the international community adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and included Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger, which has specific targets to end all hunger and malnutrition and double agricultural productivity by 2030.⁶³ At the same time the *Paris Agreement* (2015) was adopted, a legally binding framework under the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, to limit global emissions highlighting that mitigating and adapting to climate change is necessary to safeguard food security and end hunger.⁶⁴

To advance progress on these goals and address local needs, some regional groups have developed their own frameworks.⁶⁵ In 2003, the African Union (AU) adopted the *Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa*, a landmark framework that, among other commitments, includes a commitment by all AU Member States to allocate at least 10% of national budgetary resources towards implementing “sound policies for agricultural and rural development.”⁶⁶ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has implemented a series of time-bound frameworks, the most recent being the *ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security 2021-2025*.⁶⁷ The ASEAN framework includes commitments from Member States and strategic guidance to ensure long-term food security and improve the situation of farmers, including by fully operationalizing a regional food security reserve and introducing climate smart agriculture in ASEAN Member States.⁶⁸

Role of the International System

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) regularly discusses food security and related issues, especially in the context of its Humanitarian Affairs Segment.⁶⁹ Its 2022 “Meeting on the Transition from

⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. 1966.

⁵⁷ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Issue, UN Milestones: Food and Nutrition*. 2022.

⁵⁸ World Food Summit. *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*. 1996.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ World Summit on Food Security. *Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security*. 2009.

⁶² Ritchie et al. Global Change Data Lab. *Now it is Possible to Take Stock – Did the World Achieve the Millennium Development Goals?* 2018.

⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁶⁴ Meadu et al. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. *Paris Climate Agreement Unlocks Opportunities for Food and Farming*. 2015.

⁶⁵ African Union. *Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa*. 2003.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region 2021-2025*. 2020.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Economic and Social Council Focuses on Recurrent Crises, Food Insecurity, Displacement, in Lead Up to Humanitarian Affairs Segment*. 2022.

Relief to Development” discussed how to address food insecurity and famine by mobilizing collective action in the most affected countries and regions.⁷⁰ ECOSOC also holds regular joint meetings with the General Assembly’s Second Committee (GA2) on food security and issues related to globalization.⁷¹ GA2 and ECOSOC have sought to combat food insecurity and mitigate the negative aspects of globalization by providing policy recommendations to Member States and high-level guidance to subsidiary bodies.⁷² The outcome of these joint events is often a summary report drafted by the President of ECOSOC and the Chairperson of GA2.⁷³ Their most recent joint meeting took place in October 2021 on the topic of “Building productive capacities in LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS as well as MICs for more resilient recovery and sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 era.”⁷⁴ The discussion included recommendations for Member States to scale up investment in agriculture and build infrastructure that is resilient to shocks, including pandemics and climate change.⁷⁵ In June, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2022/7 on “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda” and resolution 2022/10 on “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” both calling for urgent action to adapt national policies and programs and increase international efforts to ensure food security of those at risk of hunger and malnutrition.⁷⁶

Additionally, ECOSOC established several subsidiary bodies including the UN Forum on Forests and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD).⁷⁷ The Forum on Forests hosts an annual conference and regularly discusses the use of forests for food security and monitors and assesses progress on the *United Nations Strategic Plan on Forests*, providing recommendations based on submitted voluntary national reports.⁷⁸ CPD developed the *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action*, an overarching development policy document advancing human-centered development that includes measures to strengthen food, nutrition, and agricultural policies and programs.⁷⁹ ECOSOC also established five regional commissions, each of which discusses and provides

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ International Institute for Sustainable Development. *ECOSOC and Second Committee Hear Risks, Potential of Global Forces*. 2016; International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Special Joint Meeting of ECOSOC and the Economic and Financial Committee of the General Assembly on “Food Security and Nutrition: Scaling Up the Global Response”*. 2013.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Building productive capacities in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as well as Middle-Income Countries (MICs) for more resilient recovery and sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 era*. 2021.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda (E/RES/2022/7)*. 2022; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/RES/2022/10)*. 2022.

⁷⁷ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. *The ECOSOC Handbook*. 2021; Kanem. United Nations Population Fund. *54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development: Remarks by UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem at the Opening of the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, 19 April 2021*. 2021; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forum on Forests*. n.d.

⁷⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forum on Forests*. n.d.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *National reports*. n.d.

⁷⁹ Kanem. United Nations Population Fund. *54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development: Remarks by UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem at the Opening of the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, 19 April 2021*. 2021; United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014.

guidance on region-specific food security issues.⁸⁰ In 2021, the regional commissions jointly developed a policy brief in response to the damage to food systems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸¹

Specialized agencies are semi-autonomous organizations within the UN-system that work within a thematic area.⁸² The UN has also created numerous funds and programs that provide support to Member States on issues related to food security, including: the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Program, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP).⁸³ WFP, along with two specialized agencies, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), are considered the preeminent international bodies addressing issues of food security, agriculture, and nutrition and are collectively referred to as the "Rome-based agencies" (RBAs).⁸⁴ Each of the RBAs has a unique mandate, with: WFP focusing on food aid and logistics in emergency situations; IFAD mobilizing financial, informational, and other resources for rural agricultural development projects; and FAO providing technical expertise.⁸⁵ FAO publishes an annual report, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, which includes contributions from IFAD, UNICEF, and WFP.⁸⁶ The 2022 report directly addresses the worsening food insecurity problem in the context of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, climate change, and global supply chain issues.⁸⁷ It calls for stronger governance, increased investment including through public-private partnerships, and policies focused on sustainable production and the needs of consumers.⁸⁸

International financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group (WBG) and several regional development banks regularly fund agricultural development projects and in some instances can assist with lending during food crises.⁸⁹ In May 2022, the IFIs jointly released an action plan in response to the food shortages and price increases resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.⁹⁰ That same month, numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) released a joint statement on global food security and conflict-induced hunger.⁹¹ The statement was signed by forty organizations and recommended the international community take concrete steps to address the root causes of conflict-induced hunger, including: prioritizing inclusive diplomacy to mitigate conflict and keep trade flows open; increasing humanitarian aid and maintaining commitments towards official development assistance; and fully implementing Security Council resolutions 2417 (2018) and 2573 (2021), which urged all parties to armed conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and proper functioning of food systems and markets.⁹²

International Responses to Global Food Crises

As the IFIs and major NGOs address the current and looming food crises, they have considered the lessons learned from the 2007-08 food crisis, which saw food prices increasing significantly.⁹³ The IMF's Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva stated that "if we have learned one lesson from the 2007-08 food crisis, it is that the international community needs to take fast and well-coordinated actions to effectively

⁸⁰ United Nations, Regional Commissions New York Office. *UN Regional Commissions Launch Policy Brief on Transforming Food Systems*. 2021.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. *The ECOSOC Handbook*. 2021.

