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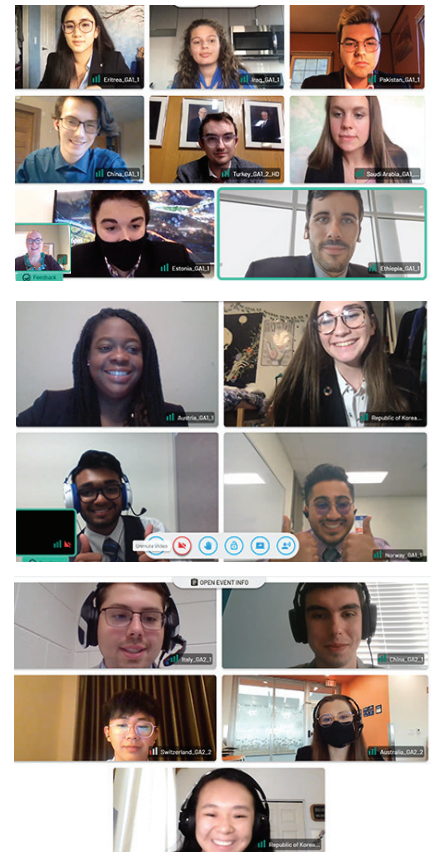
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## Economic and Social Council Background Guide 2021

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# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2021 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This year's staff is: Director Ashlee Ann Rolheiser and Assistant Director Mariana Gisela Marañón Laguna. Ashlee Ann Rolheiser is completing a Master of International Affairs and Diplomacy from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, through the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Ashlee is currently focusing on implementing and developing philanthropy support for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Mariana Gisela Marañón Laguna received her Master of Science in Integrative Neuroscience at Georgetown University in May 2021. Mariana will soon be starting her career in research and development in the pharmaceutical industry.

The topics under discussion for ECOSOC are:

- I. The Role of Science, Technology, and Innovation on Social Development and the Wellbeing of All
- II. Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations

As one of the six primary organs of the United Nations, ECOSOC addresses global economic, social, and environmental issues. ECOSOC works closely with specialized agencies, regional commissions, and frequent conferences. ECOSOC submits an annual report and recommendations to the General Assembly, and serves as a cornerstone for the cooperation and coordination of the Sustainable Development Goals. Innovation, building consensus and cooperation, and working towards internationally agreed goals are the targets of the mission of ECOSOC.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretary-General Chris Duggan at [usgchris.dc@nmun.org](mailto:usgchris.dc@nmun.org) or Secretary-General Courtney Indart at [secgen.dc@nmun.org](mailto:secgen.dc@nmun.org).

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

Sincerely,  
Ashlee Ann Rolheiser, Director  
Mariana Gisela Marañón Laguna, Assistant Director



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## Committee Overview

### Introduction

Chapter X of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a founding body and one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN).<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to its mandate, the Council promotes higher standards of living by serving as a central platform for urgent humanitarian concerns and by coordinating the activities of Member States and other UN agencies to align with the international development framework.<sup>2</sup> To do so, ECOSOC relies primarily on its cross-disciplinary network of UN entities, which include more than 17 specialized agencies, eight functional commissions, and five regional commissions.<sup>3</sup> Collectively, these bodies coordinate up to 70% of the UN's human and financial resources, equip the other main organs with information upon their request, and formulate policy recommendations for the General Assembly each year.<sup>4</sup>

