



# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

ADDRESSING POVERTY

TERRORISM

PGA'S SPECIAL SESSION



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations. The Assembly consists of all UN Member States and may discuss any questions or matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organ provided for in the Charter. It may make recommendations to UN members or the Security Council or both on any such questions or matters, except disputes or situations in respect of which the Security Council is currently exercising its functions.

(UN Handbook, 2017-18)

At Model United Nations of the Far West, the General Assembly considers two agenda items and also engages in a Special Session whose theme is determined by the President of the General Assembly. The title of this session is introduced in the weeks leading up to conference and tests delegates' ability to work on the basis of consensus. In addition to drafting and voting on its own resolutions, the General Assembly votes to approve the outcome documents of its subcommittees at the Closing Plenary Session on the final day of conference.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF  
WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF  
THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK

1. Addressing Poverty
2. Terrorism

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WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF  
THE FAR WEST

## **ADDRESSING POVERTY**

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MUNFW 70th Session – General Assembly

In June of 1998, the United Nations released a statement defining "poverty" in terms of the economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental consequences borne by millions of people. The statement reads as follows: "Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth[e] a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation."<sup>1</sup>

The many components of this definition, now identified by the term "multidimensional poverty," have become the focus of study for several United Nations agencies and other aid organizations. According to a 2019 study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 101 countries, including 31 low-income, 68 middle-income and 2 high-income, a collective 1.3 billion people qualify as being "multidimensionally poor."<sup>2</sup> Low income levels, limited access to health care and education, and pressures that restrict political freedoms are among the indicators that expose the ways in which poverty undermines human rights. Of the 1.3 billion, 780 million people live below the agreed international poverty line of \$1.90USD per day. Poverty disproportionately affects women and children: on average, there are 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in poverty for every 100 men of the same age group, and more than 160 million children are in jeopardy of living in extreme poverty beyond 2030.<sup>3</sup>

Poverty is of global concern not only because of its oppressive nature in regard to human rights, but also because it relates to a host of internationally sensitive and interconnected issues. On 1 January

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Press Release ECOSOC/5759: Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty Adopted by Administrative Committee on Coordination*, 20 May 1998.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Development Programme. (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations. Ending Poverty.

2016, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into effect with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide for action. In furthering the Millennium Development Goals' objectives, the SDGs call on all countries to share the international responsibility of eradicating poverty, reforming systems that create social inequalities, and mitigating climate change and environmental degradation.<sup>4</sup> The phenomenon of globalization emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of countries and world systems. The SDGs offer a practical roadmap for globalized action in an internationally integrated environment. Poverty is a common thread that weaves through the fabric of the SDGs. For example, goals pertaining to hunger, health, education, gender inequality, sanitation, economic growth, and clean energy cannot be achieved without first addressing and alleviating poverty.<sup>5</sup>

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE**

In recognition of poverty's influence in exacerbating other issues outlined in the 2030 Agenda, the first of the 17 goals calls for an end to poverty in all its forms. The following seven targets offer a framework for the realization of "no poverty":

- 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day;
- 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions;
- 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable;
- 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance;
- 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters;
- 1.A Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and

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<sup>4</sup>World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

<sup>5</sup>Bradshaw, J. (2011). Poverty. In Walker A., Sinfield A., & Walker C. (Eds.), *Fighting poverty, inequality and injustice: A manifesto inspired by Peter Townsend* (pp. 91-110). Bristol, UK; Portland, OR, USA: Bristol University Press.

- predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions:
- 1.B Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.<sup>6</sup>

## **GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POVERTY**

Approximately 70 percent of the world's extreme poor are located in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; in the latter, 42 percent of the population is below the poverty threshold. Though the global poverty rate has been halved since 2000, efforts to relieve the 11 percent of the world's population living below the extreme poverty line must continue.

Of the world's 780 million extreme poor, approximately 70 percent live in 5 countries (listed in descending order of extreme poor population): India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh. These countries are also among the most populous in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for 85 percent of the world's poor. A majority of the 43 countries with poverty rates above 18 percent are located in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>7</sup> According to the World Bank, three-fourths of sub-Saharan countries reported poverty rates above 18 percent in 2015, and, of the world's 28 poorest countries, 27 are sub-Saharan with poverty rates above 30 percent.<sup>8</sup> In 11 sub-Saharan countries, more than half of the population lives in extreme poverty.

Approximately 63 million people live in extreme poverty in countries across Latin America, namely Bolivia, Columbia, and Venezuela.<sup>9</sup> Although extreme poverty is comparatively lower in the Middle East and North Africa, the average poverty rate doubled between 2013 and 2015, reaching five percent and representing 18.6 million people.<sup>10</sup>

A 2018 study conducted by the Brookings Institute quantified multidimensionally poor populations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in terms of consumption and wealth, education for children and adults, and lack of access to basic infrastructure services including drinking water,

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<sup>6</sup>United Nations. (2015.) Sustainable Development Goal One.

<sup>7</sup>United Nations. Ending Poverty.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

<sup>9</sup>World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

<sup>10</sup>United Nations Development Programme. (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities.

sanitation, and electricity. Of the identified 64.4 million multidimensionally poor in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half experience compounding deprivations in all three categories.<sup>11</sup> Considerable deprivation in both access to basic infrastructure and education affects approximately 26 percent of the studied population.<sup>12</sup> An additional 19 percent of the sub-Saharan population faces extreme poverty related to inadequate wealth and access to basic infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> The study found that 26.5 million individuals constitute the South Asian multidimensionally poor, less than half of the studied population in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 40 percent of that population has inadequate access to basic infrastructure and education, followed by one quarter of the population affected by deprivations in all three categories.<sup>15</sup>

Efforts to alleviate extreme poverty have been most successful in East Asia, particularly in China due to the country's economic growth and expanding middle class.<sup>16</sup> The countries in this region reported an average poverty rate of three percent in 2015, down from 62 percent in 1990.<sup>17</sup> South Asia also achieved significant poverty reduction: its critically poor population halved from half a billion people between 1990 and 2015. In South America, extreme poverty rates consistently hover near 10 percent and are projected to maintain that level.<sup>18</sup> Comparatively, extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa continues to increase annually. Global extreme poverty is increasingly becoming a sub-Saharan phenomenon. The expansion of destitute populations in sub-Saharan regions can be attributed to the consequences of extractive industries, low income levels, weak social protection and assistance systems, the prevalence of inter and intrastate conflict, and climate effects.

## **SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

Expanding social protection programs for the poor and most vulnerable is a key element of the United Nations' strategy to reduce poverty. Social protection programmes include social assistance,

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<sup>11</sup>Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

<sup>12</sup>Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

<sup>17</sup>Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

<sup>18</sup>World Bank. (2018). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle*.

such as cash transfers; targeted food assistance, particularly for primary schools; and social insurance and labor market programs, including old-age pensions, disability pensions, unemployment insurance, skills training, and wage subsidies.<sup>19</sup> These systems are fundamental to preventing poverty and inequality in every stage of life. In 2016, preliminary data revealed that 45 percent of the world's population was effectively protected by a social protection system and 68 percent of retirement aged persons received pensions.<sup>20</sup> However, the distribution of coverage and pension provisions varied widely among countries and regions. Similar worldwide studies revealed that in 2016, 28 percent of persons with severe disabilities collected disability benefits, 22 percent of unemployed individuals worldwide received unemployment benefits, and 41 percent of women with newborns received maternity benefits.<sup>21</sup> Low-income countries have an acute need for an extension of these programmes to their vulnerable populations, as, on average, only one in five people receive some benefit from social protection systems.

## **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

Strengthening disaster risk reduction capabilities is also an important strategy for reducing poverty and creating a conducive environment for sustainable development. The risk of disaster is greater in low-income countries with weak governing institutions, as risk reduction capacities are often overwhelmed by rapid economic growth and increased exposure to natural hazards.<sup>22</sup> Large-scale natural disasters that share a correlation with climate change-related phenomena are becoming more frequent, including the recent climate-related droughts in Mozambique and catastrophic hurricanes in the Caribbean Sea. The annual average of economic losses from large-scale disasters amounts to \$520 billion in damages to schools, housing, health-care facilities, and agricultural production.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

<sup>20</sup>United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

<sup>21</sup>United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

<sup>22</sup>United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

<sup>23</sup>Schwartz, E. (2018). Quick facts: How climate change affects people living in poverty. Mercy Corps.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly following the 2015 Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This non-binding agreement recognizes that the individual State is primarily responsible for reducing disaster risk; however, in the spirit of globalization and burden sharing, it is encouraged that that responsibility be divided among other stakeholders, such as local government and the private sector.<sup>24</sup> As of March of 2019, 67 countries have recorded progress in alignment with the Sendai Framework, and 24 countries reported that their respective local governments had developed strategies consistent with national standards.<sup>25</sup> The Sendai Framework aims to accomplish the following seven global targets by 2030:

1. Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
2. Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
3. Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030;
4. Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030;
5. Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;
6. Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030;
7. Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.<sup>26</sup>

Central to the Sendai Framework are the Four Priorities For Action. The first priority emphasizes the importance of understanding disaster risk in its numerous dimensions, including vulnerability, prevention and reaction capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazardous characteristics, and environmental change. Increased knowledge of disaster risk is essential in strengthening national risk

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<sup>24</sup>United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

<sup>25</sup>United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

assessment, prevention, mitigation, and preparation and response programs and initiatives.<sup>27</sup> Improving disaster risk governance and management at the local, regional, and national levels marks the second of the four priorities, as increased collaboration and communication across governments enhance disaster-related operations. According to the third priority, public and private investment in disaster risk reduction for economic, social, health, cultural, and environmental resilience is crucial to prevent and reduce the impact of disasters on individuals, communities, national assets, and the environment. The fourth priority calls upon nations to enhance "disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction." Climate affected regions are encouraged to integrate disaster risk reduction techniques into structural development standards for housing, road and rail networks, industrial plants, and water supply systems in order to reduce structural vulnerability and normalize stable structural integrity to resist the effects of floods, droughts, storms, and other forms of extreme weather.<sup>28</sup>

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUBSISTENCE FARMING IN DEVELOPING REGIONS**

As climate events worsen, agricultural industries of several developing countries wither under intense heat waves and prolonged droughts. Droughts alone have affected more than one billion people in the last decade, as subsistence farming is the primary source of food and income for, on average, three out of four people in developing countries.<sup>29</sup> A 2017 World Bank Report reveals that droughts have decimated produce stocks that could have fed approximately 81 million people daily since 2001.<sup>30</sup>

With climate change threatening the livelihood and well being of destitute populations, national governments add insult to injury by flooding markets with hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers produced by industrial agriculture corporations, for example Monsanto and Adler Seeds.<sup>31</sup> Many subsistence farmers are legally forced to abandon local seed varieties that are drought resistant, do not require chemical fertilizer, and can be reseeded year after year. Hybridized seeds cannot be replanted

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<sup>27</sup>United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Schwartz, E. (2018). Quick facts: How climate change affects people living in poverty, Mercy Corps.

<sup>30</sup>World Bank. (2017). *Uncharted Waters: The New Economics of Water Scarcity and Variability*.

<sup>31</sup>Wise, T. A. (2019). *Eating tomorrow: Agribusiness, family farmers, and the battle for the future of food*. New York: The New Press.

and require the use of chemical fertilizers, which over time decreases output and deteriorates soil health.<sup>32</sup> Government imposition of new farming techniques, weak or nonexistent property rights, and climate change create critical living situations for millions of people in various regions of Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia, for example.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of sustainable agriculture and strong democratic institutions, poverty traps become all the more inescapable for many subsistence farmers.

## **SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Though Rwanda is not often considered a standout model of poverty reduction in the context of global poverty, there are many lessons to be learned from Rwanda's development. In the years since the genocide of 1994, Rwanda has transitioned from being the seventh poorest country to the twentieth in the 2015 global ranking. Its extreme poverty rate decreased by 12 percent between 2005 and 2010, and in 2017 it recorded a low of 38 percent. Sustainable farming techniques, an increase in non-farm related labor opportunities, the emergence of small-scale entrepreneurs, and international collaboration have been fundamental to Rwandan success.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, 64 percent of parliamentarians are women, compared to the global average of 22 percent.<sup>35</sup> Rwanda has been transformed through political commitment to honest governance, open market economics, and female representation.

Sustained economic growth has prompted countries with high poverty rates, such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria, to transition from low-income to middle-income status. A significant proportion of these countries' populations facing extreme poverty have moved into the lower-middle and middle-income population demographic.<sup>36</sup> As countries develop economically and more labor opportunities become available to the extreme poor, poverty rates tend to fall. The average poverty rate in low-income countries has reached 14 percent, down from 42 percent prior to national

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<sup>32</sup>Litchfield, J., McCulloch, N., & Winters, L. (2003). Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Poverty Dynamics in Three Developing Countries. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 85(5), 1285-1291.

<sup>33</sup>Wise, T. A. (2019). *Eating tomorrow: Agribusiness, family farmers, and the battle for the future of food*. New York: The New Press.

<sup>34</sup>Naftalin, M. (2011). Rwanda: A New Rwanda? *The World Today*, 67(7), 22-24.

<sup>35</sup>Partick, A. (2019). Women in Government: Representation in Rwanda. The Borgen Project.

<sup>36</sup>World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

efforts to sustain economic growth.<sup>37</sup> Countries that have been unsuccessful in establishing systems to promote sustained growth, such as Afghanistan, Haiti, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nepal, and several sub-Saharan countries, due to climate events, conflict, and corruption, highlight the need for international support and responsibility sharing.<sup>38</sup>

Rwanda serves as an example of how, despite devastation from conflict and turmoil, there is hope for unity both internally and internationally. Rehabilitation is possible for a nation and its extreme poor. But in the words of Rwandan president Paul Kagame, "The only sustainable solution is one that includes us all."

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What specific strategies can States use to actualize the concepts of Sustainable Development Goal One?
2. What story do human rights tell in addressing poverty?
3. What role does globalization play in responsibility sharing in the context of global poverty?
4. What global systems widen the wealth gap between developing and developed countries? How can the international community mitigate the effects of those systems as a means of alleviating poverty?
5. What is the impact, if any, of poverty in your country?
6. What measures has your country taken to reduce poverty?

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<sup>37</sup>Paolo Figini, & Enrico Santarelli. (2006). Openness, Economic Reforms, and Poverty: Globalization in Developing Countries. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 39(2), 129-151.

<sup>38</sup>World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

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## TERRORISM

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The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of two world wars that devastated the global community. The central mission of the United Nations (UN) is to maintain international peace and security, as stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter. The Security Council is the primary organ responsible for maintaining peace and security and has taken numerous actions since its founding to uphold this commitment. Article 39 of the UN Charter states that the Security Council is the main body that can "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken" (U.N. Charter art. 39). The General Assembly can also make recommendations on how to deal with these issues, and can take action if the Security Council fails to act.<sup>1</sup> However, threats to international peace and security have evolved since the United Nations was founded, which has meant that the response to these threats has changed as well.

Following the end of the Cold War, threats to international peace and security were increasingly comprised of intrastate conflicts rather than the interstate conflicts that the United Nations had been founded to prevent.<sup>2</sup> Thus, as the nature of global conflict changed, the UN's capacity to respond had to shift with it. The UN Charter was designed to deal with "international war, waged by well-organized states" (Roberts 1993). Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali released a report in 1992 entitled *An Agenda For Peace* which addressed the need for the UN to strengthen its capacity for dealing with the changing scope of conflict. Boutros-Ghali recognized the changing global context, as advancements in "communications and global commerce" have helped blur national boundaries.

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<sup>1</sup> (2019). Peace and Security. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, A. (1993). The United Nations and International Security. In Brown M. (Ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (pp. 207-236). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/j.ctv36zqgw.15>.

providing new dimensions of insecurity.<sup>3</sup> He also acknowledged that "the sources of conflict are pervasive and deep" and that states are being threatened by "brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural or linguistic strife" (Boutros-Ghali 1992). He continues by asserting that "social peace is challenged... by new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and... by acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means" (Boutros-Ghali).

The 1990s marked the first time the United Nations began to pay serious attention to the growing threat that terrorism posed to international peace and security. Due to the changing global landscape that was acknowledged by Boutros-Ghali, globalization has allowed for the increased mobility of people across borders, allowing for terrorists to move both money and weapons with ease.<sup>4</sup> Thus, during the 1990s, terrorist attacks became much more frequent and bloody. Prior to the 1990s, the General Assembly (GA) was the main body within the UN system that discussed the threat of terrorism. The main goal was for cooperation among Member States in developing an international legal framework for responding to terrorism. The GA has been discussing terrorism as a threat to international security since 1972 and has passed several resolutions dedicated to addressing this topic.

The United Nations and its agencies have devised nineteen different international legal instruments since 1963 that are focused on counter-terrorism measures. Thirteen of these were developed between 1963 and 2004 and are "open to participation by all Member States."<sup>5</sup> In 1973, the GA adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. This is an important legal instrument in combatting terrorism and calls on states to develop measures to criminalize such acts. In 1979, they adopted the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages. In 1980, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material was adopted, which criminalized the "unlawful possession, use, transfer, or theft of nuclear material" (Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee 2019). In 1988, two instruments were adopted regarding maritime navigation: the Convention for the Suppression of

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<sup>3</sup> Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace-keeping : report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the summit meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992. New York: United Nations.

<sup>4</sup> Fasulo, L. (2004). Coordinating to Fight International Terrorism. In *An Insider's Guide to the UN* (pp. 79-89). New Haven: London: Yale University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/j.ctt1npxsz.13>.

<sup>5</sup> Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. (2019). International Legal Instruments. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/resources/international-legal-instruments/>.

Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation; and the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf. These are some of the international legal instruments that were developed by the UN prior to the 1990s to combat terrorism.

Seven of the nineteen legal instruments deal with civil aviation: the 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft; the 1970 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft; the 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; the 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation, supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; the 2010 Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation; the 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft; and the 2014 Protocol to Amend the Convention on Offences and Certain Acts Committed on Board Aircraft. It is interesting to note that four of these seven legal instruments were adopted prior to 9/11.

During the 1990s, increased attention was given to the threat of terrorism. Several of the nineteen legal instruments were adopted during this decade; this was also when the Security Council began to pass resolutions regarding acts of terrorism. The 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection remains the sole international legal instrument dedicated to explosive materials. The 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings "creates a regime of universal jurisdiction over the unlawful and intentional use of explosives" with intent to cause harm.<sup>6</sup> The 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism is a very important mechanism that requires States party to this convention to criminalize those who help finance terrorism, as well as take steps to prevent and counteract the financing of terrorist activities. Additionally, this Convention allows for States to identify, freeze, and seize funds that have been allocated for terrorist acts.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

In 2005, a series of instruments were either adopted or expanded upon. These include: the 2005 Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material; the 2005 Protocol to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation; the 2005 Protocol to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms located on the Continental Shelf; and the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. These nineteen documents are important instruments in the international effort to combat terrorism. Additionally, the General Assembly established an ad hoc committee in 1996 that established "an international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings and, subsequently, an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, to supplement related existing international instruments, and thereafter to address means of further developing a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing with international terrorism."<sup>7</sup> The committee continues to be renewed annually by the General Assembly and has issued reports since 1997.

It is important to note that prior to the attacks against the United States that took place on September 11th, 2001, twelve of the nineteen instruments had already been adopted. However, the rate of adherence to these tools was incredibly low. It steadily increased following the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), as this resolution specifically calls on Member States to adopt or ratify these counter-terrorism measures. Following Resolution 1373, all countries have either signed or adopted at least one of these nineteen instruments, and two-thirds of Member States have ratified ten of the nineteen (Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee 2019). This corresponds to the increased attention paid to the issue of terrorism by the United Nations that took place following 9/11. However, despite the extensive set of instruments used to combat acts of terrorism, the UN and its Member States have yet to agree upon a universal definition for terrorism.

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<sup>7</sup> (2018, November 21). Ad Hoc Committee established by General Assembly resolution 51/210 of 17 December 1996. Retrieved from <http://legal.un.org/committees/terrorism/>.

## SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

The first time that the Security Council passed a resolution dealing with terrorism was in 1989, when it unanimously adopted Resolution 635 on the issue of plastic or sheet explosives.<sup>8</sup> Resolution 635 stated it was "mindful of the important role of the United Nations in supporting and encouraging efforts by all States and intergovernmental organizations in preventing and eliminating all acts of terrorism, including those involving the use of explosives."<sup>9</sup> Thus, this resolution essentially established the United Nations, and more specifically, the Security Council, as the international body responsible for dealing with terrorism. Security Council Resolution 1189 was adopted unanimously in August 1998, following the truck bombings at U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, on August 7th. The Resolution strongly condemned "such acts which have a damaging effect on international relations and jeopardize the security of States," as well as demonstrating the UN's commitment to "eliminate international terrorism."<sup>10</sup> Security Council Resolution 1269 was adopted unanimously in October 1999 and condemns "all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustified" and calls upon Member States to work cooperatively to effectively combat acts of terrorism.<sup>11</sup> There were a number of actions taken to condemn the threat of terrorism by the United Nations and its entities, but it wasn't until the aftermath of 9/11 that the UN became more assertive in addressing the threat terrorism posed to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Within twenty-four hours of the 9/11 attacks, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1368 condemning the attacks against the United States and stating its determination "to combat by all means threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."<sup>12</sup> Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, it recognized the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter," specifically Article 51 (S/RES/1269). This was later used

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<sup>8</sup> Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

<sup>9</sup> Security Council resolution 635, Marking of explosives, S/RES 635 (1989) (14 June 1989), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/635>.

<sup>10</sup> Security Council resolution 1189, The international terrorism, S/RES 1189 (1998) (13 August 1998), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1189>.

<sup>11</sup> Security Council resolution 1269, The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, S/RES/1269 (1999) (19 October 1999), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1269>.

<sup>12</sup> Security Council resolution 1368, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/1368 (2001) (12 September 2001), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1368>.

by the United States to legally justify its invasion of Iraq, although that argument was dismissed by the Security Council. Almost three weeks later, on 28 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1373 which imposed for the first time binding commitments on all (then)191 Member States.

Resolution 1373 "placed barriers on the movement, organisation and fund-raising activities of terrorist groups and imposed legislative, policy and reporting requirements on member states to assist the global struggle against terrorism."<sup>13</sup> Additionally, this resolution established a monitoring mechanism through the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). This committee has three main purposes: first, to strengthen the capacity of Member States to combat terrorism; second, "to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance to states trying to carry out counter-terrorism mandates" of Member States; and third, to coordinate "the counter-terrorism efforts of international, regional, and subregional organizations."<sup>14</sup> Resolution 1566 (2004) provides perhaps the closest definition for terrorism by the Security Council thus far. Resolution 1566 "mandated states to extradite, deny asylum or try perpetrators of acts of terrorism and their supporters."<sup>15</sup> This resolution also created a fund dedicated to compensating victims of terrorism. Most notable, however, is what can be found in operative paragraph three of the resolution, where it states:

that criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature, and calls upon all States to prevent such acts and, if not prevented, to ensure that such acts are punished by penalties consistent with their grave nature.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> (2019). UN Documents for Terrorism: Security Council Resolutions. Retrieved from [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un\\_documents\\_type/security-council-resolutions/page/4?ctype-Terrorism&cbtype-terrorism#038;cbtype-terrorism](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/page/4?ctype-Terrorism&cbtype-terrorism#038;cbtype-terrorism).

<sup>14</sup> Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

<sup>15</sup> Ochieng, M. (2017). The Elusive Legal Definition of Terrorism at the United Nations: An Inhibition to the Criminal Justice Paradigm at the State Level. *Strathmore Law Journal*, 3, 65-88.

<sup>16</sup> Security Council resolution 1566, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/1566 (2004) (8 October 2004), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1566>.

This is the closest to a definition of terrorism that the UN has been able to provide. However, subsequent resolutions fail to incorporate this definition. For example, Resolution 2178, unanimously adopted in 2014, requires that Member States respond to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters stating that, "all States shall ensure that their domestic laws and regulations establish serious criminal offenses sufficient to provide the ability to prosecute and to penalize in a manner duly reflecting the seriousness of the offense."<sup>17</sup> This resolution does not define what consists of an act of terrorism, and only loosely refers to "terrorism in all forms and manifestations." Thus, Member States have a wide level of freedom in both defining terrorism and abiding by the contents of Resolution 2178. Given that subsequent resolutions following Resolution 1566 (2004), including Resolution 2178 (2014), fail to incorporate the definition of terrorism provided by operative clause three in Resolution 1566, it cannot be categorized as the universal definition for terrorism.

## **UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY**

In September 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as a means to enhance counter-terrorism efforts at the national, regional, and international levels.<sup>18</sup> This strategy has been reviewed and updated every two years since its adoption, with the most recent review taking place in June 2018. There are four pillars that are central to this strategy: "addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; (and) measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism" (A/RES/60/288). The Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, stated that "governments at all levels are faced with a myriad set of responsibilities and challenges to respond to, counter, and prevent terrorism, as well as to address the conditions which give rise to terrorist and violent extremist

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<sup>17</sup> Security Council resolution 2178, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/2178 (2014) (24 September 2014), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2178>.

<sup>18</sup> UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy | Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. (2006). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctif/en/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

groups and their narratives."<sup>19</sup> The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) recently submitted a request for \$194 million to fund sixty different projects across different UN entities that will provide resources for counter-terrorism projects and measures. The monetary support provided will increase the capacity of stakeholders to effectively combat terrorism and violent extremism, as well as address the root causes.

## **LACK OF A UNIVERSAL DEFINITION OF TERRORISM**

It seems almost intentional that the UN has failed to adopt a definition on terrorism, with many believing that this is to avoid internal conflict between the Security Council and other Member States. As it stands, States are largely able to interpret what defines terrorism on their own terms when enacting national laws that adhere to Security Council Resolutions; a universal definition would require many States to change their behavior, perhaps drastically, to adhere to the international standard. This demonstrates that differing political views among States may cause variance in what they are willing to accept or reject as terrorism. The issue remains that for some Member States, terrorism is a humanitarian issue, while for others it is a political one.

The Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, in his 2006 report, stated that "calls by the international community to combat terrorism, without defining the term, can be understood as leaving it to individual States to define what is meant by the term. This carries the potential for unintended human rights abuses and even the deliberate misuse of the term."<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, it impacts the UN's ability to develop a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

Without a concrete definition, it is difficult to adequately address the root causes behind acts of terrorism. Nevertheless, there are a variety of trends that can be identified in areas that have been most impacted by terrorism. For example, marginalization, inequality, high rates of unemployment,

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<sup>19</sup> UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal (2019-2020) (Rep.). (2019). Retrieved <http://www.citationmachine.net/apa/cite-a-report/manual>.

<sup>20</sup> Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

corruption, and weak institutions are some of the conditions that allow terrorist groups to thrive.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, lack of development and inclusive governments, extreme poverty, lack of education, and state violence can also be root causes behind terrorism.<sup>22</sup> It is imperative that these issues be addressed and resolved so that terrorism does not continue to threaten global peace and security. Further, a commitment to human rights (political, civil, economic, social, cultural rights) is central in combatting terrorism, as terrorism thrives on hopelessness and despair, which helps terrorist groups appeal to disadvantaged and marginalized young people (between the ages of 17 and 27), who now make up the majority of recruits in terrorist organizations.<sup>23</sup>

## **THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

While terrorism has no common religion, race, or ethnicity, it does have a common agenda that specifically targets women as well as young people. Terrorist groups often thrive on the subjugation of women and girls; many rely on sexual slavery to finance their operations or use sexual violence as a means to achieve their goals.

Therefore, it is imperative that all measures to address terrorism include a gender perspective. This includes focusing on "(i) women and girls as victims of terrorism, (ii) women as perpetrators, facilitators, and supporters of terrorism, (iii) women as agents in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, and (iv) the differential impact of counter-terrorism strategies on women and women's rights."<sup>24</sup> It is important to not only assess the impact that terrorism has on the livelihoods of women and girls, but also to incorporate their perspectives into counter-terrorism strategies. The role that women and girls play in matters of peace and security has greatly expanded since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1888 recognize sexual violence as a tactic used in conflict and a threat to international peace

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<sup>21</sup> Guterres, A. (2017, November 16). Counter-terrorism and human rights: Winning the fight while upholding our values. Speech presented at SOAS University of London. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-11-16/secretary-general's-speech-soas-university-london-counter-terrorism>.

<sup>22</sup> Guterres 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

<sup>24</sup> Gender - United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. (2019, February). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/gender/>.

and security. Security Council Resolution 2242 builds upon the existing women, peace, and security agenda, while also recognizing the various roles that women can play in combatting terrorism and calling for an assessment of the drivers that radicalize women. Women and girls traditionally have been targets for terrorist acts, but increasingly have become actors as well, including female foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).<sup>25</sup> Thus, in order to accomplish SDG 16, incorporating a gender perspective into all strategies to combat terrorism is of paramount importance. This includes increasing women's representation throughout all levels of government, helping to build stronger and more inclusive institutions.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

In 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides a road map for ensuring international peace and security. At its core are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering a variety of thematic issues that commit Member States to achieving these goals through a global partnership. It is imperative that all stakeholders remain committed to striving towards full implementation of these goals. At the heart of this agenda is a hope that fulfilling these goals will help to strengthen universal peace, fulfilling the core mission of the United Nations since its founding. These goals build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and it is the hope that full realization of the 2030 Agenda will "shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path" (A/RES/70/1 Preamble).<sup>26</sup> In addition, these goals are integrated and address the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The preamble for the 2030 Agenda states that peace is a central component of this agenda, as the UN is "determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (A/RES/70/1 Preamble). It is apparent that Sustainable Development Goal 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, is central to achieving all of the other goals, as none of the SDGs can

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Kumar, R. & Roy, P. (2018). War and peace: Is our world serious about achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 7(6), 1153–1156. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc\_231\_18.

be realized without first achieving global peace. Sustainable development and peace go hand-in-hand. Goal 16, Target 16A states its aim is to "strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime" (UN SDGs 16 Targets; emphasis added).<sup>27</sup>

While there has been significant progress made in realizing the 2030 Agenda, and specifically SDG 16, violent extremism and terrorism threaten the progress that has been made. There are less than eleven years left to accomplish the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, it is extremely troubling that the 2018 Global Peace Index shows a decline in global peacefulness for the last four years, with country peacefulness falling by 0.27% from the previous year.<sup>28</sup> The last fifteen years have seen an increase in terrorist attacks, ultimately hindering full realization of the 2030 SDG Agenda. Consequently, the global community must reaffirm its commitment to eradicating terrorism and violent extremism in all of its forms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The central mission of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security. Terrorism constitutes a grave threat to this mission. A number of actions have been taken to advance counter-terrorism measures, but the lack of consensus regarding a universal definition of terrorism weakens counter-terrorism strategies. Therefore, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda, Member States may want to consider developing a consensual definition of terrorism in order to build more peaceful societies.

In addition, given the uneven progress in achieving SDG 16, there must be renewed efforts by Member States and other stakeholders to significantly advance progress towards the SDG 16 targets. First, data and reporting mechanisms for counter-terrorism and implementation of the SDGs must be strengthened. This will help to strengthen oversight and accountability, increasing the capacity of stakeholders to develop national planning frameworks. Second, there must be dedicated efforts to

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<sup>27</sup> Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

<sup>28</sup> Kumar, R. & Roy, P. (2018). War and peace: Is our world serious about achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 7(6), 1153–1156. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc\_231\_18.

strengthen the rule of law at both the national and international levels, and ensure that there is equal access to justice for all people. Creating inclusive institutions and ensuring that no one is left behind will help to tackle the conditions that allow terrorism to thrive. Third, member states need to share best practices. And fourth, there must be increased financial commitments dedicated to address those factors which contribute to the rise of terrorism.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are the root causes of terrorism?
2. What protections does your country have in place for victims of terrorism and acts of violent extremism?
3. Should there be an international definition for terrorism? How does your country feel about this issue? Does your country have a definition?
4. How many of the nineteen international legal instruments used for counter-terrorism is your country party to?
5. What measures has your country taken to successfully achieve SDG 16? Are there monitors in place that track SDG 16 indicators?
6. Where does your country stand in terms of progress on SDG 16 indicators? What steps have been taken to ensure progress is made?

