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Economic and Social Council Background Guide 2026

Written by Theresa M. McMackin and Eric Joshi



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations Washington DC Conference (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to your committee, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Theresa M. McMackin and Assistant Director Eric Joshi. Theresa holds a Bachelor of Arts in Historical Studies and a Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Certificate. She recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Applied Genocide Prevention. Eric is a recent Political Science graduate focusing on international governance, public policy, and access to justice. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Kaytlyn Marcotte, Catherine Tomczyk, and Tobias Willms, and Secretary-General, Ashlee Rolheiser.

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Ensuring Access to Quality Education in Conflict and Post-Conflict Zones
2. Accelerating Implementation and Financing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ECOSOC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations established by the *Charter of the United Nations* in 1945. It is composed of 54 Member States elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three year terms under a system of rotation that ensures equitable geographic representation. ECOSOC serves as the primary body for policy dialogue on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health-related topics, leading efforts to achieve General Assembly resolution 70/1 on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2030 Agenda) (2015). To implement these frameworks, it coordinates a vast network consisting of five regional commissions, eight functional commissions, fifteen specialized agencies, and six funds and programs.

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 bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET (DC time) on 15 October 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•DC Position Papers website](#).

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:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which 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.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes 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 this committee, please contact Under-Secretary-General, Kaytlyn Marcotte, at dcusg.kaytlyn@nmunstaff.org or the Secretary-General, Ashlee Rolheiser, at secgen.dc@nmun.org.

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

Theresa M. McMackin, Director
Eric Joshi, Assistant Director



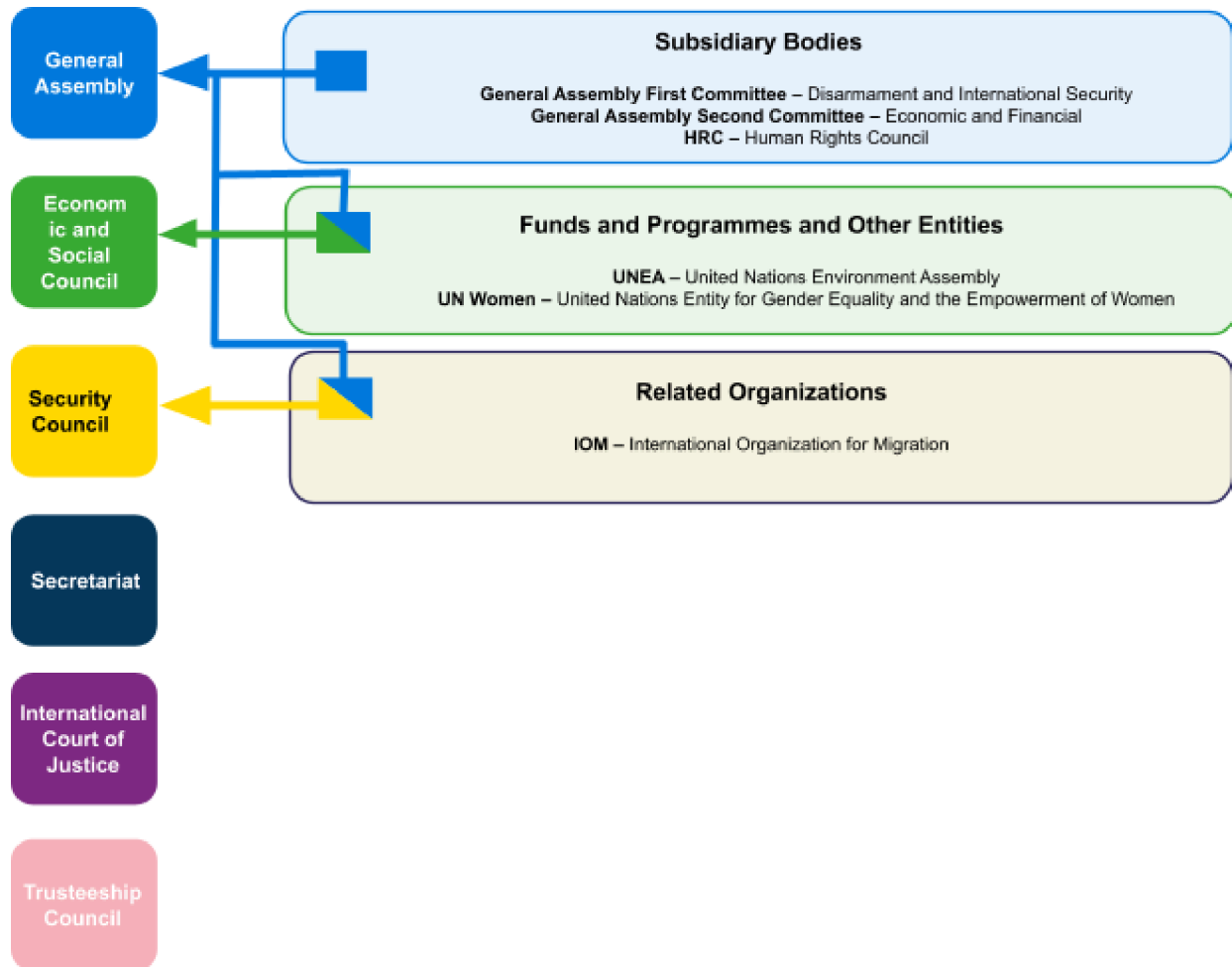
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United Nations System at NMUN•DC

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•DC. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

ECOSOC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations established by the *Charter of the United Nations* in 1945.¹ It serves as the primary body for policy dialogue on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health-related topics, advises and coordinates the activities of its subsidiary bodies on these topics, and leads discussions on the implementation of the international development framework.² ECOSOC is highly involved in coordinating efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and efforts to advance several other international frameworks.³

Mandate, Function and Powers

The main function of ECOSOC is to coordinate the activities of its subsidiary bodies and other United Nations specialized agencies.⁴ Article 62.1 of the *Charter of the United Nations* allows ECOSOC to “make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters” to present to the General Assembly and to United Nations specialized agencies.⁵ ECOSOC may also call for or convene international conferences and hold special meetings on global development emergencies and humanitarian crises.⁶ A prominent example of such a special meeting 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 to Member States and other international bodies; coordinate efforts by its subsidiary bodies and United Nations specialized agencies; follow up and review progress towards these activities; convene international conferences; create subsidiary thematic commissions, in those rare instances where there is ubiquitous demand for continuous examination of a broad subject area.⁸
- ECOSOC **will not generally**: design and implement projects or programs; direct United Nations specialized agencies to develop or implement specific projects or programs; decide on budgetary matters of United Nations entities.⁹

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *About us*. N.d.; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 7.

² United Nations Conference on International Organization. *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. p.11.

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

⁵ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁶ Ibid; 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*. N.d.

