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Economic and Social Council Background Guide 2026

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Jessie Luévano and Kathryn Slotterback (Conference A), and Director Johannes Schmidl and Assistant Director Elias Sepulveda (Conference B). Jessie graduated from Hamline University as a double major, earning a BA in Political Science and Global Studies. She is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota and works at a think tank focused on state politics and budget. She is a policy analyst tasked with leading work in health care and childcare policy. Kathryn Slotterback holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She's based out of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where she works as an Associate Team Lead for a global tool manufacturing company. Johannes studied English, Political Science, and Philosophy at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and works as a secondary school teacher. Elias studies International Development and Digital Humanities at the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently works for a non-profit, researching interventions to mitigate emerging technology risks. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Ashlee Ann Rolheiser (Conference A) and Karla Paola Chávez (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Financing for Climate, Biodiversity, and Ecosystems
2. Addressing Challenges to Economic Participation to Reduce Global Inequalities

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 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, 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 the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

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

Jessie Luévano, Director
Kathryn Slotterback, Assistant Director
Conference A

Johannes Schmidl, Director
Elias Sepulveda, Assistant Director
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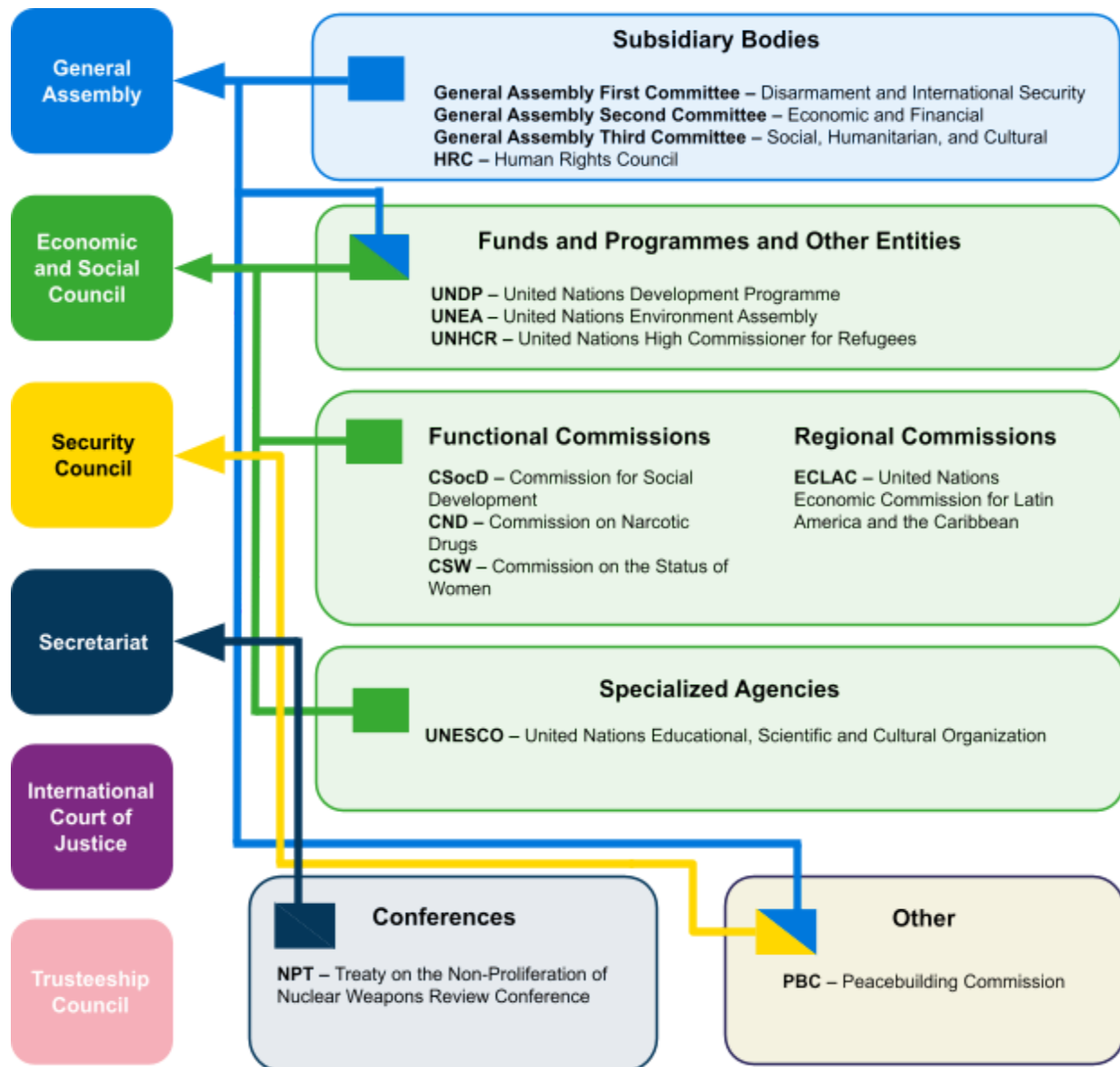
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. 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

The Economic and Social Council (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 As such, ECOSOC is highly involved in coordinating efforts to achieve the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) 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

In line with the Charter of the United Nations, the mandate of ECOSOC can be summarized as:

- 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.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 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*. 2025. p. 3.

⁹ Ibid.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)*. N.d.



Governance, Funding, and Structure

ECOSOC comprises 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, 12 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 UN.¹⁷ More than 6,000 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 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 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.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

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.

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*. 2025. 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.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.



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 United Nations specialized agencies.²⁶

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.



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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 7 November 2025 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 7 November 2025 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 7 November 2025 from: <https://hlpf.un.org/structure>



1. Financing for Climate, Biodiversity, and Ecosystems

"Climate finance is not charity, it's an investment. Climate action is not optional, it's imperative. Both are indispensable: to a liveable world for all humanity."²⁷

Introduction

The international community is encouraged to make more focused financial investments with climate as a core principle.²⁸ The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recently highlighted the need for financing that focuses on climate, biodiversity, and ecosystems in the 2024 Humanitarian Affairs segment, centering humanitarian assistance in the face of climate change.²⁹ There is an estimated annual \$700 billion gap in financing for what is required to effectively protect and restore nature.³⁰ In addition to a lack of funding, there is an estimated \$7 trillion annually allocated to industries and projects that have a negative effect on the environment.³¹ The *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (GBF) (2022) calls for a substantial increase in investment from public and private sources.³² Both preventing climate-related disasters and recovering from them require more investments from the global community than what is currently being given.³³

Humankind is causing climate change, which is damaging global ecosystems at a rapid pace and creating an increasing need for climate finance.³⁴ Climate finance draws funds from public, private, and alternative sources at local and transnational levels, which support a wide breadth of actions and policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.³⁵ The United Nations defines climate change as "long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns."³⁶ While some climate change is natural, human activities, like burning fossil fuels and cutting down forests, indicate that the world is heating up faster than at any other time in documented history.³⁷ Ecosystems are a complex group of plants, animals, and microorganisms that work together as one unit, and are deteriorating because of climate change.³⁸ Climate change harms ecosystems by worsening and intensifying forest fires, extreme weather, and the presence of invasive pests and diseases, all of which cause extinctions and decrease biodiversity.³⁹ The former president of

²⁷ Guterres. United Nations, Secretary-General. *Secretary-General's remarks to World Leaders Climate Action Summit at COP29 [as delivered]*. 2024.