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## COVID-19 and Climate Change

### Introduction

*This issues book paper will provide an overview into the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put forth by the United Nations, as well as a case study on COVID-19 and climate change. It will serve as a background document for the GA Special Session and efforts to develop a Ministerial Declaration on Covid-19 and Climate Change.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the SDGs are even more relevant today than ever before. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally<sup>1</sup>.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness.<sup>2</sup> Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes.<sup>3</sup> These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms. In addition to those who experience symptoms, some individuals test positive for COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic the whole time they are ill. This can make COVID-19 particularly difficult to detect. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing hospital treatment. Around 1 out of every 5 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing.<sup>4</sup> Older

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<sup>1</sup> WHO-Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes, or cancer, are at higher risk of developing serious illness. However, anyone can catch COVID-19 and become seriously ill.<sup>5</sup> People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease spreads primarily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks. These droplets are relatively heavy, do not travel far and quickly sink to the ground. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets from a person infected with the virus.<sup>6</sup>

### **How COVID-19 has impacted the SDGs thus far**

The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed an unprecedented crisis, causing further disruption to achieving the SDGs, with the world's poorest and most vulnerable affected the most, leaving them even further behind, according to a new report released by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.<sup>7</sup> “As Member States recognized at the SDG Summit held last September, global efforts to date have been insufficient to deliver the change we need, jeopardizing the Agenda’s promise to current and future generations,” said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. “Now, due to COVID-19, an unprecedented health, economic and social crisis is threatening the lives and livelihoods, making the achievement of the Goals even more challenging.”<sup>8</sup> Below are some key findings from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Reports on COVID-19 and the SDGs:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> WHO-Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs-UN Report Finds COVID-19 is Reversing Decades of Progress on Poverty, Healthcare, and Education  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sustainable-development-goals-report-2020.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

- An estimated 71 million people are expected to be pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, the first rise in global poverty since 1998. Lost incomes limited social protection and rising prices mean even those who were previously secure could find themselves at risk of poverty and hunger.
- Underemployment and unemployment due to the crisis mean some 1.6 billion already vulnerable workers in the informal economy – half the global workforce – may be significantly affected, with their incomes estimated to have fallen by 60 per cent in the first month of the crisis.
- The more than one billion slum dwellers worldwide are acutely at risk from the effects of COVID-19, suffering from a lack of adequate housing, no running water at home, shared toilets, little or no waste management systems, overcrowded public transport and limited access to formal health care facilities.
- Women and children are also among those bearing the heaviest brunt of the pandemic's effects. Disruption to health and vaccination services and limited access to diet and nutrition services have the potential to cause hundreds of thousands of additional under-5 deaths and tens of thousands of additional maternal deaths in 2020. Many countries have seen a surge in reports of domestic violence against women and children.
- School closures have kept 90 per cent of students worldwide (1.57 billion) out of school and caused over 370 million children to miss out on school meals they depend on. Lack of access to computers and the internet at home means remote learning is out of reach of many. About 70 countries reported moderate to severe disruptions or a total suspension of childhood vaccination services during March and April of 2020.
- As more families fall into extreme poverty, children in poor and disadvantaged communities are at much greater risk of child labor, child marriage and child trafficking. In fact, the global gains in reducing child labor are likely to be reversed for the first time in 20 years.

### **The Future of the SDGs in the Wake of COVID-19**

Below are suggestions for how States, in conjunction with the UN, can utilize the SDGs to help those who have been impacted by COVID-19 and to create a better future moving forward.

Digital finance is the access and usage of formal financial services by excluded populations.<sup>9</sup> A new report, "*People's Money: Harnessing Digitalization to Finance a Sustainable Future*," by the UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Finance sets out an

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<sup>9</sup> UN- Digital Financing Task Force  
<https://www.un.org/en/digital-financing-taskforce>

Action Agenda. Centrally, it spells out how digital finance can be harnessed in ways that empower citizens as taxpayers and investors in envisaging a digital transformation at scale that better aligns people's money with their needs, collectively expressed by the SDGs.<sup>10</sup>

The report highlights how billions of people around the world are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic using digital tools to work, spend and socialize and argues there is an historic opportunity to harness digitalization in placing citizens, the ultimate owners of the world's financial resources, in control of finance to ensure that it meets their needs, today and in the future.<sup>11</sup> The Task Force identifies five opportunities for harnessing digitalization in aligning financing with the SDGs. Amongst these opportunities are initiatives such as: aligning global capital markets with the SDGs, increasing the effectiveness and accountability of public finance that makes up the majority of the global economy, channeling digitally aggregated domestic savings into long-term development finance, informing citizens how to link their consumer spending with the SDGs, and accelerating lifeblood financing for small and medium-sized businesses.<sup>12</sup> Maria Ramos, Co-Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Finance said, "We have an historic opportunity to accelerate and expand the transformative impact of digitalization. In particular, digital finance, which in this crisis became the lifeline for millions across the world, extends the boundaries of financial inclusion by empowering citizens

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<sup>10</sup> SDGs-Digital Finance, a Lifeline During the COVID-19 Crisis, Can Deliver Long-Term Financing of the SDGs <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/08/digital-finance-a-lifeline-during-covid-19-crisis-can-deliver-long-term-financing-of-the-sdgs/>

<sup>11</sup> SDGs-Digital Finance, a Lifeline During the COVID-19 Crisis, Can Deliver Long-Term Financing of the SDGs <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/08/digital-finance-a-lifeline-during-covid-19-crisis-can-deliver-long-term-financing-of-the-sdgs/>

<sup>12</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs-UN Report Finds COVID-19 is Reversing Decades of Progress on Poverty, Healthcare, and Education <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sustainable-development-goals-report-2020.html>

as savers, investors, borrowers, lenders and tax-payers in a way that gives them choice and power over their money.”<sup>13</sup>

Creating and then making the vaccine for COVID-19 available to all people also aligns with the SDGs. More than 140 world leaders and figures signed an open letter requesting Governments unite behind a “people’s vaccine” against COVID-19, marking the most ambitious position yet set out by world leaders on what has become the most urgent quest in modern science.<sup>14</sup> They are demanding that all vaccines, treatments and tests be patent-free, mass produced and distributed fairly. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has been quoted as saying, “Nobody should be pushed to the back of the vaccine queue because of where they live or what they earn.”<sup>15</sup>

The final recommendation is to enhance political will and recommit to the SDGs. Our world has the knowledge, capacity and innovation to defeat COVID-19 and make the world a more equitable place, and if we are ambitious enough, we can muster the full complement of resources needed to implement the Goals successfully. As the world responds to the effects of this brutal pandemic, and seeks to restore global prosperity, we must focus on addressing underlying factors in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>16</sup>

A major threat to global sustainability is climate change. The next sections will address climate change, SDG 13, and how to build back better together.

## **Climate Change**

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<sup>13</sup> SDGs-Digital Finance, a Lifeline During the COVID-19 Crisis, Can Deliver Long-Term Financing of the SDGs

<sup>14</sup> UN News-Presidents and Prime Ministers Lead Call for “People’s Vaccine,” Free for All  
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064122>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> SDGs-Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic, the SDGs are Even More Relevant Today than Before  
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/04/coronavirus-sdgs-more-relevant-than-ever-before/>

The world, both humanity and the natural environment, are facing tremendous turmoil and change. Climate change is a major threat that the international community must address. In a United Nations Environment Programme report on emerging issues of concern, Deputy Executive Director Joyce Msuya discussed how humankind has caused global temperatures to rise 170 times faster than the natural rate, deliberately modified more than 75% of the planet's land surface, and permanently altered the flow of more than 93% of the world's rivers.<sup>17</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases a synthesis report related to climate change based on the reports of three Working Groups of the IPCC. The most recent synthesis report, AR5 Fifth Assessment Report (hereafter AR5 Report), was published in 2014 and the next report is scheduled to be published in 2021. The AR5 Report states that anthropogenic (human impact on the environment) greenhouse gas emissions are now higher than ever and causing atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.<sup>18</sup> It is these emissions and other human activities that “are extremely likely to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century,” which will “amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems.”<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, it should be no surprise that these risks are unevenly distributed and will most affect disadvantaged communities across the globe. Climate change also has the potential to increase the number of vulnerable people. A 2018 World Bank report predicts that without necessary actions, climate change could displace 143 million people by 2050 (in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> UNEP - Frontiers 2018/19: Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/frontiers-201819-emerging-issues-environmental-concern>

<sup>18</sup> IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

[https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> IPCC 2014 AR5

<sup>20</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>

As part of its effort to address climate change, the United Nations has included a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) dedicated to the topic. SDG 13 aims to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.<sup>21</sup> Climate change is closely linked to development since a variable climate will impact resources such as freshwater and food supplies, the basic necessities for a functioning society. In particular, “poor and developing countries...will be among those most adversely affected and least able to cope with the anticipated shocks to their social, economic, and natural systems.”<sup>22</sup> SDG 13 indicators include targets to increase disaster risk resilience, integrate measures into national policy, improve education on climate change, and promote capacity for planning and management.<sup>23</sup> However, all of these indicators are ones that will be further hampered by the effects of COVID-19.

#### **Covid-19 and Climate Change: Why talk about them together?**

Response to climate change could be further challenged by COVID-19 as national governments are focusing on the emergency of the pandemic. Although climate change may seem further away or something to worry about later, it is something that must be addressed now in conjunction with other emergencies.

On September 10, 2020, the General Assembly of the UN passed a 14-page omnibus resolution with 169 in favor to 2 against (Israel, United States) and 2 abstentions (Hungary, Ukraine).<sup>24</sup> The resolution is titled “Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic” (document A/74/L.92).<sup>25</sup> The resolution first and foremost acknowledges the devastating nature of the current pandemic and notes that this has reversed

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<sup>21</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/climate-change>

<sup>22</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/climate-change>

<sup>23</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/climate-change>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12262.doc.htm>

<sup>25</sup> A/74/L.92

“hard-won development gains and [is] hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all its Goals and targets.”<sup>26</sup> The resolution also acknowledges the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the increasing need for international cooperation to overcome this pandemic through a people-centered approach.<sup>27</sup> The approach must also be cooperative, comprehensive, and science-based. Member States are encouraged to adopt a climate-sensitive approach at the national level in accordance with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. The operative paragraphs from the omnibus resolution state:

OP46 - *Stresses* that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to reduce the risk of the economic, social and environmental impacts of disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss, and emphasizes the need to support and invest in adaptation and action at all levels to enhance efforts to build resilience through, inter alia, disaster risk reduction, community empowerment and participation and the sustainable management of ecosystems and the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, including wildlife, to reduce the likelihood of zoonotic infections and the impacts and costs of disasters;

OP47 - *Urges* Member States to adopt a climate- and environment-sensitive approach to COVID-19 recovery efforts, including by aligning investments and domestic policies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement and the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, reversing biodiversity loss, and strengthening approaches that reduce emissions and enhance both resilience and efficiency, such as increasing the global share of renewable energy, promoting pathways towards climate-resilient development, developing more ambitious national plans and, for parties to the Paris Agreement, communicating or updating their nationally determined contributions in 2020, immediately curbing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns, taking climate change and biodiversity into account in fiscal planning, budgeting, public investment management and procurement practices, and emphasizes in this regard that mitigation of and adaptation to climate change represent an immediate and urgent global priority, and stresses the importance of mobilizing means of implementation from all sources, including adequate financial support, inter alia, for mitigation and adaptation, taking into account the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change;

## **Moving Forward**

Moving forward, the international community must ensure any and all pandemic responses are climate-sensitive. A climate-sensitive response would be one that takes into

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<sup>26</sup> A/74/L.92

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12262.doc.htm>

account mitigation strategies and strengthens investments and domestic policy needed to promote climate-resilient development. Member States must build back better together through multilateral efforts that are people-centered. It will certainly be an issue if some countries with major influence continue to take steps back from multilateral efforts. Response should also be gender-sensitive and respect human rights. Investment will need to be made to ensure resilience through disaster risk reduction, community empowerment and participation, and the sustainable management of ecosystems.<sup>28</sup> Domestic policies should be in line with the goals outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Paris Agreement. Member States must work together to address the serious risks posed by both a global pandemic as well as a global climate crisis.

**Questions:**

1. What steps has your country taken to address the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. Have these steps taken into account their impact on climate change and long-term development?
3. What stakeholders have been involved in any of these decisions?
4. What role should the World Health Organization play in addressing Covid-19?
5. What other steps can the international community or the United Nations system take to address these issues?

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<sup>28</sup> A/74/L.92

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# SECOND COMMITTEE

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

IMPROVING WORKER'S RIGHTS, INCLUDING MIGRANTS AND YOUTH

PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

MANAGING AND PRESERVING NATURAL RESOURCES  
WHILE REDUCING WASTE GENERATION

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Main Committees of the UN General Assembly consider agenda items referred to them by the General Assembly and prepare recommendations and draft resolutions for submission to the General Assembly plenary. The Committees correspond with the General Assembly's major fields of responsibility.

The General Assembly's Second Committee focuses on topics relating to economic growth and development such as macroeconomic policy questions; financing for development; sustainable development; human settlements; globalization and interdependence; eradication of poverty; operational activities for development; agriculture development, food security and nutrition; information and communications technologies for development; and towards global partnerships.

(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE SECOND COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## SECOND COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK

1. Improving worker's rights, including migrants and youth
2. Providing sustainable and resilient infrastructure
3. Managing and preserving natural resources while reducing waste generation

THE SECOND COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF  
WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF  
THE FAR WEST

## **IMPROVING WORKERS RIGHTS, INCLUDING MIGRANTS AND YOUTH**

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MUNFW 70<sup>th</sup> Session – Second Committee

Announced at the annual high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were intended to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty.<sup>1</sup> The SDGs envision a world which ensures that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality.<sup>2</sup> The 17 SDGs focus on 3 dimensions -- economic, social and environmental<sup>3</sup> -- and are a set of "universal goals and targets which involve the entire world,"<sup>4</sup> both developed and developing countries. By including the global population, regardless of economic status, it is hoped these goals will ensure a prosperous and fulfilling life for all.

More specifically, Goal 8 of the SDGs aims to "create conditions for sustainable, inclusive, and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all."<sup>5</sup> Four of the twelve targets created to measure the achievement of this goal pertain to this issue:<sup>6</sup>

- Target 8.5: by 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities;
- Target 8.6: by 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET);
- Target 8.7: by 2025, end child labor in all its forms;
- Target 8.8: protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants.

Unfortunately, while progress toward Goal 8 has been made, it "is slowing down in many areas of the world."<sup>7</sup> Unemployment is far too high in many countries and gender wage gaps continue to persist around the world.<sup>8</sup> As many of the SDGs are linked, failure to make progress on Goal 8 can severely impact progress on other key goals, including Goals, 1, 3, 6, 10 and 16.<sup>9</sup> The following looks at

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<sup>1</sup> UN: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> Session, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, pg. 1.

<sup>2</sup> UN: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> Session, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, pg. 2.

<sup>3</sup> UN: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> Session, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, pg. 1.

<sup>4</sup> UN: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> Session, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, pg. 2.

<sup>5</sup> UN: *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> Session, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, pg. 1.

<sup>6</sup> ILO, *The 2030 Development Agenda: Targets for Goal #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*.

<sup>7</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. X.

<sup>8</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. X.

<sup>9</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. XI.

key issues, progress made and steps taken to achieve Goal 8 as it applies to three key groups: youth, women and migrants.

## **YOUTH**

Target 8.6 of Goal 8 states "by 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)."<sup>10</sup> However, despite the best efforts of the international community, progress has been slow to achieve this target. As of 2018, 64 million young men and women aged 15-24 were unemployed – a rate of 12.6% - which is three times higher than the unemployment rate of adults.<sup>11</sup> Globally, young people aged 15-29 years face major decent work deficits and are disproportionately affected by unemployment and low-quality jobs. In 2018, one fifth of youth were not in employment, education or training (NEET), meaning they were not gaining any professional experience or acquiring skills through educational or vocational programmes,<sup>12</sup> which reduces their future chances of finding employment. Unfortunately, the global NEET rate has only reduced by 2% since 2005, meaning there is a long way to go to secure sustainable work for all youth.

## **WOMEN**

Young women face substantially higher rates of unemployment than young men, at a rate of 30% compared to 13% for men in 2018<sup>13</sup>. These rates vary by region but while NEET rates for young men remain constant, NEET rates for women vary drastically. For example, in Southern Asia and Arab States, the female NEET rate is more than 40% compared to less than 15% for men<sup>14</sup>. While NEET rates for young men are typically a problem of unemployment, the reason for high NEET rates for young women are more complicated. Women in many regions are still battling decades-old social or cultural norms that pressure young women into early marriage or prevent married women from entering into or continuing, paid employment<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> 2030 Development Agenda, *Targets for Goal 8*

<sup>11</sup> HLPF on Sustainable Development, *Discussion on SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth*.

<sup>12</sup> "Progress of Goal 8 in 2019"

<sup>13</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. 19.

<sup>14</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. 19.

<sup>15</sup> ILO, *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, pg. 19.

Women of all ages face numerous challenges in achieving full and productive employment. In 2018, 1.3 billion women were employed compared to 2 billion men; women are 26% less likely to be employed than are men.<sup>16</sup> Unpaid care work is the main reason why women are not part of the global labor force: currently, 21.7% of women perform unpaid care work on a full-time basis, compared to 1.5% of men.<sup>17</sup> Millions of women who are willing and able to engage in employment are remaining at home to act as caregivers, eliminating them from the global economy. The second reason for the large difference in employment rates is education. Globally, 31.6% of adult women have less than a primary level education, compared to 21.9% of men; in low-income countries, these rates are doubled.<sup>18</sup> Education is critical to strengthening key skills and competencies that are needed for employment and a lack of these skills is a major hindrance in finding decent work. Countries need to focus on increasing access to education for women, and providing lifelong learning initiatives such as training programs to ensure women are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

Women also continue to be victims of a gender wage gap, on average earning only 80% of men for performing the same work<sup>19</sup>. Reasons for this abound but include social and cultural norms and lack of access to education. Women also face significant "motherhood penalties"; for example, in 2015, 45.8% of mothers with young children (ages 0-5 years) were employed compared to 53.2% of women without children.<sup>20</sup>

Compared to men, women are more likely to be engaged in informal employment -- 90% of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 89% of countries in Southern Asia, and 75% of Latin American countries.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, women in informal employment, such as domestic or care-based work are not afforded the same protections and rights as if they were in full-time employment.

To protect the rights of women in the workplace, countries should work toward enacting legislation that establishes equal rights for women and prohibits discrimination. Countries that have not

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<sup>16</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 12.

<sup>17</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 13.

<sup>18</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 32.

<sup>19</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 22.

<sup>20</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 14.

<sup>21</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 7 March 2019, pg. 12.

done so should ratify ILO Convention No. 111 of 1958 which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sex,<sup>22</sup> and ILO Convention No. 100 of 1953, which calls for equal pay for women and men workers for work of equal value.<sup>23</sup>

## **MIGRANTS**

The combination of increased conflicts and a growing economic divide around the world has led to a steep rise in migration. In 2015, there were 244 million international migrants, a massive 41% increase since 2000.<sup>24</sup> The majority of this increase – 57% – stems from higher levels of South-South migration,<sup>25</sup> or migration between developing countries. There are many reasons why migrants uproot themselves and their families in search of a better life, but the most critical is the search for decent work. Of the 244 million international migrants in 2015, 73% were workers, representing 4.4% of the global workforce.<sup>26</sup>

Migrants play a critical role in the global workforce, particularly in countries with aging populations or a declining national workforce. For example, in large economies such as the United States, migrants represent 47% of the increase in the labor force. In some European countries, migrant workers represent up to 70% of an increase in the labor force.<sup>27</sup> In regions such as the Arab States and North America, migrants represent one-third and one-fifth of all worker,<sup>28</sup> respectively. These numbers provide the justification for the 2030 Development Agenda recognition of the positive contribution of migrants toward inclusive growth and sustainable development;<sup>29</sup> however, much remains to be done to ensure they enjoy the same rights while employed.

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<sup>22</sup> ILO, *C111 – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*.

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<sup>24</sup> ILC.106/IV, International Labour Conference 2017, Report IV, *Addressing Governance Challenges in a Changing Labour Migration Landscape*, pg. 6.

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<sup>27</sup> ILC.106/IV, International Labour Conference 2017, Report IV, *Addressing Governance Challenges in a Changing Labour Migration Landscape*, pg. 9.

<sup>28</sup> ILC.106/IV, International Labour Conference 2017, Report IV, *Addressing Governance Challenges in a Changing Labour Migration Landscape*, pg. 7.

<sup>29</sup> ILC.106/IV, International Labour Conference 2017, Report IV, *Addressing Governance Challenges in a Changing Labour Migration Landscape*, pgs. 1-2.

Migrant workers are classified into two categories – skill based, who account for about one-third of all migrant workers, and non-skill based, who account for remaining two-thirds.<sup>30</sup> While migrant workers often suffer from inadequate social protection and are vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking, non-skill based migrant workers are even more likely to suffer from decent work deficits, including violations of fundamental principles and rights at work. Non-skilled positions are usually associated with lower wages and, low-wage workers are more likely to experience restrictions in exercising the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Countries are encouraged, as laid out in Resolution A/RES/72/179 of 29 January 2018, to establish or strengthen already existing mechanisms which allow migrants to report cases of abuse without fear of reprisal.<sup>31</sup> Countries that have not yet done so should consider ratifying and adhering to several ILO conventions regarding employment rights for migrant workers. Convention 97 of 1949 instructs countries to take steps to provide a free service to assist migrants with finding jobs,<sup>32</sup> while Convention 143 of 1975 reinforces the need to respect the basic human rights of all migrant workers.<sup>33</sup>

## **TARGET YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN MOROCCO**

Morocco is a prime example of a country battling high youth unemployment rates. While the overall employment rate is a moderate 10%, youth ages 15-29 are twice as likely to be unemployed<sup>34</sup>. The country is having a tough time keeping up with a growing workforce – each year, 240,000 people enter the workforce but only 129,000 new jobs are created<sup>35</sup>. As youth account for one third of the country's population and are disproportionately affected by unemployment, it was imperative for the country to create programs to decrease the rate of unemployment amongst youth.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), working with the Moroccan government, provided funding to create six career centers in major cities such as Tangier, Casablanca

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<sup>30</sup> ILC.106/IV, International Labour Conference 2017, Report IV, *Addressing Governance Challenges in a Changing Labour Migration Landscape*, pg. 9.

<sup>31</sup> UN: *Protection of Migrants*, General Assembly, 72<sup>nd</sup> Session, A/RES/72/179, 29 January 2018.

<sup>32</sup> ILO, *C097 – Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97)*.

<sup>33</sup> ILO, *C143 – Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)*.

<sup>34</sup> USAID, "Employability of Youth Enhanced."

<sup>35</sup> USAID, "Employability of Youth Enhanced."

and Marrakech,<sup>36</sup> along with a virtual career center for youth who cannot visit the physical locations.<sup>37</sup> These career centers are designed to assist youth in their transition from education to employment while providing vocational training, work readiness training and career counseling.<sup>38</sup> To date, over 100,000 youth have benefitted from services provided by the Career Centers, and over 33,000 youth have received work readiness training.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the Virtual Career Center has over 32,000 registered users, proving it can reach youth throughout the country.<sup>40</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, 92% of employers are satisfied with the youth employees they have recruited through the Career Centers,<sup>41</sup> proving this program is sustainable and has the tools to assist youth in finding long-term employment for many years.

## **PROTECTING WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS RIGHTS IN ASEAN COUNTRIES**

In ASEAN countries, the European Union (EU), International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN women collaborated to launch "Safe and Fair," a program which aims to achieve safe and fair labor migration for all women in the ASEAN region.<sup>42</sup> Given that women and girls comprise over 70% of all victims of human trafficking,<sup>43</sup> it is vital to create programs that protect their human rights and allow them to achieve safe and fair employment. Safe and Fair will "strengthen rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to labour migration governance, address women migrant workers' vulnerabilities to violence and trafficking, and support access to essential services for women migrants who experienced abuse."<sup>44</sup> Studies have shown that migrants who migrate through irregular channels, as is common in that region, are more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence; creating programs to help stop those abuses is vital.

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<sup>36</sup> USAID, "Employability of Youth Enhanced."

<sup>37</sup> USAID, "USAID Career Center | Fact Sheet | Morocco"

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<sup>43</sup> ILO, "EU, ILO and UN Women join forces to realize women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region". 17 November 2017.

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## **CONCLUSION**

Achieving the targets of SDG 8 are more important than ever. There is substantial evidence that the presence of decent work is strongly linked to economic growth – that is, more people in decent jobs can lead to stronger and more inclusive economic growth.<sup>45</sup> In order for the international community's goal of shared prosperity to become a reality, larger numbers of youth, women and migrants need to find long-term, sustainable employment and enjoy the same rights once employed. Member states need to adopt legislation and/or implement programs to help bring this about.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What has your country done to help increase employment rates for the above at-risk populations? Can any of these policies be implemented at an international level?
2. How do the unemployment rates and trends by population group – youth, women, and migrants – in your country compare to the international trends listed above?
3. How has your country progressed toward achieving SDG 8 based on the targets outlined above? What are some challenges that remain?
4. How can your country harness NGOs, the private sector and other national organizations to make progress toward these goals?
5. In 2016, 61% of workers globally were engaged in informal employment that lacks adequate protections for basic rights at work. What steps has or can your country take to reduce the rate of informal employment?

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<sup>45</sup> *SDG 8: Draft Concept Note*, 15 February 2019.

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## **PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Paris Thomas, Whittier College  
MUNFW 70th Session – Second Committee

As the developed world continues to lead the race towards progressive social, technological, and economic advancement, the developing world and their dire needs are being forgotten. Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9) calls on the international community to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation for their global neighbors who are struggling to achieve these basic human necessities. Infrastructure provides the essential physical systems and structures required to operate society and enterprises. Industrialization strengthens and promotes economic growth, allows for the creation of jobs, and thus reduces poverty. Innovation allows for the advancement of technological capabilities within the industrial sectors and expands the development of new skills.

The facts and figures<sup>1</sup> reflecting this global crisis are notable. Currently, 2.3 billion people lack access to basic sanitation. Four billion people do not have access to the internet, ninety percent of this population is found in the developing world. 2.6 billion global citizens are without constant and consistent access to electricity. Thirty per cent of agricultural products in developing countries undergo industrial processing in comparison to 98 per cent in high income countries. As it stands, the world-wide renewable energy sector employs 2.3 million people, yet this employment number could easily reach 20 million by the year 2030. In low income countries, particularly African countries, infrastructure constraints cut business productivity by 40 per cent.

Sustainable Development Goal 9<sup>2</sup> has laid out several key targets that will promote progress over the next several years:

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<sup>1</sup> "Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure": United Nations Development Program  
<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-9-industry-innovation-and-infrastructure.html>

<sup>2</sup> "SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation": SDG Compass  
<https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/sdg-9/>

- 9.1 Pursue the development of quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, both regional and transborder which will aid in supporting developing economies, preserve human well-being, and contribute to the development of affordable and equitable access for all.
- 9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and by 2030 raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product (GDP) while remaining in line with national circumstances and doubling its share in least developed countries (LDCs).
- 9.3 Aim to increase access to financial services, such as affordable credit and integration into value chains and markets, for small-scale industries and enterprises.
- 9.4 By 2030 make infrastructure and industries sustainable by upgrading and retrofitting, as well as increase resource use efficiency and adopt cleaner and more environmentally friendly technologies and industrial processes. Each country acting may do so in accordance with their individual capabilities.
- 9.5 Enhance scientific research by 2030 by increasing the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all affected countries through encouraging innovation and multiplying the number of Research and Development workers as well as multiplying the public and private research and development spending allowance.
- 9.6 Expand financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), as a means of facilitating the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure.
- 9.7 Prioritize the development of domestic technology and growth of research and innovation in developing countries by ensuring beneficial policies for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities.
- 9.8 Increase equitable access to information and communications technology, while delivering universal and affordable Internet access to LDCs by 2020.

Addressing the infrastructure, industrialization and innovation shortcomings in low-income countries through the goals of SDG 9 can have a great impact on the social and financial capital of developing international communities.

## **LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCS)**

The Least Developed Countries<sup>3</sup> (LDCs), a category established by the United Nations in 1971, are the poorest and most vulnerable members of the international community. LDCs are home to approximately 880 million people, making up 12 per cent of the world population. Yet, LDCs are responsible for contributing less than 2 per cent of the world's GDP and about 1 per cent of trade.

Currently, 47 countries are recognized as LDCs. This includes 33 African countries, 13 in Asia and the Pacific, and 1 Latin American country. South Sudan was recently added to this community. A few notable LDCs<sup>4</sup> include Afghanistan (also categorized as an LLDC), Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti (also categorized as a SIDS) Liberia, Myanmar, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Fragile institutional capacities, high levels of income inequality, and a scarcity of domestic financial resources contribute to the low level of socio-economic development within these countries. LDCs often suffer from political instability and internal and external conflict and are increasingly dependent on natural resources, further increasing instability and limiting development. Along with slow economic growth, poverty and other social disparities, hunger and malnutrition are some of the most widespread humanitarian crises found in LDCs.

The First United Nations Conference on LDCs was held in Paris in 1981. United Nations delegates met with the intent to bring awareness and an action plan to the socio-economic conditions of the most vulnerable LDCs. The "Substantial New Programme for Action for the 1980s for the LDCs" was adopted, granting the United Nations and involved parties authority to continue pursuing efforts

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<sup>3</sup> "About LDCs": UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-lDCs/>

<sup>4</sup> "LDCs At A Glance": Economic Analysis & Policy Division <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/lDCs-at-a-glance.html>

to enact special measures for LDCs. The Second United Nations Conference on the LDCs," held in Paris in 1990, adopted the "Paris Declaration" and the "Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s," granting further permissions.

In 2001, the first long-term action plan, the "Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001 – 2010" alongside the "Brussels Declaration," were adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs, hosted by the European Union. Under General Assembly Resolution 56/227, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS was established. The office's original mission was to monitor follow-up, implementation and review of the goals established in the "Brussels Programme of Action for the LCDs for the Decade 2001 – 2010."

The United Nations held its fourth conference on the LCDs in Istanbul in 2011, where the "Istanbul Programme of Action"<sup>5</sup> was adopted. This result-oriented 10-year plan established ambitious goals for LDCs to graduate from their category by 2020. With attendance from over 8,900 individuals, the Istanbul Conference represented the global community's largest gathering around LDCs, supporting necessary developments in infrastructure, innovation and industrialization. The LDC conferences and programme adoptions have created a strong foundation for the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 9.

## **LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LLDCS)**

Landlocked Developing Countries<sup>6</sup> (LLDCs) are defined by their lack of access to the sea, which causes isolation from world markets and high transit costs, resulting in constraints on socio-economic development. Due to this geographic disadvantage, LLDCs are among the poorest, most vulnerable, and highly dependent developing countries. To date, 32 countries are categorized as LLDCs, with 17 of them also falling under the LDC category.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1" Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries <http://unohrlls.org/UserFiles/File/IPoA.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "About the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)": UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-lldc/>

<sup>7</sup> "Country Profiles": UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-lldc/country-profiles/>

Kazakhstan is the most distant LLDC with a location of 3,750 kilometers from the nearest coast. Afghanistan, Chad, Niger, Zambia and Zimbabwe are next to Kazakhstan with a 2,000 kilometer journey. Transit times are excessively long, especially when met with difficult terrain, unsatisfactory road and railway conditions, and inefficient transport options. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), based on a report done by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), transit costs are higher and less affordable than tariffs for LLDCs.

The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries met in Kazakhstan in 2003 with the International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transportation Cooperation to discuss the geographical and financial constraints on the socio-economic development of LLDCs. The conference established the "Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries" and the "Almaty Ministerial Declaration."

Much of the United Nations support for LLDCs falls under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, established by the General Assembly Resolution 56/227. However, the United Nations also maintains the Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries to handle the local pressing issues of LLDCs<sup>8</sup>.

## **SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)**

Small Island Developing States<sup>9</sup> (SIDS) are another group of developing countries facing social, economic and environmental disadvantages. In June of 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development<sup>10</sup> (UNCED), otherwise known as the Earth Summit, SIDS were first recognized by the United Nations in an official capacity. Agenda 21, Chapter 17 G,<sup>11</sup> declares the United Nations recognition of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a body composed of 38 Member

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<sup>8</sup> "Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries": UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-lldc/bureau-of-the-lldc-group/>

<sup>9</sup> "About the Small Island Developing States" UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/>

<sup>10</sup> "UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992)" Earth Summit <https://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>

<sup>11</sup> "A/CONF.151/26 (Vol.II)" Conference on Environment and Development [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative\\_process/documents/A21-Ch17.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative_process/documents/A21-Ch17.htm)

States. Other members of AOSIS include non-United Nations Member States that are either non-self-governing or non independent territories.

Individual SIDS belong to three different geographic locations, with each represented by its own regional body. The Caribbean region is represented by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); the Pacific region by the Pacific Island Forum (PIF); and the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and China Sea (AIMS) by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). There are further sub-regional divisions with similar operations concentrated at the local level. The Bahamas, Fiji, Jamaica, Singapore, and Tonga are a few of the United Nations recognized SIDS.<sup>12</sup>

SIDS face many of the same constraints as LLDCs due to their remote and subdued locations. Their resource bases are narrow leaving their economies and markets reliant on external and remote sources. Costs for energy, transportation, communication services, and infrastructure continue to increase as they are limited in their ability to stay parallel with the modernizing world. Not only are SIDS vulnerable to their dependence on the public sector with limited advancements in the private sphere, but they are the most affected by natural disasters. High costs for infrastructure plays a detrimental role in SIDS' capacity to combat prevalent environmental distress. SDG 9 stresses the urgency to create resilient infrastructure, largely due to worsening environmental factors and the increasingly traumatic impacts on SIDS.