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

⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *About us*. 2023; United Nations Development Programme. *Executive Board*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)*. N.d.



Governance, Funding and Structure

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

ECOSOC oversees the work of five regional commissions, eight functional commissions, 15 specialized agencies, six funds and programs, and several other related United Nations bodies.¹³ The functional commissions focus on specific issues and the regional commissions have a geographic focus.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, which are updated regularly.¹⁶ ECOSOC also allows for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to consult on the work of the United Nations.¹⁷ More than 6,500 NGOs have been granted ECOSOC consultative status, enabling them to attend and participate in various United Nations meetings, conferences, special sessions, and other 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 January.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 United Nations specialized agencies through general policy recommendations.²¹ The second group of meetings include various fora established by ECOSOC, including the Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up and the Youth Forum, 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 the Operational Activities for Development Segment, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, and the Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development, all of which meet in

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

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Coordination Segment*. N.d.; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2026. p. 14.

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*. N.d.

¹⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Brochure*. 2026. p. 14.

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; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Sessions*. 2026.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.



June.²⁴ The fourth group focuses on the review of the implementation and progress towards the 2030 Agenda, comprising 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 July, which focuses on procedural questions and considers the reports and recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and United Nations specialized agencies.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

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; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC Sessions*. 2026.



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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 2 May 2026 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/290%20A>

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United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *Structure*. N.d. Retrieved 2 May 2026 from: <https://hlpf.un.org/structure>



1. Ensuring Access to Quality Education in Conflict and Post-Conflict Zones

"Schools and children must never be targeted in conflict. Attacks on schools not only violate children's fundamental right to education but also disrupt families and threaten the long-term development and stability of entire nations. Schools should remain a safe haven."²⁷

Introduction

Since the end of World War II in 1945, the global community has witnessed an increase in state-based conflicts.²⁸ In the report *Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946-2024*, the Peace Research Institute Oslo outlined that, in 2024, 61 conflicts across 36 countries were taking place.²⁹ According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2024, an estimated 123.2 million people were forcibly displaced globally due to conflict, persecution, and severe human rights violations.³⁰

The harm inflicted on children and their families during times of armed conflict creates cycles of poverty and violence that can last generations and delay the development of sustainable, peaceful societies.³¹ The United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict highlights the six grave violations committed against children during times of conflict: recruitment and use of children in conflicts, killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children, attacks against schools and hospitals, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access to children.³² The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that, as of 2025, 234 million children are living in conflict situations, with 85 million children completely out of school.³³ According to the World Bank, over 90% of children living in areas affected by violence and armed conflict suffer from learning poverty, or the inability to read or comprehend age-appropriate text, and estimates that more than half of the world's extreme poor will live in conflict-affected countries by 2030.³⁴

Various United Nations and non-United Nations entities have attempted to define education in conflict-affected zones.³⁵ Despite references to "armed conflict" in the Geneva Conventions, neither international law nor the United Nations have established a universal definition of conflict-affected areas or their categorization.³⁶ Quality education is defined by UNICEF as an approach to education that prioritizes healthy students, safe environments, appropriate learning materials, and trained teachers to

²⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF alarmed by continued attacks on education in conflict zones in Africa*. 2024.

²⁸ Rustad. Peace Research Institute Oslo. *Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946-2024*. 2025. p. 7.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 8.

³⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2024*. 2025.

³¹ European Union, Council of the European Union. *Council Conclusions on the update of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict*. 2024. p. 7.

³² United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The Six Grave Violations*. 2026.

³³ Education Cannot Wait. *State of Education for Crisis-Affected Children and Adolescents: Access and Learning Outcomes*. 2025. p. 6.

³⁴ World Bank Group. *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025*. 2020. p. 2.

³⁵ Geneva Academy on International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. *Due Diligence: Defining 'Conflict-Affected' and 'High-Risk Areas'*. 2013. p. 1.

³⁶ Ibid.



foster learners' skills, knowledge, and healthy mindsets.³⁷ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines post-conflict as a situation following the end of conflicts or crises, most often following peace agreements.³⁸ Despite these agreements, IOM acknowledges that some fighting may still take place in areas previously in conflict, but this does not necessarily mean that the conflict can no longer be considered over.³⁹ The World Bank utilizes the phrase "fragility, conflict, and violence" (FCV) to identify and track countries and regions at risk of and in the midst of experiencing conflict or in post-conflict periods.⁴⁰ The FCV category follows countries at risk based on social and institutional instability, countries with populations at risk of conflict through organized groups or state parties, and countries where civilian populations are at high risk of death or severe violence that creates destabilization.⁴¹ Countries that have been identified by the World Bank include, but are not limited to, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and the Central African Republic.⁴²

International and Regional Framework

The 2030 Agenda is the United Nations' recommitment to strengthening the rights of all people, particularly women, girls, and children through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴³ SDG 4 (quality education) focuses on the right of all to inclusive, quality education and calls for all girls and boys to have complete access to free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary educational opportunities by 2030.⁴⁴ SDG target 4.5 calls for the elimination of gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access for vulnerable persons to all levels of education.⁴⁵ SDG 5 (gender equality) focuses on the achievement of gender equality and ensuring the rights of women and girls, with target 5.4 calling attention to the harm of child and forced marriage and calling for its elimination.⁴⁶ Girls' access to educational opportunities throughout their lives influences the likelihood that they will become child brides, with each additional year of education lowering their risk by multiple percentage points.⁴⁷

Various declarations, conventions, and resolutions adopted by the United Nations detail the rights of children and what they are entitled to in the eyes of the international community.⁴⁸ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) is a non-legally binding document detailing the rights of all persons globally.⁴⁹ Article 26 of the declaration declares that everyone has the right to free and accessible education that promotes skills but also social responsibility, tolerance, and friendship among all people.⁵⁰ The *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (1959) is the foundational document by the United Nations on

³⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *Education: Every child has the right to learn*. 2026.

³⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Evaluation of IOM's Post-Emergency and Post-Conflict Strategies and Programmes*. 2004. p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ World Bank Group. *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025*. 2020. p. 6.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² World Bank Group. *Where We Work*. 2026.

⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 18.

⁴⁷ Girls Not Brides. *Child Marriage and Education*. 2026.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989. p. 1.