⁸³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *The United Nations System*. 2021.

⁸⁴ United Nations, World Food Programme. *Rome-Based Agencies*. 2022.

⁸⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Working Together to Fight Hunger and Poverty*. 2001.

⁸⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*. 2022.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ African Development Bank et al. *International Financial Institution Action Plan to Address Food Insecurity*. 2022.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Norwegian Refugee Council. *Joint NGO Statement on Global Food Security and Conflict-Induced Hunger*. 2022.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Reguly. *The Globe and Mail. How the Cupboards Went Bare*. 2008.

tackle a food crisis, by maintaining open trade, supporting vulnerable households, ensuring sufficient agricultural supply, and addressing financing pressures.”⁹⁴ Despite this call, ongoing food security concerns in 2022 have led many countries to pursue protectionist policies, banning certain food exports or otherwise attempting to secure local supplies.⁹⁵ This causes not only immediate effects, such as trading partners having lower food supplies, but is predicted to exacerbate rising food prices and inflation.⁹⁶ During the 2007-08 crisis, it was estimated that as much as three-quarters of the price increase of rice was due to export bans and other policy responses from major exporters.⁹⁷

The international response in 2008 included discussions and policy responses at all levels.⁹⁸ The UN estimated that \$25-40 billion USD in food aid was needed to mitigate the effects of the food crisis and donor nations generally agreed that additional aid was needed, with total commitments rising to \$12.3 billion USD at the High-Level Conference on Food Security held in June of 2008.⁹⁹ At the end of the year, only \$1 billion USD had been disbursed.¹⁰⁰ Today, the international community has already recognized the ongoing and worsening global food crisis resulting from COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine, with ministerial conferences on food security having been convened in May 2022 in New York and June 2022 in Berlin.¹⁰¹ At the first, the Group of 7 and WBG established the Global Alliance for Food Security, seeking to bring together countries and various programs to coordinate action, increase the supplies of food and fertilizer, remove barriers to trade, and provide financial support.¹⁰² At the June conference, participants committed to providing humanitarian assistance where needed, especially by increasing contributions to WFP, refraining from limiting food trade, and building up resilient food systems and addressing the underlying risk factors that lead to food insecurity.¹⁰³

The commitments and architecture developed at the 2022 ministerial conferences are similar to some that were made during and after the 2007-08 crisis.¹⁰⁴ During that time, the Group of Eight committed to doubling aid for staple food in Africa, improving food system infrastructure, addressing national agricultural and biofuel policies that negatively affect global food security, in addition to increasing immediate food aid for emergency assistance.¹⁰⁵ Despite these formal commitments, in 2009, assessments found that the international response to the crisis was lacking and that numerous investments were needed to ensure long-term food security.¹⁰⁶ With protectionism on the rise, a confluence of factors increasing food prices, and a lack of rapidly mobilizing the international response, international experts are already expecting the situation to significantly worsen, as it did in 2008, with some even indicating that an escalation to a global trade war based on food import and export restrictions is possible.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁴ Georgieva. International Monetary Fund. *Statement by IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on the Publication of the Joint International Financial Institutions Plan to Address Food Insecurity*. 2022.

⁹⁵ Wei. Bloomberg. *Rising Global Food Protectionism Risks Worsening Inflation*. 2022.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ United States Department of State. *Food Prices Crisis of 2007-2008: Lessons Learned*. 2011.

⁹⁸ Mittal. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies*. 2009.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ United States Department of State. *Global Food Security Ministerial*. 2022; Chairs of the Ministerial Conference, *Uniting For Global Food Security. Ministerial Conference “Uniting For Global Food Security” – Conclusions by the Chairs*. 2022.

¹⁰² World Bank Group. *Joint Statement: G7 Presidency, World Bank Group Establish Global Alliance for Food Security to Catalyze Response to Food Crisis*. 2022.

¹⁰³ United States Department of State. *Global Food Security Ministerial*. 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Mittal. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies*. 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ DiNapoli et al. Reuters. *Food crisis fuels fears of protectionism compounding shortages*. 2022.

Efforts to Build Resilient Food Systems

Numerous international actors have made recommendations aimed at building more resilient systems that are better equipped to respond to crises, including that Member States should: increase the level of emergency assistance during crises; bolster national safety nets for the most vulnerable; review biofuels policies; build national/regional food reserves; increase public funding for agriculture; and increase support for smallholder farmers.¹⁰⁸ Smallholder farmers in particular have been consistently recognized in food security and other frameworks as a particularly vulnerable part of the global food system.¹⁰⁹

Around half the world's labor force works in agriculture and around 60% of those workers are self-employed as small-scale farmers.¹¹⁰ International events can disrupt their access to markets or fluctuate the value of the commodity they produce, not only threatening their food security but also inhibiting them to contribute to the global food supply.¹¹¹ Independent farmers are often affected by large agribusiness, who, while also subject to market disruption, often control supply chains and agricultural input costs.¹¹² Just three companies control 50% of the global seed market and the top 10 fertilizer producers control 55% of the global market.¹¹³ These realities have led many CSOs to call for significant changes in the way that intellectual property on seeds is handled, with some even criticizing the World Intellectual Property Organization for its role in promoting patents on seeds.¹¹⁴ Numerous national efforts have been made to address the issue of fertilizers, with Malawi's Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund (SFFRFM) being notable among them.¹¹⁵