²⁸ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

²⁹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *2024 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment and ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development*. 2024.

³⁰ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022. p. 9.

³¹ United Nations Development Programme. *State of Finance for Nature*. 2023. p. 8.

³² Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022. p. 11.

³³ United Nations Environment Programme. *Governments adopt first global strategy to finance biodiversity: Implications for financial institutions*. 2025.

³⁴ United Nations, Climate Action. *What Is Climate Change?*. N.d.

³⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Introduction to Climate Finance*. N.d.

³⁶ United Nations, Climate Action. *What Is Climate Change?*. N.d.

³⁷ Ibid; United Nations, Climate Action. *Causes and Effects of Climate Change*. 2025.

³⁸ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

³⁹ United Nations, Climate Action. *What Is Climate Change?*. N.d.



ECOSOC, Munir Akram, emphasized the importance of biodiversity, saying that is is what allowed for the creation of great civilizations, food, water, and medicine.⁴⁰

All of humankind is hurt by climate change, with people in developing countries being disproportionately vulnerable.⁴¹ In 2024, nearly 46 million people were displaced because of weather-related disasters.⁴² Most displaced persons are from developing countries, where recovery from climate disasters is made more challenging by higher rates of poverty, conflict, and food insecurity.⁴³ While people in lower-income countries are more likely to be harmed by climate change, they are contributing less on average to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.⁴⁴ Currently, the 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions contribute 34-45% of global household GHG emissions, while the bottom 50% contribute 13-15%.⁴⁵

Socioeconomic and structural inequalities mean that certain people have fewer financial resources to recover and adapt to a changing climate.⁴⁶ Socioeconomic factors mean that most of these individuals are people in low-income countries and are more likely to face loss and damage from climate disasters, but less likely to recover.⁴⁷ Structural inequalities refer to how people in historically marginalized groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and Indigenous populations, are disproportionately harmed.⁴⁸ These groups tend to have fewer monetary resources to cope with climate change, and are more likely to have worse health outcomes, lose access to food, experience water scarcity, and become refugees in the face of climate-related disasters.⁴⁹

Climate finance draws from a variety of public and private sources, with the goal of financing to mitigate and adapt to climate change.⁵⁰ Climate change is occurring at a rapid pace and negatively impacting both ecosystems and the biodiversity within them.⁵¹ When used in a way that centers the environment and communities, climate finance can be used to encourage nature-based solutions and help recovery from climate disasters.⁵²

International and Regional Framework

The United Nations upholds that Member States are legally obligated to provide funding towards climate objectives.⁵³ General Assembly resolution 44/228 (1989) on the "United Nations Conference on

⁴⁰ United Nations News. *LIVE: UN chief, Prince Charles, rally 'coalition of the willing' to end biodiversity destruction*. 2020.

⁴¹ United Nations, Climate Action. *Five ways the climate crisis impacts human security*. N.d.

⁴² United Nations Office at Geneva. *Number of internally displaced breaks new record with no let-up in conflicts, disasters*. 2025.

⁴³ United Nations, Climate Action. *Five ways the climate crisis impacts human security*. N.d.

⁴⁴ United Nations, Climate Action. *What Is Climate Change?*. N.d.

⁴⁵ Shukla et al. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022 Mitigation of Climate Change Summary for Policymakers*. 2022. p. 13.

⁴⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Climate change is a matter of justice - here's why*. 2023.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bhargawa et al. World Economic Forum. *The climate crisis disproportionately hits the poor. How can we protect them?*. 2023.

⁵⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Introduction to Climate Finance*. N.d.

⁵¹ United Nations, Climate Action. *Causes and Effects of Climate Change*. N.d.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.



Environment and Development” recognizes that financial assistance to developing countries is necessary for them to participate in global environmental protection efforts.⁵⁴ It emphasizes that developed Member States, being the largest contributors to global GHG emissions, are largely responsible for reducing global environmental damage.⁵⁵ The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, codifies the principles of General Assembly resolution 44/228 into legal obligations.⁵⁶ The UNFCCC directs more developed Member States to provide additional financial resources to meet the costs of new climate adaptation projects in developing countries.⁵⁷

General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015) on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2030 Agenda) addresses economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.⁵⁸ The 2030 Agenda establishes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are universally applicable with a target achievement date of 2030, covering environmental goals such as biodiversity, marine resource conservation, and sustainable energy, as well as economic and social goals.⁵⁹ The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that these goals are interrelated and are intended to be addressed concurrently by the global community as part of a sustainable global ecosystem.⁶⁰

While the 2030 Agenda provides objectives for sustainable development, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (AAAA) (2015) specifically addresses the sources of financing for achieving these goals.⁶¹ The AAAA was adopted alongside the 2030 Agenda to harness financing to achieve the SDGs.⁶² Prior to 2015, the international community had been providing funding in the form of grants and loans from public sources for specific projects that address GHG emissions or specific development goals.⁶³ However, Member States recognized that traditional sources of funding would be insufficient to achieve the vision outlined by the SDGs.⁶⁴ Instead, the AAAA focuses on aligning global financial flows with sustainable development outcomes.⁶⁵ It outlines the implementation of financial flows around seven comprehensive action areas, such as domestic public resources and international development cooperation.⁶⁶

The *Paris Agreement*, adopted in 2015, addresses the need for climate-related financial support.⁶⁷ The *Paris Agreement* reiterates that developed Member States shall provide \$100 billion annually through 2025 to assist developing countries with climate-related issues.⁶⁸ The *Paris Agreement* also encourages

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (A/RES/44/228)*. 1989.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Introduction to Climate Finance*. 2025.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.

⁶⁸ Ibid.



the wider international community to provide additional financial support voluntarily, not just developed Member States.⁶⁹ Member States are expected to produce a nationally-determined contribution (NDC) plan that reflects their commitments to reducing GHG emissions.⁷⁰ UNFCCC regional collaboration centres assist Member States in implementing the *Paris Agreement* with technical assistance tailored to local climate action needs.⁷¹

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (2015) provides Member States with concrete actions to reduce disaster risk and effectively respond after disasters occur.⁷² The SFDRR sets four specific priorities that address the need to better understand disaster risk, strengthen policies on disaster risk, increase investment into disaster risk reduction and resilience, and enhance preparedness for post-disaster recovery.⁷³ The SFDRR outlines the need for financial investment in both adaptation, adjusting current systems to limit damage due to disasters, and resilience, recovering from disasters in an efficient and timely manner.⁷⁴ Increasing investment in disaster risk reduction and recovery can reduce impacts on local ecosystems and biodiversity.⁷⁵ For instance, funding for upgraded irrigation systems improves water efficiency and reduces overconsumption, leading to more sustainable water usage.⁷⁶

The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) was adopted in 2024 as the next iteration of the \$100 billion per year goal set forth by the *Paris Agreement*.⁷⁷ Adopted at the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), the NCQG raised the commitment from public sources to \$300 billion annually by 2035, providing a clear and accountable commitment from developed Member States.⁷⁸ However, recognizing that the scale of finance needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda is much larger than the core commitment, the NCQG also outlines an additional goal of up to \$1.3 trillion annually from other flows such as private financing and international public funds.⁷⁹

The GBF and United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UN Decade) commit to preserving biodiversity and restoring ecosystems.⁸⁰ The GBF was adopted under the auspices of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (1992), a multilateral treaty focused on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.⁸¹ The GBF outlines a set of global targets towards biodiversity, including \$200 billion of financial resources towards biodiversity-related funding and conservation of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and oceans.⁸² The UN Decade serves as an implementation plan for

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Regional Collaboration Centres*. N.d.

⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*. 2015.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Guide for Adaptation and Resilience Finance*. 2024. p. 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 12.

⁷⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance*. N.d.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022; United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. *The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*. 2021.

⁸¹ Convention on Biological Diversity. *Sustaining Life on Earth*. 2009.

⁸² Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.



the GBF and focuses on preventing, halting, and reversing ecosystem degradation to recover biodiversity and improve human health.⁸³ Additionally, it provides a strategic framework to address six key barriers to large-scale ecosystem restoration such as limited awareness, few investments into large-scale restoration, and a lack of long-term research, and provides three primary pathways to addressing these barriers: building a global movement, generating political support, and building technical capacity.⁸⁴

Role of the International System

ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies provide support for climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem finance that ranges from consensus-building in the international community to direct technical assistance for Member States.⁸⁵ Although ECOSOC does not directly fund climate finance projects, ECOSOC convenes stakeholders across the international community to reach the consensus needed in order to support and sustain these efforts.⁸⁶ The AAAA mandates that ECOSOC hold the Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up (FfD Forum) to review trends in developmental finance and the means of implementing the SDGs.⁸⁷ The 2024 FfD Forum concluded that a lack of financing was at the center of the sustainable development crisis.⁸⁸ These conclusions are forwarded on to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), also held under the auspices of ECOSOC, which reviews progress on the SDGs.⁸⁹ The 2025 HLPF highlighted the \$4 trillion annual gap in financing needed to achieve the SDGs.⁹⁰ They found that SDG 14 (life below water) is one of the least funded SDGs and needs significant finance in order to preserve ocean ecosystems and biodiversity.⁹¹

In coordination with ECOSOC, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) directly support Member States in achieving climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem finance goals.⁹² UNEP provides policy and framework recommendations on the climate agenda as the environmental technical expertise of the United Nations.⁹³ The UNEP Finance Initiative is a global partnership with banks, insurers, and investors that has developed foundational frameworks that provide a blueprint for aligning the global financial industry with the *Paris Agreement* and the SDGs.⁹⁴ For instance, signatories of the *Principles for Responsible Banking* commit to reducing the

⁸³ United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. *The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*. 2021.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC at a Glance*. 2025.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Report of the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up*. 2024.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Sustainable Development Goals*. 2015.

⁹⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2025 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council on 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"*. 2025. p. 16.

⁹¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2025 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council on 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"*. 2025. p. 16.

⁹² United Nations Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC at a Glance*. 2025.

⁹³ United Nations Environment Programme. *About Us*. 2025.

⁹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *United Nations Environment - Finance Initiative*. N.d.



negative impacts to people and the environment resulting from their activities, conduct periodic reviews of their alignment with the *Principles for Responsible Banking*, and work with their clients to encourage sustainable practices.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, UNDP provides direct technical assistance to over 140 Member States through its Climate Promise initiative.⁹⁶ This support helps Member States build the capacity to access climate funds, design fundable projects, and integrate climate action into their national development plans.⁹⁷ The UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) helps Member States quantify their biodiversity finance needs and identify ways to mobilize additional resources.⁹⁸ In March 2025, BIOFIN trained community members in Dziuché, Mexico to use tools such as camera traps, mist nets, and footprint molds to document local biodiversity for future conservation planning and decision-making.⁹⁹

Multilateral funds are financial mechanisms supported by multiple Member States as a key source of money for climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem-related development.¹⁰⁰ The UNFCCC establishes a financial mechanism that provides specific channels for public finance, primarily the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the Adaptation Fund (AF).¹⁰¹ The GEF funds projects that address a broader range of issues, such as biodiversity loss and land degradation, through grants.¹⁰² The GCF focuses on climate mitigation and adaptation projects in developing countries by providing grants and guarantees that incentivize private finance.¹⁰³ The AF supports adaptation projects by providing money directly to accredited National Implementing Entities rather than being managed by the fund itself.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the *Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030* supports the implementation of the UN Decade through addressing biodiversity loss, supporting green jobs, enhancing natural resource bases, and restoring terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems to mitigate the impacts of climate change.¹⁰⁵

Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) provide large-scale direct funding for climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem projects, as well as policy and technical support.¹⁰⁶ MDBs are composed of multiple Member States that contribute funds to a collective pool to provide loans for development projects.¹⁰⁷ This finance supports a vast range of projects, from resilient infrastructure and clean energy systems to climate-smart agriculture.¹⁰⁸ Beyond direct funding, MDBs provide essential technical assistance and support for developing and implementing NDCs through evaluating proposals for technical feasibility, economic viability, and social inclusivity.¹⁰⁹ This support may include modeling sustainable transition goals, building

⁹⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *About the Principles*. N.d.

⁹⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Helping countries reach their climate goals*. 2025.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2021.

⁹⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *How BIOFIN is empowering local communities to monitor biodiversity and protect ecosystems*. 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Osuna. Independent Global Stocktake. *Accessing UNFCCC-linked multilateral climate funds: lived experiences*. 2022. pp. 5-7.

¹⁰¹ Global Environment Facility. *Enhancing access and increasing impact: the role of the multilateral climate funds*. 2025.

¹⁰² Global Environment Facility. *Who We Are*. 2025.

¹⁰³ United Nations Environment Programme. *Green Climate Fund*. 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Adaptation Fund. *Adaptation Fund*. 2024.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. *Multi-Partner Trust Fund of the UN Decade*. N.d.

¹⁰⁶ World Bank Group. *Multilateral Development Banks*. 2016. pp. 6-8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. pp. 6-8.