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948. p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



the rights and guarantees for children and young people.⁵¹ Principle 7 of the Declaration emphasizes every child's right to receive a free education that promotes their culture and enables the child to become an active member of society.⁵² The *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) creates a framework for Member States to uphold the rights of people seeking education, with Article 13 recognizing all peoples' right to education as essential to the development of an individual's perception of their human rights.⁵³ ICESCR also emphasizes that educational opportunities ensure that all persons can participate freely in society and furthers the goals of the United Nations by promoting peace and co-existence among Member States.⁵⁴ Articles 28 and 29 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989) again emphasize the right of all children to obtain free education from the Member States in which they reside.⁵⁵ It further stipulates that Member States work to encourage the development of children regarding their cultural identity, language, and values regardless of whether the child resides outside their cultural context.⁵⁶ In 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/77 on "The rights of the child" in an effort to recommit Member States to the aims of the CRC.⁵⁷ This resolution acknowledges the responsibility of Member States and United Nations entities to ensure humanitarian access to children affected by armed conflict and highlights education as a particular form of humanitarian assistance.⁵⁸

Established in 1996, the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict highlights the vulnerability of children living in violent societies.⁵⁹ Prior to its establishment, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/157 on "Protection of children affected by armed conflicts" (1994), calling for support within the United Nations and from states and NGOs in addressing the worsening conditions for children in global conflict zones.⁶⁰ The resolution called for the Secretary-General to provide the General Assembly with bi-annual reports on developments in the global community's response to children affected by armed conflict and requested that the Secretary-General appoint an expert to routinely monitor global trends and patterns related to this issue.⁶¹ The expert's 1996 report *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children: Impact of armed conflict on children* outlined the current trends and patterns affecting children in armed conflict zones, including, but not limited to, the lack of educational opportunities and the risk of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (GBV).⁶² As a result of the report, General Assembly resolution 51/77 on "The rights of the child" recommended the creation of a Special Representative to focus on children in armed conflict.⁶³ In 1999, the Security Council

⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child (A/RES/1386 (XIV))*. 1959. p. 2.

⁵² Ibid. p. 20.

⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 51.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989. p. 170.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 170.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *The rights of the child (A/RES/51/77)*. 1997. p. 171.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

⁵⁹ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The mandate*. 2026.

⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of children affected by armed conflicts (A/RES/48/157)*. 1994. p. 2.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 3.

⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children: Impact of armed conflict on children - Report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 (A/51/306)*. 1996. p. 5.

⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The rights of the child (A/RES/51/77)*. 1997. p. 7.



adopted resolution 1261 (1999) on “Children and armed conflict,” marking the first time this issue was on the Security Council’s agenda.⁶⁴ The resolution identifies six grave violations, which are monitored by the Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict, one of which is targeted attacks on schools and hospitals.⁶⁵ In 2001, a report by the Secretary-General on the protection of children affected by armed conflict called attention to attacks targeting schools, hospitals, or other places that can have a strong presence of children and how such attacks infringe on international law.⁶⁶

The Safe Schools Declaration was introduced as a non-binding intergovernmental agreement among several Member States, affirming their commitment to the protection of education in armed conflict.⁶⁷ Presented during the First International Conference on Safe Schools in 2015, this non-United Nations declaration calls on participating states to commit to safeguarding educational resources and activities for children living in conflict zones.⁶⁸ Several senior members of the United Nations Secretariat, including the United Nations Secretary-General and a former Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, have called for Member States to endorse the declaration and its commitments to protecting educational institutions.⁶⁹ As of late 2025, 122 Member States have endorsed the declaration.⁷⁰ UNICEF partners with Member States that have endorsed the *Safe Schools Declaration* to offer assistance in planning school safety plans, offering children and educators psycho-social support, and distributing supplies.⁷¹

Despite children’s rights and their protection during armed conflict being codified in international law, children continue to suffer the consequences of conflict and war.⁷² In 2012, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) officially adopted its *Military Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict* to introduce targeted efforts to protect children’s safety and security during armed conflict.⁷³ NATO’s guidelines were a response to Security Council resolution 2068 (2012) on “Children and armed conflict,” calling on Member States and relevant parties to address the risks and grave violations inflicted on children during armed conflict, such as the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence against children.⁷⁴ Adopted by the European Union (EU) in 2008, the *EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict* represent the EU’s commitment to protecting the safety and well-being of children in times of war and conflict.⁷⁵ In its 2024 update to the guidelines, the EU highlighted the risks posed to persons under the age of 18 years and promoted a holistic approach to humanitarian, development, and peacekeeping responses to conflict.⁷⁶ The guidelines reference education and social protection as two measures that help create safe and self-sustaining environments that can aid in building and maintaining peace.⁷⁷

⁶⁴ United Nations, Security Council. *Children and armed conflict (S/RES/1261 (1999))*. 1999. p. 1.

⁶⁵ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The Six Grave Violations*. 2026.

⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of children affected by armed conflict: Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/56/453)*. 2001. p. 14.

⁶⁷ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. *Safe Schools Declaration*. 2015.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kingdom of Norway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *The Safe Schools Declaration*. 2025.

⁷¹ United Nations Children’s Fund. *Education under attack*. 2026.

⁷² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Reports ‘shocking’ rise in violations against children in conflict in 2023*. 2024.

⁷³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *NATO Policy on Children and Armed Conflict*. 2023.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Security Council. *Children and armed conflict (S/RES/2068 (2012))*. 2012. p. 2.

⁷⁵ European Union, European Commission. *EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict*. 2024. p. 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.



Role of the International System

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) serves as the overarching body under which various United Nations committees and programs focusing on education, humanitarian affairs, and conflict response operate.⁷⁸ The Secretary-General's 2025 report *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/80/75-E/2025/55)* highlighted the complex nature of conflicts, and noted that humanitarian needs in recent years have added to the strain on resources and support among Member States and their populations.⁷⁹ The report draws attention to the importance of incorporating support for children into policies and post-conflict agendas, highlighting education as essential to psychosocial support and programs focused on the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.⁸⁰

UNICEF has long called attention to the risks children are exposed to during times of conflict, such as physical and psychological harm, and the obligations Member States have to ensure attacks against persons and infrastructure cease.⁸¹ UNICEF currently supports a program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) eastern Tanganyika province, where social, cultural, and sporting events are being utilized to ease tensions between local Bantu and Twa communities.⁸² Such programs have allowed displaced students to return to school and integrate into their host communities.⁸³

In recent years, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights Council (HRC) have focused their agendas on the needs of children in armed conflict.⁸⁴ In 2025, OHCHR published the report *Rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts*, which highlights that attacks on educational facilities and staff violate international humanitarian law and damage safe areas.⁸⁵ In April 2024, HRC adopted its resolution 55/29 entitled "Rights of the child," calling on Member States to reaffirm their commitments to the CRC.⁸⁶ Additionally, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education released the 2025 report *Right to education*, which addresses the current challenges faced by children in armed conflict in obtaining quality education.⁸⁷ The report highlights the essential role of education in post-conflict recovery and the rebuilding of communities following violations of human rights and humanitarian law, especially those perpetrated against children.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *The ECOSOC System*. 2026. p. 1.

⁷⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, General Assembly. *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations - Report of the Secretary-General (A/80/75-E/2025/55)*. 2025. p. 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 10.

⁸¹ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF's change agenda for protecting children in armed conflict*. 2026.