Since 1992 the United Nations has dedicated programmes and assistance to aid SIDS in their efforts to increase development and independent socio-economic security. The "Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States" (BPOA)<sup>13</sup> was adopted at the 1994 Global Conference in Barbados. BPOA symbolized the United Nations resolve to assist and extend cooperation to SIDS as they strive to achieve their respective sustainable development goals. The BPOA was revisited and revised at the 22nd Special Session of the General Assembly. Later, the

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<sup>12</sup> "UN Members": UN-OHRLLS <http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/country-profiles/>

<sup>13</sup> "Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States": Barbados Programme of Action <http://unohrlls.org/UserFiles/File/SIDS%20documents/Barbados.pdf>

ten year review held in 2005 in Mauritius, changed the programme name to the "Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS" (MIS).<sup>14</sup>

In 2014, the United Nations commitment to the sustainable development of SIDS was reaffirmed at the Third International Conference on SIDS. The international community created the "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway" (SAMOA),<sup>15</sup> a plan that relates to many of the SDG 9 goals directly affecting the progress of SIDS. Like the LDCs and LLDCs, SIDS are represented on a macro scale within the international community by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

## **PROGRESS OF SDG 9**

Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation, the heart of Sustainable Development Goal 9, seem to be moving at a slow pace. Developing a strong socio-economic foundation for the most vulnerable places within the international community is a process that will take time, consistency and tenacity. Since the conception of the SDGs in 2015, Goal 9 has met great vicissitude.

Despite some shortcomings, there were still several points of progress in 2016. Manufacturing was found to contribute 10 to 30 per cent to the GDPs of developing countries, and employment through manufacturing has been steadily increasing. In LDCs, agriculture and other traditional sectors have remained reliable as the main source of employment. Further, global carbon dioxide emissions have continued to show a 30 per cent decrease since 1990. Additionally, the official flows for economic infrastructure in developing regions reached 59.5 billion dollars, with transport and energy receiving the most financial assistance. Information and communications infrastructure continued to spread rapidly with greater access to mobile cellular phones and services.

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<sup>14</sup> "A/CONF.207/11": Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS <http://unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/SIDS%20documents/mauritius.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway": UN-OHRLLS <https://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2015/01/SAMOA-Pathway.pdf>

The 2017 report found a continuation of improvements, particularly in manufacturing. The United Nations recommitted to investment in LDCs to build the necessary infrastructure to ensure the doubling of industry's shares of GDP by 2030.<sup>16</sup>

LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS had contributed 1 to 2.7 per cent of the 2.7-billion-dollar industry of global transportation services; this grew to 3.5 per cent of the global GDP. As manufacturing increased to 16.2 per cent of the global GDP, LDCs continued their efforts to lessen the equity gap, closing it from 4,621 dollars (Europe and North America) to 100 dollars (LDCs) per capita. Production of technologically complex commodities reached 10 per cent of total manufacturing output in LDCs. Global emissions of carbon dioxide maintained their general decline, with Europe and North America reaching 36 per cent decreases in their emissions intensity level. Investments in research and development, as well as official development assistance for economic infrastructure exhibited modest growth. Mobile cellular services prevailed in their efforts to provide unconnected areas with access to the global information community by bringing mobile cellular signals to 85 per cent of people in LDCs and other vulnerable regions.

2018 witnessed continuous progress in manufacturing, technology and decreasing carbon intensity. To achieve the inclusive and sustainable industrialization outlined in the goals of SDG 9 for developing countries, the United Nations stressed the need for competitive economic forces to drive up employment and income, facilitate international trade, and commission the efficient use of resources.<sup>17</sup>

The global economic environment of 2019 has not proved favorable for Sustainable Development Goal 9's expeditious growth. Most pressing are the concerns about the ability of LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, and other developing countries who are disadvantaged, to double their manufacturing

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<sup>16</sup> "Progress of Goal 9 in 2017": United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' Knowledge Platform <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG9>

<sup>17</sup> "Progress of Goal 9 in 2018": United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' Knowledge Platform <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG9>

industry's share of GDP by 2030 and increase investments in scientific research and innovation to the global average, where it currently remains far below.<sup>18</sup>

Manufacturing has noticeably slowed in both developing and developed countries. For the last year, the global share of GDP regarding manufacturing from developing countries has been stalled at 16.5 per cent due in large to emerging trade and tariff barriers constricting investment and economic growth. With LDCs already bringing in the lowest share of the global GDP, this is the most prominent concern for SDG 9's 2030 manufacturing goals. Additionally, the share of manufacturing employment in total employment has been consistently declining and currently stands at 14.2 per cent. Developing countries have struggled to keep up with the increasing average global investment of GDP in research and development. Presently, the average stands at 1.68 per cent. Europe and North America are above average, contributing 2.21 per cent, while developing regions fell short of the average, allocating approximately 1.2 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

Though there has been a slow down in manufacturing and unsatisfactory investments in research and development, there are several positive signs for SDG 9. With manufacturing stalled, the intensity of global carbon dioxide emissions from manufacturing industry has continued its decline. GDP has experienced growth from this environmental achievement. Developing regions have moved away from agriculture and low-value added manufacturing productions towards high-value added productions like technology. LDCs have since generated 10.4 per cent of the global manufacturing value added in this market. Despite the limited fiscal endowment in research and development, employment within this field has been steadily rising, especially in developing regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, researchers per million inhabitants is currently 91, while previously the rate was 63.

International maritime freight transport has increased to an estimated 3.7 per cent globally, with more than 80 per cent of world merchandise trade by volume transported by sea. This represents tangible hope for economic development in SIDS particularly, as efficient transportation services are

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<sup>18</sup> "Progress of Goal 9 in 2019": United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' Knowledge Platform <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG9>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

key drivers of these efforts. Growth of international maritime transit will provide new capacities for socio-economic forward movement in these dependent areas. Moreover, progress for communication and mobile connectivity equality is making rapid strides. 90 per cent of people in the world are living within range of 3G – quality or higher mobile network. Mobile cellular services are growing at a rate more rapidly than the internet. While Sustainable Development Goal 9 may be facing serious challenges to key goals due to the vulnerabilities and disadvantages of the regions they serve, significant progress has been made.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

The Sustainable Development Goals call on the international community to leave no one behind. Despite the progress in global socio-economic development, humanitarian crises continue and climate change is presenting new challenges. The Secretary-General's annual report (A/74/81-E/2019/60)<sup>20</sup> reemphasizes the need to address food insecurity, famine, forced displacement, and environmental impacts and disasters. The commitment of Goal 9 to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation is essential to the future of long-term promotion of human rights, humanitarian assistance and human independence.

Climate-change related impacts and disasters are major contributors to humanitarian crises that continue to affect vulnerable and disadvantaged regions. To achieve the primary goals of SDG 9, the international community will need to get ahead on preventative and reactive responses to the socio-economic fallouts caused by climate change disasters. SDG 9 calls on the international community to implement more protocols and frameworks for environmental protection keeping in mind the The Kyoto Protocol,<sup>21</sup> which committed the global community to reduce gas emissions in

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<sup>20</sup> "A/74/81-E/2019/60": Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations - Report of the Secretary-General <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/strengthening-coordination-emergency-humanitarian-assistance-united-nations-report-13>

<sup>21</sup> "Kyoto Protocol - Targets for the first commitment period": United Nations Climate Change <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-kyoto-protocol/what-is-the-kyoto-protocol/kyoto-protocol-targets-for-the-first-commitment-period>

1992, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,<sup>22</sup> which recognizes the State as the primary party responsible for disaster risk reduction.

Building new markets in developing nations that are not commodity based will play a crucial role in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. Manufacturing is a key factor in achieving socio-economic stability in developing nations; however, their markets need to be sustainable. With the pressing crises of climate-change, agricultural, oil, or fish dependent markets in disadvantaged regions are in a predicament. By devising economic strategies that promote industries without a commodity, such as transit or outsourced manufacturing arrangements as seen in Ethiopia, developing countries can become more active in the global economy. In order to build these strategies and networks, investments in research and development will have to come first.

Encouraging a more inclusive global economy through accessible trade options and international investments will ensure the growth of developing economies and markets. The endorsement of Free Trade (monitored by the World Trade Organizations)<sup>23</sup> breaks down financially derailing trade barriers. Trade barriers can be detrimental to the developing world's economies' need to grow faster and have the poor benefit from this growth. Free trade removes the financial barriers underdeveloped economies and populations cannot afford, while allowing for these economies to grow at a faster rate. China and India are two examples of nations seeing positive effects on their economic growth as a result of this trading trend. Economists concur that free trade provides the opportunity for direct nonpolitical investment of rich countries into regions in need.

Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation requires trial and error, consistency, and international cooperation. Progress has been made thus far, but as the world evolves both physically and socially, there is always more to be done. The time has come, now more pressing than ever, for the international community to fully embrace the challenge with unremitting dedication and service.

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<sup>22</sup> "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction": United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

<sup>23</sup> "Overview": World Trade Organization [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/wto\\_dg\\_stat\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/wto_dg_stat_e.htm)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can Member States increase affordable transporting options for SIDS and LLDCs?
2. What markets have the greatest potential to bring sustainable economic solutions?
3. In what ways can Sustainable Development Goal 9 be revised to make sure "no one is left behind?"
4. Are there pressing concerns related to Goal 9 that have gone unaddressed?
5. What incentives can the United Nations provide to increase the international community's investment in building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation?
6. With the climate-change crisis becoming more impactful on the well being and independence of societies and economies in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, how can the international community better support and protect them?
7. How has your country assisted in supporting the achievement of the key targets of SDG 9? What more can it do?

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## **MANAGING AND PRESERVING NATURAL RESOURCES WHILE REDUCING WASTE GENERATION**

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During your lifetime, it is possible that the world may run out of some nonrenewable resources, especially as the population passes eight then nine billion people. So it is necessary to try to make these resources last as long as possible.

Achieving economic growth and sustainable development requires that we urgently reduce our ecological footprint by changing the way we produce and consume goods and resources. Across the world, countries use different resources with a varying degree of extraction, use, and management. The most prominent resources that this paper will focus on will be, oil, natural gas, timber, and water as they are the most vital and consumed resources in the world today. By focusing on these four major resources, we can develop a more ethical approach to extracting, using, and managing how we use the world's resources. However, it is encouraged to go beyond these four resources and research other important impacts that countries have caused due to natural resource extractions.

### **OIL**

Global oil demand rose by 1.3% in 2018,<sup>1</sup> led by strong growth in the United States. The United States and China showed the largest overall growth, while demand fell in areas like Japan and Korea and was stagnant in parts of Europe.

The United States showed the largest overall growth at 540 kb/d (thousand barrels per day).<sup>2</sup> The strong expansion of petrochemical demand in the United States boosted consumption, which also benefited from a rise in industrial production and very strong demand for trucking services.

Oil demand in China was up by 445 kb/d, or 3.5%,<sup>3</sup> with the rate of growth slowing down as the country moved toward a less oil-intensive model of development and curbed vehicle use to improve

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<sup>1</sup> "Global Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> Status Report." *GECO 2019*, <https://www.iea.org/geco/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Global Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> Status Report." *GECO 2019*, <https://www.iea.org/geco/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

urban air quality. Environmental policies have reduced diesel demands, as provincial governments are keen to develop cleaner transport fuels or electric buses. As the world's largest auto market, total passenger car sales in China fell 4.1% in 2018 from the previous year's record sales. Meanwhile, electric passenger car sales have more than doubled from around 600,000 in 2017 to over 1.2 million in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Indian oil demand grew 5% in 2018 compared to 2017,<sup>5</sup> a year when demand was lower due to the impact of the implementation of the Goods and Service Tax and demonetisation. However, the sharp increase in oil prices in 2018, which was amplified by currency deterioration, contributed to a slowing of growth. Rapid industrialisation and the fast pace of growth in vehicle fleets have caused severe air quality problems, and policies are being put in place to try to tackle the problem.

Oil demand in Japan continued to contract, assisted by energy efficiency efforts in industry and transport and the reduced use of oil-based electricity generators as four nuclear reactors came back online for the first time since the Fukushima Daiichi accident in 2011. Demand also contracted in Korea, especially in the power sector where there was a significant shift in generation from oil to gas.

European oil demand remained stagnant due to slowing economic activity and rising prices. Germany saw an important decline in oil demand, falling by 135 kb/d or 5.4% in 2018. But oil demand in Eurasia rose strongly on a rebound in Russian oil demand, comprising more than 80% of the Eurasia total in 2018. Helped by strong car sales, Russian gasoline demand rose slightly in 2018 after three years of decline. Kerosene demand grew as a result of increased air traffic.<sup>6</sup>

In Africa, low economic growth in South Africa and a switch to natural gas in Egypt put a cap on demand growth in 2018. Egypt started production at Eni's supergiant Zohr gas field in December 2017, displacing oil used in the power sector.

Oil demand in Latin America continues to suffer from economic difficulties in Argentina, Venezuela and Brazil. After two years of steady decline, Brazil's oil demand returned to modest

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "Global Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> Status Report." *GECO 2019*. <https://www.iea.org/geco/>.

growth in 2017 as the economy emerged from a deep recession. Argentina's oil demand collapsed in 2018 as GDP fell by 2.6%, and Venezuela's GDP fell by 18% in 2018 with oil demands also declining.<sup>7</sup>

The Middle East saw a large decline in oil demand in 2018 mainly due to the sharp drop in Saudi Arabia's demand, which resulted from less construction activity, a price reform, a switch to natural gas in the power sector, and high emigration. In January 2018, the government more than doubled the price of gasoline.

## **NATURAL GAS**

Natural gas consumption grew by an estimated 4.6% in 2018<sup>8</sup>, its largest increase since 2010 when gas demand bounced back from the global financial crisis. This second consecutive year of strong growth, following a 3% rise in 2017, was driven by growing energy demand and substitution from coal. The switch from coal to gas accounted for over one-fifth of the rise in gas demand. Even though global coal demand grew for a second year in 2018, its role in the global mix continued to decline.

The United States and China together accounted for 70% of the global growth, which was driven by a strong global economy and by substitution from coal. The switch from coal to gas was responsible for nearly 40 bcm (billion cubic meters) of the increase in gas, more than one-fifth of the total extra demand.

The United States was the single largest driver of higher demand, with a gain of 80 bcm or up 10.5%<sup>9</sup> from the previous year, its highest increase since the early 1950s. This higher consumption absorbed the majority of the growth in domestic gas production, which also hit record levels in 2018.

Gas demand in China increased by almost 18%, or 42 bcm, the fastest growth rate since the introduction of its 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2016-2020)<sup>10</sup> due to its more ambitious promotion of the use of natural gas relative to previous plans. Gas now accounts for 8% of primary demand in China, double its

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "Global Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> Status Report." *GECO 2019*. <https://www.iea.org/geco/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

share at the start of the decade. The country became the world's largest natural gas importer in 2018, ahead of Japan, and was the second-largest contributor in volume to global demand growth after the United States. This results from the country's policy framework in favor of cleaner energies (known as the "Three-Year Action Plan for Winning the Blue Sky War") and by restricting the use of coal boilers for industrial and residential use. Across all sectors, the switch from coal to gas contributed 17 bcm to demand growth.

In the Asia-Pacific region, natural gas demand was also pushed by growing industry and power generation needs in South Asia as well as by nuclear reactor shutdowns in South Korea.

In the Middle Eastern and North African oil and gas producing countries, reducing oil burn for power generation through the development of natural gas-fired combined cycles contributed to the global gas demand trend. Egypt achieved self-sufficiency in its gas supply in late 2018 and inaugurated the world's largest combined cycle gas-fired power plant, with a capacity of 14.4 GW.<sup>11</sup> In Iran, the region's largest natural gas consumer, consumption growth is driven by power generation growth and the phasing out of fuel oil burn.

After several years of decline, consumption rose in Russia for a third consecutive year. The increase in gas sales was driven mainly by power generation as the use of coal for power decreased slightly. Europe as a whole experienced a decline in natural gas consumption in 2018 after two years of growth. This is partly due to the temperature sensitivity of gas demand.

Such historic demand growth in Europe was mainly driven by power generation and buildings. A colder winter and hotter summer than average was responsible for around half of the extra gas demand in both sectors. The ongoing switch from coal to gas in power generation also contributed strongly to the growth, adding 18 bcm to gas demand. The share of gas in power generation hit an all-time record of 34%.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Global Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> Status Report." *GECO 2019*, <https://www.iea.org/geco/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

## DEFORESTATION

Forests cover about 30% of the planet. And the ecosystems they create play an essential role in supporting life on earth. But deforestation is clearing Earth's forests on a massive scale. At the current rate of destruction, the world's rainforest can completely disappear within 100 years. Why should we care about deforestation?

Together deforestation and agriculture are responsible for 24% of greenhouse gas emissions, making deforestation a significant contributor to climate change.<sup>13</sup> Deforestation impacts the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in two ways. First, when trees are cut down they release the carbon they are storing into the atmosphere. Second, trees play a critical role in absorbing the greenhouse gases that fuel global warming. Fewer forests means larger amounts of greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere, and an increased speed and severity of global warming.

In addition to helping regulate the earth's climate, forests provide habitats for over 80% of the plants and animals that live on land. But deforestation destroys these habitats, diminishing biodiversity. Some experts estimate that four to six thousand rainforest species go extinct each year. This also affects the more than two billion people who rely on forests as sources of food and shelter.

The biggest driver of deforestation is agriculture. Farmers chop down trees in order to plant crops or to make room to raise livestock. Logging operations, which provide the world's wood and paper products, also cut countless trees each year. Forests are also destroyed as a result of expanding urban living spaces. The effects of deforestation are grave, but not irreversible. Efforts such as managing forest resources, eliminating clear-cutting and planting new trees to replace those removed, are already ongoing to reduce deforestation's environmental impact on our planet. However, the recent fires in the Amazon region and parts of Africa remind us of how complex this issue is. This was reflected in the most recent address to the General Assembly by Brazil's president at

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<sup>13</sup> Nunez, Christina. "Deforestation and Its Effect on the Planet." *Deforestation Facts and Information*, 25 Feb. 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation/>.

the GA's opening plenary session in which he defended Brazil's approach to the fires (See GA plenary records).

## **WATER**

The Earth might seem like it has abundant water, but in fact less than 1% is available for human use. The rest is either salt water found in oceans, fresh water frozen in the polar ice caps, or too inaccessible for practical usage. While the demand on freshwater resources is increasing, supply will always remain constant. And although it's true that the water cycle continuously returns water to earth, it is not always returned to the same place, or in the same quantity and quality. The global demand for water has been increasing at a rate of about 1% per year over the past decades as a function of population growth, economic development, and changing consumption patterns, among other factors. It will continue to grow significantly over the foreseeable future. Industrial and domestic demand for water will increase much faster than agricultural demand, although agriculture will remain the largest user overall. The vast majority of the growth in demand for water will occur in countries with developing or emerging economies. At the same time, the global water cycle is intensifying due to climate change, with wetter regions generally becoming wetter and drier regions becoming even drier. Other global changes, like urbanisation, de-forestation, and the intensification of agriculture, add to these challenges.

The United Nations World Water Development Report, nature-based solutions for water, launched 19 March 2018, during the 8th World Water Forum, and in conjunction with World Water Day, demonstrates how nature-based solutions (NBS) offer a vital means of addressing many of the world's water challenges while simultaneously delivering additional benefits vital to all aspects of sustainable development.<sup>14</sup> NBS use and mimic natural processes to enhance water availability (soil moisture retention or groundwater recharge), improve water quality (natural and constructed wetlands

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<sup>14</sup> "Water: Coordinating the UN's Work on Water and Sanitation." *UN*, <https://www.unwater.org/>.

or riparian buffer strips), and reduce risks associated with water-related disasters and climate change (floodplain restoration or green roofs).

Currently, water management remains heavily dominated by traditional, human-built infrastructure and the enormous potential for NBS remains unutilized. NBS include green infrastructure that can substitute, augment or work in parallel with man-made infrastructure in a cost-effective manner. The goal is to find the most appropriate blend of natural and man-made investments to maximize benefits and system efficiency while minimizing costs and trade-offs.

## **WASTE**

Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals is a major issue. It is essential to meet the social and economic goals of the international community. These chemicals can be used with a high degree of safety when best practices are followed. However, much remains to be done.

Two of the major problems, particularly in developing countries, are a lack of sufficient scientific information for risk assessment and a lack of resources to deal with chemicals for which data are at hand. Gross chemical contamination, with grave damage to human health, genetic structures, reproductive outcomes, and the environment, has been continuing within some of the world's most important industrial areas. Restoration will require major investment as well as the development of new techniques.

In 'The Future We Want,' the outcome document of Rio+20 (2012), Member States reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous waste in ways that lead to minimization of significant adverse effects to human health and the environment by 2020.<sup>15</sup>

In 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,' Member States re-committed to 'reduce the negative impacts of urban activities and of chemicals which are hazardous for human health and the environment, including through the environmentally sound

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<sup>15</sup> "Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production." *UNDP*, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-12-responsible-consumption-and-production.html>.

management and safe use of chemicals, the reduction and recycling of waste and the more efficient use of water and energy.<sup>16</sup>

In Sustainable Development Goal 3, 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all ages,' Member States decided to 'by 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.' In Goal 6, 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all,' Member States decided to 'by 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.' In Goal 12, 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns,' Member States reiterated to by 2020, 'achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.'<sup>17</sup>

Management of solid wastes and sewage is also an issue of concern. Solid wastes include all domestic refuse and non-hazardous wastes such as commercial and institutional wastes, street sweepings and construction debris and, in some countries, human wastes. Hazardous waste is frequently intermixed with other waste, posing particular management challenges. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, Governments reaffirmed the importance of solid waste management.<sup>18</sup> They called for priority attention to be given to waste prevention and minimization, reuse and recycling. They also called for the development of environmentally sound disposal facilities, including technology to convert waste into energy.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production." *UNDP*, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-12-responsible-consumption-and-production.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, why does it matter? More people globally are expected to join the middle class over the next two decades. This is good for individual prosperity but it will increase demand for already constrained natural resources. If we don't act to change our consumption and production patterns, we will cause irreversible damage to our environment. When we release carbon, for example, burning coal or driving a car, all of us pay for that in the form of things like fires, floods, and crop failures. Coming up with a solution to reduce emissions, like putting a fee on carbon, creates incentives to emit less carbon. More importantly, it also incentivizes the development of low carbon technology. By the end of this century, if emissions keep rising, the average temperature on earth could go up another four to eight degrees. There are a lot of things we could do to fix it, but none of them are free and we have to put in the work to do it.

One response of the UN has been to emphasize the need for "Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all," the title of GA resolution A/73/236. In this resolution's second operative paragraph, Member States strongly encouraged

Governments and other relevant stakeholders to take actions to achieve universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, increase the global share of new and renewable energy, improve the inclusion of developing countries in energy sector cooperation, where relevant, and increase the rate of improvement in energy efficiency for a clean, low-emission, low-carbon, climate-resilient, safe, efficient, modern, affordable and sustainable energy system.<sup>19</sup>

In subsequent paragraphs the resolution stressed, inter alia, expanding the use of renewable energy, cooperation and sharing of best practices at the regional and international levels, and "integrated resource planning and management in their energy strategies" (OPs 7, 9, 11,12).<sup>20</sup> Delegates at this conference then may want to explore how to make the use of current resources more efficient and sustainable, whether resources other than those discussed in this paper should be addressed.

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<sup>19</sup> GA A/RES/73/236

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

and/or how to promote the development of renewable energy resources and provide access to these, in particular to developing countries.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Do you feel any other natural resources need to be addressed? (Coal, mining of valuable minerals)
2. Should the UN regulate what resources countries use?
3. How can we promote cleaner and more efficient energy sources (renewable sources, nuclear energy)? What is your country doing in this regard?
4. How should we deal with the world's increasing trash production, especially in our oceans?
5. How would these actions affect Climate Change?

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# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS  
IN RELATION TO NUTRITION

STRENGTHENING MATERNAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL AND EQUITABLE  
ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER FOR ALL

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The World Health Organization (WHO) is one of fifteen specialized agencies of the United Nations. The WHO monitors and responds to issues related to international public health. The WHO was established in 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The WHO is a member of the United Nations Development Group. Its predecessor, the Health Organization, was an agency of the League of Nations.

Governance of the WHO takes place through the World Health Assembly, which is the supreme decision-making body; and the Executive Board, which gives effect to the decisions and policies of the Health Assembly.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ISSUES BOOK

1. Strengthening food security and food production systems in relation to nutrition
2. Strengthening maternal health care systems in developing countries
3. Strengthening efforts to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## **STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS IN RELATON TO NUTRITION**

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Following expiration of the period set for the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, the General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) designed to improve the standard of life for each person and "leave no one behind." Goal 2 of the SDGs calls for achieving zero hunger across the globe by 2030 and while doing so addressing food insecurity and malnutrition. This Goal has several targets that offer manageable, actionable steps projected to "ensure sustainable food production systems" and "end all forms of malnutrition," while also emphasizing addressing the needs of women, older persons, malnourished infant-aged children, indigenous people, and family farmers.<sup>1</sup> The SDGs are interconnected building blocks for a better future; for instance, SDG 2 is related to or dependent upon other SDGs such as provding clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), and promoting good health and well-being (Goal 3). And virtually all the SDGs relate to the primary goal of reducing and eventually eliminating poverty and "fast-track[ing] progress for those furthest behind first" in nations in need of development.<sup>2</sup>

For decades the United Nations has been working to mitigate the impact of food insecurity while simultaneously aiming to improve access to sustainable, quality food sources. Food security is defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security as the physical, social, and economic accessibility for all people at all times to "sufficient, safe, and nutritious food" necessary for an active and healthy lifestyle in accordance with dietary restrictions and food preferences.<sup>3</sup> A Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report states that people facing moderate food insecurity lack "consistent access to food, which diminishes dietary quality, disrupts normal eating patterns, and can have negative consequences for nutrition, health and well-being. People facing severe food

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<sup>1</sup> SDG Goal 2

<sup>2</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals." *UNDP*, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html).

<sup>3</sup> *Ifpri.org*, [www.ifpri.org/topic/food-security](http://www.ifpri.org/topic/food-security).

insecurity, on the other hand, have likely run out of food, experienced hunger and, at the most extreme, gone for days without eating, putting their health and well-being at grave risk.”<sup>4</sup>

Accessibility to nutritious foods is one of the numerous barriers to achieving the goal of zero hunger. According to the United Nations' Food Security and Nutrition in the World report of July 2019, there are approximately two billion people, over a quarter of the global population, who lack access to "safe, nutritious, and sufficient foods."<sup>5</sup> This places vulnerable populations, such as those living at or below the poverty level, at high risk of serious health complications, such as malnutrition. Malnutrition appears in numerous forms, such as undernutrition resulting in wasting and stunting of growth, micronutrient deficiencies (lacking the necessary nutrients to sustain life), and overweight and obesity which may lead to death and heart related issues.<sup>6</sup>

The FAO reported in 2019 that

- 821 million people were undernourished in 2017;
- The majority of the world's hungry people live in developing countries where 12.9 percent of the population is undernourished;
- The rate in Sub-Saharan Africa was 23.2 percent in 2017;
- Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45 percent) of deaths in children under five – 3.5 million each year
- 149 million children under 5 (22 percent of the global under-5 population) were undernourished in 2018.<sup>7</sup>

Those areas above the average rate of undernourishment world wide in 2018 included Sub-Saharan Africa (22.8), Eastern Africa (30.8), Middle Africa (26.5), Western Africa and Southern Asia (both 14.7), and the Caribbean (18.4).<sup>8</sup> One of the regions most affected at this time is the Sahel, a region south of the Sahara that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It includes ten countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Eritrea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Sudan. Not only does the region suffer from conflict and terrorist activities, but it is affected by desertification and these problems combine with other factors to produce a high level of malnutrition. Currently the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), established by

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<sup>4</sup> FAO Report, State of the World 2019

<sup>5</sup> "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019. : Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page-view&type=20000&nr=5678&menu=2993](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page-view&type=20000&nr=5678&menu=2993).

<sup>6</sup> "Malnutrition." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition).

<sup>7</sup> FAO Report, 2019

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Security Council resolution 2100 (2013), is tasked with providing security, protection of civilians, promotion of human rights, and supporting a national political dialogue and reconciliation, but progress has been very limited thus far.<sup>9</sup>

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which was established in 1945 and works closely with other bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank, has addressed the topics of hunger and food insecurity for many years. The first World Food Conference was held in 1974 in which global consumption and production of food was analyzed. This resulted in the adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, which notes the responsibility of the international community to address food needs in the preparation and implementation of national planning and programming of economic and social development.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, international meetings have been instrumental in addressing specific concerns of various countries, such as the 2015 Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States. The Declaration outlined the necessity for research and capacity development in these regions, specifically in "areas of nutrition, promotion of locally produced foods, marketing and branding, climate resilient agricultural technology and practices, and marine science and technology."<sup>11</sup>

At the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in November of 2009, the heads of state and other representatives adopted five Principles under the heading of "Commitments and Actions":

- Principle 1: Invest in country-owned plans, aimed at channeling resources to well-designed and results-based programmes and partnerships;
- Principle 2: Foster strategic coordination at national, regional and global level to improve governance, promote better allocation of resources, avoid duplication of efforts and identify response-gaps;
- Principle 3: Strive for a comprehensive twin-track approach to food security that consists of: (1) direct action to immediately tackle hunger for the most vulnerable and (2) medium- and long-term sustainable agricultural, food security, nutrition and rural

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<sup>9</sup> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma>

<sup>10</sup> "Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition." *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EradicationOfHungerAndMalnutrition.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EradicationOfHungerAndMalnutrition.aspx).

<sup>11</sup> "Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States." *United Nations*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8537MilanDeclaration.pdf>.

development programmes to eliminate the root causes of hunger and poverty, including through the progressive realization of the right to adequate food:

- Principle 4: Ensure a strong role for the multilateral system by sustained improvements in efficiency, responsiveness, coordination and effectiveness of multilateral institutions;
- Principle 5: Ensure sustained and substantial commitment by all partners to investment in agriculture and food security and nutrition, with provision of necessary resources in a timely and reliable fashion, aimed at multi-year plans and programmes.<sup>12</sup>

Since the formulation of the SDGs, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions directly related to SDG 2, most recently General Assembly resolutions A/RES/73/171 and A/RES/73/253.

Resolution 73/171 on "The right to food," reaffirms that right and recognized

the complex character of food insecurity and its likely recurrence owing to a combination of several major factors, such as the effects of the global financial and economic crisis, environmental degradation, desertification and the impacts of global climate change, as well as poverty, natural disasters, armed conflicts, drought, volatility in commodity prices and the lack in many countries of the appropriate technology, investment and capacity-building to confront its impact, particularly in developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States, and the need for coherence and collaboration between international institutions at the global level.<sup>13</sup>

This resolution also addresses a number of other issues such as famine, the use of starvation of civilians in combat situations, the importance of traditional sustainable agricultural practices, the impact on and role of indigenous people, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the need to mainstream a gender perspective in food security programmes, malnutrition and combating undernutrition in mothers, in particular during pregnancy, and in children, and concerns about the situation in rural areas, where 70 percent of people who are hungry reside. The resolution also notes the responsibility of States in providing food and the importance of international cooperation and development assistance.<sup>14</sup>

Resolution 73/253, on "Agriculture development, food security and nutrition," reiterates many of the points or concerns raised in resolution 73/171. The resolution notes that the goal of zero hunger is not attainable at the rate we are progressing currently due to "unsustainably managed natural resources and with insecure and uneven tenure rights for smallholders" that disproportionately impacts rural areas, especially those facing climate related disasters. Similarly, those in urban areas also have a difficult time finding access to nutritious, affordable food options known as "food

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<sup>12</sup> Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, held 16-18 November 2009; FAO document WSFS 2009/2.

<sup>13</sup> A/RES/73/171, preambular paragraph 16.

<sup>14</sup> A/RES/73/171, passim.

deserts."<sup>15</sup> The document further calls attention to the New Urban Agenda that was adopted in October of 2016 at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) to address the needs of "urban poor" residents. This emphasized including nutritional needs as well as food security into urban and territorial planning in areas that are lacking sustainable agricultural policies and nutritional food sources. Keeping in mind the diverse settings in which food insecurity and malnutrition takes place, this allows for the international community to create solutions reflective of their current status.