Over its 75-year existence, ECOSOC has also undergone several administrative reforms.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, Member States endorsed an amendment to Article 61 of the *Charter of the United Nations* that called for increasing ECOSOC's original membership to 27.<sup>6</sup> In 1971, General Assembly resolution 2847(XXVI) further amended this seat count to include 54 members.<sup>7</sup> Continuing the pursuit to improve efficiency, the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/197 in 1977, to restructure and enhance ECOSOC's coordination with its subsidiary bodies.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, to avoid any duplication of work resulting from broad mandates, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/227 in 1995, clarifying that ECOSOC has the special pertinence to monitor the implementation of General Assembly resolutions.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the past decade, the General Assembly has continued to implement additional reforms aimed at strengthening the working methods of the Council.<sup>10</sup> ECOSOC has leveraged these improvements to take the lead on identifying and discussing emerging challenges, to act as a policy forum for global leaders through the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and to provide a platform of accountability at all levels of monitoring and reporting on universal commitments.<sup>11</sup> A prominent example of these enhancements has been the commitment to provide younger generations with meaningful involvement in Council activities and discussions through ECOSOC's annual Youth Forums.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/305, in pursuit of reinforcing the Council's leadership and policy guidance role across the UN Development System (UNDS), this resolution reiterated that ECOSOC's work should be rooted in inclusivity, transparency, and flexibility.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN ECOSOC, *About ECOSOC*, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945; Educational Broadcasting Corporation, *Kofi Annan – Center of the Storm: Who Does What?*, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> DagDok – Guide to UN Documentation, *Functional Commissions*, 2020; UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Specialized Agencies*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *What Does ECOSOC Do?*, 2005; UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Documentation: Economic and Social Council – Regional Commissions*, 2021; UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> UN ECOSOC, *About Us*, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly, *Question of Equitable Representation on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/1991B (XVIII))*, 1963, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2019, p. 138; UN General Assembly, *Enlargement of the Economic and Social Council 2847 (A/RES/2847 (XXVI))*, 1971.

<sup>8</sup> UN General Assembly, *Restructuring the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System (A/RES/32/197)*, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> UN General Assembly, *Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/RES/50/227)*, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)*, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> UN ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods*, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy of Youth, *2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum*, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 68/1 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/72/305)*, 2018, p. 3.

## **Governance, Structure, and Membership**

The General Assembly apportions ECOSOC's 54 seats on the basis of geographic location; with each seat lasting for a period of three years, ending on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.<sup>14</sup> Currently, ECOSOC allocates 10 of these seats to Latin American and Caribbean States, 14 to African States, six to Eastern European States, 11 to Asian-Pacific States, and 13 to Western European and Other States.<sup>15</sup> At the commencement of ECOSOC's first program cycle, each of these 54 members designate a new President, one who's individually responsible for facilitating the organization of the committee and acquiring a consensus on issues pertaining to ECOSOC's agenda items.<sup>16</sup> Alongside four new Vice-Presidents, these representatives constitute the Bureau.<sup>17</sup> They are tasked with devising programs of work as well as streamlining the organizational activities of each session in collaboration with the Secretariat.<sup>18</sup> These offices, while eligible for reelection each year, are selected with special regard for preserving the equitable rotation among the Council's five regional sectors.<sup>19</sup> During its most recent organizational session on 23 July 2020, His Excellency Munir Akram from Pakistan became the 76th President of ECOSOC alongside Vice-Presidents from Botswana, Mexico, Switzerland, and Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

The Council convenes for one organizational session and one substantive session each year, unless determined otherwise by the Bureau, General Assembly, Security Council, or any of ECOSOC's members.<sup>21</sup> Organizational sessions prioritize administrative activities, such as agenda setting and Bureau elections.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, substantive sessions aim to enhance the synergy of the plenary body and are facilitated through five key segments: The Operational Activities for Development Segment, the Management Segment, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, the Integration Segment, and the High-Level Segment.<sup>23</sup> The Operational Activities for Development Segment focuses on providing guidance to ECOSOC on how to implement the strategies established by the General Assembly.<sup>24</sup> The Management Segment exercises significant oversight in the follow-up process to conferences and in its review of UN bodies' annual reports.<sup>25</sup> The Humanitarian Affairs Segment addresses the increasingly complex and protracted struggles taking place across the international community, whereas the Integration Segment aims to consolidate the inputs of UN entities, Member States, relevant stakeholders, and the Council's subsidiary bodies in accordance with the 2021 annual theme: "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic."<sup>26</sup> Lastly, the High-Level Segment formulates specific guidance and strategic direction for the UN to take with respect to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).<sup>27</sup> While each segment has its own set of functions, ECOSOC is still cognizant to avoid repetition at all costs by soliciting feedback from its subsidiary bodies and integrating technical and expert analysis into across the UNDS.<sup>28</sup> In the past, these segments have served as gateways for Member State representatives by connecting them with policy experts, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECOSOC postponed many of these same intergovernmental consultations until 2021.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2019, p. 138.