⁸² Buechner. U.S. Fund for UNICEF. *Where Humanitarian Aid and Peace Building Intersect: UNICEF in Eastern DRC*. 2024.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Children and armed conflict*. 2026.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/60/51)*. 2025. p. 8.

⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Children and armed conflict*. 2026.

⁸⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Right to education: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed - Right to education in armed conflict: a human rights imperative (A/80/479)*. 2025. p. 3.

⁸⁸ Ibid.



The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is the forefront entity within the United Nations system focused on advancing the rights of women and girls globally.⁸⁹ UN Women provides support to United Nations entities in advancing the rights of women, as well as to NGOs and grassroots programs globally.⁹⁰ Women and girls are more likely than boys to struggle to access or continue their education when conflict disrupts societal infrastructure and reduces family incomes.⁹¹ Between 2018 and 2023, UN Women piloted the Second Chance Education Programme to provide women who did not have educational opportunities due to social or economic barriers with access to learning through e-learning platforms and programs.⁹² UN Women works to promote the inclusion of women in peacekeeping and programmatic planning in Member States, such as those emerging from periods of conflict.⁹³

The World Bank has invested over \$7 billion in education programs in areas affected by FCV.⁹⁴ One program created by the World Bank is the Inclusion Support Programme for Refugee Education (INSPIRE).⁹⁵ Created in 2024 in partnership with Member States and UNHCR, INSPIRE provides financial support to participating Member States to fund programs integrating displaced persons into host communities, as well as resources to assist in the integration of refugee children into host countries' educational systems.⁹⁶ As of 2026, over a dozen Member States have taken part in this program.⁹⁷ The World Bank also sponsors the Lifting Education Access and Resilience in Times of Need (LEARN) program in Ukraine, which provides funds to Ukrainian schools to provide free transportation to students, textbooks, and training for teachers.⁹⁸ LEARN also aims to support the Ukrainian government's efforts to advance education reform in the country to bring the educational system up to EU standards.⁹⁹

Ensuring Access to Education for Women and Girls in Post-Conflict Zones

Women and girls' educational opportunities are disproportionately affected by conflict, making global partnerships and women-led initiatives essential to advancing gender equality, leadership, and long-term recovery in crisis-affected communities.¹⁰⁰ Education Cannot Wait, a United Nations fund for education in emergencies and crises, estimates that of the 234 million school-aged children, 50% are girls.¹⁰¹ According to the World Bank, girls are two and a half times more likely to be out of primary school if they

⁸⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *About UN Women*. 2026.

⁹⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Intergovernmental Support*. 2026.

⁹¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How war impacts women and girls: A simple explainer on gender and conflict*. 2026.

⁹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A second chance for women through online learning: Ten lessons learned from the Second Chance Education Programme*. 2023. p. 1.

⁹³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *What is the Women, Peace and Security agenda?*. 2026.

⁹⁴ World Bank Group. *Delivering Education in the Midst of Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV)*. 2025.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ World Bank Group. *Learning and School Reforms Continue in Ukraine Despite War Challenges*. 2025.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Education Cannot Wait. *State of Education for Crisis-Affected Children and Adolescents: Access and Learning Outcomes*. 2025. p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 6.



reside in conflict-affected countries.¹⁰² Additionally, girls in conflict-affected countries are nearly 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than girls living in non-conflict-affected countries.¹⁰³ For example, in Gaza, UN Women predicts that even as the education system is restored, girls will be less likely to return to the classroom due to early child marriage and pregnancy, the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, and the loss of employment opportunities.¹⁰⁴ As of 2023, UN Women has established partnerships with over 1,300 women's organizations globally to promote the rights of women and girls in conflict zones and humanitarian situations.¹⁰⁵ These partnerships aim to advance women's engagement in development measures, national crises, and recovery response plans by promoting women in leadership roles in their respective nations.¹⁰⁶

Because girls are more likely to be out of school in conflict and crisis settings, the threat of GBV and sexual exploitation becomes greater.¹⁰⁷ For example, in West and Central Africa, where women and children account for 80% of refugees and asylum seekers, child marriage has become a common practice.¹⁰⁸ In 2022, UNICEF reported that West and Central Africa has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with 37% of women being married before the age of 18.¹⁰⁹ Child marriage often ends a young woman's opportunities for continuing her education and thus limits her economic opportunities, with the economic cost of inaction on child marriage to the global economy amounting to \$175 billion annually.¹¹⁰

Save the Children's 2021 report *Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict* highlights the work of Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS).¹¹¹ An initiative of South Sudan's Ministry of General Education and Instruction, GESS hosts radio programs aimed at widening educational access to Sudanese children while also reducing educational barriers girls face in society from cultural expectations and limitations faced in conflict-affected areas.¹¹² Organizers travel to communities with episodes and materials, enabling hands-on engagement with both children and adults in the community.¹¹³ Another form of assistance that GESS provides is monetary support for families needing help paying their children's school fees, especially for girls, with money going towards school costs as well as uniforms, school fees, and learning materials.¹¹⁴

¹⁰² World Bank Group. *Delivering Education in the Midst of Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV)*. 2025.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Advocacy brief: The cost of war in Gaza on women and girls*. 2026. p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *UN Women Humanitarian Strategy (2022-2025) In Brief*. 2023. p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF alarmed by continued attacks on education in conflict zones in Africa*. 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Regional Trends: Forced Displacement in West and Central Africa in 2025*. 2025. p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF alarmed by continued attacks on education in conflict zones in Africa*. 2024.

¹¹⁰ Klein et al. Columbia SIPA Institute of Global Politics Women's Initiative. *Accelerating Efforts to End Child Marriage*. 2026. p. 30.

¹¹¹ Save the Children. *Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict*. 2021. p. 68.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.



Strengthening Education Systems in Conflict Zones

In-person learning opportunities have the capacity to offer educational and social services to children affected by conflict.¹¹⁵ In the DRC, UNICEF estimates that over 90% of school-aged children are out of the classroom.¹¹⁶ UNICEF, in partnership with the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) department and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), has constructed three temporary classrooms and learning spaces for students.¹¹⁷ Partnerships such as these have led to the creation of institutions such as the Bujari Primary School in the DRC.¹¹⁸ The support from ECHO, CERF, and UNICEF has allowed dozens of students to enroll in the educational center for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and children in the area.¹¹⁹ In Bangladesh, UNICEF and Save the Children have partnered to create the Cox's Bazar Education Sector to support the educational needs of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar as well as those of children from the host communities.¹²⁰ In 2025 alone, the program supported over 490,000 children from refugee and host communities with educational programs and capacity-building workshops.¹²¹ UNHCR estimates that as of October 2025, about 14 million people have fled their homes in Sudan due to violence and conflict, with countries such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, and other neighboring nations hosting 4.2 million individuals.¹²² Since 2024, the Makanna at El Goz established by UNICEF in South Sudan has become a refuge for around 150 female and 180 male IDPs and refugees between the ages of 3 and 18.¹²³ Arabic for "our space," the Makanna provides learning spaces, psychosocial support, referral to medical and protective services, and vital sources of clean water and sanitation.¹²⁴