In addition to the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition cited above, geographic location has a significant impact on accessibility to nutritious foods. In rural areas reliable food sources may be scarce and studies show this situation is directly linked to socio-economic level. According to the World Bank, more than "80% of the extreme poor live in rural areas."<sup>16</sup>

One mechanism that has been used to track the global scale of food related issues is the Global Food Security Index.<sup>17</sup> This assesses 113 developed and developing nations based on the quality, accessibility, and affordability of food, and maintains a database with all of these components measured. Member States have also taken action on other initiatives to accomplish SDG 2, working in coalitions and transnational bodies. For instance, the United Nations has publicly commended the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme that "provides guidance on planning and implementing investment programmes" specifically done through a comprehensive framework.<sup>18</sup> Drafted and implemented by the African Union, 41 African Union member states have signed on to participate in this programme and of these, 33 instituted "formal national agriculture and food security investment plans" to improve the quality of agricultural planning.<sup>19</sup> The initiative, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), has been developed by a coalition of 61 nations to specifically target malnutrition and improve the health of mothers and infants.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A/RES/73/253, passim.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank Group. "THE RURAL NONFARM ECONOMY." *THE RURAL NONFARM ECONOMY*, [ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/RNFEbrochureweb.pdf](http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/RNFEbrochureweb.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> "The Global Food Security Index." *Global Food Security Index*, [foodsecurityindex.eiu.com/](http://foodsecurityindex.eiu.com/).

<sup>18</sup> "OSAA, Africa, UN and Africa, United Nations and Africa, Special Adviser, UN, United Nations, NEPAD, African Union." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/caadp.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/caadp.shtml).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Global Nutrition Targets." *SUN*, [scalingupnutrition.org/progress-impact/global-nutrition-targets/](http://scalingupnutrition.org/progress-impact/global-nutrition-targets/).

Yet, as indicated by the concerns raised in the two resolutions discussed above, these initiatives are not enough. Resolution 73/171 "Calls upon Member States, the United Nations system, and development organizations and other relevant actors to urgently and effectively respond to, prevent and prepare for rising global food insecurity affecting millions of people, especially those who are facing famine or the immediate risk of famine including by enhancing humanitarian and development cooperation and providing urgent funding to respond to the needs of the affected population, and calls upon Member States and parties to armed conflicts to respect international humanitarian law and ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access."

The FAO report cited earlier also provides suggestions for addressing food insecurity and hunger. These include:

- Investing in smallholder women and men;
- Make better use of agricultural biodiversity, which can provide more nutritious diets and enhance livelihoods for farming communities;
- Provide women farmers with the same access to resources as men;
- Provide better energy resources to rural areas.

Delegates to the MUN conference may wish to follow some of these recommendations, but should feel free to think outside the box and develop other initiatives to address the problems of food insecurity and malnutrition with special emphasis on promoting gender equality, reaching a level of "zero hunger," and "leaving no one behind."

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. How can we, as an international community, collectively address the issue of malnutrition and food insecurity within our nations and beyond?
2. What needs must be met for each nation in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2?
3. What initiatives has your country implemented internally that can be adapted to fit a broader, international scale?
4. How can the international community more effectively address situations such as the political and humanitarian crises in the Sahel region?

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## **STRENGTHENING MATERNAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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MUNFW 70th Session – World Health Organization

The backbone of life, growth, and creation lies within the wellbeing of female populations across the globe. Without their vigor, willingness to provide and create, and the wide range of support they bring to their communities, humanity would cease to exist. To maintain peace and foster equality, concerted efforts and resources must strengthen the support and life force that maternal figures never waver from providing. In many developing countries there are deeply set obstacles preventing women from using their voices to obtain what they need to survive. Women of developing countries face many issues affecting maternal mortality: disease; environmental problems; lack of appropriate care, especially related to pregnancy, birth, and post-natal care; and a lack of necessary infrastructure. Forced pregnancies through arranged marriages, assault, or poor monitoring of pregnancies are other common problems experienced by women in developing countries. There needs to be an end to the trauma and poor health women of developing countries are subject to. To sustain the welfare of a country and to further promote economic growth, health care is vital. A country burdened by weak bodies and minds cannot resist the consequences of injustice.

According to Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, the "Sustainable Development Goals seek to end all preventable deaths of women, children and adolescents and create an environment in which these groups not only survive, but thrive, and see their environments, health and wellbeing transformed."<sup>1</sup> Healthcare is imperative for a country trying to overcome poverty. As was stated in the United Nations General Assembly of 2015, the environment thrives when the people do.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, sustainability and healthcare are not mutually exclusive.

The World Health Organization is the most prominent body that tries to address many of these issues, in particular maternal and newborn mortality, which are also affected by poverty, distance from facilities, cultural practices, inadequate services, and lack of information. These efforts are an important

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in the World Health Organization/United Nations General Assembly 2015, in New York.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization: "Maternal Mortality" <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

aspect of Sustainable Development Goal 3: "Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Wellbeing at all Ages." Maternal well-being is in many ways the foundation of sustainable and healthy communities.

## **OBSTACLES FACING MATERNAL WELLBEING**

Death due to pregnancy and reproductive-related issues is not only an ordeal of the past, it is an issue women are still facing today. This phenomenon is most prevalent in third world countries, but occurs worldwide. The United Nations reports that "99% of deaths from childbirth occur in developing countries."<sup>3</sup> Many of these deaths can be prevented through improved health care and proper health care services that ensure the fulfillment of the human right to good health. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals projected for 2016-2030 include a target for Maternal Health Care that aims to reduce the mortality rate to 70 per 100,000 live births. There has been significant progress when it comes to lowering the rate of maternal mortality and how it relates to sustainability, but there is still a long way to go with many obstacles to overcome.

One of the most efficient ways to foster positive changes in the economy and wellbeing of a society is through the establishment of sustainable healthcare systems. Moreover, if specific attention is not paid to improving the infrastructure needed to care for and nurture both mothers and children, the mortality rate will continue to rise. "Universal health coverage will be integral to achieving SDG 3, ending poverty and reducing inequalities in healthcare for all ages."<sup>4</sup>

According to Sustainable Development Goal 3, "All women need access to antenatal care in pregnancy, skilled care during childbirth, and care and support in the weeks after childbirth."<sup>5</sup> South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are the areas struggling most with the issues of poverty, lack of access to information, and inadequate services. One of the means to relieving the burden women disproportionately carry in society is proper education. Providing funding for education to build a

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<sup>3</sup> "Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Wellbeing at all Ages" <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

<sup>4</sup> "Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing": United Nations Development Program <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-3-good-health-and-well-being.html>

<sup>5</sup> "Maternal Mortality": World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

community of skilled workers and informed mothers is a paramount concern of the World Health Organization. Providing guidance and setting standards opens the door to the possibility for change.

What seem like insurmountable obstacles to some developing countries are actually very common and treatable. For instance, with regard to pregnancy, severe bleeding can be stopped post-birth with a simple injection; pre-eclampsia can easily be treated with adequate medical practitioner training and access to medicinal resources. Additionally, infection can be prevented and halted through education and proper medical infrastructure to facilitate the necessary amount of appointments, checkups, and medication.

In addition to focusing on the wellbeing of women before, during and after pregnancy, Sustainable Development Goal 3 also calls for focusing on the health, wellbeing, and progression of the child until the age of 5 years old. "Multisectoral, rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches are essential to address inequalities and build good health for all. The complex, multidimensional nature of health care often overwhelms under-developed health networks, thereby leaving specific needs of women unaddressed."<sup>6</sup>

For women in India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of the Middle East, some of the major obstacles to improved health care include traditional cultural practices, lack of access to information, and poverty. Inequalities must be addressed before common health and wellbeing can be achieved. These particular issues can be addressed through education and access to information. It is common that women who suffer most with poor maternal healthcare reside in areas where they have historically not been given access to education or resources that would empower them. Once women and communities are informed and equipped with these resources, societies and countries can thrive.

Several developing countries have made efforts to put a halt to maternal mortality through policy changes. In many countries programs varied from more skilled healthcare workers being present

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<sup>6</sup> "Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing": United Nations Development Program  
<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-3-good-health-and-well-being.html>

at birth, to more contraceptive use, to insurance plans and other activities to sustain life. What was central to most of these countrywide efforts was education and the strengthening of family planning. Cultural practices can often get in the way of both family planning and education. To overcome these obstacles, countries like Morocco have put in place programs for the monitoring of pregnancies. This is a step in the right direction for women in developing countries, as regular checkups are a vital part of maintaining a healthy pregnancy and mother.

It is also necessary to gather appropriate data to be able to diagnose the leading causes of maternal mortality in developing countries. Therefore, "each developing country is considered as a unit of analysis," and health metrics-based studies have been conducted to see what affects each country's maternal health situation.<sup>7</sup> There are certain socioeconomic indicators that allow countries to detect what factors have the greatest impact on their maternal mortality rates. These include family income, the average fertility rate, and the presence of a skilled healthcare professional at the time of birth. If there is enough information to project how many maternal deaths are to be expected, it should also be possible to detect what solutions would be most appropriate. Several African leaders were very committed to Millenium Development Goals, for example MDG 5 where the goal was to reduce maternal mortality 75% by 2015, and this was achieved by many countries.

According to WHO, "the probability that a 15-year-old woman will eventually die from a maternal cause is 1 in 3,700 in developed countries versus 1 in 160 in developing countries."<sup>8</sup> In many developing countries, teenage women who are pregnant and have little to no access to any sort of aid face the most complications. Additionally, these young women often have no say in the health concerns of their own bodies nor how many children they are going to have. "In Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, 70% of women surveyed by UNICEF said they had no influence over such decisions"; young women in these areas also report not having a say in whether there would be use of contraceptives.<sup>9</sup> It has been found

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<sup>7</sup> MHNP Journal: "Correlates of maternal mortality in developing countries: an ecological study of 28 countries"  
<https://mhnpjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40748-017-0059-8>

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<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Africa Renewal: "Improving Maternal Health in Africa"  
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that countries whose policies have seen the most success in maternal health care have coincidentally seen a rise in contraceptive use.

## **THE SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN A NATION**

"Poverty fuels maternal mortality," as found by the UNFPA, the World Bank, and the United Nations Population Division. They agree that poverty puts both adolescent and adult women in extreme risk of death during pregnancy.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, poverty is one of the leading factors in preventing development. One of the primary things that can help repair a society broken by poverty is education. Not only would educating a community about their circumstances help them overcome them, it would also allow that country to fix several internal problems to help it strengthen its capabilities. Maternal welfare is dependent on what the country can provide for its people.

Education and health care are not mutually exclusive: they will allow women a chance to decide their fate and educate themselves about it, thereby saving lives. Women should not have to be seen as will-less, child creating machines that are to be used at their own expense. If a conversation is to be held about women's healthcare, including the process of pregnancy and childbirth, then there is no doubt that women should have a seat at the table for that conversation. Perhaps some cultural practices may view women as incapable of making decisions, but when it comes to their health and wellbeing it is imperative that they have a say. The United Nations recognizes that "it is essential to ensure that women are empowered to effectively and meaningfully participate in leadership and decision-making processes."<sup>11</sup>

To quiet the maternal voices of a country is to quiet a resilient and capable half of an entire population. With the power that informed women, medical entities, and a government can bring to the table, there could be an environment where maternal mortality and the death of newborn children are in decline. To put a real stop to the dangers women face during pregnancy, especially young women in

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<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Africa Renewal: "Improving Maternal Health in Africa"  
<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2014/improving-maternal-health-africa>

<sup>11</sup> United Nations ECOSOC resolution 2019/L. 18 "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations"

developing countries, "access to good schools, health care, electricity, safe water, and other critical services" is necessary. In addition, hospitals need skilled healthcare professionals to be available for women to make empowered choices. However this is "often determined by socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and geography."<sup>12</sup> The World Health Organization has put forth a consolidated effort to bring aid where it is needed while also implementing programs for education. Education is necessary to sustain and involve women, just as foreign aid is imperative for developing nations.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES**

Womens' rights now play a prominent role in human rights discourse at the United Nations. The Human Rights Council recently adopted a resolution which addresses pressing issues facing women and girls who are most detrimentally affected by a lack of resources or lack of recognition of their rights across the board. These issues include "trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, systematic rape, sexual slavery, forced sterilization, forced pregnancy, harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and lack of accessible and appropriate sexual and reproductive health-care services."<sup>13</sup> The Council called upon the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Health Organization to view these issues as very important "in the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, including through the utilization of the technical guidance by States and other relevant actors."<sup>14</sup> The resolution also recognizes the need to bring substantial changes to healthcare systems. The empowerment of women and respect for their human rights will go hand in hand with bringing down maternal mortality rates and strengthening the care of newborns and mothers. Giving women a choice and allowing them to make their own decisions is perhaps more life-changing than any policy or infrastructure could be.

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<sup>12</sup> The World Bank: "Poverty Overview" <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council resolution: A/HRC/39/L.13/Rev.1 "Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights in humanitarian settings"

<sup>14</sup> United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council resolution: A/HRC/39/L.13/Rev.1 "Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights in humanitarian settings"

Sexual health and maternal health are closely related. It is important to make contraceptives more available and provide treatment for AIDS or other STDs. "The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has called on countries to urgently scale up evidence-informed programs to end the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030."<sup>15</sup> This effort is will require significant resources for developing countries suffering from the fatal effects of AIDS and other sexual-health related complications.

The most recent ECOSOC resolution on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" included two paragraphs on reproductive health care, operative paragraphs 42 and 47, which state the following:

OP42: *Urges* Member States, in cooperation with relevant United Nations and other humanitarian organizations, to ensure reliable and safe access to sexual and reproductive health-care services . . . and recognizes that relevant services are important in order to effectively meet the needs of women and adolescent girls and infants and protect them from preventable mortality and morbidity that occur in humanitarian emergencies; . . ."

OP47: *Encourages* Member States, in cooperation with relevant United Nations humanitarian organizations, to ensure that the basic humanitarian needs of affected populations, including clean water, food, shelter, energy, health, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, including school feeding programmes, education and protection, are addressed as components of humanitarian response, including through providing timely and adequate resources, while ensuring that their collaborative efforts fully adhere to humanitarian principles; . . .<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the United States and a few other States, while joining in the consensus resolution attempted to delete these two paragraphs stating that the phrases "reproductive health" or "reproductive health services" were not clearly defined and should not be interpreted to include a right to abortion.<sup>17</sup>

The World Health Organization recognizes that it is essential to address inequalities of healthcare access in developing countries to promote "comprehensive reproductive, maternal, and newborn health care, addressing all causes of maternal mortality, and strengthening health systems,

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<sup>15</sup> KFF.org The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation: "U.N. Economic And Social Council Calls On Countries To Scale Up AIDS Response, U.N. General Assembly To Set High-Level Meeting Date" <https://www.kff.org/news-summary/u-n-economic-and-social-council-calls-on-countries-to-scale-up-aids-response-u-n-general-assembly-to-set-high-level-meeting-date/>

<sup>16</sup> E/2019/L.18 (this resolution number may change upon its official publication.)

<sup>17</sup> Report from and interview with Consultant from UNHCR who was in attendance at the adoption.

ensuring accountability in order to improve quality of care and equity."<sup>18</sup> Affordable healthcare, which breaks the boundaries of ethnic, geographical, and income-based discrimination, should be accessible for everyone including women in developing countries and needs to be recognized as a basic human right.

## **CONCLUSION**

Adequate education breeds success and sustainability, and with aid in providing resources from the United Nations, the sustainability of the health and quality of life for future generations will be secured. As stated throughout this report, education is the key to solving the issues, issues that can only be avoided if one know better or has access to better quality resources. The ability of countries to implement strong informational structures will directly project the quality of healthcare. Sustainability, and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 3 aim to better all aspects of healthcare. Women's autonomy over their bodies would invoke a dialogue about the wider definition of women's rights. The United Nations, "*Calls upon the States*, with the participation of (influential entities) to develop and implement holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses and strategies to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage..."<sup>19</sup>(the General Assembly 2018). New programs and implementations in developing countries to empower them with the ability to build their own healthcare will continue to meet the SD3 and MDG5. Past efforts to remedy the Maternal healthcare is essential to the future generations, the sustainability of the current world, and the strength and the gift of life. Protecting women's healthcare is protecting human rights.

Sustainable Development Goal 3 calls for, inter alia, addressing and improving maternal healthcare in developing countries. Improved educational systems, improved health care systems and reproductive health care services, providing more health care workers, programs to overcome cultural barriers, specific programs to address AIDS or providing family planning and access to contraceptives can all contribute to lowering maternal and childhood deaths. But underlying all of these efforts is the need to empower women and show greater respect for womens' human rights. The efforts put forth

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<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization: "Maternal Mortality" <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

<sup>19</sup> The United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/153: "Child, Early, and Forced Marriage" 2018

within developing countries to provide quality, standardized services for pregnant women will further remedy issues related to maternal deaths and how well the systems in place are working. Women must be offered a seat at the table when discussing their healthcare and wellbeing; it is imperative that maternal healthcare conversations and resolutions include the voices of those most directly affected by their outcomes.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are the policies in your country that allow for equal access to maternal healthcare?
2. How can countries combat the cultural practices and commonly held beliefs that keep women out of conversations regarding their own bodies and well being?
3. What can be done to provide more access to education and healthcare with skilled professionals?
4. Sustainable Development Goal 3 calls for stable healthcare at all ages. What can countries do to eradicate gender-based discrimination when it comes to access to healthcare and lack of healthcare education?
5. What kind of assistance can most help developing countries to develop quality healthcare services?
6. What can be done to help developing countries address and help prevent AIDS and other reproductive health concerns?
7. What kind of assistance, if any, has your country offered to others?

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# **STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER FOR ALL**

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*Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.<sup>1</sup>*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2010, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation.<sup>2</sup> Water and sanitation are essential factors for survival, environmental sustainability, political stability and economic prosperity. In 2015, United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among those 17 goals, sustainable development Goal 6 stated that by 2030 we must "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."<sup>3</sup> The World Health Organisation (WHO), created in 1948 by the UN, has since then defined its primary role as directing and coordinating international health within the UN system.<sup>4</sup> The WHO is responsible for numerous initiatives and programmes designed to address SDG 6. However, we must be aware that at the current rate of progress, the world is not on track to achieve the global SDG 6 targets by 2030.<sup>5</sup> It is important for us to work together to address this issue, as out of competition for this potentially scarce resource in the future, conflict may arise, posing a threat to international peace and security. This is a problem that requires our continued attention and cooperation.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6**

The 2030 agenda recognises the symbiotic nature of society, development, sustainable growth and the environment. The sustainable development goals work to complement one another; this

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<sup>1</sup> Ban Ki-Moon, 2019

<sup>2</sup> 'General Assembly, Human Rights Council Texts Declaring Water, Sanitation Human Right 'Breakthrough': Challenge Now to Turn Right 'into a Reality', Third Committee Told | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases', 2019

<sup>3</sup> 'Goal 6, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform', 2019

<sup>4</sup> 'Who we are', 2019

<sup>5</sup> 'Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water', 2018

integrated approach recognizes the interdependent success of these goals.<sup>6</sup> It is imperative to view SDG 6 through a wider lens to get a full view of how it connects to and facilitates the achievement of other sustainable development goals.

Eight individual targets constitute SDG 6: the importance of achieving access to affordable drinking water, access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, improving water quality, increasing water-use efficiency, implementing integrated water resource management, protecting water-related ecosystems, expanding international cooperation and strengthening the participation of local communities.<sup>7</sup>

Achieving each aspect of SDG 6 by 2030 is essential to improving health, boosting economic growth and facilitating the reduction of poverty. However, despite the progress that has been made by the WHO, we are still not on track to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. It is imperative we reconsider the actions we should be taking to enable us to achieve this goal. This is especially significant because given the possible scarcity of water in the future; conflicts may arise between or within states, posing a threat to international peace and security. Cooperation and responsibility sharing in the management of water resources will be essential to achieving SDG 6.

In 2017, 2.2 billion people were without safely managed drinking water services.<sup>8</sup> Some countries have less than 50% basic water coverage, including - Comoros, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo, Zambia, Senegal and Peru.<sup>9</sup> Even in Europe and North America, "access to safely managed sanitation services remains a challenge in many countries, especially in rural areas."<sup>10</sup>

## **WHAT ACTIONS HAS THE WHO BEEN TAKING?**

As the international authority on public health and water quality, "WHO leads global efforts to prevent transmission of waterborne disease, advising governments on the development of health-based targets and regulations."<sup>11</sup> WHO has produced a succession of water quality guidelines and

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<sup>6</sup> 'Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water', 2018, p.9

<sup>7</sup> 'Goal 6, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform', 2019

<sup>8</sup> 'Drinking-water', 2019

<sup>9</sup> 'WASH in Health Care Facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019 | UN-Water', 2019

<sup>10</sup>The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019, p.7

<sup>11</sup> 'Drinking-water', 2019

continues to support individual countries to overcome their unique challenges in implementation. WHO works with all "Member States to support their national health development process, whether or not WHO has a physical presence."<sup>12</sup>

WHO also works closely with other UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For example, WHO has worked alongside the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the last 20 years to address issues relating to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).<sup>13</sup> In 2015 they released the Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool (WASH FIT). WASH and WASHFIT lay out practical steps that can be taken to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in healthcare facilities.<sup>14</sup> In 2018, "the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General issued a Global Call to Action to elevate the importance of and prioritize action on WASH in all health care facilities"<sup>15</sup>. As such, in 2019, WHO and UNICEF worked with the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), and released the SDG baseline report for WASH in health care facilities, which provides the "first national, regional and global baseline estimates for monitoring SDG 6 in health care facilities."<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the WHO has also worked alongside United Nations Water. UN Water coordinates the efforts of UN entities and international organisations working on water and sanitation issues, and provides a coherent and reliable data set that can be used to inform policy and create effective and collaborative responses. UN-Water also established the initiative, "The Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water" (GLAAS), which is now implemented by the WHO. In line with SDG 6, GLAAS continues to "provide information on investments and the enabling environment with a specific focus on monitoring targets 6a and 6b."<sup>17</sup>

The WHO has also facilitated the adoption of Water Safety Plans (WSPs) by Member States. These water safety plans are intended to help support and address the needs of diverse and disadvantaged groups.<sup>18</sup> In 2017, WSPs had been implemented in at least "93 countries worldwide, with 69 countries

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<sup>12</sup> 'WHO's work with countries', 2019

<sup>13</sup> 'Impact of WASH', 2019

<sup>14</sup> 'WASH in health care facilities: Practical steps to achieve universal access to quality care', 2019

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Summary of UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2017-2020 Strategy, 2017

<sup>18</sup> A guide to equitable water safety planning: ensuring no one is left behind, 2019, p.1

reporting to have policy instruments either in place or under development that promote or require WSPs or an equivalent."<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, the WHO provides guidance on improving the quality of drinking water through the Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage Programme (HWTS).<sup>20</sup> Moreover WHO promotes functional and sustainable improvements to the safety of small community water supplies around the world, particularly in rural areas. This work is enacted through the International Small Community Water Supply Network.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the progress that has been made by the WHO, we are still not on track to achieve SDG6 by 2030. It is imperative we reconsider the actions we should be taking to enable us to achieve this goal.

## **WHO IS AT RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND?**

At the present rate of progress, some individuals are vulnerable to being left out of our efforts to achieve SDG 6. Inequalities and discrimination continue to persist between and within countries. Those who are at risk of being left behind include women and girls, minority groups, the disabled, those of different ages and health status and the geographically remote, to name only a few.<sup>22</sup> The issue is that "the same people who are being left behind are those who could benefit most from improved access to water and sanitation."<sup>23</sup> Better access to water and sanitation, water management and governance could enhance the lives of those who are vulnerable dramatically. For these individuals the benefits have the potential to include "better health, savings in time and money, dignity, improved access to food and energy, and greater opportunities in terms of education, employment and livelihoods."<sup>24</sup> While this issue affects everyone, everywhere, we must not forget to consider those individuals whose voices are less prominent in the discussion.

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<sup>19</sup> Global status report on water safety plans: A review of proactive risk assessment and risk management practices to ensure the safety of drinking-water, 2017

<sup>20</sup> 'Household water treatment and safe storage', 2019

<sup>21</sup> 'International Small Community Water Supply Network', 2019

<sup>22</sup> The United Nations World Water Development Report, 2019, p.2

<sup>23</sup> The United Nations World Water Development Report, 2019, p.1

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE TO ALLOW THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 6 BY 2030?

Since the 1980's, water usage has been increasing worldwide by around 1% per year. This has been due to a combination of "population growth, socio-economic development and changing consumption patterns."<sup>25</sup> This rate of increase in global water demand is expected to continue at a similar rate until 2050. This would account "for an increase of 20 to 30% above the current level of water use."<sup>26</sup> Evidently, action must be taken to ensure we pursue sustainable means of achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

A few key factors are essential for achieving SDG 6. Accelerated cooperation, increased funding, research, development, innovation, development of institutional capacity, and the inclusion of women and those at risk of being left behind in the discussion, are at the heart of the future actions we should take.

Cooperation is a fundamental requirement. In 2018, "153 countries shared a total of 286 trans-boundary river and lake basins and 592 trans-boundary aquifers."<sup>27</sup> This dependence on trans-boundary waters has created interdependencies between countries. These interdependencies are apparent within political, environmental, economic and security spheres. Cooperation is key to success. While unique interdependent relationships between member states exist globally, a meaningful effort is needed to ensure that, "where appropriate, trans-boundary basins across the world are covered by operational arrangements."<sup>28</sup>

Ensuring that everyone can access safe drinking water, to which they are entitled as a human right, requires increased financial resources. In 2017, "80 per cent of countries reported insufficient financing to meet national water, sanitation and hygiene targets."<sup>29</sup> Additionally, due to a lack of resources and investment in data collection mechanisms, many countries lack the capacity to collect and analyse the data required for full assessment.<sup>30</sup> Alongside completed data sets for monitoring,

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<sup>25</sup> "World Water Development Report 2019 | UN-Water", 2019

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water", 2018

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water", 2018

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

"scientific research, development and innovation are essential to support informed decision-making,"<sup>31</sup> all of which require increased investment and funding.

Further, it is imperative that we strengthen institutional capacity with experienced and effective professionals who can plan and implement progress towards achieving SDG 6, but this can take a significant amount of time.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the inclusion of vulnerable populations, especially women, is essential for achievement of equity by 2030. In 2017, a survey of 84 countries revealed that "the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's participation is higher for rural communities than for urban areas."<sup>33</sup> We must continue to listen to these voices, include them in discussions and recognise the distinct challenges they face. These actions are a prerequisite to achieving equitable access to safe drinking water.

## **CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING SDG 6 BY 2030**

Despite the actions of the WHO and other UN agencies, challenges persist, inhibiting the outcome of our efforts and ability to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Increasing water scarcity, population growth, climate change, inequalities, conflict, political instability, demographic changes and urbanization pose challenges for water supply systems.<sup>34</sup> We must be aware of these factors when planning.

The effects of climate change will result in greater variations in harvested rainwater and can contribute to water scarcity. As natural disasters become more regular and damaging, we must plan ahead and increase resilience to such events.<sup>35</sup> Water scarcity is of great concern to the international community, as it is likely to create tensions both between and within countries, as they compete for this limited resource. Most of those countries facing a strong likelihood of future water scarcity are located in Northern Africa and Western, Central and Southern Asia, yet this is an issue that will affect us all. Due to the "intricate interdependencies in ecosystems,"<sup>36</sup> cooperation is essential to our success in achieving

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<sup>31</sup> The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019, p.8

<sup>32</sup> "Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water", 2018

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> "Drinking-water", 2019

<sup>35</sup> The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019, p.6

<sup>36</sup> "Environmental peacebuilding: Conditions for success", 2006, p. 10

SDG 6. We must address this issue in both policy and practice; otherwise, "water interventions will continue to fail to reach those most in need and who are likely to benefit most."<sup>37</sup>

According to the World Bank, in 2015, 484 million people worldwide lived in fragile situations. Of these individuals, "284 million people lacked basic sanitation services and 183 million lacked basic drinking water services."<sup>38</sup> While significant differences can be observed across different regions, essentially the findings suggest that those living in fragile states are more likely to lack access to basic drinking water or sanitation services. Resolving these situations often requires political solutions. However, this does not mean we cannot make progress towards ensuring that everyone, including those individuals living in fragile states, has access to affordable and equitable drinking water.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sustainable Development Goal 6 and its achievement continue to require the attention and on-going efforts of member states. Access to clean drinking water is a human right and is essential to preserving the dignity, equality, respect and independence of all individuals everywhere. Strengthening efforts to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all is at the heart of our collective commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its theme of 'Leaving no one behind.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019, p.9

<sup>38</sup> 'Executive Summary - SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation | UN-Water', 2018

<sup>39</sup> 'World Water Development Report 2019 | UN-Water', 2019

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What actions, if any, has your country taken to strengthen efforts to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all?
2. Are the current water mechanisms in your country sustainable?
3. What barriers does your country face in achieving SDG 6?
4. How has your country been affected by the efforts of the World Health Organisation?
5. What actions could be taken by the international community to enhance your country's efforts towards achieving SDG 6?
6. Have vulnerable populations and women been included in discussions within your nation?
7. How can we ensure the success of programs promoted and implemented through the World Health Organisation regarding SDG 6?

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# UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND URBANIZATION

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY-BUILDING AT NATIONAL  
AND LOCAL LEVELS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

ADDRESSING MARINE POLLUTION IN LIGHT OF SDG NUMBER 14

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

UNEA's functions include setting the global environmental agenda; providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges; undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences; setting strategic guidance on the future direction of UNEP; organizing multi-stakeholder dialogue; and fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resources mobilization. The Assembly reports to the General Assembly through ECOSOC.

Since the establishment of the universal membership in 2013, all 193 UN Member States have been members of the Environment Assembly.

(UN Handbook, 2017-18)

THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK

1. Promoting sustainable and environmentally sound urbanization
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## **PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND URBANIZATION**

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The world passed a milestone in 2016: for the first time more than half of the world's human population will live in an urban environment but only account for 2.8% of the world's land use.<sup>1</sup> According to the United Nations Population Fund, the growth in urbanization will continue as by 2030 almost 5 billion people will live in "towns and cities."<sup>2</sup> In response to the growth of urbanization, the United Nations incorporated sustainable urban development into Sustainable Development Goal #11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities" which seeks to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." The targets for this goal work to ensure access for all to adequate housing and basic services, provide access to safe, affordable and accessible transport systems as well as road safety, reduce the negative environmental impact of cities, and support the least developed states through financial and technical assistance.<sup>3</sup>

Urbanization poses a unique challenge to Member States. As more people move to urban areas, more resources and land will be needed to support the growing urban population. This creates a vicious cycle in which too many people move to a small space and overuse resources, thereby depleting resources in rural areas which in turn causes more migration to urban areas and cities which in turn grow rapidly in size. In addition, urban land will increase to 1.2 million km in 2030, nearly tripling the land use between 2000 and 2030.<sup>4</sup> This transition is prominent in Asia; for example in 1969, the urbanization rate was less than 20% for Asia and the Pacific region; that number grew to 55% in

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), April 27, 2016 "Urbanization and Sustainable Development: A United Nations System Input to a New Urban Agenda". Accessed August 10, 2019. [https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/Urbanization%20and%20Sustainable%20Development\\_a%20UN%20system%20input%20to%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda-ODS.pdf](https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/Urbanization%20and%20Sustainable%20Development_a%20UN%20system%20input%20to%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda-ODS.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Population Fund, 2019, "Urbanization" <https://www.unfpa.org/urbanization>, accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, 2015, Sustainable Development Goal #11 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Program, 2016 "Support to Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Cities in the Developing World." 2016. Accessed August 10, 2019. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/sustainable-urbanization-strategy.html>.

2015. By 2050, 6.5 billion people will be living in urban communities around the world.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly for this topic and the UNEA committee, environmental degradation caused by urbanization diminishes the quality of life for urban dwellers, but can also serve as "an opportunity to build more sustainable, innovative and equitable towns and cities, and to use the world's natural resources more efficiently."<sup>6</sup>

More than just a subset of migration, urbanization can be seen as the transitioning of societies. All around the world, cities are centers of vast economic potential. The rise of industry in developing states has provided increasing job opportunities. Cities also provide greater opportunities for education and political representation. Additionally, in times of strife, rural populations typically move to cities for greater access to security, resources and opportunity.

Urbanization has brought major economic growth to Member States by creating new jobs, increasing production, and generating more than 80% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By 2025 this will rise to 88% of global GDP, and the potential generation of 230 new cities. By using urbanization to create new jobs, states have been able to grow their middle class. In 2009, 1.8 billion people were considered to be middle-class, but by 2030 it is estimated that the middle class will account for 5 billion out of the world's 8 billion people.<sup>7</sup> Developing nations especially have successfully used urbanization as an effective tool for material growth, poverty reduction, and growing their middle class.

However, because so many people have moved to urban areas, the demand for resources has spiked. Current conditions and trends in urbanization suggest communities will face many challenges such as limited access to basic needs such as clean water, proper sanitation and insufficient government support, and limited capacity to respond to natural disasters and climate change. In addition, the number of urban dwellers living in slums continues to rise. The UN

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<sup>5</sup> Arfanuzzaman M, Dahiya B. Sustainable urbanization in Southeast Asia and beyond: Challenges of population growth, land use change, and environmental health. *Growth and Change*. 2019;50:725–744. <https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12297>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Environment Program, 2014. "Urbanization Provides Unprecedented Opportunities to Transition to a Green Economy Says New Report" <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/urbanization-provides-unprecedented-opportunities-transition-green>, accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Pezzini, Mario, 2012. "An emerging middle class" *OECD Observer* [http://oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3681/An\\_emerging\\_middle\\_class.html](http://oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3681/An_emerging_middle_class.html), accessed August 10, 2019.