<sup>15</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC at a Glance*, 2021, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC at a Glance*, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Bureau*, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/5715/Rev.2)*, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Sessions*, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)*, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> UN ECOSOC, *What We Do: Management Segment*, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2021; UN ECOSOC, *Integration Segment*, 2021; UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Sessions*, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC High-Level Segment*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Sessions*, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Sessions*, 2021.

Beyond its role in facilitating UN forums on sustainable development, ECOSOC's purview also spans more than 60 subsidiary bodies, specialized agencies, funds, and programs.<sup>30</sup> This gives ECOSOC sizeable access to nearly three-fourths of the UN's \$36.4 billion operating budget, as the 11 largest entities for UN funding, such as the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, report their activities to the Council.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it is also worth mentioning that even though ECOSOC maintains close working relationships with these agencies and "may make recommendations for the coordination of their activities," they are independent entities nonetheless.<sup>32</sup> As a result, specialized agencies establish their own funding mechanisms, governing bodies, membership guidelines, and procedural rules.<sup>33</sup>

ECOSOC does directly oversee and manage some of its subsidiary bodies and commissions, particularly to avoid duplication and coordinate across the institutional.<sup>34</sup> The two most common types of these are functional commissions and regional commissions.<sup>35</sup> Functional commissions, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, make recommendations on issues in their area of expertise, whereas regional commissions, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, target development challenges within their geographical scope.<sup>36</sup> Other less common subsidiary bodies include: standing committees, such as the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, ad hoc bodies, such as the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and expert bodies, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.<sup>37</sup> These last three subsidiary bodies recommend guidelines for preserving the coherence and coordination of the UN system, prioritize topics that the Council has identified as deserving of additional attention or particular expertise, and facilitate the organ's technical work.<sup>38</sup>

### **Mandate, Functions, and Powers**

Article 62(1) of the *Charter of the United Nations* mandates that ECOSOC "may make studies and reports with respect to economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters," including human rights and freedoms, to present to the General Assembly and other UN agencies.<sup>39</sup> ECOSOC may also provide information and assist the Security Council when addressing humanitarian crises, including public health emergencies.<sup>40</sup> As emphasized by recent reforms, ECOSOC also provides coordination, monitoring, and advice to UN programs, agencies, and funds on the implementation of international development policies.<sup>41</sup> To improve upon this degree of coordination, a 2007 reform of ECOSOC brought forth by General Assembly resolution 61/16, established the High-Level Segment.<sup>42</sup> While often mistaken for the HLPF, which is a multi-stakeholder platform for providing recommendations and best practices on implementing the 2030 Agenda, the High-Level Segment represents the culmination of ECOSOC's

<sup>30</sup> UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Functional Commissions*, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> UN ECOSOC, *About Us*, 2021, pp. 24-25; UN General Assembly, *Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System: Funding Analysis (A/75/79/Add.1–E/2020/55/Add.1)*, 2020, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Article 58; UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *What Are UN Specialized Agencies, and How Many Are There?*, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Article 58; UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, 2021; UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>40</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Progress in the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 67/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (E/RES/2013/5)*, 2013, p. 1; UN ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods*, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)*, 2006.

working cycle.<sup>43</sup> By bringing together representatives from governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society to discuss development cooperation, the High-Level Segment focuses on understanding the long-term trends of UN initiatives and on projecting the future of the SDGs.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to overseeing its subsidiary bodies, ECOSOC's mechanisms allow for NGOs to consult on the work of the UN.<sup>45</sup> There are more than 5,450 NGOs that have been granted consultative status, allowing them to attend and participate in various UN meetings, conferences, and special sessions as well as participate in international discussions.<sup>46</sup> By obtaining consultative status, these NGOs are allowed to provide insight to different UN bodies, discussions, and policies that pertain to specialized topics and regions.<sup>47</sup> Applications for consultative status are considered by ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs, which was established in 1946 and is made up of 19 Member States.<sup>48</sup> The Committee on NGOs directly reports to ECOSOC on the procedural and substantive matters raised by NGOs.<sup>49</sup> ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 (1996) defines the principles, eligibility requirements, rules, procedures, obligations, and responsibilities for NGOs and the UN in establishing the consultative relationship.<sup>50</sup> While the Committee on NGOs has postponed its meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at its 1 September 2018 session, the Committee granted consultative status to 219 NGOs and deferred an additional 198 NGOs for consideration in 2020.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, it reviewed quadrennial reports of suspended NGOs, which resulted in the reinstatement of 37 organizations and the removal of 115.<sup>52</sup>