When current technologies are available to students, educational opportunities can become accessible in conflict zones.¹²⁵ In Ukraine, All-Ukrainian School Online is a partnership between the Ukrainian government and UNICEF, providing students in grades 1 to 11 within Ukraine, as well as students located outside of the country, with access to materials for learning, and teachers with materials to assist their learning plans.¹²⁶ These technologies allow students to learn from home or in underground schools that protect students during bombings or air raids.¹²⁷ UNICEF also provides educational services for over 4 million children and their families in Sudan through the Learning Passport program and other e-learning initiatives.¹²⁸ The Learning Passport platform, initiated by a partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft, provides digital educational courses, resources, and other materials to learners as well as low-income or high-risk communities.¹²⁹ Currently, Learning Passport is live in 50 Member States, including but not

¹¹⁵ Teach For All. *Education in Emergencies*. 2026.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Children's Fund. *Education in Crisis: How crises around the world are impacting children's learning*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *This is my Makanna - my safe space*. 2024.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ United Nations Children's Fund. *A wish to return to school is realized*. 2024.

¹²⁰ Rohingya Refugee Response. *Education*. 2026.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Sudan emergency*. 2026.

¹²³ United Nations Children's Fund. *This is my Makanna - my safe space*. 2024.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ United Nations Children's Fund. *Zaporizhzhia schoolchildren learn with the All-Ukrainian Online School Platform*. 2026.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. *When can children learn? Sudan's Education crisis and its impact on learning in the region*. 2023. p. 9.

¹²⁹ Learning Passport. *About the Learning Passport*. 2026.



limited to Ukraine, Myanmar, Brazil, and Syria.¹³⁰ In Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, the International Rescue Committee has partnered with Sesame Workshop to produce an Arabic-language version of Sesame Street, titled Ahlan Simsim, which is aired across the Middle East and North Africa.¹³¹ This initiative allows young children impacted by conflict in the region to engage in culturally supported educational materials and programs that encourage learning.¹³²

Conclusion

The United Nations has long supported the creation of safe spaces for children in conflict settings in schools and learning communities, to not only create stability and equity for children but also to invest in stable and peaceful futures for their communities.¹³³ ECOSOC and its partners within the United Nations system have a demonstrated history of addressing this issue through collaboration and action and through engaging with child-age learners in areas currently affected by conflict and in post-conflict zones.¹³⁴ Although international frameworks and cooperative programs are in place, safe educational environments for children living in conflict and post-conflict zones are often not guaranteed.¹³⁵ As an established international human right, ensuring quality and safe educational opportunities for all children makes strides towards achieving sustainable post-conflict societies and communities.¹³⁶ Through in-person and virtual programs and initiatives, the global community is working to ensure that children affected by conflict are not abandoned in their educational pursuits.¹³⁷

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: In what ways can the United Nations adapt to ensure children's access to education globally? What actions can international and local partners take to ensure girls stay engaged and enrolled in educational opportunities? What partnerships and programs currently established in post-conflict zones can be implemented globally? What forms of digital technologies can be utilized to engage students in educational opportunities? What diplomatic-level opportunities can be created to ensure the safety of students in educational settings?

¹³⁰ Learning Passport. *Where We Work*. 2026.

¹³¹ International Rescue Committee. *The groundbreaking impact of Ahlan Simsim*. 2023.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Right to education: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed - Right to education in armed conflict: a human rights imperative (A/80/479)*. 2025. p. 3.

¹³⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, General Assembly. *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations - Report of the Secretary-General (A/80/75-E/2025/55)*. 2025. p. 1.

¹³⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Reports 'shocking' rise in violations against children in conflict in 2023*. 2024.

¹³⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Right to education: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed - Right to education in armed conflict: a human rights imperative (A/80/479)*. 2025 p. 3.

¹³⁷ International Rescue Committee. *The groundbreaking impact of Ahlan Simsim*. 2023.



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2. Accelerating Implementation and Financing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Introduction

Adopted in 2015, the 2030 Agenda is the global framework which established 17 SDGs and 169 targets.¹³⁸ The agenda is organized around five core principles: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership, which together form an integrated, indivisible vision linking sustainable development in its economic, social, and environmental dimensions.¹³⁹ A decade after its adoption, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) released the tenth edition of the annual *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*, which highlighted the achievements of SDG implementation that improved millions of lives around the world.¹⁴⁰ Despite these gains, conflicts, climate change, geopolitical tensions, and economic shocks continue to obstruct the progress made toward these goals.¹⁴¹

One of the biggest challenges for advancing the progress of the SDGs is financing constraints: Member States face an estimated \$4 trillion annual shortfall in the resources needed to achieve the SDGs.¹⁴² The data available in the SDG Report 2025 reveals that only 35% of the SDG targets are on track or making moderate progress, while nearly half are advancing too slowly, and 18% have reversed their progress.¹⁴³ According to the United Nations Chief Executive Board for Coordination, least developed countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) require targeted support from the international community to develop a more equitable international financial system.¹⁴⁴ This includes better regulation of global financial markets and of speculation as well as the equitable participation of all states in the institutions of global governance, as identified in the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴⁵ Public development banks (PDBs) are state-owned or state-sponsored financial institutions mandated to finance public policy objectives, representing one concrete instrument through which states can operationalize these governance commitments by directing capital toward SDG-aligned priorities that private markets consistently underfund.¹⁴⁶

The Decade of Action is a United Nations initiative launched in 2020 for accelerating sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges.¹⁴⁷ It called for action at the global, local, and people levels to secure

¹³⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 1.

¹³⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The 17 Goals*. 2026.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Decoding the Future: Global Architecture Reforms*. 2024.

¹⁴³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, General Assembly. *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (A/80/81-E/2025/62)*. 2025. p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development*. 2017. p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *What are Public Development Banks? Your questions answered*. 2023; Finance in Common. *Unlocking the Potential of Public Development Banks for Sustainable Development: A Finance in common contribution to the FfD4*. 2025. p. 38.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Decade of Action*. 2026.



greater leadership, more resources, and smarter solutions, and explicitly identified the persistent financing gap as the central challenge that requires urgent attention.¹⁴⁸ Accelerating both the implementation and the financing of the 2030 Agenda requires an integrated approach that addresses structural barriers across domestic resource mobilization, international public finance, private sector investment, and debt sustainability.¹⁴⁹ ECOSOC serves as the principal coordinating body in the United Nations system for these interconnected efforts.¹⁵⁰