Originally funded through an IFAD project from 1983-1988, SFFRFM finances and imports all fertilizer required for use by Malawian smallholder farmers, maintains a stockpile, and, while still subject to market pressures, attempts to stabilize fertilizer prices over time so that smallholder farmers have predictable agricultural input costs.¹¹⁶ The SFFRFM and other efforts have been augmented by farmer input subsidy programs (FISPs), nationally implemented initiatives that subsidize smallholder farmers as part of Member States' efforts to meet the commitments made in the *Maputo Declaration*.¹¹⁷ Countries have created several types of FISPs, with some offering flat-rate price subsidies, some rationing supplies, and others using vouchers.¹¹⁸ While intended to assist small-scale farmers, FISP initiatives are often expensive, with funding exceeding other agricultural investments.¹¹⁹ In some cases, they have also been marred by corruption, co-option by large agribusiness, or have otherwise been criticized for not addressing long-term difficulties.¹²⁰

Climate-Smart Agriculture

Among the most prominent and worsening agricultural concerns are the effects of global climate change.¹²¹ Non-green agriculture has exacerbated the problem, with between 19% and 29% of total greenhouse gas emissions being due to agriculture and one third of food produced globally being lost or

¹⁰⁸ Mittal. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies*. 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. *Smallholder Farmers*. 2022.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ngenoh et al. Agricultural Sciences. *Coping with Shocks and Determinants Among Indigenous Vegetable Smallholder Farmers in Kenya*. 2018.

¹¹² Gura et al. *Agropoly: A Handful of Corporations Control World Food Production*. 2013.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ African Centre for Biodiversity et al. *Citizens of the World Oppose Intellectual Property Over Seeds, Reclaim and Restore Local Food Systems and Agricultural Biodiversity*. 2020.

¹¹⁵ Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi. *The Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi*. 2020.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Andrews. Development. *The Farmer-Input Subsidy Program (FISP) Does not Service the Poor*. 2021.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ World Bank Group. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.

wasted.¹²² As a result, the concept of “climate-smart agriculture” (CSA), “an integrated approach to managing landscapes—cropland, livestock, forests and fisheries—that addresses the interlinked challenges of food security and accelerating climate change,” has been promoted by some international organizations.¹²³ CSA policies seek to increase productivity, enhance resilience, and reduce emissions by developing context-specific interventions.¹²⁴ At a high level, this includes support to improve soil management and pest/disease management; improving food reserves and reducing waste; and ensuring equitable access to input and product markets for producers.¹²⁵ The specific context determines the intervention needed; for example, a smallholder farmer in a rural location may need a physical road to get access to the market to sell the food they produce while in another context additional refrigeration may be needed to mitigate waste.¹²⁶

Among the numerous examples of CSA are the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) program and Vietnam’s efforts to intensify catfish farming.¹²⁷ DTMA brought together farmers, research institutions, seed producers, NGOs, and other stakeholders to develop drought tolerant maize for use on the African continent.¹²⁸ Over nine years, the project made 60 drought resistant varieties available, worked with government actors to implement policies that increased access to seeds, and provided support to increase grain production by a value of \$160-200 million USD.¹²⁹ In Vietnam, focus was placed on sustainable intensification, which refers to raising yields of an agriproduct while limiting inputs and conserving resources.¹³⁰ Vietnam had a fast growing catfish aquaculture industry that began from the residents’ backyard ponds.¹³¹ The government and Vietnamese people invested in the industry and CSOs helped to develop local guidelines that led to some major producers being certified by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, an international organization that has robust environmental standards for aquaculture.¹³²

The IFIs have already identified CSA as a target for development funding.¹³³ WBG began to develop CSA profiles for various countries and regions in 2014 and recognizes that CSA requires not only an understanding of the local agricultural and environmental context, but also the social and political realities that lead to government policymaking.¹³⁴ This has led to the creation of Climate Smart Agriculture Investment Plans (CSAIPs), which are developed in cooperation with various international actors and experts and suggest policies and investments that Member States can implement to spur CSA at the local level.¹³⁵

Conclusion

The international community has sought to ensure global food security since the creation of the UN, incorporating the right to food in fundamental human rights documents and establishing numerous frameworks.¹³⁶ Despite these efforts, millions face hunger and the realities of interconnected economies

¹²² World Bank Group. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.

¹²³ World Bank Group. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.

¹²⁴ CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. *What is Climate-Smart Agriculture?* n.d.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center. *Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa*. 2015.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. *Farming Catfish Intensively in Vietnam*. n.d.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² World Wide Fund For Nature. *In Vietnam, Helping Catfish Farming Become More Sustainable*. 2012.

¹³³ World Bank Group. *Climate Smart Agriculture Investment Plans: Bringing CSA to Life*. 2022.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Food Security and Nutrition – A Global Issue, UN Milestones: Food and Nutrition*. 2022.

have repeatedly led to food crises.¹³⁷ Attaining food security in this context is multifaceted – Member States have sought to increase resilience through numerous methods, adapting agricultural and economic policy, providing training, and building up institutions.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, global food systems continue to suffer from a lack of resilience, and economic and climate realities have not only hampered progress, but caused food insecurity to increase in recent years.¹³⁹ ECOSOC has already begun to foster international dialogue on how to address the current reality of food insecurity and develop immediate and long-term solutions.¹⁴⁰

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address food security, they should consider: What is the food security situation in the country they are representing? Does their country belong to any regional groups that have food security initiatives? What are the root causes of food insecurity? How can the negative aspects of globalization be mitigated to not be detrimental to food security? How can the international community ensure that commitments to address food security and frameworks agreed to are fully implemented?

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CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. *What is Climate-Smart Agriculture?* n.d. Retrieved 19 July 2022 from: <https://csa.guide/csa/what-is-climate-smart-agriculture>
CGIAR introduces the main concepts of climate-smart agriculture and how it ties into food productivity, resilience, and the SDGs. The site describes the pillars of CSA and gives examples of the intersection of improving short-term food availability, mitigation potential, and adaptive capacity. Delegates can gain a deeper understanding of CSA, see case studies, and visit other parts of the CSA Guide site to get a better understanding of the subject and how it may be applied to national and international policy frameworks.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*. 2022. Retrieved 19 July 2022 from: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/cc0639en.pdf>
The 2022 report is the latest of the Food Security and Nutrition in the World series. Not only does this in-depth report cover the current state of food security with indicators, it assesses the effects of current food and agricultural policy and potential avenues for policy improvement. The key messages, policy recommendations, and conclusions can help inform delegates discussions.