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

In 2020, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 forced ECOSOC to defer more than half of its substantive sessions to 2021.<sup>53</sup> Despite these disruptions to its program of work, ECOSOC still managed to promote a robust multilateral response by harnessing the expertise of its annual segments, specialized agencies, and subsidiary bodies.<sup>54</sup> These virtual dialogues proved to be crucial in coordinating future actions, addressing relevant areas of concern, and sharing lessons learned amidst the evolving state of the pandemic.<sup>55</sup>

The Operational Activities for the Development Segment met at the end of May 2020 to assess the achievements that had been introduced in the span of a single Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) cycle.<sup>56</sup> Since 2016, the QCPR has served as the primary mechanism through which the General Assembly measures the effectiveness and coherence of UN support for programs across Member States.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the deliberation and discussion phase of this five-day segment, however, many Member States drew attention to the fact that additional steps would need to be taken to strengthen the UNDS's ability to deliver integrated policy advice for poverty eradication and a sustainable recovery

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<sup>43</sup> UN DESA, *High-Level Political Forum*, 2021; UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC High-Level Segment*, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC High-Level Segment*, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> UN ECOSOC, *List of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council as of 1 September 2018 (E/2019/INF/5)*, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> UN DESA, *Introduction to ECOSOC Consultative Status*, 2018; UN ECOSOC, *Consultative Relationship Between the United Nations and Non-governmental Organizations (E/RES/1996/31)*, 1996, pp. 53-61.

<sup>51</sup> UN DESA, *The Committee on NGOs*, 2020; UN DGC, *Concluding Session, Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations Recommends Status for 219 Groups, Adopts Report Containing 2020 Meeting Schedule*, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Sessions*, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC's Response to COVID-19*, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> UN ECOSOC, *The 2020 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2020.

<sup>57</sup> UN ECOSOC, *2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Chair's Summary*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *Guiding Operational Activities for Development*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *The 2020 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2020.

from COVID-19.<sup>58</sup> First, Member States called for the profiles of Resident Coordinators (RC) to be strengthened, both in terms of gender and geographic representation.<sup>59</sup> This would ensure that the representatives charged with leading the UNDS would be better equipped to reflect the needs of the entire UN system.<sup>60</sup> Second, Member States endorsed improvements to the “frequency, quality, and scope” of UN Country Teams’ (UNCT) reporting to RCs, including the addition of an “annual country report to each government.”<sup>61</sup> Third, Member States underscored the importance of providing adequate and sustainable funding to RCs in order to enhance their capacity to deliver efficient responses in keeping with national development priorities.<sup>62</sup> In the end, there was strong recognition that although significant challenges remained, the first QCPR had fulfilled its role over the past four years in the most efficient manner.<sup>63</sup> Because of this, Member States adopted General Assembly resolution 75/233 on 21 December 2020, highlighting that the new QCPR will continue to be responsible for guiding the UNDS over the next four years through high-level political guidance.<sup>64</sup> It will also be repositioned to capture the expressed needs of program countries, placing a stronger emphasis on health, social protection, technological innovation, and equitable quality education.<sup>65</sup>

The Humanitarian Affairs Segment convened virtually on 9 to 11 June 2020 under the theme “reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.”<sup>66</sup> Throughout their discussions, Member States considered solutions that would refine humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons; assessed the growing complexity of interminable health crises; and sought to revamp humanitarian effectiveness through an increased investment into technology and innovation.<sup>67</sup> These solutions proposed that the global community should invest in community engagement and control measures, launch responses to humanitarian crises with a respect for international law, and reinforce national healthcare systems to better withstand future outbreaks.<sup>68</sup>

At the culmination of ECOSOC’s substantive sessions, the 2020 HLPF and High-Level Segment convened in order to discuss how Member States could accelerate the implementation of the SDGs amidst the decade of action.<sup>69</sup> A key component of this debate was how COVID-19 had disrupted the international community’s progress by reducing global output and economic growth by 4.9% and 5.7%, respectively.<sup>70</sup> In their written statements, coalitions of developing Member States, such as the Group of 77, reiterated that the exogenous shocks of the pandemic had eroded development gains achieved throughout the past decades by exacerbating their state’s structural weaknesses.<sup>71</sup> A particular concern

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<sup>58</sup> UN ECOSOC, *2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Chair’s Summary*, 2020, p. 9; UNDESA, *How We Work*, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> UN ECOSOC, *2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Chair’s Summary*, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*; UN ECOSOC, *The 2020 Operational Activities for Development Segment*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *QCPR in 2020*, 2020.