Development Programme states that "828 million people are estimated to live in slums, and the number is rising."<sup>8</sup> UN-HABITAT defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
2. Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.<sup>9</sup>

Slums are created when cities grow without proper planning from local governments. As the city grows unchecked, local governments are unable to provide housing for their new population and the poorest of the population are forced into areas and live in small makeshift houses. By 2020, it is estimated that two billion people will be living in slum conditions.<sup>10</sup> It is slum households in particular that will be the most negatively impacted by and the most vulnerable to the vagaries of environmental degradation. Likewise, developing states often face a lack of resources that populations need to survive, leading to further threats for states that already suffer from a lack of resources. Inadequate funding for infrastructure, leads people to live without basic services like clean water, food, transportation, and sanitation.

While there is substantial progress toward sustainable urbanization, a reluctance to enact policies that promote sustainable development favors the short-term benefits over the long-term impacts of environmental degradation and places billions of lives in a precarious position. These threatening conditions require immediate action to reduce and prevent substandard living conditions and for policies pursuant to the objectives of SDG #11 for creating methods designed to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 2019, "Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities" <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-11-sustainable-cities-and-communities.html>, accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> UN-Habitat, 2006 "Slums: Some Definitions" [http://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media\\_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf](http://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf) accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2016, "World Cities Report 2016—Urbanization and Development—Emerging Features" <http://wcr.unhabitat.org/>, accessed on August 6, 2019.

## SHORTAGE OF WATER

Several examples serve to further demonstrate the needs and interests of Member States in relation to urbanization and achieving SDG #11. As noted above, as a population grows so too does its demand for necessary resources, especially clean water. At the same time the dramatic increase in urbanization has brought the need to build massive amounts of infrastructure, such as water pipes and sewage systems, in order to meet the needs of the growing population. Yet, most developing nations have been unable to build the necessary infrastructure that their population needs due to technical, knowledge and financial constraints, leading to extreme water shortages and water pollution. While, the percent of the world's population having access to safely managed drinking water increased from 61% to 71% between 2000 and 2016, globally, 785 million people still lack access to safe drinking water. In 170 countries, 80 percent have medium-to-low implementation of water resource management standards and practices.<sup>11</sup>

This year, in the city of Chennai, India, the four reservoirs that have provided the city's water supply have run dry and the pipes that had pumped water to the city have been completely dry for five months now. Chennai is currently in a drought, the city has seen 55% less rainfall than normal. However, the drought is not the only reason why the reservoirs are drying up. The city has expanded onto wetlands that are crucial to the ecosystem and the water circulation system. Wetlands, like the Pallikaranai marshlands, allow Chennai's reservoirs to fill with water during the rainy season and that water can be used during droughts. However, as the city was expanding, these wetlands were converted into commercial areas for Information Technology companies. Additionally, in the middle of the Pallikaranai marshlands the city has placed the Perungundi garbage dump.<sup>12</sup> The destruction of these wetlands has damaged the ecosystem and as a result water has become dangerously scarcer during droughts and more contaminated.

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2019, E/2019/68. "Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>. Accessed August 11, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> "Viewpoint: Why India's Chennai Has Run out of Water." BBC News. July 02, 2019. Accessed August 11, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-48797399>.

Chennai is not the only city that has sacrificed water ecosystems in the name of expansion. Dhaka, Bangladesh, if it continues to grow at its current rate, will have no water body or vegetation area left in the city after 10 years, resulting in groundwater depletion for almost half of the city. The bodies of water that surround Dhaka are being destroyed. Every day, over 60,000 m<sup>3</sup> of toxic waste and 7,000 tons of solid waste were dumped into the three main river basins by businesses and citizens.<sup>13</sup> This not only creates pollution for a vital water source for the city but also destroys the entire river ecosystem. Additionally, that amount of waste not being properly disposed of will have a deleterious health impact on the people who live in the city, especially the poorest communities who have the least amount of resources to provide sanitary waste disposal and potable water. Dhaka's Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA), however, with assistance from numerous international organizations including the Asian Development Bank, has gone from having a loan withdrawn by the World Bank "because of procurement irregularities" to "investments in the physical system [that are] aimed at expanding and improving the supply of water to 8 million people in Dhaka. At least 15% of the additional supply resulting from the project was to go to low-income communities through standpipes and communal taps."<sup>14</sup> Success stories to help growing cities build essential infrastructure demonstrate both the need for action as well as the potential to solve the problem of sustainable urbanization.

## **URBANIZATION AND ENERGY**

Another environmental example is the need for sustainable energy in urban areas. In terms of energy use, urban areas are projected to use 50 to 70% more from 2010 to 2050. Therefore, energy use by urban areas must be addressed as energy use around the world is expected to rely predominantly on fossil fuels, making energy production the biggest factor in greenhouse gas

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<sup>13</sup> Kaur, Mehar, 2019 "Solid waste pollution in the South Asian Seas" The Energy Resources Institute, <https://www.teriin.org/article/solid-waste-pollution-south-asian-seas-sas> Accessed August 12, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Manoj Sharma and Melissa Alipalo, 2017 "The Dhaka Water Services Turnaround" Asian Development Bank (report), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/384631/dhaka-water-services.pdf>, accessed October 20, 2019.

emissions and air pollution that causes poor health.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, if Member States are committed to moving forward toward SDG #11, refusing to focus on sustainable energy production and use will be astronomically more expensive and detrimental than investing in sustainable methods to grow and expand urban areas. Special attention must be paid to poor and vulnerable social groups who will be disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, especially in population-dense urban areas.

### *Two Contrasting Cases – Nigeria and Singapore*

Nigeria currently faces significant challenges in the face of rapid urbanization, which has resulted in the formation of an urban health crisis resulting from insecure water supplies, slums, and poor water management as well as disease and congested, risky transport systems. There are three states in the world that are expected to account for 37% of projected world population between 2014 and 2015. These states are Nigeria, India, and China.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1980-96 the proportion of urban dwellers in poverty in Nigeria doubled. This has presented a host of challenges. While Nigeria has many water sources, urban areas still struggle. A report revealed that only 3% of residents of the capital, Ibadan, have access to piped water and in Lagos, only 9% of its 10 million residents have access. Additionally, a recent Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) report indicated that there was no significant improvement in access among urban households between 2008 and 2013. To compound this crisis, the water that is available tends to be highly turbid with sediment and there is limited access to piped water whether in the household or even public sources of water. Due to a lack of foresight and planning without empirical data, political and administrative interventions, and financial constraints, most urban water systems for urban environments have become outmoded before they even come into commission.<sup>17</sup>

Singapore, in contrast has been a prime example of sustainable urbanization. The state has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest population density in the world<sup>18</sup> and has been able to achieve universal access to clean,

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/2019/66. "Long-term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals." <https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/66> accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Alhaji A Aliyu and Lawal Amadu, "Urbanization, Cities, and Health: The Challenges to Nigeria - A Review," *Annals of African medicine* (Medknow Publications & Media Pvt Ltd, 2017), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5676403/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Barrientos, Miguel, 2018. "Country Comparison Population Density," *Population Density - Country Comparison*. <https://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?v=21000>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

safe, and potable water. It has created a power grid that runs 95% off natural gas and is available to every citizen. Singapore has been able to grow at a sustainable rate, all due to long-term city planning. They have also thrived from a growing economy and GDP.<sup>19</sup>

One area Singapore has excelled in is its infrastructure, especially their systems for sanitation, waste, and clean water. For their water systems, they have developed a diverse system that draws water from four different sources: (1) Local water catchment, (2) imported water from Malaysia, (3) water reuse from their NEWater Initiative, and (4) seawater desalination. The NEWater Initiative allows Singapore to reuse all the water that is drained and turn it into new clean drinking water. The system uses membrane technology and ultraviolet disinfection to purify the water. Normally, desalination requires a large amount of energy, making it a poor option for developing countries. Singapore's current water efficiency is due to the complex and comprehensive systems, and policies that work together to overcome any inefficiency. Currently, the country has three desalination plants, contributing over 130 million imperial gallons per day. By 2060, NEWater and desalination will meet 55 percent of Singapore's water needs.<sup>20</sup>

## **CURRENT ACTIONS TO ADDRESS URBANIZATION**

The UN has acted on many levels over the past decades to research strategies, elicit funding and provide the technical and material resources necessary to assist Member States facing urbanization. While addressing urbanization and sustainable cities is an ambitious goal for all parts of the United Nations, it is important in particular for the UNEA to confront environmental threats caused by large urban areas as well as the threats posed by environmental degradation to the urban residents. The main goal of SDG #11 is not to limit the growth of cities, which have provided a means for states to increase the size of their middle class and grow their economies, but to create ways for cities to grow in a sustainable way. Member States must recognize that short-term choices may seem

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<sup>19</sup> Singapore. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Towards a More Sustainable and Resilient Singapore". 2018. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19439Singapores\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_Review\\_Report\\_v2.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19439Singapores_Voluntary_National_Review_Report_v2.pdf). Accessed August 14, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Thai Pin Tan and Stuti Rawat. 2018. "NEWater in Singapore" <http://www.globalwaterforum.org/2018/01/15/newater-in-singapore/>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

more viable because they will often have immediate effects and have a low up-front cost. However, looking at a cost benefit analysis, long-term investments and planning will cost less overall.

A significant recent action of the UN took place at the 2016 meeting of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development<sup>21</sup> where Member States crafted further actions to promote the "New Urban Agenda" (also known as Habitat III).

The New Urban Agenda is

an action oriented 24-page document that provides the global principles, policies and standards required to achieve sustainable urban development, to transform the way we construct, manage, operate and live in our cities. It will guide the efforts around urbanization for a wide range of actors including nation states, city and regional leaders, funders of international development, the private sector, the United Nations programmes and civil society for the next 20 years.

In addition, the Agenda has three Guiding Principles: (1) Leave no one behind, ensure urban equity and eradicate poverty, (2) Achieve sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all, and, most important for the UNEA, (3) Foster ecological and resilient cities and human settlements.<sup>22</sup> The Agenda encourages a significant focus on ecologically sound cities as well as the creation and implementation of strategies to promote environmentally sustainable urban areas. Along with this is the important goal of funding these proposals with international organizations such as the World Bank who identified "Three big ideas, countless solutions" to promote the New Urban Agenda, and in particular financial gap. "Globally, \$4.5-\$5.4 trillion is needed to fill the urban infrastructure finance gap."<sup>23</sup>

Another area that Member States have focused on is sustainable urban energy systems in their focus on long-term growth. Phillips and Smith (2015) describe numerous steps cities can take to promote sustainable urban energy and assert that

Implementing renewable energy strategies in city environments is rapidly becoming "energetically imperative". Making the transition involves not only switching the energy source,

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, 2016 "The New Urban Agenda" <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/> accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Alice Charles, 2016 "The New Urban Agenda has been adopted. So what happens next?" <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/last-month-a-new-global-agreement-to-drive-sustainable-urban-development-was-reached-so-what-is-it-and-happens-next/> accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank, 2018, "Big Ideas to Achieve Sustainable Cities and Communities" <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2018/01/31/3-big-ideas-to-achieve-sustainable-cities-and-communities>, accessed October 10, 2019.

but making sure it is cost-effective, sustainable and beneficial for development. Cities around the world are pledging to make use of 100 per cent clean energy: Copenhagen pledges to be carbon-neutral by 2025, Aspen, Colorado, is expected to use 100 per cent renewable energies by 2015, and Munich is planning to have 100 per cent of its electricity powered by renewables by 2025.

Energy production and use is a good example of how developed and developing states may at times be unable or unwilling to afford the upfront costs to make the long-term choice, and instead are forced to pick the cheaper short-term choice. However, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power are proven means to create "eco-cities" that can provide cheaper and cleaner energy in the long term.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, sustainable cities should focus on waste management, including the release of waste that contributes to water and air pollution. Many states have allowed pollution to occur to increase the economic growth urban areas can create and are now struggling to reduce the environmental hazards; for example, China has recently put new laws in place to reduce the severe air pollution in its capital city of Beijing.<sup>25</sup> Technological fixes such as anaerobic digestion of waste can be a win-win proposition for developing states who must carefully plan and invest in new technologies.<sup>26</sup> If cities start developing these kinds of ecofriendly technologies as they are developing, as opposed to after they have developed, the costs of it decrease dramatically. It is much more expensive to completely change systems that cities depend on, rather than start using the necessary ecofriendly systems from the start. SDG #11 is formulated to help states find innovative ways to make their cities grow but use and create sustainable ways to do so.

Another option for sustainable urbanization was introduced in 2019 in the "World social situation 2019: shaping the future of inequality" (Note by the Secretariat), which states that "The current speed of urbanization, especially in poor countries, makes urban governance and adequate planning increasingly pressing." Additionally, it lists four components which have been identified as key to

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<sup>24</sup> Laura Phillips and Pete Smith, December 2015, "Sustainable Urban Energy is the future" <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/sustainable-urban-energy-future>, accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> J.P., 2018, January 25, "How China cut its air pollution" *The Economist*, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/01/25/how-china-cut-its-air-pollution> accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips and Smith.

reducing inequality in urban environments. The first is the securing of land rights for the impoverished with a focus on housing and on equitable provision of public services. The second is the improvement of the transportation system, particularly between residential and commercial zones. Third, states must promote access to formal employment. Finally, the capacities of local governments must be strengthened to address increasingly complex problems efficiently such as using data and strengthening coordination between them and national governments.<sup>27</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

There has been steady progress to meet the 2030 sustainable development goals and particular SDG#11. However, more ambitious plans and improvements are needed to be made in order to fully meet the goals. While there are many benefits to be found in the trends toward urbanization such as increases in population, Gross Domestic Product and other economic boons, urbanization is something of a double-edged sword and can do just as much harm as good if left unchecked and poorly executed. For many megacities, their current growth rate is unsustainable resulting in water shortages, health crises, and overcrowded living standards. Additionally, the current urbanization trends are posing extreme environmental degradation. Developed and developing states face their own unique challenges in addressing sustainable urbanization. The challenges of financing sustainable growth and city planning are ever present, with many states struggling as they lack the ability to plan for housing, sewage, and other vital services. In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 all Member States and parts of the United Nations, and especially the UNEA must work together to build a sustainable future.

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 2019, "World social situation 2019: shaping the future of inequality" <https://undocs.org/A/74/135>, pp. 10-11, accessed October 10, 2019.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the current trends regarding urbanization in your state?
2. Does your state have the financial, educational and technical resources to sustainably grow your cities?
3. What types of environmental problems are caused by the cities in your state? What environmental threats do the residents of your state face due to urbanization?
4. Is your state supportive of increasing financial, educational and technical resources such as international loans and grants to developing states for sustainable urbanization?
5. What partnerships has your state established (including in the United Nations, other international organizations and CSOs) to address sustainable urbanization?

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## **STRENGTHENING CAPACITY-BUILDING AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

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MUNFW 70<sup>th</sup> Session – UN Environment Assembly

Climate change, defined by the United Nations (UN) in 1992, is "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods."<sup>1</sup> Climate change is an existential threat to all living creatures on the Earth. Even after almost three decades of international negotiations to address the crisis there have been no substantive improvements. The average global temperature of the Earth's atmosphere is rising, and there is warming of the oceans, shrinking of ice sheets, glacial retreat, decreased snow cover, rising sea level, declining arctic sea ice, ocean acidification, and extreme natural disasters exacerbated by the warming atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> It is necessary for all Member States to understand the climate crisis and take action to mitigate climate change as well as to prepare to adapt to the threat climate change presents. It is essential that Member States focus their attention on building the capacity of all states to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis in order to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience.

As Member States negotiate further efforts to address this topic, we must recognize that while all states will be affected, some states will suffer greater consequences. Currently, many island nations face the hazard of non-existence due to rising sea levels. The Marshall Islands are being challenged on whether to relocate or elevate themselves as their beaches are eroding, and their land and drinking water is salinized by sea water. It is projected that within 80 years, islands such as the Solomon Islands, Maldives, Palau, Micronesia, Fiji, Tuvalu, Seychelles, Kiribati, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Tangier Island (Virginia, USA), Shishmaref (Alaska, USA), and the Marshall Islands will be underwater.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change." *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. UNFCCC.

[unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/background\\_publications\\_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?" Edited by Holly Shaftel. *NASA*, 30 Sept. 2019. [climate.nasa.gov/evidence/](https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/).

<sup>3</sup> Mettler, Lyn. "13 Islands That Will Disappear in the Next 80 Years." *Reader's Digest*, 2019. [www.rd.com/advice/travel/islands-will-disappear-80-years/](https://www.rd.com/advice/travel/islands-will-disappear-80-years/).

Alongside this threat, as rates of climate change increase, so do the severity of specific natural disasters. While hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones are not caused by climate change, the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans is creating new mega storms that are larger and stronger than seen before. The United States has faced drastic effects due to hurricanes striking Florida, Louisiana, Texas and North Carolina with storm surges, flooding from extreme rainfall, and erosion of coastal areas. In addition, many areas in the United States are facing a constant cycle of floods and droughts due to the changing climate. Events such as Typhoon Hagibis in Japan, and Hurricane Dorian and Hurricane Katrina in the United States can threaten the lives of those directly hit, and importantly negatively damage the economies present. Hurricane Katrina was recorded as being the "most destructive natural disaster in U.S. history, costing over \$125 billion supplied in repairs and reconstruction.<sup>4</sup> Other states highly affected by these disasters include India, China, Ethiopia, Malawi, Somalia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Haiti—all which experience high fatality rates alongside high destruction rates.<sup>5</sup>

All states will need to build their capacity to respond to climate change. However, many developing states are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because they do not have the infrastructure and economic means to adapt to the threats posed by climate change. The Netherlands, for example, has built extensive infrastructure to withstand storm surge. In contrast, Tuvalu does not have the economic strength to build the capacity to withstand rising sea levels, and more frequent and stronger storms.<sup>6</sup>

## **UN ACTIONS, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 13, AND UNEA**

The UN has held numerous conferences to address climate change, including the creation and ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, as well as the yearly UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COPs). The

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<sup>4</sup> Amadeo, Kimberly, "Hurricane Katrina Facts, Damage and Costs" *The Balance* <https://www.thebalance.com/hurricane-katrina-facts-damage-and-economic-effects-3306023>

<sup>5</sup> Dillinger, Jessica, "Countries Most Prone to Natural Disasters." *World Atlas*, 21 Jan. 2016, [www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-deadliest-natural-disasters.html](http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-deadliest-natural-disasters.html).

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Allen, "Will Tuvalu Disappear Beneath the Sea?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/will-tuvalu-disappear-beneath-the-sea-180940704/>

UNFCCC negotiations have focused on mitigating (reducing the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change) and adaptation (responding to the consequences of climate change). These and more recent efforts have emphasized the need to address climate change and to help states to prepare and build their capacity to respond. Other recent efforts include the 2030 Agenda and specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, which states "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts."<sup>7</sup> As of April of 2019, 185 parties have ratified the Paris Agreement negotiated as part of the UNFCCC efforts, in which all members must submit new nationally determined contributions and ambitions by 2020. In addition, the Agreement continues specific provisions to support capacity building in Articles 9, 10 and 11. At the same time, global climate finance flows have increased by 17 percent in the time slot of 2015-2016 comparative to 2013-2014. In addition, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), created by the Copenhagen Agreement, was designed to provide financial assistance from "advanced states" to developing states to assist with mitigation and adaptation actions. As of June 2019, 259 activities have been approved by the GCF, with 225 funded in 115 countries, totaling USD 54.68 million.<sup>8</sup>

On March 15, 2019, the United Nations Environment Assembly closed their fourth session, hosted at its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya on the theme of Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production. In their fifth resolution (UNEP/EA.4/Res.5), the UNEA calls for the production and collaboration of sustainable infrastructure, with emphasis on utilizing previous frameworks and initiatives, as well as inclusion and progress towards the SDGs.<sup>9</sup> Resolutions 21 (UNEP/EA.4/Res.21)<sup>10</sup> and 23 (UNEP/EA.4/Res.23)<sup>11</sup> also focus on mitigating climate change as well as promoting further research on the environment and the global climate impacts.

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<sup>7</sup> "Goal 13 Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg13](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg13).

<sup>8</sup> Green Climate Fund, Meeting of the Board "Eighth Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change" [https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/1674504/GCF\\_B.23\\_10\\_-\\_Eighth\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Green\\_Climate\\_Fund\\_to\\_the\\_Conference\\_of\\_the\\_Parties\\_to\\_the\\_United\\_Nations\\_Framework\\_Convention\\_on\\_Climate\\_Change.pdf/3a253685-3375-563e-00e5-88fce8ef2dd1](https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/1674504/GCF_B.23_10_-_Eighth_Report_of_the_Green_Climate_Fund_to_the_Conference_of_the_Parties_to_the_United_Nations_Framework_Convention_on_Climate_Change.pdf/3a253685-3375-563e-00e5-88fce8ef2dd1)

<sup>9</sup> UNEA. "Sustainable Infrastructure." *United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme*, UNEP, 15 Mar. 2019, [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28470/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28470/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> UNEA. "Keeping the World Environment under Review: Enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme Science-Policy Interface and Endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook." *United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations*

Many Member States have taken initial steps towards achieving SDG13; however, many more ambitious steps must be made as the rate of climate change continues to rise above those expected. Access to financial resources and strengthened capacities need to be scaled up at a much faster rate, particularly for the least developed and small island developing States.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

Capacity building is the "process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world,"<sup>12</sup> and requires actions on the local, national, and international levels. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) capacity development "starts from the principle that people are best empowered to realize their full potential when the means of development are sustainable – home-grown, long-term, and generated and managed collectively by those who stand to benefit." In a more literal sense, capacity building starts from the principle that people are the core solution to their own problems. In other words, local solutions are essential for success so that developing nations have the capability to form and manage infrastructure which can ensure future independence from international aid. At the core, local, or community, capacity building focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from realizing the development goals that allow them to achieve sustainable results.<sup>13</sup>

## **CLIMATE-AWARE CAPACITY BUILDING**

In the context of climate change and environmental concerns, capacity building has evolved to include measures to mitigate pollution, environmental decay, and biohazards, as well as provide

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*Environment Programme*, UNEP, 15 Mar. 2019.

[wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y).

<sup>12</sup> "Capacity-Building | Academic Impact." *United Nations*, United Nations, [academicimpact.un.org/content/capacity-building](https://academicimpact.un.org/content/capacity-building).

<sup>13</sup> "Capacity Development: a UNDP Primer." Edited by Kanni Wignaraja. *United Nations Development Programme*. UNDP, 2009. [www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/capacity-development-a-undp-primer/CDG\\_PrimerReport\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/capacity-development-a-undp-primer/CDG_PrimerReport_final_web.pdf).

solutions and plans towards post-natural disaster and environment aid. All of these steps are designed to reduce vulnerabilities and risks, and increase climate resiliency.<sup>14</sup> Because of these factors, all forms of capacity building have become an important foundation of the newly adopted Paris Agreement. However, these measures still vary between Member States. For instance, many developing countries lack the necessary capacity for their daily livelihood, as well as the means to mitigate and adapt to climate action, for a plethora of reasons. These may include

a lack of public awareness and support for climate action . . . fragmentation of information and research institutions . . . a lack of international support specifically directed towards building and retaining skills . . . a lack of established or strong policies, systems and processes . . . to efficiently and effectively plan, manage and coordinate capacity building activities.<sup>15</sup>

Plus, many of these challenges strongly persist due to the short-term project based approach to capacity building created by the fragmentation of international institutions providing support.

Additionally, capacity building efforts need "greater coordination, coherence, monitoring, review, and reporting." Currently, there is no regular monitoring, review process, or centralized institution in place to provide the necessary guidance to coordinate, as well as shift towards climate-aware capacity building. In addition, it has been suggested that increasing coordination and coherence between the thematic bodies and entities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will improve institutional architecture as well as promote climate action.<sup>16</sup>

One item to note, the Paris Agreement sets a road map on capacity building. Countries agreed during the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21) to "enhance capacity building activities together with the associated institutional arrangements by establishing the Paris Committee in Capacity Building (PCCB)." The committee is mandated to oversee a comprehensive work program over the next four years, including to:

identify capacity gaps and needs, foster international, regional, national, and subnational cooperation, assess how to increase synergies, coordination, coherence, and collaboration among existing bodies and activities within, and outside, the UNFCCC, promote the development and spread of relevant tools and methodologies,

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<sup>14</sup> UNFCCC, "What do Adaptation to climate change and Climate Resiliency mean? <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/what-do-adaptation-to-climate-change-and-climate-resilience-mean>

<sup>15</sup> Dagnet, Yamide, and Eliza Northrop. "3 Reasons Why Capacity Building Is Critical for Implementing the Paris Agreement." *World Resources Institute*, 26 Sept. 2018. [www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/3-reasons-why-capacity-building-critical-implementing-paris-agreement](http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/3-reasons-why-capacity-building-critical-implementing-paris-agreement).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

and collect the best practices and lessons learned, with the goal of enhancing ownership and retention of capacity at national, regional, and subnational levels.<sup>17</sup>

Member States will choose the initial institutional arrangements under the Paris Agreement as well as cooperate to enhance capacity building activities, climate change education, public awareness, participation, and access to information. Developed countries have also agreed to improve support in developing countries with less capacity.

But what does it mean for Member States to create, adapt, and follow climate-aware capacity building? First, the impacts of climate change will be felt on all sectors, however mostly on natural resources and vulnerable areas including water, agriculture, forests, and coastal zones. These impacts are likely to be substantial and, depending on the region, could be catastrophic as have been seen by the events mentioned earlier. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has researched and identified possible measures to promote adaptation and capacity building in relation to climate shifts and vulnerability. According to the FAO there are three strategies for coping with climate variability:

1. Science and Assessment,
2. Before the fact: Preparedness, and
3. After the fact: Relief.

The three strategies are structured to ensure well-balanced and carefully formulated capacity building strategies. However, there are three important challenges that must be recognized while designing and implementing the core strategies:

1. Building effective knowledge generation systems,
2. Meeting financial considerations, and
3. Enabling institutional transformations.<sup>18</sup>

Most of these challenges though are easily "fixed" via the called for collaboration and coherence among Parties and Member States in regard to capacity building institutions and as emphasized in SDG17-Partnerships for the Goals.

Other possible solutions provided by the FAO include a list of how-to and not-to enhance the institutionalization of capacity building. First, the scope must be framed in broad terms, for narrowly focused capacity building institutions typically do not address or are not beneficial to economies or

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<sup>17</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Kandlikar, Milind, and Ambuj Sagar. "Capacity Building for Climate Change: a Risk Management Approach." *Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations*. FAO, <http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/288690/oct-climate-milind.ppt>.

human security. Second, do not "reinvent the wheel" — many organizations tend to begin without consultation with those who have taken action previously when formulating structures and goals. It is easier and more beneficial to build on previous structures and from knowledge achieved from beneficial and non-beneficial strategies. Third, it is essential to research "success stories" that may provide viable frameworks from multiple sources such as other international organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Finally, local knowledge must be gathered and incorporated as those who are most vulnerable tend to be the most understanding of local issues and as discussed above (UNDP report) local people are the core solution to achieving success. Expert communities can assist with knowledge sharing but must be in balance with local knowledge. In addition, change must come on the local level, and it is often this level that has the most need of education and capacity building.<sup>19</sup> These are all steps that have been established as possible means to assist in sustainable, adaptable and effective capacity building, especially in regard to climate awareness and adaptation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Climate change poses an existential threat to the human race as well as the livelihood of all Member States. As the negative effects of climate change grow, the capacity of all states to mitigate and adapt to climate change will be increasingly challenged. Awareness and concrete actions to build capacity are essential on the international, national and local levels. By focusing on implementing SDG13, and finding sustainable and effective ways to generate climate-aware capacity building, we are guaranteeing the success and prosperity of future generations, as well as the health and future of all creatures on the Earth. The scientific evidence is present and simple: climate change equals the extinction of many species; extinction may equal no humans — effective actions need to be taken now.

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways is your state vulnerable to the effects of climate change?
2. What capacity does your state have to address your climate vulnerabilities and build climate resiliency?
3. Is your state in a position to assist in providing capacity building frameworks, or is your state in the need of assistance?
4. How has climate change already affected your state economically, physically, and/or morally?
5. Are people migrating to or from your state because of the effects of climate change?
6. What plans does your state have in relation to the Paris Agreement and capacity building?
7. Will your state engage in local, national and international collaboration regarding capacity building? Are there specific steps your state would like to see taken or considered?

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## ADDRESSING MARINE POLLUTION IN LIGHT OF SDG NUMBER 14

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MUNFW 70th Session – UN Environment Assembly

We recognize that our ocean covers three quarters of our planet, connects our populations and markets and forms an important part of our natural and cultural heritage. It supplies nearly half the oxygen we breathe, absorbs over a quarter of the carbon dioxide we produce, plays a vital role in the water cycle and the climate system and is an important source of our planet's biodiversity and of ecosystem services. It contributes to sustainable development and sustainable ocean-based economies, as well as to poverty eradication, food security and nutrition, maritime trade and transportation, decent work and livelihoods.

*A/RES/71/312: Our Oceans, Our Future: Call for Action*

### INTRODUCTION

Marine pollution is an extreme threat as over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) noted that "the market value of marine and coastal resources and industries is estimated at US\$3 trillion per year, about 5 percent of global GDP."<sup>1</sup> However, despite numerous efforts by the United Nations, marine pollution continues to rise with an estimated 5.25 trillion plastic debris in the ocean as of 2018.<sup>2</sup> Globally, 13,000-15,000 pieces of plastic are dumped into the ocean every day. In addition, the increasing costs of recycling and more states becoming unwilling to be the waste processors for the world have further exacerbated the crisis of plastic waste disposal.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, oil spills are polluting large amount of ocean water and coastal zones. In 2018 the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited (ITOPF) recorded three enormous ocean oil spills. The estimated loss of oil that year to the environment was 116,000 tonnes, a majority of which was attributed to the *Sanchi* collision in the East China Sea.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Ocean Conservancy reports that oil spills have grown

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

<sup>2</sup> Ocean Crusaders, <http://oceancrusaders.org/plastic-crusades/plastic-statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> A recent example of this is China no longer buying the United States' recycling, this has made it much more difficult for communities to get rid of their waste in a sustainable way.

<sup>4</sup> International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited (ITOPF) 2019, <https://www.itopf.org/knowledge-resources/data-statistics/statistics/>

larger over the past 20 years.<sup>5</sup> Understanding what has and should be done to address this serious problem is essential to finding solutions.

## **UN ACTIONS**

The United Nations (UN) has been combating marine pollution for several decades. One of the first actions was the adoption of The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1973. The Convention created many regulations "aimed at preventing and minimizing pollution from ships - both accidental pollution and that from routine operations."<sup>6</sup> An important annex of MARPOL is Annex 6, "Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships." The Annex set specific distances from land that trash and waste from a ship's bilge could be dumped. Furthermore, the first United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) created a comprehensive system of laws to govern and protect the oceans and its resources<sup>7</sup> and subsequent UNCLOS meetings have generated stronger environmental protections that pertain directly to marine pollution. In addition, the UN 2030 Agenda "Transforming Our World" gives special focus to environmental issues with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development," sets out seven targets combatting overfishing, marine pollution, environmental protections, and coastal eutrophication.

In response to continued ocean degradation and the goals set forth in SDG 14, the General Assembly of the United Nations convened the Ocean Conference and passed A/RES/71/312, "Our Oceans, Our Future: Call for Action." This resolution and the Conference have aimed to combat the current causes of marine pollution as well as increase resource conservation and clean-up efforts. While emphasizing cooperation, it acknowledges "that each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development, in particular least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked

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<sup>5</sup> The Ocean Conservancy, "What have we learned from 50 years of off-shore oil spills" <https://oceanconservancy.org/blog/2019/02/05/learned-50-years-offshore-oil-disasters/>

<sup>6</sup> International Maritime Organisation, [http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of-Pollution-from-Ships-\(MARPOL\).aspx](http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of-Pollution-from-Ships-(MARPOL).aspx)

<sup>7</sup> S.S. Rana & Co, <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=b5b618ab-f09d-43f4-a518-01b31599bf61>

developing countries, small island developing States (SIDS), and African States, including coastal ones, as do others recognized in the 2030 Agenda."<sup>8</sup> During the Ocean Conference they also appointed Peter Thomas of Fiji as Special Envoy for the Ocean.

## **MARINE DEBRIS**

Marine debris is a major threat to the ocean's health and is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment."<sup>9</sup> It poses a serious and long-term danger to marine animals, ecosystems, navigation and human health.