Mittal. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies*. 2009. Retrieved 19 July 2022 from: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsmdpg2420093_en.pdf
Anuradha Mittal references a multitude of external research and international reports in this report for the G-24. The report assesses the realities of the 2007-08 food price crisis, the international efforts to combat food insecurity during it, and the lessons learned as a result. The international responses and conclusion sections are likely to be the most informative. They describe in detail what various actors committed to, did and didn't do, and what the international community may need to consider mitigating such crises in the future.

¹³⁷ Husain. United States Institute of Peace. *The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?* 2022.

¹³⁸ CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. *What is Climate-Smart Agriculture?* n.d.

¹³⁹ World Bank Group. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Economic and Social Council Focuses on Recurrent Crises, Food Insecurity, Displacement, in Lead Up to Humanitarian Affairs Segment*. 2022.

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The 2030 Agenda established the SDGs and is the current principal overarching development framework. Food and food security is connected to many of the SDGs, but SDG 2 seeks to end hunger. Delegates benefit from reading the targets and indicators related to SDG 2, assessing what national and international policy frameworks can assist in their achievement, and how to mitigate international realities that may make it difficult.

World Food Summit. *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*. 1996. Retrieved 19 July 2022 from: <https://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

The Rome Declaration remains among the most significant documents with regards to food security. While adopted in 1996, many of its statements and goals are still applicable today and it is still cited in other reports and resolutions. In addition to understanding this declaration and its historical context, delegates should consider reading the major follow-up, the 2009 Rome Declaration on World Food Security, which established a new set of principles to guide modern efforts on food security.

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World Bank Group. *Climate Smart Agriculture Investment Plans: Bringing CSA to Life*. 2022. Retrieved 27 July 2022 from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/publication/climate-smart-agriculture-investment-plans-bringing-climate-smart-agriculture-to-life>

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World Bank Group. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021. Retrieved 19 July 2022 from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climate-smart-agriculture>

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2. Promoting Sustainable Economic Participation of Youth

“We must develop strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work that will allow them to become independent and responsible global citizens.”¹⁴¹

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recognizes youth as “persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (...) without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.”¹⁴² Globally there are over 1.22 billion youth, equivalent to 15.6% of the population.¹⁴³ That number is expected to further increase through 2065 and the economic participation of youth is likely to shape society at local, national, and international levels.¹⁴⁴ Youth have the potential to positively impact the economy as they can more easily and quickly adapt to new technologies, driving technological advancement in the world of work.¹⁴⁵ Despite their positive effects, 67.6 million youth, or 13.6% of the global youth labor force, were unemployed in 2019.¹⁴⁶ Youth unemployment is three times more common than in adults as they have fewer work experiences and often struggle to find quality jobs.¹⁴⁷ In Northern African and Arab States, youth unemployment rates are even higher, estimated at 2.2 and 1.7 times the global average, as youth face structural obstacles to economic participation and decent work, including cultural norms that impede young women from working and the effects of political uncertainty.¹⁴⁸

The International Labour Organization (ILO) describes decent work as having equal opportunities for productive work among women and men that: generates a fair income; ensures a safe working environment and social protection; and allows for personal growth, inclusion, and participation in decision-making processes.¹⁴⁹ While there is no universal definition of economic participation, it generally “refers to an individual’s engagement in work and/or education and their access to economic resources that results from such participation.”¹⁵⁰ Lack of decent work and economic participation has serious long-term consequences on society in terms of social and economic development.¹⁵¹ When youth experience unemployment at the early stages of their lifetime, they will have fewer employment opportunities and be more likely to stay unemployed.¹⁵² Unemployed youth also have higher exposure to crime, health issues, violence, and drug abuse and can be more susceptible to the influence of political extremism.¹⁵³ Even when working, three out of four young people globally are engaged in the informal sector, which refers to

¹⁴¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Secretary-General’s message on International Youth Day*. 2003.

¹⁴² United Nations, General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/36/215)*. 1981. p. 15.

¹⁴³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2022*. 2022.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018. pp. 35, 55.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda*. 2020. pp. 14, 91.

¹⁴⁶ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*. 2020. p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018. p. 39; International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*. 2020. pp. 13, 35, 49.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 39; Ibid. p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ International Labour Organization. *Decent work*. n.d.

¹⁵⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *The health and welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 2015*. 2015. p. 24.

¹⁵¹ International Labour Organization. *Youth Employment*. n.d.

¹⁵² International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth: special issue on the impact of the global economic crisis on youth*. 2010. p. 6.

¹⁵³ United Nations, Commission for Social Development. *Youth Employment: Impact, Challenges and Opportunities for Social Development Conference room paper*. 2007. p. 2; International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth: special issue on the impact of the global economic crisis on youth*. 2010. p. 6; International Labour Organization. *Youth Employment*. n.d.

“economic activities taking place outside of corporate public and private sectors.”¹⁵⁴ Informal workers include short term and seasonal workers as well as those working without a formal contract, social benefits, and protection.¹⁵⁵ While 86% of African workers, 68% of workers in Asia and the Pacific, and 69% of workers in the Arab States are informal workers, the percentage is higher for youth, with 94.9%, 86.3%, and 85.1% of them estimated to work informally, respectively.¹⁵⁶

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated these realities and disproportionately impacted youth in terms of education and training opportunities, new job openings, job losses, and a decrease in income.¹⁵⁷ The employment loss was 5% higher for youth as compared to adults and young women were particularly impacted due to their disproportionate representation in the service and entertainment sectors and the closure of education facilities that decreased access to out-of-home childcare.¹⁵⁸ The COVID-19 crisis has also forced many young people to quit or lose access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which contributed to a 2% increase in the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training as compared to the pre-COVID-19 level of 267 million.¹⁵⁹ Lack of access to education and skills development opportunities exacerbates the skills gap, where the skills in demand by employers do not match the skills young people possess, thus hindering the economic participation of youth.¹⁶⁰ TVET helps youth acquire skills needed to make a successful transition from school to work and to access decent work, which is directly linked to achieving sustainable development.¹⁶¹ The UN has recognized the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on youth and also noted the potential for youth to lead post-COVID-19 rebuilding.¹⁶² ECOSOC has included youth in discussions on COVID-19 recovery and promotes their engagement in advancing sustainable development and addressing youth issues, including the provision of decent work opportunities.¹⁶³

International and Regional Framework

The UN has adopted several landmark documents that guarantee everyone the right to economic participation, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966), and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989).¹⁶⁴ Article 23 of UDHR established the right to work for everyone and “the right to equal pay for equal work,” while Article 24 recognizes the right to reasonable working hours.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁴ Ciccone et al. United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *The Challenges of Youth and Informal Employment in selected Asia-Pacific Countries*. 2019. p. 5; Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *Transitions to the formal economy*. n.d.; International Labour Organization. *Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture (third edition)*. 2018. p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ International Labour Organization. *Key Indicators of the Labour Market, Ninth Edition*. 2016. p. 86.