<sup>64</sup> UN ECOSOC, *QCPR in 2020*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (A/RES/75/233)*, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2020.

<sup>67</sup> UN OCHA, *Speech by the Vice President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale on the Presidential Statement on the Occasion of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment on 1 June 2020*, 2020, pp. 1-3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>69</sup> UNDESA, *High-Level Political Forum 2020 Under the Auspices of ECOSOC*, 2020.

<sup>70</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development, Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/59)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 68/1 on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/72/305)*, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Segment of the 2020 Session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Convened Under the Auspices of the Council, on the Theme “Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development”*: Advance Version (E/2020/L.20–E/HLPF/2020/L.1), 2020.



for this cohort revolved around sealing the technological divide rampant among developing Member States – a difficulty all of them viewed as indispensable for the creation of an equitable and sustainable future.<sup>72</sup> Thus, in recognition of these challenges, the deliberative body adopted the Ministerial Declaration of the 2020 HLPF and High-Level Segment of ECOSOC.<sup>73</sup> As part of their commitments, Member States called upon the international community to eradicate poverty and ensure an inclusive restoration from the pandemic through advancements in new sustainable energy technology; an investment in equitable and universal access to education; and the strengthening of national healthcare systems.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to holding virtual meetings, ECOSOC responded to the pandemic by launching a temporary methodology for decision-making, called the “silence procedure.”<sup>75</sup> Under this system, the President of ECOSOC, Mona Juul, circulated draft resolutions to all Member States and gave them at least 72 hours to raise an objection.<sup>76</sup> If silence was not broken, the draft resolution was considered adopted; otherwise, the text was sent back to the sponsors for revisions and then faced another round of the silence procedure.<sup>77</sup> ECOSOC used this method from 3 April to 22 July 2020, resulting in the adoption of more than 50 resolutions and decisions.<sup>78</sup> The most prominent of these included ECOSOC resolutions 2020/12 and 2020/13 for their emphasis on harnessing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote an inclusive and gender-sensitive economic growth and to accelerate progress across all internationally agreed development initiatives.<sup>79</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Since its introduction as a founding body of the UN, ECOSOC has evolved to become the principal entity for policy guidance, review, and analysis to Member States, giving it substantial influence on the wide remit of the work published within the UN’s environmental, social, and economic fields.<sup>80</sup> In accordance with this mandate, the Council oversees the coordination of a diverse array of subsidiary bodies and the mobilization of resources aimed at securing sustainable development and higher standards of living for all.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which is estimated to reap hundreds of billions from the international community, ECOSOC plans to deliver a “sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic,” pursuant to its 2021 theme by continuing to structure its work around national development priorities and leverage such recommendations through regional partners, intergovernmental consultations, and all relevant stakeholders.<sup>82</sup>

### **Annotated Bibliography**

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*This report was published in accordance with the changes and reforms that were made to allow ECOSOC to better fulfil its mandate. The report outlines the key points made within General Assembly resolution 68/1 (2013) and the new set of priorities for ECOSOC in*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> UNDESA, *Outcome*, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Segment of the 2020 Session of the Economic and Social Council on the Annual Theme “Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development,”* 2020.

<sup>75</sup> IISD, *UN Bodies Formalize Silence Procedure for Decision-Making During Pandemic*, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Decisions and Resolutions of the 2020 Session of the Council Adopted through Silence Procedure, Proposals on which No Action was Taken and Proposals on which Silence was Broken*, 2020.

<sup>79</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Assessment of the Progress Made in the Implementation of and Follow-Up to the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (E/RES/2020/12)*, 2020; UN ECOSOC, *Science, Technology, and Innovation for Development (E/RES/2020/13)*, 2020.

<sup>80</sup> UN ECOSOC, *About Us*, 2021.

<sup>81</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

<sup>82</sup> UN ECOSOC, *About Us*, 2021.