¹⁰⁸ African Development Bank et al. *Viewpoint Note: MDBs Working as a System for Impact and Scale*. 2024. pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 2-3.



capacity for government institutions, and providing policy recommendations for attracting additional public and private investment.¹¹⁰

Regional partnerships provide region-specific recommendations for financing for climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem projects and frameworks tailored to their unique contexts.¹¹¹ For instance, the African Union's Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy addresses climate action through climate justice, emphasizes the region's vulnerability to climate change, and prioritizes adaptation finance.¹¹² The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has established the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF) to provide technical support for identifying commercially-viable green projects, as well as loans to cover upfront capital costs.¹¹³ Consequently, the ACGF increases the likelihood that these climate projects will succeed and attract more private investment.¹¹⁴ These regional partnerships serve key roles in aligning global climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem finance with specific priorities and needs that differ across regions.¹¹⁵

Redirecting Environmentally Harmful Subsidies towards Nature-based Solutions

Financing for activities driving environmental degradation vastly outpaces the financing allocated to sustainable development and hinders progress towards climate-related goals.¹¹⁶ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the amount of available funding for sustainable development is only \$5.24 trillion.¹¹⁷ This falls short of the estimated \$9.24 trillion required to meet the SDGs.¹¹⁸ In contrast, in *State of Finance for Nature 2023*, UNEP estimates that global finance flows with a direct negative impact on nature amount to nearly \$7 trillion annually.¹¹⁹ UNEP defines nature-negative finance as investments that have a direct detrimental impact on nature.¹²⁰ The report identifies construction, electric utilities, real estate, oil and gas, and the food and tobacco sectors as the five key industries where these harmful financial flows are linked to the destruction of vital ecosystems such as forests and wetlands.¹²¹

Government-supported programs designed to stabilize prices for consumers or producers often contribute significantly to nature-negative finances.¹²² Also known as environmentally-harmful subsidies, these programs are prevalent across several key sectors in various forms, such as monetary transfers, tax

¹¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

¹¹¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Regional Cooperation, Initiatives Vital to Building Resilience, Delivering on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Speakers Tell High-Level Political Forum (ECOSOC/7140)*. 2023.

¹¹² African Union. *African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)*. 2022. pp. 2-3.

¹¹³ Asian Development Bank. *ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF) Overview*. 2025.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Regional Cooperation, Initiatives Vital to Building Resilience, Delivering on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Speakers Tell High-Level Political Forum (ECOSOC/7140)*. 2023.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *State of Finance for Nature 2023*. 2023. pp. 1-3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 1-3.

¹¹⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Finance for sustainable development*. N.d.

¹¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *State of Finance for Nature 2023*. 2023. pp. 1-3.

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp. 1-3.

¹²¹ Ibid. pp. 1-3.

¹²² Damania et al. The World Bank. *Detox Development: Repurposing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies*. 2023.



breaks, and price supports.¹²³ In the fossil fuel industry, government subsidies are used to lower and stabilize the price of energy.¹²⁴ Subsidies for fossil fuels totaled \$7 trillion in 2022, encouraging wasteful consumption and making renewable energy sources less competitive.¹²⁵ Explicit subsidies, such as regulated pricing for gasoline, electricity, and natural gas accounted for \$1.3 trillion.¹²⁶ The remaining implicit subsidies represent unpriced negative impacts on the environment, such as local air pollution and climate damage.¹²⁷ The fishing industry also receives substantial subsidies that are a primary driver of overfishing and the depletion of global fish stocks.¹²⁸ By providing subsidies for fuel and boat construction, governments enable larger fleets to fish for longer stretches of time further from shore, leading to overfishing and harm to marine ecosystems.¹²⁹

Policies that address harmful subsidies can disincentivize environmentally-damaging activities and redirect investment towards sustainable development.¹³⁰ The World Trade Organization *Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies* (2022) establishes binding international rules designed to curb the most harmful forms of fisheries subsidies, but specifically exempts developing countries' subsidies for small-scale and artisanal fleets.¹³¹ In Ecuador, the government recently moved to eliminate diesel subsidies for its large, industrial tuna fleet while exempting small-scale artisanal fishing vessels from the subsidy cut.¹³² This allowed the government to achieve significant savings and reduce incentives for industrial overfishing while protecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable coastal communities, who depend on artisanal fishing for food and income.¹³³ Indonesia undertook significant fuel subsidy reforms in 2015 by eliminating most gas subsidies and lowering the diesel subsidy.¹³⁴ Over \$15 billion was reallocated to tangible development priorities, such as: a housing project for 60,000 low-income households; expanded clean water access to 10.3 million households; and cash transfers to regions and villages for other special development projects.¹³⁵

Financing to Repair Damage from Climate-Related Disasters

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction determined that more resources are needed to ensure that climate disasters do not reverse progress towards the 2030 Agenda.¹³⁶ Climate-related disasters such as flooding, droughts, and cyclones are increasing in frequency, intensity, and duration and

¹²³ Damania et al. The World Bank. *Detox Development: Repurposing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies*. 2023.

¹²⁴ Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform: Removing harmful incentives and appropriately pricing fossil fuel products*. 2024. pp. 2-3.

¹²⁵ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

¹²⁶ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

¹²⁷ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

¹²⁸ Skerrett et al. Oceana. *Assessing the spatial burden of harmful fisheries subsidies*. 2021. pp. 1-4.

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp. 1-4.

¹³⁰ Damania et al. World Bank. *Detox Development: Repurposing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies*. 2023.

¹³¹ Irschlinger. International Institute for Sustainable Development. *World Trade Organization Talks on Subsidies That Contribute to Overcapacity and Overfishing: What's on the table?*. 2024. pp. 2-4.

¹³² LatinNews. *In brief: Ecuador's gov't mulls tax reform as it looks to cut costs*. 2025.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Pradipto et al. International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Financing Development With Fossil Fuel Subsidies: The Reallocation Of Indonesia's Gasoline And Diesel Subsidies In 2015*. 2016. pp. 2-4.

¹³⁵ Ibid. pp. 2-4.

¹³⁶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Disaster risk reduction in Least Developed Countries*. N.d.



disproportionately affecting least-developed countries (LDCs).¹³⁷ Although LDCs are only responsible for less than 1.1% of the global GHG emissions, they have experienced a five-fold increase in the frequency of climate disasters and suffered nearly 70% of all deaths.¹³⁸ Climate disasters also negatively impact biodiversity and ecosystems in local communities.¹³⁹ For instance, since 2001, fires have burned over 10.3 million hectares of the Amazon, directly affecting the habitats of over 77% of the plant and vertebrate species in the area.¹⁴⁰ In 2017, Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico and damaged the largest, oldest, and historically most storm-resilient hardwoods that provided critical habitat for countless other organisms and are vital to the forest's structure and function.¹⁴¹ Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation negatively affect local communities' disaster recovery response and long-term economic outlook.¹⁴² The World Bank estimates that the collapse of just three select ecosystem services - wild pollination, food from marine fisheries, and timber from native forests - could result in a decline in global gross domestic product of \$2.7 trillion annually by 2030.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the World Bank estimates that extreme weather events push an additional 26 million people into poverty every year and could increase the total number of people living in poverty by 130 million by 2030.¹⁴⁴

Disaster experts suggest that communities are most empowered to repair climate-related damage to local ecosystems when decision-making power and resources are led by locals.¹⁴⁵ Humanitarian aid for post-disaster recovery can inadvertently undermine recovery when local communities are not prioritized.¹⁴⁶ For instance, following the 2010 floods in Pakistan, international aid agencies purchased bamboo at above-market rates, resulting in a reduced supply and price inflation that negatively affected small and medium-sized bamboo traders who were unable to compete with these agencies.¹⁴⁷ In comparison, cash and voucher assistance (CVA) is a tool for empowering disaster-affected populations, providing assistance through cash or vouchers redeemable for specific goods or services and allowing recipients to choose how to address their most pressing needs.¹⁴⁸ CVA can be used to promote more sustainable economic practices that assist in repairing local ecosystems.¹⁴⁹ Vouchers introduced in Imvepi and Rhino camps in Uganda for more efficient stoves reduced deforestation by decreasing firewood usage from 2.5 kg of wood per person per day to an average of 1.1 kg of wood.¹⁵⁰ Food and goods

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Johnson et al. World Bank Group. *The Economic Case for Nature: A Global Earth-Economy Model to Assess Development Policy Pathways*. 2021. p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ Price. Conservation International. *Study: How years of wildfires have devastated the Amazon*. 2021.