### *Our Plastic Planet*

Plastic production took off in the 1950s and less than 9% of plastic produced between 1950 - 2015 was recycled. Single use plastic has become a central part of most peoples lives. Whether we realize it or not, we are surrounded by plastic. We are producing more than 300 million tons of plastic per year, and UNDP estimates that 89% of that is single use plastics<sup>10</sup>. Plastic bottle consumption alone accounts for 14% of plastic waste. "According to the Container Recycling Institute, "100.7 billion plastic beverage bottles were sold in the U.S. in 2014, or 315 bottles per person. 57% of those units were plastic water bottles: 57.3 billion sold in 2014. This is up from 3.8 billion plastic water bottles sold in 1996, the earliest year for available data." In fact, a billion gallons of oil are used to supply plastic water bottles for the US alone.<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that this year every person on the planet will produce about 300 pounds of single use plastics. While an individual using a plastic water bottle seems insignificant, it is done by many on a global scale.<sup>12</sup> According to National Geographic "half the world's mismanaged plastic waste was generated by just five Asian countries: China, Indonesia, the

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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations, <https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>

<sup>9</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2019, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/marinedebris.html>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Development Programme, <https://feature.undp.org/plastic-tidal-wave/>

<sup>11</sup> Craig Lesson, 2013, "A Plastic Ocean" (documentary), Sima Studios.

<sup>12</sup> For emphasis on other potential producers of plastic products, Coca-Cola produces 3 million tons of plastic packaging per year, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/heatherfarmbrough/2019/03/15/coca-cola-reveals-it-produces-3m-tonnes-of-plastic-packaging-a-year-in-ground-breaking-report/#147964a6670f>.

Philippines, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. . . . Let's say you recycle 100 percent in all of North America and Europe' " says Ramani Narayan, a chemical engineering professor at Michigan State University who also works in his native India, " "You still would not make a dent on the plastics released into the oceans. If you want to do something about this, you have to go there, to these countries, and deal with the mismanaged waste.' "<sup>13</sup>

At the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi in 2019, 170 Member States pledged to significantly reduce their plastic usage by 2030. This pledge followed the 2016 conference during which the Assembly adopted UNEP/EA.2/RES.11 addressing marine pollution and microplastics. It called for further implementation of resolution 1/6 regarding "Marine plastic debris and microplastics," encouraged international cooperation on transboundary watercourses where surface runoff transports litter and eutrophication, and welcomed cooperation with other UN bodies, IGOs and NGOs.

These global commitments and the growing awareness of this problem has led to multiple actions. More than 60 countries have set goals to cut back plastic waste. Canada has aimed to ban single use plastics by 2021. Chile and Peru have also worked to ban and reduce single use plastic waste. "Chile's Constitutional Court ratified a bill that bans retail use of plastic bags across the country on July 6, ruling against an appeal that had been filed by the plastics industry." This bill was the first plastic ban bill in the Americas. Big companies such as Disney and United Airlines have set goals to remove plastic from their facilities. As of 2018 companies "PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Danone, Unilever, and Dow are committed to funding the \$90 million investment, and Circulate Capital says a deal will be inked by early 2019."<sup>14</sup> Combating plastic pollution requires joint strategies between countries, public-private partnerships, and other organizations in order to be effective. While plastic is a valuable resource, plastic pollution is irresponsible and unnecessary. "Ocean plastic is not as complicated as climate change. There are no ocean trash deniers, at least so far. To do something about it, we don't have to remake our planet's entire energy system."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Laura Parker, 2018, "We Made Plastic. We Depend on It. Now We're Drowning in It." <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/06/plastic-planet-waste-pollution-trash-crisis/>

<sup>14</sup> Brian Clark Howard, et al. 2019. "A running list of action on plastic pollution" National Geographic <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/07/ocean-plastic-pollution-solutions/>

<sup>15</sup> Laura Parker, 2018.

### *Our Ocean Dumping*

Abandoned or discarded fishing gear is a significant problem for ocean life "because this trash can entangle, injure, maim, and drown marine wildlife and damage property."<sup>16</sup> UNEP/EA.2/Res.11 references the role of the International Maritime Organization in reducing marine litter. It also outlined strategies to mitigate marine pollution by establishing effective port reception facilities, creating harbor fees to cover trash recovery and disposal costs and other incentives.

The dumping of waste in the ocean creates another problem. The waste collects into large patches due to the circulation of ocean currents, the most notable being the Pacific Garbage Patch. A recent study showed a majority of the waste in the Pacific Garbage Patch was not from straw or bags, but from fishing gear. Approximately "79,000 tons [of waste was fishing gear]. The study also found that fishing nets account for 46 percent of the trash, with the majority of the rest composed of other fishing industry gear, including ropes, oyster spacers, eel traps, crates, and baskets." Over 100,000 marine animals are entangled and suffocated by discarded or lost fishing nets annually. Clearly, ocean pollution is a serious threat as it is estimated that by 2050 due to the overall the accumulation of plastic waste and marine litter there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.<sup>17</sup>

## **SOURCE POLLUTION**

In addition to the dumping of waste in the oceans, marine pollution can come from the land. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines point source pollution as "any single identifiable source of pollution from which pollutants are discharged, such as a pipe, ditch, ship or factory smokestack." A common source is from factories, such as oil refineries, or sewage treatment plants who discharge their effluents into water which makes its way into rivers and the ocean. Unregulated point source pollution contaminates water sources and has a severe negative impact on human health and the ocean environment.

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<sup>16</sup> NOAA, 2019, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/marinedebris.html>

<sup>17</sup> Laura Parker, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/06/plastic-planet-waste-pollution-trash-crisis/>

A second common example is debris from natural disasters. It is estimated that 20% of trash in the Pacific Garbage Patch is from the 2011 Japan tsunami. In addition, the meltdown of the Fukushima Nuclear Plant contaminated one million tons of water. The Japanese government is currently debating dumping the radioactive water into the ocean to dilute it, no longer making it harmful to humans. However, there has been a strong backlash from local fisheries and fishermen whose livelihood is dependent on the health of the fish.<sup>18</sup>

Point source pollution can be attributed to single events such as oil spills. On January 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 the Panama- registered Iranian oil tanker *Sanchi*, going to South Korea carrying condensate,<sup>19</sup> and Chinese cargo ship *CF Crystal* collided off the Shanghai coast. "The Sanchi was carrying a highly flammable fuel oil, equivalent to one million barrels of oil."<sup>20</sup> The tanker drifted and sank into the South China Sea, an area already with a vulnerable ecosystem, making the worst-case scenario a disastrous reality. China and Japan's territorial disputes delayed clean up because it was unclear who was responsible for environmental protection in the area. "Despite being obliged by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to protect the marine environment, both China, in whose 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone the accident occurred, and Japan, in whose claimed exclusive economic zone the vessel sank, were slow to respond."<sup>21</sup> While Japan and China have agreements over the disputed waters to avoid clashes, there are no joint contingency plans to deal with environmental disasters.<sup>22</sup> The crash posed a major threat to Japan, South Korea and marine life; many compare the disaster to the same extent as Exxon Valdez<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> James Patterson, 2019, "Japan to Dump Radioactive Water from Fukushima Reactor into Pacific Ocean," <https://www.ibtimes.com/japan-dump-radioactive-water-fukushima-reactor-pacific-ocean-2830468>

<sup>19</sup> According to Mark Valencia (2018), condensate is a highly volatile, highly toxic material that is greatly harmful to the environment. In addition to the slick on the water's surface, the sinking of the ship means that the remaining condensate cargo and bunker oil – a heavier form of fuel oil – threaten the depths of the sea from the wreckage. An estimated 2,000 tonnes (2,200 short tons) of bunker oil is thought to have been in *Sanchi's* fuel storage tanks. The accident sight is also where many edible fish were spawning and in the path of a whale migration. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2134058/muddy-waters-how-china-japan-territorial-disputes-delayed>

<sup>20</sup> South China Morning Post, 2019, "How the Sanchi oil tanker environmental disaster unfolded" <http://multimedia.scmp.com/news/china/article/sanchi/>

<sup>22</sup> Mark Valencia, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2134058/muddy-waters-how-china-japan-territorial-disputes-delayed>

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Leahy, 2019 "Exxon Valdez changed the oil industry forever-but new threats emerge" <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/03/oil-spills-30-years-after-exxon-valdez/>

## NON-POINT SOURCE

Most non-point source pollution is a result of land run off from agricultural and urban areas into rivers causing deoxygenation. Oxygen is critical to the health of our planet and oxygen breathing plants and animals in the oceans. Despite it being an essential part of marine life, we are seeing an exponential increase of deoxygenation in our ocean systems. The nutrients from agriculture, sewage and industrial waste are causing ocean dead zones, fish kills, worsening habitat loss, and the alteration of biogeochemical cycles and food webs. Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas are the leading remaining causes of water quality problems. Nonpoint source pollution not only affects ecosystems; it can also have harmful effects on the economy. For example, U.S. Coastal and marine waters support 28.3 million jobs, generate \$54 billion in goods and services through activities like shipping, boating, and tourism, and contribute \$30 billion to the U.S. economy through recreational fishing alone. If pollution leads to mass die-offs of fish and dirty-looking water, many areas will experience deep financial losses.<sup>24</sup>

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a report in 2017, "The executive summary of Water Pollution from Agriculture: A Global Review," examining the growing concern over the agriculture industries impact on water quality. Eduardo Mansur, Director of FAO's Land and Water Division, said "In most high-income countries and many emerging economies, agricultural pollution has overtaken contamination from settlements and industries as the main factor in the degradation of inland and coastal waters." FAO reports that many countries, such as Argentina, Malaysia, South Africa and Pakistan, have experienced exponential economic growth by using pesticides; however, nitrate from agriculture is now the most common chemical contaminant in the world's groundwater aquifers and is leading to fetal illness, birth defects, cancer and more. In addition, fertilizers are entering rivers and flowing out to pollute the ocean. The FAO has suggested responding through policies/incentives, and on-farm practices and off-farm practices. One proposal that shows promise is establishing

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<sup>24</sup> NOAA, [https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/tutorial\\_pollution/04nonpointsource.html](https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/tutorial_pollution/04nonpointsource.html)

protection zones along surface watercourses, within farms and in buffer zones around farms and improving irrigation systems.<sup>25</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Awareness of the harmful effects of marine pollution is an important first step toward addressing this crisis. Actions taken by the United Nations, NGOs and Member States point in a positive direction that together we can reduce, prevent, and potentially repair the damage from marine pollution. Plastic is a valuable resource- it keeps medical supplies sterile, provides water to contaminated areas; it's durable and lasts multiple lifetimes; however, the waste produced by our current plastic use is unmanageable and unnecessary. The 300 million tons created this year is expected to triple when the global population reaches 8 billion people, unless we respond quickly. Likewise, the UN, in its 2018 Progress report on SGD14, noted that among other concerning marine pollution trends "Global trends point to continued deterioration of coastal waters due to pollution and eutrophication."<sup>26</sup>

As of 2019 there has been very limited progress on marine pollution. Awareness has increased, commitments have been made, but very few consequential international actions have been taken to significantly reduce the problem. Clearly, further steps need to be taken to identify those who are creating the waste, and Member States must negotiate tangible policies and actions by developed states, and provide support for developing states so all Member States can reduce their marine pollution. The UNEA needs to do more to raise awareness of the dangers of marine pollution by Member States, and design concrete and realistic strategies to fund and implement positive change. Possible steps could be to build on SDG 17 ("Strengthen the means of Implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development") by creating partnerships with NGOs and non-UN IGOs to educate shipping companies and to encourage Member States to create and enforce environmental protection policies. Increasing focus on SDG14's Targets and Indicators 14.1, 14.1.1 and

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<sup>25</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019, "Land & Water" <http://www.fao.org/land-water/news-archive/news-detail/en/c/1032702/>

<sup>26</sup> The United Nations, 2019, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

14.C are vital in moving towards a healthy ocean with greater effort. Our planet, marine life, and all living creatures need Member States to create sustainable solutions in order to achieve the progress called for by Sustainable Development Goal 14 by 2030.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are the major sources of marine pollution in your country?
2. What waste water management and solid waste recycling systems are in place?
3. Is your country landlocked or coastal; does it have rivers that drain to the ocean? How does this affect your policies, use of chemicals, waste systems, etc.?
4. What commitments has your country set for SDG 14? Have you taken any concrete actions to achieve them?
5. What systems does your country have in place to handle an environmental disaster?

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MODEL UNITED NATIONS  
OF THE FAR WEST

@ THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE UN

# GUIDE TO THE WORLD PRESS

NEWLY REVISED, APRIL 2020

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The World Press was founded during the 40th Session of Model United Nations of the Far West in 1990, an evolution of the MUNFW Daily Journal (founded at the Sixth Annual Session in 1956) which provided delegates with logistical information regarding the conference site, including directions to different areas of the college campus hosting the session, updates on conference events and meeting locations, and more. The World Press was created with a new mission in mind – to bring news about the conference to delegates in their committees and to fully incorporate the newspaper into the simulation by selecting “foreign correspondents” from various country teams to cover conference events. Ever since, delegates have eagerly awaited the daily deliveries of World Press issues to their committee rooms to read about the excitement occurring in other committees.

World Press reporters have also covered important issues of interest to students delegates outside of committee negotiations, including the ways that real world events have affected them and changed their policy positions, sometimes in the middle of the session.

The World Press, like all institutions, has evolved over time. The World Press’s new, entirely digital format is just one example of that evolution. We are excited to have you on our news team for the upcoming session of Model United Nations of the Far West.

# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## GUIDE TO THE WORLD PRESS

Model UN mirrors the United Nations in a number of ways, including press coverage. Being a World Press correspondent at Model UN, like at the United Nations, is fast paced. During the fall of each year, when the General Assembly session commences, a press correspondent's assignment becomes demanding as multiple meetings, many of which are worthy of reporting, take place at the same time. While one cannot be in more than one place at a time, there are other ways to get information about meetings. The back-room politics of the United Nations is reflected at Model UN in the hallway conversations and late-night caucusing sessions. It is the adept observer who can discern these diplomatic subtleties and begin to better understand the game of politics and diplomacy, and from there to write about it.

### THE WORLD PRESS ORGANIZATION

The World Press consists of correspondents from national news services assigned to cover MUNFW. World Press delegates write and submit articles to the newspaper, which is published once or twice daily. This newspaper disseminates news and opinion, serving as a link between committees and delegates, facilitating the overall integration and cohesiveness of conference proceedings, both in and out of committee. The World Press' production staff is headed by the Editor-in-Chief, who, with the assistance of editors and reporters, strive to provide accurate coverage of conference events.

### OPERATION OF THE WORLD PRESS

The World Press blog posts articles throughout each day of conference. News reports, analysis, features, editorials, and resolution summaries normally make up each edition. Press delegates are issued credentials, which grant them admission to any committee room for the purpose of observing the proceedings, and are expected to write at least one article per day. At the conference, press delegates are often assigned to report on specific subjects. These assignments are normally made at morning or evening press meetings.

### JOURNALISM PRINCIPLES

The intention of the World Press is to produce a credible and accurate news summary, with the ideals of a free press and the basic ethics of journalism always in mind. To this end, journalists must remain close to their sources. The most effective tool in any kind of journalism is the direct source: the delegate's words as opposed to the rumor. In addition, journalists must also know their material. If a reporter is covering a session of the Security Council, they must be aware of the rules, topics at hand, politics at work, and the positions of various countries. The following rules attempt to establish a professional relationship between the press, the delegates, and the Secretariat.

1. It is the correspondent's responsibility to meet deadlines set up by the Editor-in-Chief, unless they have approval from the Editor in Chief for alternate deadlines.
2. Correspondents shall conduct interviews at times agreed upon by the delegate and when committee is suspended. Committee business or debate should not be interrupted.

3. Correspondents shall remain unbiased while on duty for the World Press, and should only express their views or opinions through appropriate articles.
4. Notes, drafts, and copies of correspondent's articles should only be shared with other World Press staff. No delegate or member or the Secretariat may influence coverage in any manner, other than through the course of an interview or personally written statement to the press. If anyone feels it necessary to influence or approve your work, they should bring the matter to the Editor-in-Chief only.
5. When asking questions of delegates or the Secretariat, the correspondent must identify themselves as such, and for which national news service they are reporting, and ask through what means, if any, the source consents to be identified.

## PREPARATION

It is not necessary for World Press correspondents to have prior journalism experience to participate in the World Press; however, prior journalism or writing experience is helpful. It is the delegate's responsibility to prepare themselves by researching their country and news service, the conference committees, and issues that they will be covering at conference, similar to the research a delegate preparing for a Main Committee would conduct.

In order for a reporter to correctly reflect their nation's point of view (or bias), they must understand both the internal and external conditions and policies of their country. Moreover, although World Press delegates will not actually participate in committees, they will be covering their proceedings; thus, the more internal politics and knowledge they have, the more insightful and effective their reporting will be. Having a working knowledge of the rules, common tactics used in committee, and the issues being discussed will help. An effective method of preparation is to research the news service for which you will be reporting, to obtain background information about how, where, why, by whom and for whom they are published. Delegates should also study general techniques involved in reporting and composing for newspaper articles.

## REPORTING - SOURCE COLLECTION

Observation is one of the central tenants of reporting. When covering MUNFW, it is important to astutely observe the committee or delegation that is the subject of your article. Take notes on what you're observing, especially direct quotes from the proceedings, noteworthy events, or speeches. Collect copies of any relevant documents, such as agendas or resolutions. You do not need to record everything that takes place, but you will need to have reference materials. Gathering information should go beyond passive observation, so make sure to conduct interviews to supplement the information in your article. Conduct interviews at a convenient time for the interviewee, and identify yourself as a reporter, as well as what paper and country you represent, and the purpose of the interview. When you record specific quotes, always transcribe them immediately—ask the source to repeat themselves or explain themselves further if necessary. Make sure to ask the source if they may be quoted by name, country or anonymously. At least two sources are necessary for any article. If you gain inside information, such as rumor or information given in confidence outside of an interview, it is not usable in an article. However, you may ask such a source questions about such rumors. Any questions as to admissible information should be directed to the Editor in Chief.

## GROUND RULES

While it is the intent of MUNFW to observe the freedom of the press, in cooperation with each Secretariat, the MUNFW reserves the right to not publish any article submitted by a correspondent that is deemed inappropriate, libelous, or which appears to be plagiarized in any manner. Correspondents will be issued credentials which will admit them into any committee room for the purpose of observation of the proceedings. However, when in committee, correspondents may not speak to individual delegates or to the committee itself. If a correspondent wishes to speak to a delegate, they may do so only during a suspension of the meeting.

## TYPES OF WORLD PRESS ARTICLES

There are four main types of articles: beat coverage, delegation coverage, analysis, and features.

**Beat coverage** consists of attending committee, interviewing delegates or chairs, and examining resolutions. The purpose of a beat article is to inform the reader as to what happened in a committee, what the main issues of discussion and who the main players are. Bias is appropriate only to the extent that it is in line with your country's newspaper practice. Your primary concern is to report the news so that others have a true picture of what went on.

**Delegation coverage** means observing a delegation and conducting interviews with its delegates. Articles should put the delegation's purposes and actions into perspective relative to current events, conference happenings, and the history the delegation itself.

**Analysis** means educated and qualified opinion and commentary on issues, committee proceedings, and the conference as a whole. These are not editorials; they are analyses based on observation, fact, and documents. Your perspective may be that of your country, but it must be supported by fact, and sources are still required. These articles will give a voice to the different opinions of those participating in the conference.

**Features** provide coverage of lively, perhaps nonpolitical, aspects of the conference such as secretariat information, committee profiles, and social events. Features may be creative, as they serve to add creativity and human interest to the paper, but still require sources and verified information.

In summary, you are a reporter with a dual purpose; to report the news for your country's audience and to allow all countries represented at MUNFW to gather information about the proceedings of the conference regardless of their national perspective.

## STORY CONSTRUCTION

Once you have finished your observation and gathered all necessary information, you are ready to construct your article. The most important thing to remember is that others must be able to easily follow what you have to say. For example, can someone who did not attend the Security Council that day read your article understand what happened and who was there?

Articles should present their information in a straightforward and concise fashion. Only important and relevant details should be included. Group related facts with corresponding quotes and other information. Decide how you will order your article as appropriate to its form

and content (as a general rule, chronological order is appropriate for news articles). Write the story: All articles will consist of three parts: the lead, the body and the wrap-up, in that order. The lead is the opening paragraph of the story, consisting of one or two sentences that identify the who, what, where, and when of a story. The lead identifies the subject of the analysis to come, sets the article's tone, and peaks the reader's interest. The body will be the bulk of your article. For news stories, it will present the facts and comments of the subject. As mentioned above, articles are usually structured chronologically, but if the piece combines multiple stages of debate or agenda topic, chronology may be set aside so that each topic may be dealt with separately. Wrap-up serves the purpose of letting the reader know the article is closing. It should be one paragraph that restates the lead in light of the information presented in the article. It helps to study daily national newspapers to see examples of articles and compare your writing.

Once your story is complete, you need to edit it. Would someone outside the issue understand? Is information logically organized? Is the piece accurate? Are your quotes and sources properly cited? Is it appropriately balanced and biased? Did you check spelling and grammar? Remember that your name is on the article. The World Press is a unique opportunity to participate at conference and is also a learning experience. Keep in mind that you are writing for someone else's information, and that if they can gain information and understanding events outside their committee rooms, the purpose of the World Press is served and your job as a reporter has been accomplished.

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**For more information, or to contact the Editor of the World Press for this year's session of MUNFW, contact [wpeditor@munfw.org](mailto:wpeditor@munfw.org)**



# COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

MEASURES TO ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO AND EDUCATION FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND GIRLS

ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND ELIMINATING ALL FORMS OF HARMFUL PRACTICES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

PROMOTING THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In 1996, ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 (see p. 20) expanded the Commission's mandate and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

(UNWomen.org)

THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY  
THE STUDENTS OF HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ISSUES BOOK

1. Measures to ensure equal access to and education for all, especially women and girls
2. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and eliminating all forms of harmful practices against women and girls
3. Promoting the economic and political empowerment of women

THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY  
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MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## **MEASURES TO ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO AND EDUCATION FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Sessi Fletcher, Humboldt State University  
MUNFW 70th Session – Committee on the Status of Women

It is no secret that we are failing our world populations in our promise to ensure equal education for all. Ever since its adoption in 1948, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights has outlined the vital role education has in Article 26, stating that "everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."<sup>1</sup> With this promise in mind, we must begin to address the astounding rates of uneducated populations in the world today. This year's theme, "Leave No One Behind", offers the opportunity for us to closely examine not only the ways in which education can empower those that have access to it, but also the ways in which unequal access holds people back - particularly women and girls. This brief will present information on the widespread nature of the issue, the role Sustainable Development Goal 4 has in addressing this issue, the challenges to ensuring equal access to education, the current international efforts, and finally the ways in which we can achieve and accelerate educational success to fulfill our goals for the 2030 Agenda.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 AND ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

It is also important to keep in mind the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that the United Nations set in 2015 to achieve by 2030. These seventeen goals, engulfing a range of topics from addressing economic poverty, environmental challenges, and reducing inequalities,<sup>2</sup> represent some of the most pressing issues the international community faces as a whole today and outline the ways in which we can begin to address each topic. In debating the different measures needed to

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<sup>1</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/).

<sup>2</sup> "SDGs: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

ensure equal access to and education for all, especially women and girls. we must pay particular attention to Sustainable Development Goal 4. SDG 4 is the goal aiming to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."<sup>3</sup> SDG 4 has various targets including but not limited to:

ensur(ing) that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (4.1), "ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (4.2), and eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations (4.5).<sup>4</sup>

With SDG 4 in mind, we must now focus on how to implement these targets in terms of ensuring that equal access can be provided for all, particularly women and girls especially.

## **UNEQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION ACROSS THE WORLD**

To be able to accurately and effectively address the lack of equal access to education for all, we must first be able to understand the full scope of the issue. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published a study in early September 2019 on the statistical data of children out of education. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO explained that, "according to our projections, nine million girls of primary school age will never start school or set foot in a classroom, compared to about three million boys."<sup>5</sup> Azoulay goes further to elaborate that roughly four million of those nine million girls live in Sub-Saharan Africa, an area that could be

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<sup>3</sup> "Goal 4: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

<sup>4</sup> "Goal 4: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

<sup>5</sup> "Around 12 Million Children May Never See a Classroom, UN Data Reveals | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 13 Sept. 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046272>

prioritized to decrease the number of uneducated women and girls in the world.<sup>6</sup> This new statistical evidence does not help to diminish the already alarmingly-high numbers of children in the world without access to educational institutions; UNESCO also has evidence of approximately 258 million adolescents between the ages of 6 and 17. Furthermore, according to UNESCO projections, "at the present rate, by 2030, one-in-six children will not be attending primary and secondary school at all, and only six in every ten young people will complete secondary education."<sup>7</sup>

Data from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) also highlights the wide-spread severity of the issue. Of the estimated 7.1 million refugee children, only about half are enrolled in programs in host countries that give them access to education.<sup>8</sup> Only about six in ten refugee children are enrolled in primary school programs. The number decreases as refugee children age: only two in ten are enrolled in secondary-school programs. The reasons for such staggeringly low numbers of enrolled refugee children vary. Typically, impoverished host countries already have low school enrollment numbers for their native adolescent populations, so the likelihood of adolescent refugee populations gaining access to educational programs that native adolescent populations already have trouble accessing is incredibly low. Similarly, some wealthier host countries often have policies that aim at integrating adolescent refugee populations into the mainstream educational programs for their native-child populations, while others, such as Greece and some Balkan states have refugee populations that await asylum-request processing. The UNHCR high commissioner's spokesperson, Melissa Fleming, has voiced the concerns that:

It's not just sad, but it's also dumb... Not investing in refugees, people who have fled war zones...is not investing very simply in the future of its people: the people have to be the future teachers, architects, the peacemakers, artists, politicians who are interested in reconciliation, not revenge.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> "More than Half of World's Refugee Children 'Do Not Get an Education', Warns UNHCR | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 30 Aug. 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/08/1045281>

<sup>9</sup> "More than Half of World's Refugee Children 'Do Not Get an Education', Warns UNHCR | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 30 Aug. 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/08/1045281>

Similarly, 750 million adults worldwide are illiterate, about two thirds of them are women.<sup>10</sup> Studies done by UN Women have found that there are currently approximately 15 million primary school aged girls are out of school worldwide, this compared to 10 million boys.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, UN Women reports that up to 48.1% of girls do not attend educational institutions in some regions and often drop out of secondary school programs due to "early pregnancy and the expectation that they should contribute to household work."<sup>12</sup> Unequal access to education affects adult women as well. Evidence from UNESCO shows that a number of Sub-Saharan African states have a female literacy rate of under 50%, which has the potential to increase a woman's likelihood of experiencing deprivation and vulnerability to exploitation.<sup>13</sup> It is important to realize that missing out on education at the adolescent level leaves women vulnerable later in life to a range of challenges.

It is clear from the available statistical evidence that unequal access to education is a widespread issue. It affects a range of children and adolescents, whether experiencing this issue in their home countries or abroad as refugees. Similarly, adult women are affected by unequal access to education.

## **CHALLENGES TO ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

There are a number of reasons that prevent women and girls from accessing education. Firstly, it appears that there is some correlation between the education levels of women and girls of a country and that country's economic income (measured through GDP). For example, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) figures show that about 19% of six to eleven year-olds in lower-income countries do not attend educational institutions whereas, looking at the same age range, only about 2% do not attend educational institutions in higher-income countries.<sup>14</sup> Similar findings come from

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<sup>10</sup> "Education - United Nations Sustainable Development." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/)

<sup>11</sup> "Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education." *UN Women*, [www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-4-quality-education](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-4-quality-education)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> "Women ED Facts and Figure: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization." *Women ED Facts and Figure | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, [www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/international-women-s-day-2014/women-ed-facts-and-figure/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/international-women-s-day-2014/women-ed-facts-and-figure/)

<sup>14</sup> "Around 12 Million Children May Never See a Classroom. UN Data Reveals | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 13 Sept. 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046272>

studying older adolescents: 61% of fifteen to seventeen year-olds in lower-income countries do not attend educational institutions compared to a much lower 8% of fifteen to seventeen year-olds in higher-income countries. Apart from the income levels of a country, there are several other reasons that hinder access to education. As pointed out by the United Nations outline for SDG 4:

The reasons for the lack of quality education are due to lack of adequately trained teachers, poor conditions of schools and equity issues related to opportunities provided to rural children. For quality education to be provided to the children of impoverished families, investment is needed in educational scholarships, teacher training workshops, school building and improvement of water and electricity access to schools.<sup>15</sup>

A 2019 SDG 4 progress update report also agreed with these findings, describing that many regions of the world still lack the proper infrastructure and facilities that help to establish a safe and productive learning environment.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has discussed the importance of location, explaining "children from rural areas are more than twice as likely to be out of primary school than their urban peers. In conflict zones, 27 million children are out of school."<sup>17</sup> Keeping in mind the different challenges we face in ensuring equal access to all, we can now study what has been done thus far to combat the issue and push us closer to our 2030 goals.

## **INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS THUS FAR**

Despite the disheartening numbers of uneducated women and girls globally, there are several ways in which the international community has acted to ensure success in achieving the 2030 agenda. As of 2019, a reported 7 in 10 children aged three and four are now "on track in at least three of the following domains: literacy-numeracy, physical development, social-emotional development and

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<sup>15</sup> "Quality Education - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

<sup>16</sup> "Goal 4: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

<sup>17</sup> "Education." *UNICEF*, United Nations, [www.unicef.org/education](http://www.unicef.org/education)

learning."<sup>18</sup> Funding and financial aid has also increased in order to ensure access to education. For example, official development aid (ODA) for educational scholarships from states such as Australia, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom has increased by \$1.3 billion since 2017.<sup>19</sup> Within the United Nations, particular organizations are working towards accelerating the promises of SDG 4 through adolescent education. UNICEF, for example, is currently taking an active role in addressing three main points of focus that have led to the staggering statistics of women and girls without education. As UNICEF reports, their focus lies in three areas: (1) access, (2) learning and skills, and (3) emergencies and fragile contexts. In regards to the first focus area, the goal is to "[ensure] gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including for children with disabilities, marginalized children and those living in humanitarian and emergency settings;"<sup>20</sup> the second focus area aims to "[achieve] quality learning outcomes and skills development that come from strong education systems and innovative solutions."<sup>21</sup> Finally, by recognizing the circumstances of women and girls living in fragile or emergency situations, UNICEF hopes to "improve learning and protection for children in emergencies and on the move."<sup>22</sup> If the international community as a whole were able to recognize the various challenges to ensuring equal access to education for women and girls, we could then make headway in ensuring that progress is not only made, but accelerated to meet our 2030 goals.

## LOOKING FORWARD

It is clear that lack of education, particularly for women and girls, is a worldwide issue. The staggering statistical evidence of not only the widespread nature of the issue, but the ways in which it is holding back masses within world populations later in life, alludes to the totality of the issue and can cast doubt on the effectiveness in any attempts to combat it. However, despite the alarming rates of uneducated children and adults in the world, we can look to the admirable efforts of many

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<sup>18</sup> "Goal 4: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> "Education." *UNICEF*, United Nations, <https://www.unicef.org/education>

<sup>21</sup> "Education." *UNICEF*, United Nations, <https://www.unicef.org/education>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

international organizations in addressing it. These organizations, as well as many bodies within the United Nations, are focused on addressing the various barriers to equal education access, including but not limited to: income inequalities, infrastructural inequalities, lack of educators, lack of educational institutions, and environmental challenges such as location and refugee status. In recognizing and discussing these various circumstances, we can begin the important work of addressing the issue.

We are now only eleven years away from the deadline for the 2030 agenda. What started out as a desire to address seventeen important global issues has, over the years, been met by challenges to the completion of those goals. This committee has been given the immense responsibility to discuss and address the potential measures to ensuring equal access to and education for all, especially women and girls, and with it, the responsibility in determining the best courses of action in accelerating Sustainable Development Goal 4. Alone, no individual country will be able to complete such a goal,<sup>23</sup> but coming together as an international community will help take us closer to achieving our 2030 agenda to bring education - and all of its benefits - to the peoples of our world.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What kinds of political, economic, and security conditions are necessary to ensure that quality education can be accessed and maintained?
2. Has the international response thus far been effective in combating the issue of education insecurity? Why or why not?
3. What efforts of the current international response could be enhanced? What efforts need to be changed?
4. How does unequal access to education, particularly for women and girls, affect your country? What measures could your country take to help countries more affected?
5. Of the other sixteen Sustainable Development Goals, which could be addressed while dealing with Sustainable Development Goal 4?
6. How can we accelerate efforts to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda?

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<sup>23</sup> Delegates are advised to read their country's 2019 opening Plenary speeches. Many delegations (though not all) have made comments about the different challenges to education access for women and girls within their country, as well as steps they are currently taking to tackle the issue. It might be helpful to look over your country's comments while writing your stances on the issue.

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## **ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

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The fifth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations is Gender Equality. Specific targets within SDG 5 include ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, enhancing the use of enabling technology-- in particular information and communications technology-- to promote the empowerment of women, and the elimination of all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.<sup>1</sup> In total, nine targets were created by the United Nations to ensure that women and girls will be treated equally relative to their male counterparts.