*addressing global issues. Additionally, the chart included in the document highlights the yearly schedule of ECOSOC as well as its meeting structure. Delegates would find this useful in understanding ECOSOC's current mandate and structure that extends beyond Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations.*

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2020). *Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development, Report of the Secretary-General (E/RES/2020/59)*. Retrieved 18 February 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/e/2020/59>  
*This Report of the Secretary-General was published on 8 May 2020 in preparation for the 2020 HLPF. In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the report notes key areas that can have a significant socioeconomic impact on people's wellbeing. In line with the provisional agendas, the report also addresses areas such as energy and extreme poverty. Delegates will find this document useful in understanding the priorities of ECOSOC and the background of HLPF 2020.*

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*This declaration was published at the culmination of the High-Level Segment and HLPF in 2020. It demonstrates how the UN is working to reduce the impact of COVID-19, and it explains the efforts currently underway to ensure that the global community is still able to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Delegates will find this document useful in understanding how various regional blocs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how these same Member States recommend the UN system should act in response.*

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## I. The Role of Science, Technology, and Innovation on Social Development and the Wellbeing of All

*“Sustainable development need not wait for tomorrow’s technological breakthroughs. The policies, the science and the green technologies at our disposal today can begin to do the job.”<sup>83</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Investing into science, technology, and innovation (STI) is vital for global economic and social advancement.<sup>84</sup> Technological, scientific, and innovation advancements have evolved quickly in recent decades.<sup>85</sup> The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on global responsibility and acted as a centerpiece for global development, which created a precedent for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and constituted an encouraging momentum for furthering global development to build upon the role of STI for the wellbeing of all.<sup>86</sup> STI development is fundamental for Member States to ensure the health, prosperity, security, and wellbeing of their citizens.<sup>87</sup> STI are critical in the advancement and prosperity of humankind, however, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed many societal vulnerabilities, including lack of resources for the development of STI.<sup>88</sup> The international community is encouraged by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to further assistance mechanisms for STI to achieve the SDGs.<sup>89</sup>

Recognizing the rapid development of scientific and technological innovations, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has highlighted the urgency to create new and adapt existing national and international policies to protect and encourage innovation for the wellbeing of all.<sup>90</sup> To ensure global cooperation, improved coordination regarding existing measures for regional and international unity, specifically regarding the United Nations (UN), is required.<sup>91</sup> Although STI is at the core of human development, negative environmental, economic, and societal aftereffects are threatening life on earth and the reality of long-term survival.<sup>92</sup> Although breakthroughs in the wellbeing of humanity have been acquired through STI, strengthened policies and frameworks are vital for the continuation of advancement and the safeguarding of sustainable development.<sup>93</sup> To meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, stronger mechanisms for policy creation, and the promotion of science-policy-society between Member States and the private sector, is required.<sup>94</sup> Relationships between regional, industrial, and science policies are not autonomous, in fact, the OECD has recommended closer coordination between the three.<sup>95</sup> The digital revolution, also known as the third industrial revolution, has highlighted the rapid advancement of STI due to its ability to continually transform itself; the steam engine, electricity

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<sup>83</sup> UN Secretary-General, *Speech by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Sustainable Development at the World Summit on 2 September 2002, in Johannesburg, 2002.*

<sup>84</sup> UNESCO, *Investing in Science, Technology and Innovation*, 2019.

<sup>85</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture for sustainable development and the MDGs*, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation for the post-2015 development agenda (E/CN.16/2014/2)*, 2014, p.2.

<sup>87</sup> Attri, A Perspective on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy: Need for International Coordination, *Brief for GSDR – 2016 Update*, 2016.