¹⁴¹ Krajick. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Puerto Rico: Hurricane Maria study warns: Climate-driven storms may raze many tropical forests*. 2019.

¹⁴² Johnson et al. World Bank Group. *The Economic Case for Nature: A Global Earth-Economy Model to Assess Development Policy Pathways*. 2021. p. 6.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ World Bank. *Climate Change Overview*. 2025.

¹⁴⁵ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. *Disaster recovery towards resilience: contributions of an assets-based community development approach*. 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. *Economic impacts of humanitarian aid*. 2016. pp. 1-5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 1-5.

¹⁴⁸ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. *Disaster recovery towards resilience: contributions of an assets-based community development approach*. 2017; Jeong et al. World Bank Group. *Impact Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance Programs: A Review of the Evidence on Cash and In-Kind Transfers in Humanitarian Settings*. 2022. pp. 2-4.

¹⁴⁹ Brangeon et al. Groupe URD. *The Environmental Impact of Cash and Voucher Assistance*. 2020. p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 16.



purchased with CVA from local markets instead of being imported from abroad can support the repair of local ecosystems that are necessary for local markets to function.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

To achieve financing for climate, biodiversity, and ecosystems, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies convene stakeholders to support and sustain climate financing efforts.¹⁵² In the face of a changing climate, climate financing is more important now than ever before.¹⁵³ The adverse effects of climate change impact all of humankind, but especially individuals in developing countries and vulnerable populations.¹⁵⁴ Financing for the climate is currently underfunded and includes subsidies that are harmful to the climate.¹⁵⁵ The 2030 Agenda, *Paris Agreement*, and other foundational documents emphasize the need for Member States to monitor GHG emissions and contribute financially to assist developing countries in preparing for and recovering from the effects of climate change.¹⁵⁶

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can ECOSOC encourage more climate-minded financing from public and private sources in the international community? How can ECOSOC provide guidance for alternatives to nature-negative financial subsidies? What strategies can help Member States recover after a climate disaster? How can these strategies be mindful of vulnerable populations? How can ECOSOC provide guidance post-climate disaster that empowers local communities?

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 28.

¹⁵² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *ECOSOC at a Glance*. 2025. p. 2.

¹⁵³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Introduction to Climate Finance*. N.d.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, Climate Action. *Five ways the climate crisis impacts human security*. N.d.

¹⁵⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Finance for sustainable development*. N.d.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.



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https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Multilateral-Development-Banks_WBG_IATF-Issue-Brief.pdf.



2. Addressing Challenges to Economic Participation to Reduce Global Inequalities

"To accelerate progress towards social justice and the SDGs will require innovative solutions."¹⁵⁷

Introduction

Inequality is a multidimensional phenomenon, and despite successes in combating global inequalities since the 2000s, they persist as a defining challenge for the international community.¹⁵⁸ The United Nations system works to reduce inequality, which it defines along two axes: inequality between and within countries.¹⁵⁹ For the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), inequality is a complex phenomenon including equal access to resources, opportunities, skills, and recognition.¹⁶⁰ Global inequality thus refers to the uneven distribution of these factors across countries and within populations, with financial inequality as the predominant statistical metric.¹⁶¹ While the trend of inequality between countries has decreased, about two thirds of the global population lives in countries where inequality has grown since 1990.¹⁶² Income and wealth inequality remain high, with the richest 10% of the global population earning over 50% of global income.¹⁶³ Inequality has adverse effects on social mobility, political instability, and social cohesion, and can undermine development efforts.¹⁶⁴ This slows progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work), and SDG 10 (reduce inequalities).¹⁶⁵ The root causes of global inequality are complex and interconnected, ranging from colonial legacies to structural problems, such as unequal access to education and healthcare, trade imbalances, and systemic discrimination.¹⁶⁶

A lack of economic participation is a significant driver of global inequality, primarily resulting from a lack of participation in the workforce, often due to systemic lack of access to or social exclusion from the economy.¹⁶⁷ Economic participation includes access to employment in the formal economy, fair wages, entrepreneurship, asset ownership, and financial systems.¹⁶⁸ The individuals excluded from these systems are often women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized ethnic groups, which puts

¹⁵⁷ International Labour Organization. *ILO Flagship report World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*. 2025. p. XIV.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations, System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *Inequalities*. N.d.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Inequality – Bridging the Divide*. N.d.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality (E/2019/65)*. 2019. p. 3.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2019*. 2019. p. 64; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality (E/2019/65)*. 2019. p. 3, 15.

¹⁶² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs et. al. *World Social Report 2025: A New Policy Consensus to Accelerate Social Progress*. 2025. p. 3.

¹⁶³ World Inequality Lab. *World Inequality Report 2022*. 2021. p. 10, 15.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*. 2020. pp. 45-48.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 45-48.

¹⁶⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Income Inequality: The Gap Between Rich and Poor*. 2015. pp. 13-14; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*. 2020. p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ International Labour Organization. *World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2020*. 2020. pp. 13, 34-35.

¹⁶⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *Australia's Welfare 2023: Chapter 2 – Economic Participation*. 2013. p. 2.



them at a heightened risk of poverty and limits their upward mobility and their capacity to rise to a higher socio-economic position.¹⁶⁹ For instance, women make up more than half of the people living in extreme poverty while performing approximately 76% of total unpaid care work globally, which constrains their ability to participate in paid labor markets.¹⁷⁰ The gender gap is also evident in the percentage of youth not in employment, education, or training, which reached a recent peak in 2020, with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) data showing that 31.1% of women and 15.8% of men were outside economic participation.¹⁷¹ While these peak numbers have decreased to 28.2% for women and 13.1% for men by 2025, they remain high.¹⁷² Over 1.4 billion people worldwide lack access to a formal bank account, limiting their capacity to save, invest, or secure credit, which constitutes a structural impediment to economic participation for these unbanked adults.¹⁷³ The exclusion of large portions of the global population from economic systems can be perpetuated across generations, restricting their capacity to overcome transgenerational inequalities.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, ECOSOC sees inequality as a risk factor that increases the likelihood of problems beyond the economic dimension, such as violence or insecurity.¹⁷⁵

Barriers to economic participation are multifaceted and systemic, rooted in structural inequalities embedded in legal systems, labor markets, education, infrastructure, and technology.¹⁷⁶ Systemic barriers within a national system include legal and policy restrictions, such as unequal inheritance laws or limitations on land ownership.¹⁷⁷ They often prevent women and minority groups from fully engaging in economic life, leading to about 2.4 billion women globally lacking equal economic rights under the law.¹⁷⁸ Discrimination in labor markets leads to wage gaps and employment disparities, with only three out of ten persons with disabilities participating in the labor market, hindering their inclusion.¹⁷⁹ Geographical and infrastructural limitations also play a role.¹⁸⁰ In low-income and rural areas, limited access to electricity, transportation, and digital connectivity restricts economic opportunities in the digital age, leading to a digital divide.¹⁸¹ The digital divide is the gap in access to information and communication technology (ICT) between and within countries, communities, and individuals.¹⁸² ICTs are technological tools that can create, store, and exchange information, and can include computers, the internet, telephones, and

¹⁶⁹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. *Upward mobility*. 2025; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development*. 2016. pp. 2, 30, 42.