¹⁵⁶ International Labour Organization. *Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture (third edition)*. 2018. pp. 19, 24-25.

¹⁵⁷ International Labour Organization. *An update on the youth labour market impact of the COVID-19 crisis*. 2021. p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 4; International Labour Organization. *Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis*. 2020. p. 2; International Labour Organization. *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fifth edition*. 2020. pp. 8-10.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. 2022. p. 43; International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*. 2020. p. 22.

¹⁶⁰ Moritz et al. World Economic Forum. *How to address the widening youth skills gap*. 2022.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021)*. 2016. p. 4; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018. p. 57.

¹⁶² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Young people key for COVID recovery and a sustainable future*. 2022.

¹⁶³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Youth Forum*. n.d.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

ICESCR enshrines the economic rights of all peoples in Article 3 and the protection of young people from exploitation in Article 10.¹⁶⁶ Expanding on the rights recognized by UDHR and ICESCR, CRC established the right of every child up to the age of 18 to have access to education, including vocational education, to prepare them for their future careers.¹⁶⁷

The *World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)*, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1995, provided a blueprint for the international community to promote young people's participation in society.¹⁶⁸ WPAY identified 15 priority areas including education and employment, recognizing the rights of youth to access vocational and professional training, and advocating for governments to strengthen measures to create employment opportunities for youth.¹⁶⁹ In 2007, a report of the UN Secretary-General proposed "goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy" in line with WPAY and specifically addressing globalization, poverty and hunger, education, and employment.¹⁷⁰ Two decades after the adoption of WPAY, a High-Level Event of the General Assembly in 2015 noted that youth unemployment and access to quality education were still a remaining challenge despite Member States' progress in developing or renewing their national youth policies and establishing strategies to promote skills development and entrepreneurship.¹⁷¹

With the aim of advancing progress toward sustainable development, the General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)* in 2015, which set out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for poverty eradication along with improving access to social services, protecting the planet, and reducing inequalities.¹⁷² In particular, SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) recognize the need for skills acquisition to achieve decent work for youth.¹⁷³ SDG target 4.4 calls for increased access to technical and vocational skills for youth, while SDG targets 8.5, 8.6, and 8.b aim for the provision of decent work opportunities, a decrease in the youth unemployment rate, and the establishment of a global strategy to this end, respectively.¹⁷⁴ The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs serve as guidance for Member States in initiating national youth employment strategies to combat unemployment among youth.¹⁷⁵

Building on the 2030 Agenda, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)* (2015) was adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.¹⁷⁶ AAAA set out action areas and measures to strengthen the mobilization of financial resources to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷⁷ Priority areas identified in AAAA include creating decent work for all and ensuring access to technology for youth, among others.¹⁷⁸ In this year's annual ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, ministers and representatives around the world addressed the remaining gaps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and progress on AAAA among countries and regions and expressed their commitment

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1)*. 2007.

¹⁷¹ United Nations, President of the General Assembly. *High-Level Event to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth*. 2015.

¹⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. 2022. p. 43.

¹⁷⁶ Third International Conference on Financing for Development. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development*. 2015.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

to further invest in education, digital skills training, and social protection for vulnerable populations, including youth.¹⁷⁹

In the *UN Youth Strategy* (2018), presented by the UN Secretary-General, the UN proclaimed its commitment to “work with and for young people” by engaging youth in discussions on issues that affect them and listening to their needs and challenges.¹⁸⁰ Bringing together different stakeholders, the UN strengthens Member States’ and partners’ efforts to promote “young people’s greater access to decent work and productive employment,” as identified as one of the priorities of the *UN Youth Strategy*.¹⁸¹ This year’s annual progress report on the implementation of the strategy highlighted the work of the UN system in knowledge exchange, both online and offline, and advocacy events and campaigns held at regional and global levels to raise awareness on youth issues.¹⁸²

Role of the International System

ECOSOC is one of the main UN bodies that connects youth directly with policymakers and the UN system.¹⁸³ ECOSOC holds an annual Youth Forum where young people participate in discussions with Member State representatives to share their views on youth issues and challenges.¹⁸⁴ The first-ever Youth Forum was convened in 2012 under the theme of “Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities,” in which discussions emphasized the importance of aligning training and education with the skills needed in the labor market as well as partnership between public and private sectors and youth to promote job creation.¹⁸⁵ Since the establishment of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Youth Forum has served as a platform for youth to consider actions that can be taken to achieve the SDGs and the challenges that remain.¹⁸⁶ A decade after the first Youth Forum, this year’s theme focused on the role of youth in recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and included a side event aimed at examining good practices among governments and other organizations on skills training for youth.¹⁸⁷

Bringing together governments, employers, and workers, ILO actively advocates for decent work for all, including youth.¹⁸⁸ The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth was launched by the Director-General of ILO in 2016 to unite various partners including 21 UN agencies, governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector to work towards advancing the 2030 Agenda, share knowledge, mobilize funds, and promote regional and national actions that foster decent work for youth.¹⁸⁹ Multiple short-term initiatives have been launched under the initiative, including Boosting Decent Employment for Africa’s Youth, a three-year research initiative completed in 2022, which sought to address various issues that have been holding Africa back from advancing youth employment.¹⁹⁰ The initiative led to the publication of synthesis papers addressing: the need for a proper funding for TVET; a set of policies to

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Follow-up and review of the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (E/FFDF/2022/L.1)*. 2022.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth203: Working with and for young people 0*. 2018.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth2030: Progress Report 2022*. 2022.