Around the world women and girls bear a disproportionate share of unpaid work, are shut out of politics, and have more limited access to proper health care, credit, governmental services, and so much more. When Member States work towards meeting the targets laid out in SDG 5, they are ensuring not only more opportunities for women, but healthier and happier lives for them as well. That is why target 5.6, which calls for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development as well as the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, is so important.<sup>2</sup>

### **REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

Indicator 5.6.1 of SDG 5 says that women aged 15-49 years should be able to make their own informed decisions regarding their sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.<sup>3</sup> This means that all women should be able to tell their partner or husband no in regard to sexual

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<sup>1</sup> "SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls." *UN Women*. [www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality).

<sup>2</sup> "Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls." *United Nations*. [United Nations.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5](http://United Nations.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5).

<sup>3</sup> "Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls." *United Nations*. [United Nations.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5](http://United Nations.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5).

intercourse, have the ability to use any form of contraceptive, and make their own choices about their health care.<sup>4</sup> According to the SDG Tracker, only a woman who can say "yes" to all three components of reproductive rights is considered a woman who makes her own decisions regarding sexual relations and reproductive health care. Having the opportunity to do this is considered a basic human right, which is why it is outlined in SDG 5. The United Nations is asking Member States to meet this indicator by 2030. However, the amount of freedom that women have to make these decisions varies throughout the world.

In 2015 the SDG Tracker collected data from approximately 27 countries. Of these countries Senegal, Mali, Niger, and Chad were in the 0-20% category while there were no countries in the 80-100% range of women who are able to say yes to all three components. Additionally, the United Nations Stats says that indicator 5.6.1 data only looks at women who are married or in unions with male partners. Of the data collected by the United Nations and shared at the Gender Statistics Meeting in October 2017, only 45 Member States protected a woman's right to decline sexual intercourse with their husband or partner. For question two, women who are married or in unions and using contraceptives were asked if they are the sole person deciding if they use the contraceptives they are on and 59 countries were able to answer "yes." Further, no countries were able to indicate that women make their own decisions in regard to their own reproductive health care; however, when asked about health care in general, 60 countries responded "yes." Finally, 45 countries had data that said "yes" to all three questions. But, of these 45 countries the highest percentage of women who were able to answer "yes" to all three components was, as of 2007, Ukraine with 81%. More recently the highest percentage was, as of 2015, Rwanda at 70%. Unfortunately not all of these estimates have been validated, which means Member States and the United Nations as a whole still have a lot of work to do in order to meet SDG 5 indicator 6.1.<sup>5</sup>

Reproductive Rights are Human Rights: A handbook for National Human Rights Institutions

was created to lend a helpful hand to national human rights institutions by giving them the tools that

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<sup>4</sup> Ritchie, Roser, Mispy, Ortiz-Ospina. "Measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." *SDG-Tracker.org, website* (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Jhamba, Tapiwa. "Update on Development of SDG Indicators 5.6.1 & 5.6.2." *United Nations Statistics Division, unstats.un.org/unsd/iaeggs/Meetings/Rome\_October\_2017/docs/1.1%20UNFPA.pdf*.

they may need in order to better integrate reproductive rights into their countries. "Maternal mortality, gender-based violence, lack of access to appropriate health care and an absence of family planning services drive violations of reproductive rights across the world."<sup>6</sup> With the help of the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, this lengthy handbook not only gives guidance on what reproductive rights look like but also provides individual complaints that have been made and talks about regional information.

One individual complaint that is provided in the handbook is CEDAW/C/50/D/22/2009. This case was about a young girl who was sexually abused in 2006 and became pregnant. After surviving a suicide attempt in March 2007, she had to undergo surgery, but due to the pregnancy her operation was cancelled. The girl and her mother requested an abortion but were told no by the hospital over a month later. The Deputy Defender for Women's Rights stepped in to help during this time. In June of 2007 the girl suffered from a miscarriage and was told that the decision the medical board had come to was not subject to appeal. In early July 2007 she underwent surgery and is now paralyzed from the waist down. Ultimately the committee found the State in violation of the girl's human rights and right to health and gave recommendations such as reviewing their laws on therapeutic abortion.<sup>7</sup>

Another example of how nations are addressing reproductive rights in their country is Malaysia. According to the handbook, "the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia conducts regular sessions with school students to raise awareness about human rights issues." Further, the commission has helped the Malaysian government in areas that they aren't doing as well in through their population policy. By addressing these issues and giving the government guidance, they are able to help prevent Malaysia from taking away its peoples human rights.

The United Nations and other entities suggestions are not always accepted by Member States; however, this evidence shows that the suggestions being given can be impactful. Each day Member

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<sup>6</sup> *Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights*, O HCHR, UNPFA, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2014. Accessed on 8 July 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/NHRIHandbook.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights*, O HCHR, UNPFA, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2014. Accessed on 8 July 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/NHRIHandbook.pdf>

States progress towards equality, but not without help or resources. By taking advantage of the help and resources that are provided to them, Member States can work towards being less harmful to women's human rights as in the previously mentioned case of the girl who was sexually abused, and instead be more supportive as in Malaysia. However, it is important to point out that the United Nations has done much more than just create handbooks and track Member States' progress in implementing and protecting reproductive rights as a way to provide help to them.

## **SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE**

SDG indicator 5.6.2 tracks "the number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education."<sup>8</sup> In 2006, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health reiterated in A/61/338 that every person deserves the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This explicitly includes women's right to sexual and reproductive health care that is not only good quality but also accessible both physically and economically and without discrimination.<sup>9</sup> This right necessarily extends beyond just having access to healthcare. It also includes education for both sexes on the issues involved with sexual and reproductive health, including but not limited to sex education in regard to opposite sex as well as same sex relationships.<sup>10</sup>

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meets every year to discuss humanitarian affairs. This year E/RES/2019/14 was developed and two paragraphs were added in regards to sexual and reproductive health. Clause 42 urges Member States to guarantee reliable and safe access to reproductive health care services as well as health care and psychosocial support services. It also recognizes that to help prevent mortality and morbidity in women, girls, and infants during emergency situations relevant reproductive services may be needed. Further, clause 47 urges

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<sup>8</sup> Ritchie, Roser, Mispy, Ortiz-Ospina. "Measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." *SDG-Tracker.org website* (2018).

<sup>9</sup> "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights." *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx).

<sup>10</sup> "Sexual and Reproductive Rights." *Amnesty International*, [www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-and-reproductive-rights/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-and-reproductive-rights/)

Member States to ensure the basic humanitarian needs of people such as food, clean water, sexual and reproductive health care, and education. It also urges Member States to address these things as components of humanitarian response with sufficient and adequate resources.<sup>11</sup>

While in session, the United States spoke out against these clauses, which were agreed language from past resolutions, and asked for a vote to remove them. They disagreed with clause 42 and 47 because they believed that "while women should have equal access to health care, these paragraphs should not be interpreted as providing a right to abortion and that the definition of "sexual and reproductive health" needs clarification." Other countries such as the Holy See and Brazil agreed with this point made by the U.S.<sup>12</sup>

Other organizations--both within the United Nations system and outside it--are dedicated to helping the world reach the goals laid out in SDG 5. Some work on an international basis, while others stick to their home turf. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for example, works to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals and how progress in meeting one goal will help the international community succeed in another. More specifically, UNFPA contends that "population dynamics - including growth rates, age structure, fertility and mortality, migration and more - influence every aspect of human, social and economic development."<sup>13</sup>

UNFPA also keeps data on how different regions of the world are progressing with respect to a variety of health-related areas, including program expenses, family planning, midwifery, and child marriages. For instance, the Adolescent and Youth Dashboard shows that of the 28 African countries that there is data for, only 11 reported that over 30% of women and girls aged 15-24 have comprehensive knowledge on HIV. Furthermore, the World Population Dashboard shows that, as of 2019, 12% of the world's women who are aged 15-49 and married or in a union have an unmet need for family planning. The highest percentage is in Africa and the Arab States, while the lowest percentage is in regions such as North and South America and Europe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "E/RES/2019/14," *United Nations Economic and Social Council*, 8 July 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/202/70/PDF/N1920270.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>12</sup> McBride, Michael, "Report for UNHCR on ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 2019."

<sup>13</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions," *United Nations Population Fund*, United Nations, [www.unfpa.org/frequently-asked-questions](http://www.unfpa.org/frequently-asked-questions).

<sup>14</sup> "UNFPA Data," *United Nations Population Fund*, United Nations, [www.unfpa.org/data](http://www.unfpa.org/data).

## CONCLUSION

At the September 2019 SDG Summit, the General Assembly adopted the final draft of the Political Declaration. This declaration stressed ECOSOC's theme of interconnectedness among the SDG's while also providing a framework for tracking the progress of Member States in meeting the 2030 goals. Commitment number ten in the declaration affirms that gender equality is not only crucial to achieving other SDG's but that "...full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied full human rights and opportunities." In addition to this, commitment number 20 acknowledges that progress is too slow in numerous areas such as lowering starvation rates, addressing climate change, and promoting gender equality. Based on this assessment, it clear that Member States still have much work to do not only on the international level, but on a national one as well. The Political Declaration recommits the General Assembly and its Member States to "leave no one behind" and ensure that Member States focus on the poorest and most vulnerable communities, including indigenous people, those living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, children, and other historically marginalized groups. Finally, this call also asserts a commitment to "...targeted and accelerated action to remove all legal, social, and economic barriers to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the realization and enjoyment of their human rights."<sup>15</sup>

Sustainable Development Goal 5 is in place to ensure that women and girls enjoy not only the same human rights as their male counterparts, but also as each other throughout the world. Target 5.6's goal is to ensure that women and girls have equal and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, overcoming global and regional inequalities in areas such as access to contraceptives, sex education, and HIV/AIDS knowledge. The United Nations recognizes that progress is too slow and more needs to be done, but it is also important to not disregard the progress that has been made. By keeping that progress in mind, ECOSCO's recognition of how the SDG's are interconnected, and the areas that need more focus or adjustment, Member States should

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<sup>15</sup> The General Assembly, "Gearing up for a Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development: Political Declaration of the SDG Summit." United Nations, September 2019.

be able to work together to not only meet the goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, but meet the goals of all of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Does your country protect women's sexual and reproductive health in its constitution? If so, how? What other de facto and de jure protections exist?
2. Are there cultural and/or religious reasons your country has for preventing some types of sexual and reproductive health care such as abortions or contraceptives? Do other countries with similar cultural and/or religious profiles have similar limits? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the financial obstacles that the women in your country face in regard to sexual and reproductive health care? Has your country found ways to overcome them?
4. Does your country provide sex education? If so, what approach does it take?

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## **PROMOTING THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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Gender inequality and violence against women is one of the most widely spread issues in the world, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) stating that almost 20% of women aged 15-49 reported sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner within the last 12 months. Women are more likely than men to live below 50% of the median income, women representation in national Parliaments is about 23% and only 52% of women married or in a union are able to freely make decisions about their sexual relations, contraception, and health care. In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence. Globally, over 200 million women and girls around the world have been subjected to female genital mutilation and over 750 million will be married before the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 is to achieve gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Many targets set forth for this goal are far from being achieved: eliminating gender inequality in its entirety; eliminating harmful practices such as forced, early and child marriage; ending female genital mutilation and eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. Despite efforts to achieve these targets, gender discrimination still exists in every corner of the world.

### **PROGRESS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5**

According to the article, "Trends in Global Gender Inequality",<sup>2</sup> literacy rates among women since 1970 have increased dramatically, jumping from 11.2% to 44%. While this is still not representative

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<sup>1</sup> UNSDG 5 Reports and Figures

<sup>2</sup> Shawn F. Dorius and Glenn Firebaugh, 'Trends in Global Gender Inequality', *Social Forces*, 88.5 (2010), 1941–68  
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0040>>

of parity, this shows that global trends of gender inequality are declining. The Global Gender Gap<sup>3</sup> report published in 2018 also shows that overall progress for closing global gender gaps is at an average of about 68%. The subindexes closest to parity are Education Attainment and the Health and Survival gaps, those being at just 4.4%. The larger gaps are somewhat staggering: the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap is at 41.9% while the Political Representation gap is the largest gap at 77.1%. overall, the average gender gap still remains to be closed. Only the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap has declined slightly since the year before the 2017 report.

In "Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis,"<sup>4</sup> studies found that possible cultural and political obstacles to equal political representation include religious ideals, certain political systems, enforcement of traditional roles for women, the fact that several nations have not ratified the UN Convention on Eliminating Gender Discrimination, and the small share of women in professional occupations. Political systems with multi-member district electoral systems are reported to have a positive effect on women's political representation, as well as countries that experienced an early women's suffrage movement. Marxist and Leninist governments also seem to promote political representation for women.

The practice of child marriage has continued to decline around the world, with most of the progress taking place in South Asia, where a girl's risk of being married as a child has decreased by about a quarter between 2013 to 2018. Female genital mutilation has decreased by about a quarter in 30 countries where the practice is concentrated and representative data is available. Progress has been made on the issue of gender based budgeting: based on data from 69 countries, 13 have met the criteria of having a tracking system that measures and makes public their available gender based budgeting system, while 41 countries are approaching the criteria.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Global Gender Gap Report' *World Economic Forum*, (2018) <[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> Kenworthy, Lane, and Melissa Malami. "Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis." *Social Forces*, vol. 78, no. 1, 1999, pp. 235–268. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3005796](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3005796).

## ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

According to the American Psychological Association, the socioeconomic status of women highly affects the overall quality of life and well-being of women. In a report by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015, poverty rates for women were substantially higher than those of men, with more than 1 in 7 women living in poverty in 2014. In 2012, the poverty rates for women was 14.5% compared to 12% for men,<sup>5</sup> while in all ethnic groups women faced higher poverty rates than that of white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, the pay gap between men and women has essentially plateaued, despite steady progress over recent decades. In the 10 years between 2004 and 2014, the earnings ratio slightly increased from 78 percent in 2013 to 79 percent in 2014, the pay gap remains at 21 percent.<sup>7</sup> This percentage places the United States at rank 19 in the Global Gender Gap report for economic participation and opportunity. In 2015, women with a high school diploma were paid 80 percent of what men with a high school diploma were paid. Women with postgraduate degrees were paid 74 percent of what their male counterparts were paid.<sup>8</sup>

Women in lower socioeconomic classes face a variety of negative health issues and outcomes for them and their children. Results of breast cancer studies indicate that women living with breast cancer are 11 percent more likely to die if they live within lower income communities;<sup>9</sup> women with a lower socioeconomic status who have no insurance have the lowest rates of mammography screening among women aged 40-64, increasing their risk of death from breast cancer.<sup>10</sup>

Along with these harmful physical health issues, a number of negative psychological problems affect women of a lower socioeconomic status such as pre and post-partum depression, anxiety,

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<sup>5</sup> Entmacher, J., Robbins, K. G., Vogtman, J., & Frohlich, L. (2013). *Insecure and unequal: Poverty and income among women and families 2000-2012*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.

<sup>6</sup> Eichener, A., & Robbins, G. (2015). *National snapshot: Poverty among women & families, 2014*. Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/resources/national-snapshot-poverty-among-women-families-2014/>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (XXXX). Current population survey (CPS), 2014 annual social and economic (ASEC) supplement, 2013 poverty table of contents, POV29. Years of school completed by poverty status, sex, age, nativity and citizenship. Retrieved from [http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032014/pov/pov29\\_100.htm](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032014/pov/pov29_100.htm)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2006). American Community Survey: Selected economic characteristics. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> Du, X. L., Fang, S., & Meyer, T. E. (2008). Impact of treatment and socioeconomic status on racial disparities in survival among older women with breast cancer. *American Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 31, 125-132. doi:10.1097/COC.0b013e3181587890

<sup>10</sup> Sabatino, S. A., Coates, R. J., Uhler, R. J., Breen, N., Tangka, F., & Shaw, K. M. (2008). Disparities in mammography use among U.S. women aged 40-64 years, by race, ethnicity, income, and health insurance status, 1993 and 2005. *Medical Care*, 46, 692-700. doi:10.1097/MLR.0b013e31817893b1

addiction and violent victimization. At two and three months postpartum, women with low income have been found to experience significantly more depressive symptoms than women with high-income,<sup>11</sup> which the WHO cites as a direct result of the daily stressors and reduced support systems that are attached to low employment rank.

## **POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD**

UN Women published statistics on the political power held by women around the world and found it varies widely by region. Nordic countries vastly outnumber every other region in the world for average percentage of women in parliament, with 42.5% as of February 2019. The Americas follow at 30.5%; Europe including Nordic countries, 28.6%; Europe excluding Nordic countries, 27.2%; sub-Saharan Africa, 23.9%; Asia, 19.8%; Arab States, 19%; and the Pacific, 16.3%.

According to the data from the UN SDG Report of 2019, in 103 countries women's representation in locally elected bodies varied from less than one percent to over 50%. UN Women reports that as of June 2019, there are 11 women serving as Heads of State, 12 serving as Head of Government, while as of February 2019, there are 27 States in which women account for less than 10% of parliaments, including three chambers with no women at all.<sup>12</sup> Rwanda currently has the highest percentage of women serving in parliament at 61.3% of seats in the lower house.<sup>13</sup> Rwanda is only one out of three countries that have parliaments consisting of over 50% women, followed by Cuba with 53.2% and Bolivia with 53.1%.<sup>14</sup> As of February 2019, 55 countries have reached 30% of parliamentary representation of women including 22 countries in Europe, 12 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 12 in Latin America and the Caribbean, two in the Pacific and one each in Asia and Arab States.<sup>15</sup> Most of these countries have applied some form of quotas that open space for women in political participation and decision making.

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<sup>11</sup> Mulia, N., Schmidt, L., Bond, J., Jacobs, L., & Korcha, R. (2008). Stress, social support and problem drinking among women in poverty. *Addiction*, 103, 1283-1293. doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2008.02234.x

<sup>12</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Women in national parliaments," as at 1 February 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> UN Women calculation based on IDEA, Stockholm University and IPU, Global DataBase of Quotas on Women, <http://www.quotaproject.org/>, and IPU, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, gender balance in political participation and decision making is an internationally agreed upon target.<sup>16</sup> Leadership by women in political decision making and participation has been proven to improve those processes.<sup>17</sup> Research on local councils in India found that the number of drinking water projects increased by over 62% in areas with women-led councils compared to those within areas with male-led councils.<sup>18</sup> Research in Norway also found that there was a direct causal relationship between funding for childcare coverage and the presence of women in municipal councils.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Organizations such as UN Women and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women have taken great strides in covering the gaps that have existed in gender equality for centuries. These gaps, however, is still very present and until complete parity in gender rights and status is achieved women will always be at a disadvantage. Gender violence such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages remains rampant across the world and the economic and political status of women suffer as a result. This is why more initiatives and policies must be enacted in order to lessen the consequences of such actions and free women around the world of these misogynistic practices. It is not enough to simply end the violence against women, but the level of economic and political participation of women must be increased in order to fully embrace gender equality. The upheaval of archaic gender roles is also a step many countries will have to consider in order for women to lift their status within a region that still clings to old cultural beliefs. The promotion of the economic and political status of women has far reaching benefits beyond that of just gender equality and the fight for equal opportunities and participation for women is of utmost importance.

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<sup>16</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Critical Area G 'Women, Power and Decision-Making'

<sup>17</sup> UN Women, 'In Brief: Women's Leadership and Political Participation.'

<sup>18</sup> R. Chattopadhyay and E. Duflo (2004), "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India," *Econometrica* 72(5), pp. 1409–1443

<sup>19</sup> K. A. Bratton and L. P. Ray, 2002, "Descriptive Representation: Policy Outcomes and Municipal Day-Care Coverage in Norway," *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), pp. 428–437.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What gender gaps still exist in your state? What steps has your state taken to reduce them?
2. Has your country ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women? Why or why not?
3. Does your state have prevalent cultural beliefs on gender roles? Do these impede the improvement of the status of women?
4. What has your country done to help with the promotion of the status of women within your country? What about around the world?
5. How has your country's past policies affected the current status of women? Current policies?
6. When did women gain suffrage within your country? How much has their status improved since then?
7. What do you think the international community should do to improve the status of women?

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# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

## *70th* SESSION ISSUES BOOK

MEASURES TO COMBAT DEFORESTATION AND DESERTIFICATION

MEASURES TO ADDRESS ORGANIZED CRIME

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE NATIONAL  
AND LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. ECOSOC coordinates the work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, ten functional commissions and five regional commissions, receives reports from nine UN funds and programmes and issues policy recommendations to the UN system and to Member States. Under the UN Charter, ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. ECOSOC's purview extends over 70 percent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.

The Council's 54 member Governments are elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms. In carrying out its mandate, ECOSOC consults with academics, business sector representatives and more than 2,500 registered non-governmental organizations.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK

1. Measures to combat deforestation and desertification
2. Measures to address organized crime
3. Strengthening partnerships to enhance national and local capacity building

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## **MEASURES TO COMBAT DEFORESTATION AND DESERTIFICATION**

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MUNFW 70<sup>th</sup> Session – Economic and Social Council

The world as we know it is rapidly changing. New technology, growing populations and climate change are presenting new challenges for many nations. A globalized world economy and the effects of global warming are severely impacting the very foundations of developing nations, whether socially, economically, or politically. Two issues of the utmost concern are deforestation and desertification.

As suggested by the Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Robert Kinley, climate change is not only an environmental issue but rather an issue that hinders development itself.<sup>1</sup> The deforestation and desertification of developing nations contribute to additional pressure being placed upon these countries, which in turn, exacerbates conflict and prevents development. They pose a threat to the protection, restoration, and promotion of the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, as well as creating economic, social and physical conditions that deter long lasting development and hinder nations from the achievement of other SDGs that address poverty, hunger, good health and more.

Climate change affects the world at large, but developing nations often find themselves bearing the brunt of these affects. This is due largely to the geographical location of many developing nations as well as their financial inability to prepare, prevent and rebuild in view of the mounting number of natural disasters and rising sea levels. Climate change, especially harsher weather patterns, can damage infrastructure and affect the livelihoods of civilians. This poses threats to the economic stability of a nation and puts the lives of individuals at risk.<sup>2</sup> Climate change also has a harsh affect on agrarian practices, which are the basis of many Least Developed Countries' (LDCs) and developing

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<sup>1</sup> Kinley, Richard. "Climate Change and Sustainable Development: an International Workshop to Strengthen Research and Understanding." *UNFCCC*, 7 Apr. 2006, [unfccc.int/news/climate-change-and-sustainable-development-an-international-workshop-to-strengthen-research-and-understanding](http://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-and-sustainable-development-an-international-workshop-to-strengthen-research-and-understanding). Accessed 1 Aug. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Global Affairs Canada - Affaires. "Climate Change in Developing Countries." *GAC*, 24 July 2019, [www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/environmental\\_protection-protection\\_environnement/climate-climatiques.aspx?lang-eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/environmental_protection-protection_environnement/climate-climatiques.aspx?lang-eng). Accessed 1 Aug. 2019.

countries' economies. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggests that the agrarian economies of developing nations are beneficial to overall development and can assist in their inclusion in the global economy (Role). But LDCs and developing nations face pressures, both internally and externally, that limit their ability to become agriculture reliant nations in the world economy. These pressures include inconsistent rates of production, competitive world markets, weak internal trade structures and more. In addition, the pressures of growing populations and climate change often create economic circumstances that contribute to unsustainable practices, resulting in land degradation.<sup>3</sup> It is in these ways that climate change, resulting in deforestation and desertification, impedes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To combat this, the United Nations has several initiatives in place to prevent further degradation of natural habitats that can encourage and aid in achieving sustainable development in line with the goals set for 2030. But tackling deforestation and desertification head on is necessary to ensure all people can enjoy the human rights outlined in the United Nations Charter.

## **DEFORESTATION AND DESERTIFICATION**

Deforestation and desertification are the result of a number of factors including climate change, a rapidly developing world economy, and population growth. The Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization defines deforestation as "the conversion of forested areas to non-forest land use such as arable land, urban use, logged area or wasteland." Deforestation is also the conversion of forest to another land use or the long-term reduction of tree canopy cover below a 10% threshold. Deforestation can result from deliberate removal of forest cover for agriculture or urban development, or it can be an unintentional consequence of uncontrolled grazing, which can prevent the natural regeneration of young trees. The combined effect of grazing and fires can be a major cause of deforestation in dry areas. Deforestation implies the long-term (>10 years) or permanent loss

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<sup>3</sup> "The Role of Agriculture in the Development of LDCs and Their Integration into the World Economy," Commodities and Trade Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The Role of Agriculture in the Development of LDCs and Their Integration into the World Economy*, 2002.

of forest cover."<sup>4</sup> This also includes a reduction in the quality of forests, "the density and structure of the trees, the ecological services supplied, the biomass of plants and animals, the species diversity and the genetic diversity." It is estimated that nearly 46% of the world's trees have been felled since humans began cutting down forests en masse.<sup>5</sup> In the 26 years between 1990 and 2016, it is estimated that about 1.3 million square kilometers of forests have been cut down.

Trees are critical to maintaining the balance of local and global ecological systems and are key to absorbing the carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases that are entering the earth's atmosphere at increased rates due to emissions from human activity. According to the World Research Institute, they actually serve as mitigators of climate change, with the 23% of tropical tree coverings necessary for the world to meet goals set in the Paris Agreement.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, desertification is the development of environmental changes that occur over time, resulting in a different and less hospitable environment. Desertification is the degradation of land in dry sub-humid, semi-arid and arid areas due to human activities that overexploit or misuse land. It does not refer to the expansion of already existing deserts, but rather comes as a result of land mismanagement due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, water scarcity, climate change, political instability, and poverty.<sup>7</sup> Desertification can also be quantified by the long-term or permanent damage of soil quality and water absorption. Whether it is damaged soil or fertile topsoil being blown away, desertification is the destruction of productivity of land and often results in situations where plant life is no longer able to be supported on the same scale as years prior.<sup>8</sup> With one third of the world's land falling into the aforementioned categories, desertification is one of the changes in ecosystems that poses a significant threat to the socioeconomic well being of millions of

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<sup>4</sup> Tejaswi, Giri. "STRENGTHENING MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN ASIA." FRomeoestry Department Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations , *MANUAL ON DEFORESTATION, DEGRADATION, AND FRAGMENTATION USING REMOTE SENSING AND GIS*, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Crowther, T. W., et al. "Mapping Tree Density at a Global Scale." *Nature*, vol. 525, no. 7568, 2015, pp. 201–205. doi:10.1038/nature14967.

<sup>6</sup> Gibbs, David, et al. "By the Numbers: The Value of Tropical Forests in the Climate Change Equation." *World Resources Institute*, 4 Oct. 2018. [www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/numbers-value-tropical-forests-climate-change-equation](http://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/numbers-value-tropical-forests-climate-change-equation).

<sup>7</sup> "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 17 June." *United Nations*, United Nations, 2019. [www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/).

<sup>8</sup> NASA. "Defining Desertification." *Earth Observatory*, NASA, 3 Jan. 2007. [earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/Desertification/desertification2.php](http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/Desertification/desertification2.php).

people globally.<sup>9</sup> The projected ramifications of desertifications will affect nearly 1.8 billion people residing in water-scarce areas by 2025 and will displace an estimated 145 million people by 2045.<sup>10</sup>

Deforestation greatly affects many emerging economies, as the use of forested areas for other development often allows for less oversight of sustainable land management. According to the FAO, an estimated 18 million acres of forest are lost each year.<sup>11</sup> This is particularly prevalent in a country such as Papua New Guinea where economic practices that center around agriculture, logging, mining and natural resource extraction increase pressures to remove large areas of forest to promote economic growth; it serves as a prime example of the necessity for sustainable forestry practices to encourage development. When economic success for both individuals and the nation is tied to land usage, it is imperative that sustainable practices be utilized. In the case of Papua New Guinea, there has been a decline in the amount of area covered by forests, with an estimated 895,000 acres a year being felled since 2001. This has led to a sharp decline in forest coverage by 15% from 1972 to 2002.<sup>12</sup> Deforestation has also affected the remaining forested areas, particularly near areas where large expanses of trees are cut down for agriculture, logging, roads or housing. The World Wildlife Foundation suggests that this occurs as a result of slash and burn agricultural techniques, stripping of soil nutrients by monoculture plants, trophy hunting and the hunting of endangered species, modified climates as a result of lower rates of CO<sub>2</sub> absorption and altered water cycles that happen as a result of lower water circulation provided by trees. These all alter the delicate balance of remaining forested areas at large.<sup>13</sup> Over the long term, this will affect the quality of life for not only the wildlife within the forest but the people who depend on the land.

Desertification also occurs as a result of land mismanagement and can be a result of deforestation as well. In The Gambia there has been a loss of 100,000 hectares of forests between

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<sup>9</sup> Kannan, A. *Global Environmental Governance and Desertification: a Study of Gulf Cooperation Council Countries*. Concept Pub. Co., 2012.

<sup>10</sup> "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 17 June." *United Nations*. United Nations, 2019. [www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/).

<sup>11</sup> Bradford, Alina. "Deforestation: Facts, Causes & Effects." *LiveScience*. Purch, 2018. [amp.livescience.com/27692-deforestation.html](http://amp.livescience.com/27692-deforestation.html).

<sup>12</sup> Adam, David. "Satellite Images Show Papua New Guinea Deforestation at Critical Level." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 2 June 2008. [www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/jun/02/forests.conservaion](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/jun/02/forests.conservaion).

<sup>13</sup> "Deforestation in New Guinea." *World Wildlife Foundation*, 2005. [http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge\\_hub/where\\_we\\_work/new\\_guinea\\_forests/problems\\_forests\\_new\\_guinea/deforestation\\_for\\_estes\\_new\\_guinea/#1](http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/new_guinea_forests/problems_forests_new_guinea/deforestation_for_estes_new_guinea/#1).

1998 and 2009 as a result of desertification, necessitating restoration in almost half the country's land.<sup>14</sup> The National Action Programme for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (NAP-UNCCD) states that desertification in The Gambia came about mainly as a result of "decreasing vegetation cover, brush fires, encroachment on the remaining forests, declining soil fertility, and over-exploitation of the rangeland."<sup>15</sup> These physical changes to the land result from a growing population and the related pressures that this puts on arable and non-arable land. With the economy relying largely on agriculture, redistributive trade and tourism, most Gambians rely heavily on crop production and livestock. Agriculture accounts for 30% of the GDP and 70% of the employment in the country. These numbers, in addition to the population density of 108 persons per square kilometer, illustrates the pressure of population growth on land management. Because of this, desertification also causes poverty and food insecurity in The Gambia. While people are the main catalysts for desertification, they are also the main victims of it. The misuse, or overuse, of land in Gambia has also contributed to the "salt water intrusion into the fresh water zone of the river system, salt water seepage into the upper aquifer of the fresh water system in the coastal areas, soil salinisation and erosion, decreasing fertility of the arable land, and finally, migration."<sup>16</sup> Because of limited arable land and the poverty and food insecurity that are associated with it, there is tension that can exacerbate conflict. The FAO has long suggested that food insecurity and conflict are connected and Gambia is no exception. While there is no direct link between the two, civil conflicts are always fueled largely by discontent with quality of life, which food security is very much a part of.<sup>17</sup>

## **UNITED NATION EFFORTS**

Due to the large scale of these issues, the United Nations has several offices with oversight on these matters, as well as targets included in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. The United

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<sup>14</sup> "The Gambia." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2018. [www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/gambia/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/gambia/en/).

<sup>15</sup> "National Action Programme To Combat Desertification (NAP)." United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); The Government of the Gambia, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Stojetz, Wolfgang, and Charles Martin-Shields. "Food Security and Conflict." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2018.

Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FAO, and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) all have agenda items, bills and programs dedicated to preventing deforestation. This is also true pertaining to desertification with the exclusion of UN-REDD and with the addition of the UNCCD. There are overarching goals that pertain to both these issues in the larger bodies of UNEP, UNDP and FAO, in addition to environmental rights being recognized as a human right by the Human Rights Council in 2012, and extended with resolution 37/8 and the appointment of Mr. David R. Boyd as the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment in 2018.<sup>18</sup>

In Papua New Guinea, UN-REDD has made progress in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. REDD was first recognized in 2005 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the request of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica. This document, "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries: Approaches to Stimulate Action," submitted by these two countries on behalf of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, calls for the assistance of three subsidiary UN bodies, the UNEP, UNDP and the FAO, to assist in their fields of expertise to help nations such as Papua New Guinea reach their REDD+ goals. The assistance from these bodies under REDD has allowed for the strengthening of institutional capacities for sustainable forest management and monitoring. This has seen the establishment of the "Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system, PNG REDD+ and Forest Monitoring Web-Portal and Forest Reference Emission and Forest Reference Levels (FREL/FRL)," all through partnerships with the international community and organizations such as the European Union and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).<sup>19</sup> The combination of the REDD program and international assistance has allowed for the creation of the National Climate Change Policy, which creates economic incentive for the inclusion of REDD policy in sustainable forestry and land management. For the time being, REDD has slowed the course of deforestation by supporting change on an institutional level.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment." *OHCHR*, 2019. [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pages/SREnvironmentIndex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pages/SREnvironmentIndex.aspx).