¹⁷⁰ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018. p. xxix.

¹⁷¹ International Labour Organization. *ILO Flagship report World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*. 2025. p. 7.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁷³ World Bank Group. *Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19*. 2022. pp. 4, 15.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2023-24*. 2024. p. 67.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/79/3)*. 2024. p. 30.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities*. 2020.

¹⁷⁷ World Bank Group. *Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have Same Economic Rights as Men*. 2022.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ International Labour Organization. *New ILO Working Paper Exposes Significant 'Disability Wage Gap'*. 2024.

¹⁸⁰ World Bank Group. *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives*. 2021. p. 158.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 158.

¹⁸² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *WSIS+20 Review Action Lines Milestones, Challenges and Emerging Trends beyond 2025*. 2025.



broadcasting and recording technologies.¹⁸³ Globally, only 70% of people have access to the internet, with the digital divide most pronounced in least developed countries, where 40% of men and 29% of women are connected.¹⁸⁴ ECOSOC highlights the importance of inclusive participation across issues, from fighting poverty to the development of the digital economy.¹⁸⁵

International and Regional Framework

Reducing inequalities entails the universal recognition and exercise of human rights, including the right to work.¹⁸⁶ In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), setting the foundation for equal rights for everyone.¹⁸⁷ Notably, Article 22 outlines the right of every person to economic, social, and cultural rights both nationally and internationally.¹⁸⁸ Article 23 further develops this, guaranteeing the right to work, equal pay, and protection against unemployment, laying the groundwork for freedom from economic discrimination.¹⁸⁹ This formed the basis for future frameworks addressing economic participation, such as the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, adopted by the General Assembly, which codified the rights listed in UDHR.¹⁹⁰ Later, adopting the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the General Assembly addressed barriers women face in accessing economic opportunities, requiring states to take active measures to eliminate discrimination in the workplace.¹⁹¹

Building on a rights-based foundation, ECOSOC has aimed to address barriers to economic participation for vulnerable populations through policy-setting.¹⁹² In 1989, ECOSOC adopted resolution 1989/36 on “Equality in economic and social participation,” noting the slow progress on gender parity, and encouraging Member States to support equal pay, access to economic resources, and education and vocational training for women.¹⁹³ In this vein, ECOSOC’s first World Summit for Social Development in 1995 emphasized the need to curb inequalities and boost employment.¹⁹⁴ The summit concluded with the adoption of the *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development*, which outlined 10 commitments for governments, including eradicating

¹⁸³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Information and communication technologies (ICTs)*. N.d.

¹⁸⁴ International Telecommunication Union. *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2024*. 2024. p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/79/3)*. 2024. p. 33, 40.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948. p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. pp. 49-50.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979. pp. 194-195.

¹⁹² United Nations, Commission for Social Development. *Mainstreaming Disability in the Development Agenda (E/CN.5/2010/6)*. 2010.

¹⁹³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Equality in Economic and Social Participation (E/RES/1989/36)*. 1989.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *World Summit for Social Development - 6-12 March 1995, Copenhagen, Denmark*. N.d.



poverty and reducing inequality.¹⁹⁵ These commitments laid the groundwork for promoting decent work, with commitments aimed at ensuring equitable access to income, access to credit, education, technology, and employment.¹⁹⁶ This resolution also created the Commission for Social Development under ECOSOC's supervision.¹⁹⁷

Building on these foundational frameworks, the United Nations system has developed global frameworks for promoting economic participation within and among Member States.¹⁹⁸ In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), outlining 17 SDGs, including goals on economic participation and addressing inequalities among communities and between Member States.¹⁹⁹ SDG 10 aims to reduce inequalities in fundamental rights at a national and international level.²⁰⁰ SDG 10 is supported by SDG 5 and SDG 8 by outlining targets to reduce economic barriers, with target 5.5 supporting full economic participation for women and girls, and target 8.5 calling for equal pay and participation for all women and men, young people, and people with disabilities.²⁰¹ This economic focus has informed recent conferences, including the *Pact for the Future* (2024) and its *Global Digital Compact* (2024) (GDC).²⁰² The *Pact for the Future* focuses on sustainable development and financing, with actions four and eight addressing financing gaps for developing countries and gender equality in employment, respectively.²⁰³ In addition to highlighting the roles inclusivity and technology play in economic participation, the *Pact for the Future* highlighted the importance of international cooperation among civil society, governments, and private stakeholders to achieve its objectives.²⁰⁴ The GDC outlines specific objectives for improving international cooperation, including the need to close the digital divide, expand digital inclusion, and provide access to the digital economy within and between Member States to achieve the SDGs.²⁰⁵

In addition to the United Nations system's work, regional frameworks have also addressed economic participation and inequalities between countries.²⁰⁶ In 2015, the African Union adopted *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, which outlines seven core aspirations that target economic inequalities and promote sustainable development.²⁰⁷ These aspirations specifically include promoting inclusive growth, job creation, gender equality, and youth empowerment, among others.²⁰⁸ Similarly, in 2017, the European Union adopted the *European Pillar of Social Rights*, which outlined 20 principles to be achieved by

¹⁹⁵ United Nations, Commission for Social Development. *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*. 1995. pp. 8-22.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 9-10.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Accelerating Implementation of 2030 Agenda, Closing Digital Divide Focus, as Economic and Social Council Closes its Coordination Segment*. 2024.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015.

²⁰⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Goal 10 Progress and Info*. 2025.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Pact for the Future*. N.d.

²⁰³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future* (A/RES/79/1). 2024. p. 22.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 35-36.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 41.

²⁰⁶ European Commission. *The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles*. N.d.

²⁰⁷ African Union Commission. *Agenda 2063*. 2015. pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 5.