International and Regional Framework

The 2030 Agenda was built on the Millennium Development Goals to complete what they did not achieve, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable.¹⁵¹ The agenda encourages Member States to conduct voluntary, regular, and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels called Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).¹⁵² The *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (AAAA), adopted in July 2015, established a global framework for financing sustainable development across seven action areas and introduced concrete measures, including official development assistance (ODA) targets, blended finance instruments, and domestic tax reform to close critical funding gaps.¹⁵³ The AAAA also identified illicit financial flows (IFFs), sovereign debt vulnerability, and inequitable governance of international financial institutions as systemic barriers requiring urgent international action.¹⁵⁴ The AAAA also affirmed the commitment of developed countries to achieve the target of spending 0.7% of their gross national income on ODA, a target that the majority of the donor countries have yet to fulfill.¹⁵⁵ ODA serves as a critical complement to domestic resource mobilization and, according to the AAAA, it can be used to catalyze additional financing, strengthen tax systems, build essential public services, and unlock private investment through blended finance mechanisms.¹⁵⁶ General Assembly resolution 72/279 on “Repositioning of the United Nations system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive review of the operational activities for the development of the United Nations system” (2018) repositioned the United Nations development system to better support 2030 Agenda implementation by delinking the Resident Coordinator system from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), establishing an independent Development Coordination Office within the United Nations Secretariat, and deploying a new generation of country teams tailored to national priorities, thereby strengthening coordination and accountability of United Nations development activities at the country level to directly accelerate SDG delivery.¹⁵⁷ This reform placed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework at the center of collective United Nations support to host governments, providing a unified planning and accountability instrument that aligned the work of all

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Financing and Funding*. 2026.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015. p. 1.

¹⁵² United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *2025 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. 2025. pp. 2-4.

¹⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)* (A/RES/69/313). 2015. pp. 1-4.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system* (A/RES/72/279). 2018. pp. 1-2.



United Nations entities at the country level with national SDG priorities.¹⁵⁸ General Assembly resolution 79/334 on the “Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets” (2025) underscores that closing the technological gap between developed and developing countries is critical to accelerating SDG implementation, as scaling up investment in science, technology, and innovation offers a direct pathway to mobilizing the resources and productive capacity needed to meet the 2030 Agenda’s financing demands.¹⁵⁹

General Assembly resolution 71/313 on the “Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2017) formally adopted the global indicator framework for monitoring the SDG progress, which underwent a comprehensive review in 2025 to improve the precision and coverage of measurement for the final implementation cycle.¹⁶⁰ After the 2025 Comprehensive Review Process of the global indicator framework by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, many refinements, including an expansion of the scope to measure the volume of scholarships funded through ODA for SDG 4 (quality education), were proposed and are being reviewed by the United Nations Statistical Commission.¹⁶¹ The *Pact for the Future*, adopted by the General Assembly in 2024, constitutes the most wide-ranging intergovernmental agreement in decades.¹⁶² In 2025, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development resulted in the Seville Commitment, the first intergovernmentally agreed development financing framework since the AAAA, which recognized a \$4 trillion annual financing gap and launched a package of systemic reforms to close it.¹⁶³ These reforms remain largely unrealized, as the Seville Commitment (2025) was negotiated against a widening \$4 trillion annual financing gap faced by developing countries, with sharp divisions among Member States over proposals to triple multilateral development bank (MDB) lending capacity and establish a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation.¹⁶⁴

Role of the International System

ECOSOC serves as the principal United Nations body for policy dialogue on economic, social, and related matters, and plays a central coordinating role in supporting the implementation and financing of the 2030 Agenda across the United Nations system.¹⁶⁵ The 2025 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), held from 14 to 23 July 2025, convened over 100 ministerial representatives under the theme “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind.”¹⁶⁶ The Forum conducted in-depth reviews of SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets (A/RES/79/334)*. 2025. p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313)*. 2017. p. 2.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics. *2025 Comprehensive Review Process*. 2025.

¹⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024. pp. 1-5.

¹⁶³ Mishra. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Ahead of UN summit, countries finalise landmark ‘Compromiso de Sevilla’*. 2025.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *High-Level Political Forum 2025*. 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.



goals), with findings intended to inform accelerated national implementation strategies in the Agenda's final five years.¹⁶⁷

The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* notes that progress on SDG 17 is among the most limited of all SDGs, with a \$4 trillion annual financing gap, unprecedented high debt burdens in developing countries, and a widening digital divide undermining the foundation of effective multilateral cooperation.¹⁶⁸ The 2025 ECOSOC Coordination Segment guided coordinated United Nations system action to implement the *Pact for the Future* and its annexes.¹⁶⁹ The United Nations Funding Compact established mutual accountability for more transparent, predictable, and country-responsive United Nations development financing, monitored through a dedicated global-level reporting framework.¹⁷⁰ UNDP, operating in over 170 countries, is central to accelerating 2030 Agenda implementation by deploying tools such as the SDG Investor Map, blended finance instruments, and technical assistance on public financial management to directly connect developing countries with the financing and capacity they need to close critical SDG funding gaps.¹⁷¹ UNDP, alongside UN DESA, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the European Union, and in cooperation with select Member States, operates the Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF) Facility, which supports countries in designing tools that align public and private financing strategies with national sustainable development priorities.¹⁷² In 2025, over 86 countries used the INFF approach to enhance financing for sustainable development, with 17 governments leveraging \$16 billion in new SDG-aligned financing through INFF-shaped reforms, including bold macroeconomic restructuring to engage the private sector as a central driver of inclusive growth, with \$32 billion identified for further alignment and greater SDG impact.¹⁷³

The Joint SDG Fund, an inter-agency pooled mechanism co-chaired by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, is the United Nations' premier joint financing mechanism for development.¹⁷⁴ Since 2018, the fund has supported 350 joint programs across 122 Member States with \$380 million in commitments and unlocked \$6 billion in additional resources for the SDGs that were pooled from the contributions of Member States.¹⁷⁵ UN DESA supports the annual *Financing for Sustainable Development Report* produced by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, which monitors progress of all AAAA commitments and identifies where coordinated international action is most urgently needed.¹⁷⁶ The *UN DESA Annual Highlights Report 2025* documents key initiatives directly relevant to the topic, including tailored financing assistance to SIDS through the FINS initiative, breakthroughs in international

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. p. 43.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *2025 Coordination Segment*. 2025; United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Framework for Global-level Monitoring and Reporting on the Funding Compact for the UN's Support to the SDGs*. 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Financing the 2030 Agenda: An Introductory Guidebook for UNDP Country Offices*. 2018. pp. 9-12.