¹⁸³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Youth Forum*. n.d.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Youth Forum: Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities*. n.d.; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Summary of Discussions: 2012 ECOSOC Youth Forum*. 2012.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Youth Forum*. n.d.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Economic and Social Council Youth Forum “COVID-19 recovery: Youth taking action for a sustainable future” Side event at the 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum “Emerging from COVID-19: Innovative good practices in training and youth employment”*. 2022.

¹⁸⁸ International Labour Organization. *Mission and Impact of the ILO*. n.d.

¹⁸⁹ Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *What is Decent Jobs for Youth?* n.d.; International Labour Organization. *Scaling up decent jobs for youth*. 2022. p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *Decent Jobs for Youth Impact Report 2019-2021*. 2021. p. 77.

support the wellbeing and capacity building opportunities for young women; and effective interventions in fragile situations that benefit both youth and the local community.¹⁹¹

Several UN bodies support TVET initiatives for youth.¹⁹² The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) and specifically mandated that it promote TVET in Member States.¹⁹³ It conducts “capacity development programmes [and] knowledge sharing” through its global network of TVET institutions in 166 Member States.¹⁹⁴ The 2020 UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Leadership Programme focused on advancing the digital capacities of TVET leaders and staff across the globe in the face of the COVID-19 crisis by partnering with TVET institutions and universities in nine selected countries.¹⁹⁵ In addition, UNESCO-UNEVOC works to raise awareness on the importance of TVET through symposiums, events, and campaigns that gather different stakeholders in TVET on World Youth Skills Day, celebrated every year on 15 July.¹⁹⁶

At the regional level, the African Union (AU) puts an emphasis on youth development through policy formulation.¹⁹⁷ The *African Youth Charter* (2006) acknowledges youth as a key driver for Africa’s development and sets out States parties’ obligations to foster youth empowerment and development.¹⁹⁸ Following the designation of 2009 to 2018 as the Decade on Youth Development in Africa, AU adopted the *African Youth Decade 2009-2018 Plan of Action* in 2011 to guide the implementation of the *African Youth Charter*.¹⁹⁹ It put forward specific activities and timeframes to support Member States develop policies and programs for youth, notably in the areas of access to education and employment.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, the 1 Million By 2021 initiative was launched to invest in the development of African youth, which focused on supporting youth employment, entrepreneurship, education, and engagement.²⁰¹ The initiative benefitted 8 million African youth and led to the development of the 1 Million Next Level initiative, which aims to engage more stakeholders and empower 300 million African youth and support additional thematic areas, including health and wellbeing of youth.²⁰²

Over the past decade, the European Union (EU) created and expanded the *Youth Guarantee*, a set of policies that aim to improve the opportunities for employment, education, and apprenticeship for youth in line with the EU’s broader Youth Employment Support package.²⁰³ *Youth Guarantee* efforts have given more than 24 million people under the age of 30 access to employment and connected those at risk of unemployment to skills training opportunities, even amid the COVID-19 crisis.²⁰⁴ Within the Youth

¹⁹¹ Ismail et al. INCLUDE. *Workplace Based Learning and Youth Employment in Africa*. 2020; Khan. INCLUDE. *Young, Female and African: Barriers, Interventions and Opportunities for Female Youth Employment in Africa*. 2020; Izzii. INCLUDE. *Promoting Decent Employment for African Youth as a Peacebuilding Strategy*. 2020.

¹⁹² United Nations, World Youth Skills Day 15 July. *Transforming youth skills for the future*. n.d.

¹⁹³ UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. *Who We Are*. n.d.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Biennial Report 2020-2021 Adapting to the new normal*. 2021. p. 2; UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. *What We Do*. n.d.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Biennial Report 2020-2021 Adapting to the new normal*. 2021. pp. 26-29.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations, World Youth Skills Day 15 July. *Transforming youth skills for the future*. n.d.; UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. *Transforming youth skills for the future*. n.d.

¹⁹⁷ African Union. *Youth Development*. n.d.

¹⁹⁸ African Union. *African Youth Charter*. 2006.

¹⁹⁹ African Union. *The African Youth Decade 2009-2018 Plan of Action*. 2011.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ African Union, One Million By 2021. *About*. 2020.

²⁰² African Union. *1 Million by 2021 Showcase: Over 8 Million African Youth Reached in AUC Chairperson’s Initiative*. 2022; African Union. *Uganda pledges to support AU’s 1 Million Next Level Initiative*. 2022.

²⁰³ European Commission. *Commission launches Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs for the next generation*. 2020; European Commission. *Youth employment support*. n.d.

²⁰⁴ European Commission. *Youth employment support*. n.d.

Employment Support package, over 900,000 apprenticeships were created, providing opportunities for youth to nurture skills and get experience in the labor market.²⁰⁵

Creating Decent Work Opportunities for Marginalized Youth

WPAY and the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth recognize that marginalized youth, including young women, rural youth, as well as migrant and refugee youth, are especially vulnerable to unemployment.²⁰⁶ Youth living in rural areas are 40% more likely than urban youth to engage in informal work under poor working conditions and are also more likely to be impoverished due to the lack of access to education, training, land, credit, and markets.²⁰⁷ According to ILO, 88% of the people considered as extreme working poor, which refers to “[employed] people living on less than \$1.90 per day,” lived in rural areas in 2012.²⁰⁸ To tackle issues of rural youth unemployment, ILO and the International Fund for Agriculture Development created the Taqueem Initiative in the Middle East and North Africa, which has conducted capacity building and knowledge exchange with policymakers, along with research, to examine interventions that effectively promote rural youth’ and women’s employment.²⁰⁹ The Taqueem Initiative has supported women’s economic empowerment and its beneficiaries include more than 40,000 rural youth.²¹⁰ Its efforts are wide-ranging and innovative, including the broadcasting of a reality TV show that features young entrepreneurs learning to build their entrepreneurial skills to start businesses and conducting business and vocational training for young women in rural Egypt to improve their engagement in income-generating activities.²¹¹ As marginalized youth may experience intersectional barriers in economic participation due to their gender, race, nationality, and socio-economic backgrounds, among others, some Member States have sought to implement policies that promote decent work and address the specific challenges faced by marginalized youth.²¹²

The digital divide is adding to the challenges of rural workers as many employers increasingly expect their staff to possess digital skills in the technologically advanced labor market.²¹³ Globally, rural children and youth have 16% less access to the Internet compared to those in urban areas and a wider gap exists in some regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean.²¹⁴ Despite rural youth having the potential to support the digitalization of agriculture and other sectors of work, the urban-rural digital divide exacerbates the income gap both within and across countries.²¹⁵

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018. pp. 44-47; United Nations, General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. 1996.