2030.²⁰⁹ These principles include chapters on promoting equal opportunities, supporting youth employment, and fostering economic inclusion for people with disabilities.²¹⁰

Role of the International System

ECOSOC, through its agencies, programs, and specialized bodies, undertakes efforts to reduce global inequalities and address barriers to economic participation at the individual and national level.²¹¹ ECOSOC collaborates with the international system through its work overseeing the follow-up process on financing for development, including organizing the annual Financing for Development Forum, which reviews global trends in development finance to support the 2030 Agenda.²¹² This forum brought together public and private organizations, international governmental organizations, and governments to plan the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FF4D), emphasizing collaboration among the international community and public-private partnerships to support national economic plans and address economic inequalities within and among countries.²¹³ ILO is a United Nations specialized agency that promotes social justice and decent work standards in alignment with the 2030 Agenda.²¹⁴ Through its *Decent Work Agenda* (2008), ILO promotes increasing access to equal work for people with disabilities, youth, women, and Indigenous communities.²¹⁵ Additionally, the Commission on the Status of Women, through the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), supports equal employment for women and provides data collection across SDG indicators focused on gender equality.²¹⁶ Beyond increasing access to decent work, the international system also works to address barriers to the digital economy.²¹⁷

United Nations bodies and programs also work to address barriers to economic participation within countries, including equal access to employment and access to the digital economy.²¹⁸ ECOSOC works closely with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), which provides research, analysis, policy advice, and technical assistance.²¹⁹ ECOSOC and UN DESA partner to coordinate the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which annually reviews progress on the SDGs.²²⁰ UN DESA supports initiatives such as the Working Group on Digital Government and has provided policy advice on digital governance, highlighting national strategies and capacity-building efforts

²⁰⁹ European Commission. *The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles*. N.d.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum*. 2025.

²¹² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Financing for Development*. N.d.

²¹³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Sevilla Commitment (A/RES/79/323)*. 2025. p. 5.

²¹⁴ International Labour Organization. *The ILO and the UN*. 2025.

²¹⁵ International Labour Organization. *Decent Work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. N.d. p. 4; International Labour Organization. *Indigenous and tribal peoples*. 2025.

²¹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *UN Women and the Sustainable Development Goals*. 2024.

²¹⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Working Group on Digital Government*. N.d.

²¹⁸ International Labour Organization. *The ILO and the UN*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Economic and Social Council*. 2025.

²¹⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Intergovernmental Support*. N.d.

²²⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Concluding High-level Political Forum, Member States Adopt Ministerial Declaration Reaffirming Unwavering Commitment to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2025.



as effective tools for increasing digital inclusion and economic participation.²²¹ ECOSOC also collaborates with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, mandated to promote socially sustainable urban areas, to support the digital transformation of cities by providing best practices and recommendations.²²²

International and regional actors also support programs for financing development, research, and economic inclusion.²²³ The World Bank provides loans, grants, and risk insurance to finance projects to improve financial inclusion.²²⁴ Furthermore, it supports research and programming for economic inclusion in collaboration with intergovernmental organizations, non-profit organizations (NGOs), and countries through data gathering, aggregated to development indicators to assess the state of global inequalities.²²⁵ As part of this work, the World Bank hosts the Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI), a global platform that supports multi-stakeholder collaboration among non-governmental organizations, United Nations bodies, and the World Bank to inform policymakers on issues affecting economic inclusion and scale up programs supporting inclusion.²²⁶ PEI also supports programs in 26 Member States and provides landscape data on the state of economic inclusion and policy advice to mitigate barriers.²²⁷ Regionally, development banks in partnership with governments and civil society take key actions to address economic participation within and among countries.²²⁸ The Asian Development Bank partners with financial institutions in its microfinance program to provide loan access to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) run by women.²²⁹ Another example is the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) program, IDB Cares, where IDB cooperates with Latin American governments to invest in the care economy, which predominantly employs women, to formalize the sector and improve working conditions.²³⁰

Increasing Economic Participation of Marginalized Groups

Economic participation is a vital driver for inclusive development and sustainable economic growth.²³¹ Barriers to economic participation frequently intersect with factors such as gender, health, age, and disability, which can influence an individual's ability to participate in the economy.²³² While the international community has recognized that reducing inequality is not only a matter of fairness but also a necessity for sustainable peace, resilience, and prosperity, barriers to economic participation persist for marginalized groups within countries worldwide.²³³ For instance, PEI's 2024 report, *The State of Economic Inclusion*, highlights how women and youth face significant and unique barriers to employment,

²²¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Working Group on Digital Government*. N.d.

²²² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)*. 2024.

²²³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Financing For Sustainable Development*. N.d.

²²⁴ World Bank Group. *Financial Inclusion*. 2025.

²²⁵ World Bank Group. *Data Bank*. 2025.

²²⁶ Partnership for Economic Inclusion. *Read the State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024: Pathways to Scale*. N.d.

²²⁷ Partnership for Economic Inclusion. *Country Engagement*. N.d.

²²⁸ Asian Development Bank. *Microfinance Program*. 2025; Inter-American Development Bank. *IDB Cares*. N.d.

²²⁹ Asian Development Bank. *Microfinance Program*. 2025.

²³⁰ Inter-American Development Bank. *IDB Cares*. N.d.

²³¹ World Bank Group. *The State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024*. 2024. p. 33.

²³² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Leaving No One Behind In An Ageing World: World Social Report 2023*. 2023. p. 44.

²³³ Ibid. p. 10.



ranging from a lack of access to technical training, employer biases, and unpaid care work that can limit the economic opportunities for women and mothers.²³⁴ Additionally, a 2025 UN DESA policy brief identified that people with disabilities face significant challenges to employment that, while mitigated by increasing access to education, persist due to social bias and barriers to accessibility.²³⁵ The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy aims to integrate the rights of people with disabilities in the United Nations system through a framework that encourages inclusion in decision-making, reasonable accommodation, and initiatives that include and empower persons with disabilities.²³⁶

A lack of demographic-specific data needed to identify community-specific and structural barriers presents challenges to addressing economic participation.²³⁷ The 2024 *Sustainable Development Goals Report* emphasizes that access to disaggregated data is paramount to assessing progress on the SDGs.²³⁸ This data helps identify challenges and solutions, and evaluates progress on SDG targets related to social and economic indicators, making it challenging to measure SDG performance without it.²³⁹ Despite its importance, high-quality disaggregated data is complex to access due to the variability of data-collection processes across countries.²⁴⁰ To address this, in 2019, the United Nations Statistical Commission published the *United Nations National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics*, which provides data-collection recommendations for local and national governments to improve data quality.²⁴¹ Beyond data gaps, structural barriers such as a lack of child care, and social stigmas around Indigenous people, migrants and refugees, and persons with disabilities also contribute to unequal access to economic opportunities.²⁴²

Despite these challenges, economic participation can be improved by increasing access to financing for previously marginalized communities.²⁴³ While access to high-quality data is essential for developing community-specific solutions, ECOSOC Partnership Forum has identified that supporting MSMEs and improving labor rights are ways of increasing economic participation and opportunity.²⁴⁴ In support of this, the *Sevilla Commitment* (2025), as part of FF4D, called for the promotion of policies supportive of entrepreneurship and MSMEs, and for integrating regional and national markets into the global market.²⁴⁵ Beyond the United Nations system, programs like PEI help increase economic participation by financing projects that expand access to economic opportunities for vulnerable populations.²⁴⁶ Examples of

²³⁴ World Bank Group. *The State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024*. 2024. p. 33.

²³⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Assessing Group-Based Inequalities Across The Life Course for a More Inclusive World*. 2025.

²³⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy*. N.d. pp. 14, 20.

²³⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024. p. 5.

²³⁸ Ibid. p. 5.

²³⁹ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁴¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics*. 2019. p. 21.

²⁴² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Inequality – Bridging the Divide*. N.d.