¹⁷² United Nations Development Programme. *INFF global partners convene in Spain to strengthen country-led financing frameworks for sustainable development*. 2025.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations, Joint SDG Fund. *Transforming Our World*. 2026.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Highlights 2025: Towards Sustainable Development for All*. 2025. pp. 13-25.



tax cooperation, and the adoption of the Seville Commitment as a renewed framework for closing the \$4 trillion annual SDG financing gap.¹⁷⁷ The Seville Commitment of 2025 explicitly addressed the root causes of IFFs, calling for stronger measures against tax evasion, aggressive tax avoidance, and trade misinvoicing, recognizing that curbing IFFs is inseparable from closing the SDG financing gap and strengthening domestic resource mobilization in developing countries.¹⁷⁸

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) plays a distinct role in supporting SDG implementation and financing through its work on trade, investment, and the reduction of IFFs.¹⁷⁹ UNCTAD is the co-custodian of SDG indicator 16.4.1 under SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) concerning the total value of inward and outward IFFs.¹⁸⁰ This indicator measures the total value of inward and outward IFFs as a share of gross domestic product, serving as a key measurement for tracking progress toward significantly reducing IFFs and combating all forms of organized crime by 2030.¹⁸¹ UNCTAD has developed an internationally endorsed conceptual framework for the statistical measurement of IFFs and is currently supporting 12 Member States across four continents to compile and report data to the Global SDG Indicators Database.¹⁸² In 2024, UNCTAD's technical cooperation expenditure surpassed \$56 million across 203 projects in 72 Member States, strengthening developing Member States' capacity to track IFFs, improve trade and investment data, and pursue equitable participation in the global economy.¹⁸³

The Role of PRBs in Accelerating and Financing the 2030 Agenda

Since the first Finance in Common Summit in 2020, PDBs have increasingly been recognized as central actors in bridging the gap between the scale of development financing needs and the resources available through traditional public and private channels.¹⁸⁴ With over 500 PDBs worldwide managing assets totaling more than \$23 trillion, they represent a significant and underutilized resource for closing the SDG financing gap.¹⁸⁵ Their importance became visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when governments relied on them for economic support and recovery, demonstrating their unique capacity as legally independent, publicly mandated institutions to finance what commercial banks cannot.¹⁸⁶ Finance in Common is an independent global network through which the world's 522 PDBs are committing to coordinate action on climate change and sustainable development, operating outside formal United Nations structures but complementing them by aligning PDB financing with SDG priorities at the country level.¹⁸⁷ The AAAA explicitly recognized that achieving the SDGs requires combining different financing

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. pp. 10-25.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Briefing session on illicit financial flows*. 2025.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *SDG Pulse 2025*. 2025.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Illicit Financial Flows*. 2025.

¹⁸¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *SDG indicator metadata*. 2025. pp. 1-3.

¹⁸² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Illicit Financial Flows*. 2025.

¹⁸³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *UNCTAD supports countries to progress towards SDGs*. 2025.

¹⁸⁴ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *What are Public Development Banks? Your questions answered*. 2023; Finance in Common. *Unlocking the Potential of Public Development Banks for Sustainable Development: A Finance in common contribution to the FfD4*. 2025. pp. 11-13.

¹⁸⁵ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *What are Public Development Banks? Your questions answered*. 2023; Finance in Common. *Unlocking the Potential of Public Development Banks for Sustainable Development: A Finance in common contribution to the FfD4*. 2025. p. 38.

¹⁸⁶ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *What are Public Development Banks? Your questions answered*. 2023.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.



sources and integrating the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, affirming that international public finance, including ODA, should catalyze additional resource mobilization through blended and pooled financing mechanisms.¹⁸⁸ PDBs are uniquely positioned to operationalize this vision, providing long-term concessional funding, risk mitigation through guarantees, and direct financing in sectors and regions where private capital remains insufficient.¹⁸⁹ Blended finance, which strategically deploys public development finance to mobilize private capital, extends this further by scaling SDG investment beyond what public budgets alone can provide, with the AAAA affirming that public-private partnerships and blended finance instruments serve to lower investment-specific risks and incentivize private sector participation across key development sectors.¹⁹⁰

Despite their potential, PDBs currently operate without a unified international oversight framework, coordinating primarily through voluntary forums such as Finance in Common and the International Development Finance Club.¹⁹¹ This has raised questions among Member States and development finance observers regarding the coherence and accountability of PDB contributions to the 2030 Agenda.¹⁹² The *Pact for the Future* committed Member States to reform the international financial architecture through actions 44 and 50 in order to mobilize adequate capital for the SDGs and accelerate that reform to direct financing to developing countries most in need.¹⁹³ The Pact explicitly acknowledged that developing countries lack access to affordable long-term financing and that the SDGs will not be met unless the financing gap is closed.¹⁹⁴ It further urged MDBs to accelerate comprehensive reforms to their missions, operations, and financial capacity, while strengthening developing countries' representation in MDB governance.¹⁹⁵ Central to these reforms is the discussion around increasing paid-in capital and more efficiently using MDB balance sheets, to scale available resources from MDBs to \$500 billion per year.¹⁹⁶ This directly implicates ECOSOC's coordinating mandate, as only ECOSOC, through the Financing for Development Forum and the Funding Compact, is institutionally positioned to ensure intergovernmental coherence and accountability in aligning MDB reform with the 2030 Agenda.¹⁹⁷

Increasing Cooperation between Member States to Advance Progress on the SDGs

The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* calls for urgent multilateralism, based on evidence, equity, and mutual accountability.¹⁹⁸ This report identified six critical transitions requiring concentrated effort: food systems, energy access, digital transformation, education, jobs and social protection, as well as climate and biodiversity action.¹⁹⁹ SDG 17 specifically calls for strengthening the means for the

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. 2015. pp. 15-16.

¹⁸⁹ Integrated National Financing Frameworks. *Financing strategy*. 2026.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. 2015. pp. 15-16.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, Joint SDG Fund. *How We Work: Financing, Partnerships and SDG Delivery*. 2026.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024. pp. 31-34.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. p. 10.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.



implementation and revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development, recognizing that multilateral cooperation is foundational to achieving the 2030 Agenda.²⁰⁰

VNRs, through which Member States present national SDG progress to the High-Level Political Forum, constitute a central mechanism for mutual accountability, peer learning, and mobilization of political will.²⁰¹ The *2025 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*, drawing on 35 national reviews presented at the HLPF, found that while countries are increasingly embedding the SDGs into national development plans, persistent data gaps, fragile financing structures, and uneven statistical capacity continue to obstruct evidence-based implementation.²⁰² VNRs have consistently identified South-South and triangular cooperation as essential means of bridging financing and implementation gaps in the final five years before 2030.²⁰³ South-South cooperation refers to collaboration among developing countries themselves, while triangular cooperation involves two or more developing countries partnering with a developed country or multilateral organization to implement shared development objectives.²⁰⁴

The 2025 ECOSOC Coordination Segment and the Secretary-General's *State of the South-South cooperation* (A/80/256) report together highlight that South-South and triangular cooperation have become indispensable channels for accelerating SDG implementation, particularly for developing countries facing compounding crises in the final years of the 2030 Agenda.²⁰⁵ South-South and triangular cooperation represent growing channels through which developing countries share knowledge, technology, and financial resources in support of the 2030 Agenda.²⁰⁶ The Secretary-General's 2025 *State of the South-South cooperation* report highlights how countries of the Global South are forging partnerships to tackle poverty, climate change, digital divides, and debt distress through context-specific, people-centered strategies.²⁰⁷ The report underscores that these efforts are particularly critical for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, which face disproportionate structural challenges in the post-COVID era.²⁰⁸ Compounding crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, rising debt distress affecting 60% of the poorest countries, and a \$4 trillion SDG financing gap, have disproportionately set back the Global South, making South-South and triangular cooperation critical, with tangible outcomes including vaccine distribution, climate partnerships, digital initiatives, and Southern development banks deploying tens of billions in pandemic recovery financing.²⁰⁹

As of 2025, fewer than 30% of Member States have trend data unavailable for SDG 5 and SDG 13 (climate action).²¹⁰ The Joint SDG Fund's model demonstrates the potential of inter-agency,

²⁰⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015. pp. 10-11.