<sup>19</sup> Abe, Hitofumi. "Papua New Guinea's REDD+ Journey." *UN-REDD Programme*, 2018. [www.un-redd.org/single-post/2018/09/03/Papua-New-Guinea%E2%80%99s-REDD-journey](http://www.un-redd.org/single-post/2018/09/03/Papua-New-Guinea%E2%80%99s-REDD-journey).

<sup>20</sup> "Papua New Guinea." *The REDD Desk*, 2018. [theredddesk.org/countries/papua-new-guinea](http://theredddesk.org/countries/papua-new-guinea).

In response to the widespread concern about desertification, the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification was established in 1994, the sole document to link both the environment and sustainable development. The Convention and the 197 nations who are party to it agreed on the creation of a new global roadmap to attain Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) along with the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, which utilizes sustainable development to restore land productivity and lessen drought impacts on 1.8 billion vulnerable people.<sup>21</sup> In Gambia the UNCCD has contributed to the success seen in planning, preparing and executing the prevention of desertification. Together with the FAO, The Gambia has created agricultural initiatives that encourage the productions of non-timbre based forest products. These products include yields such as honey, edible fruits, and on non-timbre based forest products such as honey, and edible fruits, nuts and handicrafts. In The Gambia, the managment of forests has also been included in its programs involving community forest management and the consolidation of community forestry, governmental and communal cooperation in state park forestry management, capacity development in forestry and nursery management and practices, as well as education about the effects of desertification.<sup>22</sup>

There have also been steps in the direction of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 15 over the last two decades. From 2000-2018 more of each key biodiversity area has been protected than before. This means that the percentage has risen by 39% for terrestiral areas, 42% for freshwater areas, and 36% for mountain areas. This has allowed for the total global percentage of protected land to rise to 15%. Measures such as these affectively aid in the protection of land from deforestation and desertification by creating a standard for effective and sustainable land managment. In addition, 116 parties have ratified the Nagoya Protocol, which addresses the fair and equitable use of and access to genetic resources used to contibute to comservation and sustain biodiversity. This addresses target 15.6, which is just one of the steps that the UN and Member States have been taking to achieve SDG 15.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "UNCCD History." *UNCCD* 2018, [www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention/unccd-history](http://www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention/unccd-history).

<sup>22</sup> "The Gambia." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2018, [www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/gambia/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/gambia/en/).

<sup>23</sup> United Nations. "Forests, Desertification and Biodiversity - United Nations Sustainable Development." *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, 2019, [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/).

## **THE FUTURE**

The United Nations understands the challenges that lie ahead for countries as the world changes due to global warming. With frameworks of environmental protection for LDCs and other developing nations, and the Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030, combating climate change with development and preventative measures is a sure way to attempt to prevent and negate its possible ramifications. While countries like Papua New Guinea and The Gambia have seen adversity in terms of land degradation, they also serve as examples of how change can be implemented. It is the goal of the UN to provide a dignified life for all people; climate change, particularly deforestation and desertification, are direct threats to those principles. With interorganizational cooperation, community involvement and capacity building it is possible not only to prevent further land degradation but assist in the reversal of damage while promoting sustainable development. This will not only assist in the fight against climate change, but drastically improve the quality of life for all individuals.

Considerations for the future prevention of deforestation and desertification should include measures to prevent further degradation of land, including but not limited to the implementation of target goals outlined in SDG 15, the encouragement of community and indigenous forest management, and economic incentives for sustainable land management, specifically for agriculture. As we move forward, these stand as some of the most pressing matters in combatting land degradation, deforestation and desertification.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. How do countries break free from the cycle of poverty, food insecurity and desertification?
2. How can we encourage sustainable forestry practices in countries whose economies rely on logging and agriculture?
3. How do we better implement the Sustainable Development Goals on a local scale?
4. What actions has your country taken to address these issues?
5. If you need assistance in addressing deforestation or desertification, what form should that assistance take?

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# **MEASURES TO ADDRESS ORGANIZED CRIME, INCLUDING ILLICIT FINANCIAL AND ARMS FLOWS, AND STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL SYSTEMS**

Whittier College

MUNFW 70<sup>th</sup> Session – Economic and Social Council

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sustainable Development Goal 16, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, is dedicated to "Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies' for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels."<sup>1</sup> SDG 16 has 12 targets, including "promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice" (16.3), "combat organized crime and illicit financial and arms flow" (16.4), "substantially reduce corruption and bribery" (16.5), and "strengthen national institutions to prevent violence and combat crime and terrorism" (16.A). These targets are the focus of this agenda item for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Other targets under SDG 16, such as "protecting children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence" or "providing universal legal identity," while equally important, would come under the purview of other United Nations bodies. Those being discussed here in ECOSOC fall primarily under the mandate of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The UNODC, located in Vienna, Austria, was established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2004 to integrate the work of the UN International Drug Control Programme (established in 1990) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme (established in 1991).<sup>2</sup> According to UNODC, "Traditional, territorial-based criminal groups have evolved or have been partially replaced by smaller and more flexible networks with branches across several jurisdictions. In the course of an investigation, victims, suspects, organized criminal groups and proceeds of crime may be located in many States. Moreover, organized crime affects all States, whether as countries of supply, transit or demand. As such, modern organized crime constitutes a global challenge that must be met with a concerted,

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<sup>1</sup> UN Report on SDG 16.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Handbook, 2018-19, published by New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), p. 276.

global response."<sup>3</sup> It states further that "Every nation is affected by the problems of serious and organized crime" that can impact "the daily lives of citizens, hamper economic growth, and hamper efforts made by governments to contain the consequences of crime."<sup>4</sup>

As with most of the other SDG targets, the General Assembly developed a set of indicators to use as benchmarks when determining how much progress was being made regarding each target. For instance, target 16.3 has two indicators (the proportion of victims who have reported their victimization and the proportion of detainees in the overall prison population who have not yet been sentenced. Target 16.4 includes indicators such as the "total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows" and "the proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority." Indicators for 16.5 include data on the number of bribes involving public officials or business transactions and 16.A stresses the "existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, at the time of publication, data were lacking for many of these indicators. However, in terms of target 16.3 the Office did report that the "share of unsentenced detainees in the overall prison populations has remained largely constant at 30 per cent in recent years." And birth registration, which "plays a primary role in ensuring individual rights and access to justice and social services," while having reached nearly universal registration in some regions was at an average of just 73 per cent and below 50 per cent of children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Secretary-General's report noted that only "39 per cent of all countries had in place an institution that was fully compliant with the internationally agreed standard, seven countries more than was the case in 2015."<sup>7</sup> This suggests that delegates may wish to consider how to promote or improve the collection of relevant data in these areas.

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<sup>3</sup> UNODC, [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro.html).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals (2019).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

The primary document that outlines the United Nations Member States approach to these issues is the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, which was adopted as an Annex to Assembly resolution 55/25 on 15 November 2000. The concluding preambular paragraph provides the Convention's underlying philosophy and areas of concern:

*Strongly convinced* that the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will constitute an effective tool and the necessary legal framework for international cooperation in combating, inter alia, such criminal activities as money-laundering, corruption, illicit trafficking in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, offences against cultural heritage and the growing links between transnational organized crime and terrorist acts. . .[.]<sup>8</sup>

The Convention defines various terms and the scope of its application (Articles 2 and 3). It also notes in Article 4 that "States Parties shall carry out their obligations under this Convention in a manner consistent with the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and that of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States." Article 6 criminalizes the "laundering of proceeds of crime," and Article 7 discusses "measures to combat money-laundering." Both Articles also describe the responsibilities of States Parties regarding laundering in terms of legislation and measures that they should follow. Subsequent articles discuss corruption, liability of legal persons, prosecution, confiscation of proceeds of crime, extradition of the accused, protection of witnesses, and various forms of international cooperation, including law enforcement cooperation and technical training.<sup>9</sup> Article 31 (Prevention) states that "States Parties shall endeavor to develop and evaluate national projects and to establish and promote best practices and policies aimed at the prevention of transnational organized crime" and outlines actions that States Parties should focus on.<sup>10</sup>

On 31 May 2001 the General Assembly, in resolution 55/255, adopted the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The opening preambular paragraph provides the justification for adopting the Protocol:

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<sup>8</sup> General Assembly Resolution 55/25, preambular paragraph 10.

<sup>9</sup> A/RES/55/25, Annex I, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, Articles 8-30.

<sup>10</sup> A/RES/55/25, Annex I, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, Article 31.

Aware of the urgent need to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, owing to the harmful effects of those activities on the security of each State, region and the world as a whole, endangering the well-being of peoples, their social and economic development and their right to live in peace, . . .[.]<sup>11</sup>

The Annex defines illicit manufacturing, illicit trafficking, and tracing among other terms and the scope of application (Articles 3 and 4). It goes on to discuss criminalization, confiscation, seizure and disposal, record-keeping, issues relating to firearms, cooperation and training and technical assistance (Articles 5-14).<sup>12\*</sup>

There are 190 States Parties to the Convention including all the permanent members of the Security Council. However, there are only 150 States Parties to the Protocol; China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are not parties to the Protocol.

## **STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL SYSTEMS**

Criminal behavior, whether carried out by organized gangs or corrupt governments, has become a more widespread phenomenon in recent years. In addition to possible loss of life, trafficking and exploitation of victims, in particular women and children, and economic losses, criminal behavior may inhibit donor countries from contributing assistance as that assistance does not always reach its intended targets. Furthermore, the private sector is often unwilling to invest in developing countries if they cannot be assured that their investments will be protected by a functioning legal system. For instance, regardless of where a State may stand on the issues surrounding Ukraine (as of mid-October 2019), it provides an excellent example of how corruption may interfere with a state's attempt to move forward with economic and political development.

In reaction to the general concerns noted above, the General Assembly has stressed the importance of strengthening judicial systems and promoting the rule of law. In its most recent resolution on the rule of law, it noted that the rule of law and development are "strongly

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<sup>11</sup> A/RES/55/255, Annex, preambular paragraph 1.

<sup>12</sup> Rather than spell out each of the relevant Articles in this paper, delegates are urged to consult both the Convention and its Protocol for definitions and recommendations to States Parties to the Convention.

interrelated and mutually reinforcing." It emphasized its strong commitment to support an effective, fair, humane and accountable criminal justice system, inclusive of all sectors of society.<sup>13</sup> The operative paragraphs call for mainstreaming a gender perspective, promoting educational programmes, eliminating all forms of discrimination, and welcome the efforts of the UNODC to, inter alia, improve data collection and analysis and provide technical assistance to Member States.<sup>14</sup>

A UNODC statement on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice noted that at the field level the Office has been developing programs related to crime prevention and criminal justice "based on the needs and objectives identified in each region/country."<sup>15</sup> It also notes that "crime prevention and criminal justice strategies must be gender-responsive and respect the rule of law, therefore incorporating human rights law and principles."<sup>16</sup> The Office follows the guidelines established by General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions.<sup>17</sup> In practice what the Office tries to do is provide assessment, advice and program support, develop tools and trainings for States, and update standards and norms.<sup>18</sup> Among the services UNODC provides are a Handbook on "Early Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Processes," a "Standards of Professional Responsibilities and Statement of the Essential Duties and Rights of Prosecutors" tool kit, "Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime," a "Resource guide on Strengthening Judicial Integrity and Capacity," and "Good Practices in the Protection of Witnesses in Criminal Proceedings Involving Organized Crime."<sup>19</sup>

In addition to General Assembly resolutions and UNODC activities, the Security Council now regularly includes efforts to improve judicial systems and police training as part of the mandates in peace-keeping operations, activities usually led by civilians and/or domestic police officials contributed by donor countries.

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<sup>13</sup> A/RES/73/185, preambular paragraphs 9, 12, and 14.

<sup>14</sup> A/RES/73/185, operative paragraphs 6, 8, 9, 15, and 16.

<sup>15</sup> UNODC statement: [unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/index.html?ref-menuside](http://unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/index.html?ref-menuside)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> UNODC statement: [unodc.org/unodc/en/urban-safety/criminal-justice-reform/html](http://unodc.org/unodc/en/urban-safety/criminal-justice-reform/html).

## MONEY LAUNDERING

One significant form of criminal behavior is the laundering of money. A UNODC statement in 2019 notes that "rapid developments in financial information, technology and communication allow money to move anywhere in the world with speed and ease. This makes the task of combating money-laundering more urgent than ever."<sup>20</sup> The Office estimates that 2-5 per cent of Global GDP or between US\$800 billion – US\$2 trillion is laundered in one year.<sup>21</sup> This money fuels corruption and organization crime and "can erode a nation's economy."<sup>22</sup> For instance, between 2008-2010 Africa "lost US \$63.4 billion to illicit flows, more than what it received in foreign direct investment."<sup>23</sup> UNODC suggests that the use of the U.S. dollar in transactions in black markets, greater financial deregulation, "the progress of the Euromarket, and the proliferation of financial secrecy havens" have contributed to difficulties in finding, freezing, and forfeiting criminally derived income.<sup>24</sup> In a statement on "Introduction to money-laundering," the Office notes that terrorists, while not concerned with disguising where money comes from (e.g., in some cases, the sale of oil in regions they control), "they are concerned with concealing its destination and the purpose for which it has been collected."<sup>25</sup> However, another problem stemming from illicit financial flows is the loss of tax revenue, estimated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at \$100 billion U.S.<sup>26</sup>

UNODC's primary structure for dealing with money-laundering is its Law Enforcement, Organized Crime and Anti-Money-Laundering Unit (1997), which is responsible for carrying out its global program against money-laundering. The Unit's mandate was strengthened in 1998 by the Political Declaration and the measures for countering money-laundering adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, which broadened the scope of its mandate to cover all

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<sup>20</sup> UNODC statement on Money-Laundering and Globalization (2019). [unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/globalization.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/globalization.html)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> UNODC statement on "Introduction to money-laundering (2019). [unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/introduction.html?ref=menu](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/introduction.html?ref=menu)

<sup>23</sup> Radha Kulkarni [UNDP.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/taking-global-action-against-illicit-financial-flows.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/taking-global-action-against-illicit-financial-flows.html)

<sup>24</sup> UNODC statement on Money-Laundering and Globalization (2019). [unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/globalization.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/globalization.html)

<sup>25</sup> UNODC statement on "Introduction to money-laundering (2019). [unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/introduction.html?ref=menu](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/introduction.html?ref=menu)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

serious crime, not just drug related offenses."<sup>27</sup> The objective is to "strengthen the ability of Member States to implement measures against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism and to assist them in detecting, seizing and confiscating illicit proceeds. . . ." <sup>28</sup> The Unit has prepared on-line courses such as "Understanding Money Laundering," a 60-90 minute video that "covers common money laundering methods and actions that can be undertaken to fight money laundering." <sup>29</sup>

As the Office suggests, more sophisticated approaches to money-laundering require more sophisticated responses to a practice that can make it difficult for many countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. One approach suggested by Radha Kulkarni's UNDP blog would be for countries to commit to nationally-defined revenue targets, improve domestic financial transparency, and improve collection capabilities through modernized tax systems.<sup>30</sup> And MUN delegates can certainly consider other approaches that would try to prevent money-laundering at the source, before it is too late to stop illicit flows.

## **THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

As the nature of conflicts has changed from inter-state fighting to intra-state struggles and terrorist organizations or criminal gangs have become more active, the role of small arms and light weapons has increased and the need to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has become even more important. The change in patterns of conflict has also had a significant impact on civilian casualties, which now outnumber those of the combatants themselves. The General Assembly has addressed this problem through numerous resolutions, yet the illicit trade, as well as the illegal sale and transfer of these weapons, continues unabated.

An article by Rebecca Peters in the UN Chronicle, "It's Time to Act Against Gun Violence," noted that given the high school massacres occurring in the United States, armed gangs in Brazil, and "systematic sexual violence" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (DRC), a comprehensive

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<sup>27</sup> UNODC statement on "money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (2019) [unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/index.html?ref-menuside](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/index.html?ref-menuside)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> [unodc.org/elearning/en/courses/course-catalogue.html#MLFC](https://www.unodc.org/elearning/en/courses/course-catalogue.html#MLFC). (course 9.1; 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Radha Kulkarni [UNDP.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/taking-global-action-against-illicit-financial-flows.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/taking-global-action-against-illicit-financial-flows.html).

approach to the problem of gun violence was necessary.<sup>31</sup> Her article appeared in 2009. A decade later her comments are still, if not even more, valid. But this is not the result of inattention, but rather, perhaps, a lack of effective implementation of existing standards and insufficient political will.

The international community has adopted several documents to address this issue. These include the "Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects" (2001), the "International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons" (International Tracing Instrument – ITI, 2005), the "Arms Trade Treaty" (2012), and the "Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons" (the Kinshasa Convention, 2017).

The legally non-binding Programme of Action notes that "the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world . . . have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels." It presents a series of actions Member States should take to address these problems, while "reaffirming the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence" and the right of each State to manufacture, import and retain small arms and light weapons for its self-defence and security needs."<sup>32</sup> The ITI, as its title suggests, provides guidelines for marking small arms and light weapons so that they can be traced from the time of production to their eventual use.<sup>33</sup> The Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force in 2014, obligates Member States to monitor arms exports and ensure that such weapons are not used for human rights abuses, including terrorism, and calls upon States to establish standards for arms import and export. 105 States have ratified the Treaty (32 others have signed, but not ratified); China, Russia, and the United States have not ratified the Treaty.

The most recent Assembly resolution (A/RES/73/69), entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects," highlights a number of concerns in this area, but is doing so

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<sup>31</sup> Peters, Rebecca. "It's Time to Act Against Violence." UN Chronicle, Vol. XLVI, No. 1 & 2, January 2009.

<sup>32</sup> UN Document A/Conf.192/15, (poa-iss.org/PoA/ppoahtml.aspx.)

<sup>33</sup> Accessed through googling the title of the ITI.

implies that results in recent years have been disappointing. The resolution underlines "the need for States to enhance their efforts to build national capacity for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument." It also underlines the fact that the issue

requires concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and that their uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world has a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and poses a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels.<sup>34</sup>

The resolution also emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and assistance; identification of needs, priorities, and national plans; cross-border cooperation; and financial assistance; and welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a multi-partner trust facility within the Peacebuilding Fund to provide support for States.<sup>35</sup>

In the general debate that led to the adoption of the resolution many States expressed their support for the various documents noted above, but Sudan noted that "responsibility for combating the proliferation of such weapons should be placed on manufacturing States, not only the affected countries. Jamaica said that efforts must include "education initiatives that allow for greater public engagement in reducing, controlling and eliminating all categories of weapons." Malawi cited Small Arms Survey report that over 560,000 people had died of violence in 2016, while Ethiopia stressed that the illicit trafficking had been "fueling intra- and inter-State conflicts," attributing this to "their easy availability, relative inexpensiveness, technical simplicity and easy mobility." The Central African Republic noted the destruction caused by Boko Haram in central Africa and praised the Kinshasa Convention, which had already led many States to "establish national commissions to implement its

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<sup>34</sup> A/RES/73/69, operative paragraph 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, various paragraphs.

provisions." Speakers also called attention to the role of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and the need to follow through with these efforts in post-conflict situations.<sup>36</sup>

While these speakers expressed strong support for the various agreements and the resolution was adopted by consensus (without a vote), there are areas of disagreement. Some States object to the phrase "in all its aspects," which is included in the Programme of Action as being too broad and, perhaps, a threat to national sovereignty. Other concerns relate to the rights of States to manufacture, export or import, and maintain such weapons or the rights of their citizens to own such weapons. Delegates will have to weigh these concerns as they address this topic.

## **CONCLUSION**

It should be apparent that there is general agreement on the need to address the various problems included under this agenda item, but while each issue has been given considerable attention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the international community has not resolved them and in some cases things have gotten worse. While delegates may wish to peruse the various documents to get a broader perspective on what they include, they should also think outside the box to develop realistic approaches that can help to implement the basic ideas that are included in these documents. Finally, while it is desirable to have one comprehensive, consensus resolution on these targets of Sustainable Development Goal 16, it may facilitate the work of delegates to have three separate resolutions or one resolution with three subsets to address the issues of improving justice systems, restricting the practice of money laundering, and reducing the illicit manufacture and trade in small arms and light weapons.

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<sup>36</sup> The statements are included in General Assembly First Committee, 73<sup>rd</sup> Session, 6<sup>th</sup> meeting (a.m.). [un.org/press/en/2018/gadis3601.doc.htm](http://un.org/press/en/2018/gadis3601.doc.htm).

## QUESTION TO CONSIDER

1. What programs has your country developed to improve your criminal justice system? Are you in a position to assist other country in this area? How?
2. Is money-laundering an issue in your country? What measures has your country taken to address this problem?
3. Is your country involved in the legal manufacture or distribution of small arms and/or light weapons? How to you ensure that the sale, export, or import of these weapons conforms with international standards?
4. Where does your State stand on some of the issues regarding the rights of countries or citizens to own, produce or distribute these kinds of weapons?
5. Is your country a Party to the various conventions or programs that have been adopted? Why or why not?
6. What forms of cooperation has your country engaged in with other States on these issues?
7. What additional steps can the international community take to address these issues?

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## **EXAMINING IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 17**

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MUNFW 70<sup>th</sup> Session – Economic and Social Council

During the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York during September 2015, seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set to be accomplished by 2030. In order to achieve the SDGs in the given timeline, international cooperation is critical. Partnerships are key to the success of all nation-states. The 2018 report on the progress of the SDGs states that "Goal 17 seeks to strengthen global partnerships to achieve the Agenda's goals, bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors."<sup>1</sup> Key areas examined to determine the success of SDG 17 are development assistance, high-speed broadband accessibility, market shares, and universal census polls. The coordination of each of these areas through contributions and cooperation from developed nations is crucial to the implementation of SDG 17.

### **SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

One of the crucial elements in coordinating state efforts is having developing nations working collaboratively with other developing nations. This idea is present in the South-South Cooperation, which was a term coined in 1978 during the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA) conference.<sup>2</sup> South-South Cooperation provides leverage for developing states in their negotiations and diplomatic communications with developed countries and allows them to share best practices with each other and make use of their comparative advantages. This cooperation provides a sense of unity among developing nations as they focus on common goals and mutual interests. For instance, South-South Cooperation has enabled developing countries to provide support for Cuba's continued battle against

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/goal-17/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>

Ebola in West Africa, Mexico's efforts to improve the quality of corn in Kenya, as well as the implementation of various action plans to reduce the hunger epidemic in Mesoamerican countries.

## **FINANCING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE**

It is a priority of the United Nations to assist developing nations and vulnerable populations. One of the fundamental goals for SDG 17 is to increase official development assistance (ODA) and fulfill commitments that have been made by donor countries. The benchmark set for the ODA financial contributions is 0.7 percent of a nation's gross national income (GNI). In 2018 only five states met that goal: Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Despite increased contributions by some in 2017, ODA remained at 0.31 percent of GNI and net ODA in 2018 was down by 2.7 percent from 2017.<sup>3</sup> Donor fatigue and volatile financial markets are some of the reasons for this decline.

In its most recent resolution on South-South cooperation (A/RES/73/249), the General Assembly noted, among other points, the importance of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and reaffirmed the need for a "strong political commitment to address the challenges of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity."<sup>4</sup> Whether this will result in an increase in ODA remains to be seen.

## **INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY**

The internet has become an essential component of modern living. While there have been advancements in the number of people who can access the internet, high-speed secure internet access is still unavailable to a large majority of the world. In 2016, "only 6 percent of the population [in developing countries] had access to high-speed fixed broadband Internet, compared to 24 per cent in

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17>

<sup>4</sup> A/RES/73/249

the developed regions."<sup>5</sup> This directly impacts the ability to develop global connections and partnerships. Internet access is crucial to education, innovation and healthcare. Lack of access in the vast majority of the world creates a further divide between the haves and have nots. However, global improvements were made in 2018 by connecting different parts of the world with technology. Beginning in 2019, over half of the world's population had access to high-speed broadband internet networks.

Recently, there have been technological improvements to close the gap between developed and developing nations. The Technology Bank, agreed to in 2015 and implemented in June 2018, established a centralized "knowledge hub" for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that will allow for better global connections with scientific and technological information.<sup>6</sup> This is important because it utilizes the same approach as South-South Cooperation where countries with similar levels of development can assist one another. "The first stage of operations includes activities aimed at improving the access of scientists and researchers to publications, data, research and technical knowledge."<sup>7</sup> While the goal is to assist LDCs, once they no longer qualify for that status, they will still be allowed to access the Technology Bank for five years. This allows room for them to continue with projects and development as solidify their improved status.

## **TRADE**

Trade is another essential component of global partnerships. Tariffs limit the ability for open trade between nations. In 2017, "trade-weighted tariffs" were decreased worldwide by 2.2 percent. The highest tariffs from 2017 were placed on African regions. This caused increased trade tensions to rise among nations with large economies because doubt was cast about the capabilities of a multilateral trading system under WTO.<sup>8</sup>

The Istanbul Program of Action set a goal to have LDCs double their share of global exports by 2020. However, 2018 saw very slow growth where LDCs remained shareholders of only one

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<sup>5</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/goal-17/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/ldc-technology-bank-launches-in-turkey/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

percent of world merchandise exports. At this rate, it is projected that in order to meet the 2020 goal, LDCs will have to quadruple their share yearly.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS**

While government assistance and global partnerships between or among Member States are significant, there are other forms of partnership that will also have a major impact on achieving SDG 17. The private sector plays a key role. Private sector philanthropy allows for additional support of human rights and social justice movements.<sup>9</sup> While governments have specific agendas, private sector groups are able to set their own priorities and focus on assistance for a variety of causes. In order to mobilize resources for various projects, funding from the private sector must be utilized. Involving multiple stakeholders in large projects offers a greater opportunity for success. Signing on private sector organizations as supporters of economic, environmental, humanitarian, or social programs can ease financial constraints and create stronger backing for the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **PARTNERSHIPS WITH AND WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

Partnerships are not limited to those between States or between governments and the private sector. The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) "was established in 1998 to serve as the interface between the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations system." The fund provides support for a variety of projects sponsored by UN agencies, Governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. The range of projects can be seen in the report of the Secretary-General on the "United Nations Office for Partnership" (A/73/222).<sup>10</sup> As of 2017 the fund had supported "641 projects, implemented by 48 United Nations entities in 128 countries."<sup>11</sup> Some examples include projects in the area of global health involving the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/>

<sup>10</sup> A/73/222, p. 1, report of the Secretary-General on the "United Nations Office for Partnerships"; Ted Turner provided a significant amount of core funding, approximately \$0.45 billion out of a total of \$1.47 billion.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to address key global health priorities: WHO, UNICEF, the American Red Cross, and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address measles and rubella; UNICEF and UNHCR's program "Nothing But Nets" to address malaria; and UNFPA, UN-Women, UNICEF, and UNHCR to promote issues "such as gender equality, maternal health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender-based violence."<sup>12</sup> In addition, there are multi-stakeholder alliances such as the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves or the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.<sup>13</sup>

"The United Nations Democracy Fund was established by the Secretary-General (Kofi Annan) in July 2005 to support democratization around the world."<sup>14</sup> It has supported "nearly 750 projects in more than 130 countries."<sup>15</sup> In its latest round of funding projects addressed such topics as Youth engagement (16 %), Rule of law and human rights (18 %), Community activism (6 %), Strengthening interaction with Governments (23 %), Media and freedom of information (6 %), Empowerment of women (27 %), and Tools for knowledge (4 %).<sup>16</sup>

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also partner with UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNDP, and WFP. It is often NGOs who are working in the field given the limited resources and staffing of the agencies themselves. For instance, UNHCR works with well over 600 international, national, or local NGOs in over 100 countries. NGOs may provide medical assistance, psychological services, educational programs, food distribution assistance, and/or support with developing infrastructure.<sup>17</sup>

## **THE PARTNERSHIP FORUM AND UN HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM**

Each year the United Nations holds a Partnership Forum as a lead-in to ECOSOC's High-level Political Forum, which discusses progress regarding SDG 17 on an annual basis. At the meeting on 11 April 2019, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine spoke on behalf of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 13; specific examples can be seen on pp. 14-16.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with UNHCR consultant, M. McBride.

Group of 77 and China.<sup>18</sup> The representative noted that the Group "recognizes the need for global partnership for sustainable development" and reiterates that a stronger commitment to partnership and cooperation is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." Further, the Group emphasizes the need for "strengthening and promoting robust, effective and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, respecting national policies and priorities." In addition, the Group welcomed progress in South-South cooperation, the importance of coordination in engaging with partners within the UN system, and reaffirmed "its readiness to work with all stakeholders to encourage effective partnerships, including public, public-private and with non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations, academia and civil society."<sup>19</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

SDG 17 is important because it can create a sense of unity among the various stakeholders in their attempts to achieve the other SDGs. Partnerships between developed and developing countries in the form of ODA, fair trade agreements, or improved access to the internet; South-South cooperation; partnerships within the UN system and between UN agencies and other entities; and partnerships between Governments and NGOs, civil society and/or the private sector will be key in these efforts.

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, there has been progress made on SDG 17 with regard to internet accessibility and trade-weighted tariffs. The Addis Ababa agreement on financing for development may address some funding needs. But donors need to be convinced to meet their ODA commitments; best practices and technological advances need to be shared; States need to do more to empower women, and Governments need to provide an enabling environment for developing partnerships where various stakeholders can contribute to efforts to fight poverty and

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<sup>18</sup> Palestine has been recognized as an observer State. While it cannot vote on issues, it may speak and participate in negotiations. Palestine was selected to be the primary spokesperson for the G77 and China during the 2019 session, so although not an official member of ECOSOC, Palestine may represent (speak on behalf of) the Group.

<sup>19</sup> All quotes and summaries come from the Statement by Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, 11 April 2019 at the ECOSOC Partnership Forum in New York; <https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id+190411>

address the other SDGs. A major challenge for delegates then is to come up with ideas to develop or strengthen, in the words of the G77, "robust, effective, and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships" while respecting national sovereignty and promoting accountability so that we will "leave no one behind."

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What contributions does your nation state make to ODA? Does your country meet the 0.7 GNI goal?
2. Does your country have access to high-speed broadband internet? Are there restrictions on internet accessibility imposed by your government?
3. Does your country have access to the Technology Bank?
4. What is your country's stance on trade-weighted tariffs?
5. What type of partnerships have you participated in with other countries; the private sector; NGOs; etc.?

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# Diplomatic Note

## United States of America's Draft Program of Work for UN Security Council April 16-19, 2021

Dear UN Security Council colleagues,

The Permanent Mission of the United States to the Model UN of the Far West presents its compliments to all of the Security Council members. As president of the UN Security Council for the duration of the 70th session of Model United Nations of the Far West, the United States has the honor to preside over the Council's discussion and set the Council's agenda for tackling the most pressing threats to international peace and security.

Our draft Program of Work for the Model UN Security Council is below for your consideration. It is our hope that the draft agenda will be adopted by consensus upon the opening meeting.

The United States is deeply concerned with the recent outbreaks of violence in Burma and Ethiopia, and believes the UN Security Council must consider actions to restore peace and mediate these conflicts. The Russian Federation's recent build up of forces on the Ukrainian border is a worrisome escalation that could result in military confrontation; therefore, it is urgent that the Council meet to find ways of reducing tensions and preventing Russia from further military intervention. Finally, the United States is determined to adopt a mandate renewal resolution of UN Security Council resolution 2533 that will keep the vital humanitarian aid flowing to millions of Syrian civilians in Syria before the mandate expires on Sunday, April 18.

<b>Friday, April 16</b>	Opening Plenary
<b>Saturday, April 17</b>	Burma Ukraine
<b>Sunday, April 18</b>	Syria (Humanitarian; mandate renewal of resolution 2165) Ethiopia
<b>Monday, April 19</b>	Closing Plenary

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Erin + Grace

**Erin Clancy, U.S. Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of the United States**

**Grace Reader, Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of the United States**

**Security Council Documents to Help You Prepare**

**Burma:**

- Security Council Presidential Statement on 10 March, 2021 (S/PRST/2021/5)
  - <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/10/world/myanmar-un-security-council-intl-latam/index.html>
- Security Council Press Statement on 4 February, 2021 (SC/14430)

**Ukraine:**

- Security Council Briefing on Situation in Ukraine from 11 February, 2021
- Security Council Presidential Statement on Ukraine from 6 June, 2018

**Syria:**

- Read up on recent Meetings on Political and Humanitarian Situation in Syria (monthly meetings)
- UNSCR 2165
- Security General Report from 24 February, 2021 (S/2021/160)

**Ethiopia:**

- CFR Article from 10 February, 2021 (<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/conflict-ethiopias-tigray-region-what-know>)
- Monthly Updates on Tigray situation (Starting Dec. 2020)