²⁴³ World Bank Blog. *Economic inclusion programs: A springboard out of extreme poverty*. 2021.

²⁴⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council*. 2025. p. 3.

²⁴⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Sevilla Commitment (A/RES/79/323)*. 2025. p. 18.

²⁴⁶ World Bank Blog. *Economic inclusion programs: A springboard out of extreme poverty*. 2021.



programs PEI helps scale include the Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods project, which increases opportunities for poor women in Zambia.²⁴⁷

Bridging the Digital Divide for Economic Participation

The digital divide creates barriers, such as the lack of access to digital tools, skills, and opportunities for meaningful economic participation.²⁴⁸ In 2024, unavailable or unaffordable internet was the primary barrier to its access, contributing to the digital divide.²⁴⁹ This contributes to a lack of digital skills, such as coding, artificial intelligence (AI) knowledge, and data literacy, that can exclude workers from emerging job markets.²⁵⁰ This access gap can negatively affect individuals and communities by preventing their full and equal participation in local and global economies.²⁵¹ Additionally, the digital divide disproportionately affects vulnerable groups.²⁵² Despite the presence of ICT networks across countries, many do not extend beyond densely populated areas, resulting in less access for rural communities.²⁵³ Globally, estimates indicate that 83% of individuals living in urban areas have access to the internet, compared to 48% in rural areas.²⁵⁴ In addition to rural and urban disparities, a 2021 UN DESA policy brief further highlighted that digital exclusions disproportionately impact women, the elderly, the disabled, Indigenous, and impoverished people due to a lack of assistive technologies, digital content in Indigenous languages, and affordability.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, in 2025, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that advancements in AI could worsen existing gaps in global economic participation, as countries and communities with access to ICT may reap financial benefits from AI that are not available to all communities.²⁵⁶

To address this gap, the international system has focused on promoting cooperation and partnerships to advance digital inclusion and access to infrastructure.²⁵⁷ UN DESA defines digital inclusion as equitable access to and the design of technologies for everyone, and it has been a core part of efforts to address

²⁴⁷ Partnership for Economic Inclusion. *Moving from Protection to Production in Egypt*. 2022. p. 2;

Partnership for Economic Inclusion. *Moving beyond "Survival" towards "Opportunity."* 2022. p. 2.

²⁴⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Assessing the Digital Divide: Understanding internet connectivity and digital literacy in cities and communities*. N.d. pp. 31-32.

²⁴⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Accelerating Implementation of 2030 Agenda, Closing Digital Divide Focus, as Economic and Social Council Closes its Coordination Segment*. 2024.

²⁵⁰ Marwala et al. United Nations University. *Bridging the Digital Divide with Education as a Catalyst for Economic Inclusion and Growth*. 2025.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Preparing to seize AI opportunities*. 2025. p. 80; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Assessing the Digital Divide: Understanding internet connectivity and digital literacy in cities and communities*. N.d. pp. 31-32.

²⁵³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Preparing to seize AI opportunities*. 2025. p. 80.

²⁵⁴ International Telecommunication Union. *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2024*. 2024. p. 7.

²⁵⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN/DESA Policy Brief #92: Leveraging digital technologies for social inclusion*. 2021.

²⁵⁶ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Preparing to seize AI opportunities*. 2025. p. 80.

²⁵⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: The role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all."* 2020.



the digital divide.²⁵⁸ In 2020, the *United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* highlighted how access to technology and digital skills can be a catalyst for economic participation and presented eight key areas for action to bridge the digital divide.²⁵⁹ These key areas include improving access to technology, promoting digital inclusion, and collaborating globally on AI and on building a trustworthy digital ecosystem.²⁶⁰ As part of these efforts, UN DESA has collaborated with the International Telecommunication Union and UNCTAD on an expert group meeting to develop policies for digital inclusion, focusing on women, older adults, and persons with disabilities, and barriers such as the absence of assistive technologies, language-access digital content, and affordability.²⁶¹ Regionally, efforts to address the digital divide have incorporated public-private partnerships and focused on infrastructure and accessibility gaps.²⁶² An example of this is the BELLA program, an infrastructure project co-financed by the European Union and the Latin American NGO, RedCLARA, that established a direct connection between Europe and Latin America to address long-term interconnectivity needs of research and educational communities.²⁶³ Another example addressing accessibility gaps is the 2024 multi-stakeholder project by the United Nations Development Programme, HP Inc., and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, which provided training in digital literacy, legal empowerment, storytelling, and advocacy to Indigenous youth in Bangladesh and the Philippines.²⁶⁴ Despite these efforts, existing gaps remain.²⁶⁵ Bridging the digital divide will require collaborative solutions and digitally inclusive approaches.²⁶⁶

Conclusion

Efforts to address global inequality through enhanced economic participation remain central to achieving the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda.²⁶⁷ Continued uneven economic participation across regions, demographics, and social groups sits at the nexus between SDG 8 and SDG 10.²⁶⁸ Increasing access to decent work, financial services, and digital literacy is essential for breaking cycles of poverty and exclusion, especially for marginalized groups.²⁶⁹ Persistent structural barriers are yet to be addressed through coordinated global, regional, and national policy frameworks.²⁷⁰ Inclusive employment policies not only improve livelihoods but also enhance social cohesion and macroeconomic stability within a nation,

²⁵⁸ United Nations, Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies. *Definition: Digital Inclusion*. N.d.

²⁵⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*. N.d.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: The role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all."* 2020.

²⁶² Bella Program. *The BELLA Programme*. 2017.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Indigenous Youth Leaders Bridging The Digital Divide Through Technology For Climate Justice*. 2025.

²⁶⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN/DESA Policy Brief #92: Leveraging digital technologies for social inclusion*. 2021.

²⁶⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Assessing the Digital Divide: Understanding internet connectivity and digital literacy in cities and communities*. N.d. pp. 35-36.

²⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Income Inequality: The Gap Between Rich and Poor*. 2015.

²⁷⁰ World Bank Group. *Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have Same Economic Rights as Men*. 2022.



thus contributing to reducing the globally rising inequality within countries.²⁷¹ Estimates also show that inequality reduces the pace and sustainability of growth, underlining the importance of equal access to digital resources as a part of economic participation.²⁷² An uneven distribution of access to new digital technologies, such as AI, risks widening pre-existing gaps, which in turn may increase global inequality between nations.²⁷³ The policies that empower marginalized populations, support inclusive and sustainable economic development, and reduce inequality across and within countries.²⁷⁴

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What role can local and regional governments, as well as ECOSOC, play in supporting economic inclusion initiatives? How can access to digital education and training in data literacy, AI, and ICTs be expanded for youth and marginalized groups? How can ECOSOC help to facilitate partnerships for the SDGs 8 and 10? What are the structural barriers that favor global inequalities, and what are best practices to remove them?

²⁷¹ International Labour Organization. *New ILO Working Paper Exposes Significant 'Disability Wage Gap'*. 2024.

²⁷² United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Assessing the Digital Divide: Understanding internet connectivity and digital literacy in cities and communities*. N.d.

²⁷³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Preparing to seize AI opportunities*. 2025. p. 80.

²⁷⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development*. 2016.



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