²⁰¹ United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *High-Level Political Forum 2025*. 2025.

²⁰² United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *2025 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. 2025. p. 2.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *2025 Coordination Segment*. 2025.

²⁰⁶ El-Ferri. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What is South-South cooperation, and can it be the gateway to a fairer world?*. 2025.

²⁰⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *State of the South-South cooperation: Report of the Secretary-General* (A/80/256). 2025. pp. 2-3.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 17-19.

²¹⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. pp. 5-6.



multi-stakeholder cooperation with \$380 million in commitments from 16 Member State governments and private sector partners.²¹¹ The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* states that data gaps represent a critical challenge for SDG cooperation.²¹² The suspension of development data programs globally reflects a broader trend of chronic underfunding of statistical systems, which are too often treated as technical afterthoughts rather than foundational investments, exposing the systemic risk of building global data infrastructure on a narrow and fragile base of external support.²¹³ Without reliable, disaggregated data, governments and multilateral institutions cannot identify implementation gaps, allocate resources effectively, or maintain mutual accountability across the SDGs most critical to leaving no one behind.²¹⁴

Technology transfer and innovation-sharing represent critical but underutilized tools for accelerating SDG implementation, yet persistent digital and technological divides continue to undermine the structural conditions for equitable multilateral cooperation in the final years of the 2030 Agenda.²¹⁵ General Assembly resolution 79/334 (2025) emphasized that enhanced cooperation on science, technology, and innovation must be a central pillar of the international effort to accelerate SDG implementation in the remaining years of achieving the 2030 Agenda.²¹⁶ Technology transfer and innovation-sharing are among the few mechanisms capable of compressing decades of development progress into the five remaining years before 2030, yet with only 36% of the population in LDCs having Internet access as of 2022, deliberate multilateral cooperation to bridge the digital divide remains a prerequisite for equitable partnership.²¹⁷

Sovereign debt distress has emerged as one of the most acute structural barriers to SDG financing, requiring coordinated multilateral reform in the final years of the 2030 Agenda.²¹⁸ Published in June 2025, the report *Confronting the Debt Crisis: 11 Actions to Unlock Sustainable Financing* of the Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt identified three categories of action encompassing multilateral system reforms, cooperation between countries, and national-level measures, including reforming the G20 Common Framework, normalizing debt service pauses during crises, and rechanneling Special Drawing Rights through MDBs.²¹⁹ This report underscores the urgency of coordinated multilateral action, as the SDG financing gap has expanded from \$2.5 trillion in 2014 to over \$4 trillion in 2024, with 3.4 billion people now living in countries spending more on interest payments than on health and education.²²⁰

²¹¹ United Nations, Joint SDG Fund. *A Year of Impact for the People and the Planet: Joint SDG Fund Annual Report 2024*. 2024.

²¹² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. pp. 5-6.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets (A/RES/79/334)*. 2025. pp. 3-6.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ United Nations, Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt. *Confronting the Debt Crisis: 11 Actions to Unlock Sustainable Financing - Report of the UN Secretary General's Expert Group on Debt*. 2025. pp. 2-5.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.



Conclusion

With the 2030 deadline four years away and only 35% of SDG targets on track, the international community confronts a harsh reality.²²¹ The structural barriers to SDG implementation and financing are well-documented, encompassing a \$4 trillion annual financing gap, record debt servicing burdens, declining ODA, widening digital divides, and persistent data deficiencies across the Global South.²²² The Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt has identified this reality plainly: developing countries are trapped in a vicious cycle of rising interest payments and shrinking fiscal space, with 3.4 billion people now living in countries spending more on debt servicing than on health and education, and ODA falling by 7.1% in 2024 alone, with further cuts projected to bring disbursements to approximately 20% below 2023 levels by 2025.²²³

Through its coordination mandate, ECOSOC is uniquely positioned to drive integrated and coherent action across the pillars of SDG implementation and financing together with the HLPF, the United Nations development system, and the Funding Compact.²²⁴ Existing multilateral tools and frameworks require additional resources and political agreements to address these barriers and to deliver more transformative results.²²⁵ The *Pact for the Future* and the Seville Commitment together represent the most detailed multilateral commitments since 2015 to reform the international financial architecture, address the sovereign debt crisis, and mobilize public and private finance at the scale required to honor the promises of the 2030 Agenda.²²⁶ However, these commitments require time-bound action to translate political declarations into measurable and accountable outcomes.²²⁷ Drawing on the full architecture of commitments established from the AAAA through the Seville Commitment, accelerating SDG implementation in the final years of the 2030 Agenda will require Member States to leverage PDBs as strategic instruments of coordinated multilateral action, directing concessional finance, blended mechanisms, and South-South partnerships toward the structural gaps that market forces and declining ODA alone cannot close.²²⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What specific reforms to the international financial architecture or South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms would have the greatest impact on accelerating national SDG implementation? To what

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *High-Level Political Forum 2025*. 2025.

²²³ United Nations, Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt. *Confronting the Debt Crisis: 11 Actions to Unlock Sustainable Financing - Report of the UN Secretary General's Expert Group on Debt*. 2025. pp. 2-5.

²²⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *2025 Coordination Segment*. 2025; United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Framework for Global-level Monitoring and Reporting on the Funding Compact for the UN's Support to the SDGs*. 2025.

²²⁵ United Nations, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *High-Level Political Forum 2025*. 2025.

²²⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. 2025. p. 43.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *What are Public Development Banks? Your questions answered*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *State of the South-South cooperation: Report of the Secretary-General (A/80/256)*. 2025. pp. 2-3.



extent does the current structure of South-South and triangular cooperation adequately address the specific needs of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS? What institutional reforms or additional resources would be required to close the gap between political commitment and operational delivery? How can ECOSOC strengthen the accountability mechanisms for the United Nations Funding Compact?



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2026 from: <https://unctad.org/publication/sdg-pulse-2025>

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