²⁰⁷ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future*. 2017. p. 5; Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *Youth in the Rural Economy*. n.d. p. 4.

²⁰⁸ International Labour Organization. *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016 – Transforming jobs to end poverty*. 2016. pp. xiii, 15.

²⁰⁹ International Labour Organization. *Decent Work for Rural Youth*. 2019. p. 8; International Labour Organization. *Taqueem – Evidence to improve youth and women’s employment in the Middle East and North Africa*. 2017.

²¹⁰ International Labour Organization. *Taqueem – Evidence to improve youth and women’s employment in the Middle East and North Africa*. 2017.

²¹¹ Barsoum et al. International Labour Organization. *Evaluating the effects of entrepreneurship edutainment in Egypt: Randomized controlled trial baseline report*. 2015; International Labour Organization. *Decent Work for Rural Youth*. 2019. p. 8; Elsayed et al. International Labour Organization. *Empowering young women through Business and Vocational Training: Evidence from a field intervention in rural Egypt*. 2017. p. 1.

²¹² Gammarano. ILOSTAT. *International Day of Rural Women: The unfinished quest for decent work for all*. 2020; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda*. 2020. p. 41; United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. *Call to Action: Meaningful Participation of Young Persons with Disabilities*. 2021.

²¹³ Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *Digital Skills for Youth*. n.d. p. 4; World Bank Group. *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends. Chapter 2: Expanding opportunities*. 2016. p. 104.

²¹⁴ United Nations Children’s Fund et al. *How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic*. 2020. p. 7.

²¹⁵ Henry et al. *Bridging the urban-rural digital divide and mobilizing technology for poverty eradication: challenges and gaps*. 2019. p. 2; International Labour Organization. *Decent Work for Rural Youth*. 2019. pp. 3-4; United

Refugee youth similarly struggle with a lack of infrastructure access and are also one of the most economically disadvantaged groups, with many of them having no access to education and employment opportunities.²¹⁶ The expectation to engage in housework to help out their family, the exclusion from education, and other barriers including language and physical remoteness of schools, impede refugee youth from getting skills training opportunities that will lead to productive employment.²¹⁷ Less access to financial services and social protection, discrimination, and lack of legislation to protect the rights of refugees are among the factors that increase refugee exploitation or force them to engage in informal work.²¹⁸ Recognizing the need for international cooperation to support refugees' livelihoods, the *Global Compact on Refugees* was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018.²¹⁹ It calls for stakeholders' financial and technical support for improved access and quality of education and vocational training, along with the implementation of projects that generate decent work for refugee youth.²²⁰ At the national level, ILO conducts apprenticeship programs for refugee youth.²²¹ In Turkey, ILO works with local communities and vocational training centers to provide information on apprenticeship programs for Syrian refugee youth in the country.²²² Through this program, ILO has worked to ensure that apprenticeships are effective in connecting refugee youth with decent work opportunities.²²³

Youth Employment in Modern Society

Over the last decade, international recognition of the importance of achieving social and environmental sustainability has grown, including when developing policies aimed at providing decent work for all.²²⁴ The outcome document of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want*, outlined the connection between the promotion of decent work and sustainable development.²²⁵ It included a call for governments to establish policies that enable young people's access to decent jobs to drive "sustainable and inclusive development" in the future.²²⁶ As environmental sustainability and work are being discussed internationally, it leads to increased interest in "green jobs," which are described as "decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment" and/or "produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment."²²⁷ ILO estimates that green jobs can contribute to a net employment increase of almost 18 million jobs by 2030 if appropriate measures are taken to shift to more sustainable economic practices.²²⁸ The joint initiative Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), led by five UN agencies, supports countries in promoting a green economy through capacity building, funding, and technical assistance for policy development.²²⁹ For example, with support from PAGE, the government of Senegal established the National Strategy on Green Jobs to provide its citizens with decent work through the creation of green jobs.²³⁰ The strategy is implemented under the National

Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Opportunities for youth in rural business and entrepreneurship in agriculture*. 2021.

²¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Empower Refugee Youth: Youth Education Programme*. 2018. p. 3.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²¹⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion -2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*. 2018.

²¹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Compact on Refugees*. 2018. p. III.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 26-30.

²²¹ International Labour Organization. *Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts*. 2020. p. 41.

²²² *Ibid.* p. 41; International Labour Organization. *Lessons Learned of ILO's Refugee Response Programme in Turkey: Supporting livelihood opportunities for refugees and host communities*. 2019. pp. 23-24.

²²³ International Labour Organization. *Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts*. 2020. p. 41.

²²⁴ International Labour Organization. *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*. 2013. p. xi.

²²⁵ United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. *The Future We Want*. 2012.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ International Labour Organization. *What is a green job?* 2016.

²²⁸ International Labour Organization. *World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs*. 2018. p. 1.

²²⁹ United Nations, Partnership for Action on Green Economy. *About PAGE*. n.d.

²³⁰ United Nations, Partnership for Action on Green Economy. *Senegal 2014-2019 Results Factsheet*. 2018.

Programme for the Promotion of Green Jobs and assists youth in developing businesses in the waste management and renewable energy sectors.²³¹

While many UN bodies and partnerships are accelerating the creation of green jobs in collaboration with governments, several challenges exist in implementation.²³² There is a growing recognition among the international community that skills development through TVET is necessary for young workers to engage in green jobs.²³³ However, many countries lack national skills development policies and programs for green jobs, or they are often not aligned with environmental policies due to inadequate coordination between different stakeholders responsible for designing national policies.²³⁴ In addition, a lack of understanding by policymakers on the significance of addressing environmental issues and the need for a shift to more environmentally friendly forms of employment inhibit the promotion of green jobs.²³⁵

In addition to efforts to create and fill green jobs, actors at all levels have sought to promote “social entrepreneurship,” which “seeks to create value or generate a positive impact on society by offering services or products that answer unmet needs or by offering different solutions to social challenges.”²³⁶ As social enterprises generally aim to serve marginalized groups, they can generate income for youth while making a social impact.²³⁷ However, young people face a number of challenges when engaging in social entrepreneurship, namely lack of experience in the business field and inadequate human and financial capital.²³⁸ The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has acknowledged that, to fully unleash the potential of young social entrepreneurs, it is necessary to engage youth in developing an entrepreneurship ecosystem that includes encouraging education and training on entrepreneurship as well as easy-to-access financial services and support networks.²³⁹

An example of an effort to create a favorable environment that fosters social entrepreneurship is the Social Business Initiative (SBI), which was launched by the European Commission in 2011 and aimed to support the establishment of social enterprises in Europe.²⁴⁰ It identified priority areas to promote social entrepreneurship, such as providing skills development for youth to sustainably manage businesses and increasing community programs for youth to become social entrepreneurs.²⁴¹ At the national level, the Jeun’ESS initiative was established in France to promote youth social entrepreneurship.²⁴² A public-private partnership between ministries, companies, and foundations, Jeun’ESS includes social entrepreneurship in the educational activities offered at educational institutions and also supports youth in joining social economy enterprises.²⁴³ A European study published in 2020 suggests the need for better education and training programs to develop skills among young entrepreneurs persists, as does the need for capacity building of policymakers and support organizations to put in place effective policies.²⁴⁴

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Van der Ree. International Labour Organization. *Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programmes*. 2019.

²³³ Ibid. p. 19.

²³⁴ Ibid. p. 19; International Labour Organization et al. *Meeting skill needs for green jobs: Policy recommendations*. 2013. p. 4; Strietska-Ilina et al. International Labour Organization. *Skills for Green Jobs: A Global Review*. 2011. p. 15.

²³⁵ Van der Ree. International Labour Organization. *Mainstreaming green job issues into national employment policies and implementation plans: A review*. 2017. p. 18.

²³⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda*. 2020. p. 14.

²³⁷ Ibid. p. 2.

²³⁸ Ibid. p. 69.

²³⁹ Ibid. p. 114.

²⁴⁰ European Commission. *Social Business Initiative - Creating a Favourable Climate for Social Enterprises, Key Stakeholders in the Social Economy and Innovation*. 2011.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Noya. *Social Enterprises: What can policies do to support them?* 2014. p. 3.

²⁴³ Ibid. p. 3.

²⁴⁴ European Commission. *Impact of the European Commission’s Social Business Initiative (SBI) and its Follow-up Actions*. 2020. p. 148.

Conclusion

Compared to adults, youth are more prone to work in the informal sector which leads to lower income, a poor working environment, and inadequate social protection.²⁴⁵ In order to provide decent work opportunities for all, the UN has recognized the need to include marginalized youth in programs that support education and training of skills that will enable young people's transition to employment.²⁴⁶ Ensuring the economic participation of youth remain a top UN priority as education and economic opportunities have been severely disrupted due to the COVID-19 crisis.²⁴⁷ The UN, its bodies, and international programs continue to support young people such that they can realize social, economic, and environmental sustainability and become agents of positive change.²⁴⁸

Further Research

In researching this topic, delegates should consider additional questions such as: How can ECOSOC work to address and tackle youth employment issues? What needs to be done to provide youth with quality education and training to develop work skills? How can governments involve different actors to ensure the economic participation of marginalized youth? What measures should be taken to promote green jobs that can benefit both youth and the environment? How can governments and the international community work together to create an enabling environment for young social entrepreneurs? What are the other approaches besides the examples described above that can realize both sustainable development and the provision of decent jobs for youth?

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International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*. 2020. Retrieved 2 July 2022 from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

This resource describes the changes in the labor market in the past years and its impact on youth. As the use of technology accelerates in today's labor market, young people need to adapt to the changes to get employed. This publication underlines both the challenges and opportunities technological advancement can bring to the employment of youth. It also presents policy recommendations and ideas for intervention by the public sector.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018. Retrieved 3 July 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

The World Youth Report published biennially by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs addresses key issues and situations of youth. The 2018 edition of the report focuses on the educational and employment situation of youth as well as their role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. This report can help delegates grasp the overall picture of the challenges youth are facing in terms of education and employment, and how the improvement of their conditions can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

²⁴⁵ Ciccone et al. United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *The Challenges of Youth and Informal Employment in selected Asia-Pacific Countries*. 2019. p. 5.

²⁴⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. 1996.

²⁴⁷ United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth2030: Working with and for young people*. 2018; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Protecting and mobilizing youth in COVID-19 responses*. 2020. p. 1.

²⁴⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda*. 2020. pp. 6, 101.

United Nations, General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. 1996. Retrieved 2 July 2022 from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/50/81>

The World Programme of Action for Youth identifies 15 priority areas and proposals for action for each area to improve the situation and realize participation of youth in society. It explicitly states Member States' responsibility to implement the document at the national, regional, and international levels. It also supports governments in formulating policies to promote the well-being of youth. Delegates will find this source useful in exploring possible solutions to this topic.

United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth2030: Working with and for young people*. 2018. Retrieved 2 July 2022 from:

https://www.unyouth2030.com/files/ugd/b1d674_9f63445fc59a41b6bb50cbd4f800922b.pdf

Presented by the UN Secretary-General in 2018, Youth2030 is a landmark framework that guides UN's work to engage young people to tackle youth issues. This strategy identifies five priority areas that the UN commits to work around the world to empower youth. The strategy can help delegates consider the actions the UN and the international community as a whole can take to engage and empower youth in addressing the world's critical issues.

Van der Ree. International Labour Organization. *Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programmes*. 2019. Retrieved 18 July 2022 from:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732596.pdf

This technical note presents approaches governments and policymakers can take to promote a green economy and green jobs for youth. The document explains the key definitions and ideas necessary in understanding the concept of green jobs and its connection with youth employment. Delegates can deepen their understanding of the promotion of green jobs as this document introduces good practices implemented at the national and regional levels.

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