<sup>88</sup> OECD, *Social economy and the COVID-19 crisis: current and future roles*, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture for sustainable development and the MDGs*, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> UN, *Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>92</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative, *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.6.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Malecki, *Science, technology, and regional economic development: Review and prospects*, 1981, p.328.

generator, and printing press are the only three other technologies have earned this same distinction.<sup>96</sup> Current and future technological breakthroughs will make it possible to achieve the 2030 Agenda.<sup>97</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

To achieve the 2030 Agenda, various UN agencies, along with many Member States and regional organizations, have been developing frameworks and encouraging policy protection for STI to promote further innovation; some of these bodies and organizations include the UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs (UN-IATT), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), OECD, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).<sup>98</sup> The right to science is highlighted in Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), to allow humans to “share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.<sup>99</sup> STI development is also protected in Article 66 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) by establishing that humans have the right to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications”.<sup>100</sup> Further, the ICESCR affirms that Member States should respect the indispensable freedom for scientific research and that all Member States should conserve, develop, and diffuse science.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/213 (2015) to emphasize the relevance of STI for global development and the wellbeing of all.<sup>102</sup> The main factors that influence an individual to adopt innovation, respectively, are: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, tribality, and observability.<sup>103</sup> These stages are critical for the adoption and sharing of new technologies, and the creation of new policies regarding STI, as decision-making is often made on an individual basis.<sup>104</sup> By adopting new technologies, developing economies will have an opportunity to strengthen their gross domestic product (GDP), which will aid in the achievement of the 2030 Global Goals.<sup>105</sup>

On 25 February 2021, the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Regional Science Technology and Innovation Forum was opened in Brazzaville, Congo, to feature the value of STI for Africa.<sup>106</sup> The Forum identified technological and institutional gaps, as well as the digital divide, and was thematically focused on “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.”<sup>107</sup> Similarly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (APASTI) Implementation Plan, focuses on strategic actions with deliverable goals, specific activities and timelines, and indicators from the internal work of nine ASEAN Sub-Committees.<sup>108</sup> On 9 October 2018, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) held a discussion focused on Article 15 of the ICESCR in order to consult, and develop an action plan for the future of global development in relation to STI.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Muhleisen, *The Long and Short of the Digital Revolution*, 2018, p.6.

<sup>97</sup> UN Secretary-General, *Speech by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality at the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development on 8 July 2019, in New York*, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative, *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.6.

<sup>99</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>100</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXII))*, 1966.

<sup>101</sup> The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *The Right to Science*, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> UN General Assembly, *Science, technology and innovation for development (A/RES/68/220)*, 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Attri, *A Perspective on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy: Need for International Coordination, Brief for GSDR – 2016 Update*, 2016.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative. *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> UNESCO, *Third African Regional Science Technology and Innovation Forum opens in Brazzaville*, 2021.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> ASEAN, *ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (APASTI) 2016-2025 Implementation Plan*, 2016.

<sup>109</sup> UNOHCHR, *General discussion on a draft general comment on article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its*



ECOSOC coordinates and facilitates STI-related developments and works with UN bodies to drive innovation and scientific advancement. ECOSOC collaborated with UNESCO on the *Report of the UN Secretary-General on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs” for the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review*.<sup>110</sup> This report, along with other reports, was requested on behalf of the Secretary-General to promote sustainable development and the MDGs, as well as provide measurable data, input, and information from UN subsidiaries.<sup>111</sup> With this data, the 2013 ECOSOC substantive session focused on the potential for STI to assist in achieving the MDGs, pursuing sustainable development, the promotion of a science-policy-society, and fostering the wellbeing for all.<sup>112</sup> The report developed twelve commitments for ECOSOC to promote policy coherence, most notably for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CTSD) to direct international collaboration and focus on addressing the culture for sustainable development.<sup>113</sup> Strengthening international cooperation through enhancing science-policy is highlighted in the twelve goals, and also serves as a priority for the CTSD, ECOSOC, and the Committee for Development Policy (CDP).<sup>114</sup> Digital accessibility and technological advancement remain critical to the development of humankind, as seen by the General Assembly resolutions 72/242 and 73/17 to address the rapid development of technology and with respect to the SDGs.<sup>115</sup> ECOSOC strongly encourages the development of legal, policy and institutional frameworks at all levels to drive the facilitation of STI in order to successfully achieve the SDGs for the wellbeing of all.<sup>116</sup> The 2030 Agenda emphasizes addressing the impacts of industry, innovation, and infrastructure on society, which is fundamental for the realization for social development, as seen in SDGs 3 and 9.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

Fair global competition in research, opportunity, and information exchange are essential to the advancement of STI.<sup>118</sup> STI can reshape communities, countries, and the world, especially by providing critical access to information for marginalized and underrepresented groups.<sup>119</sup> Both ECOSOC and UNESCO note that funding, the promotion of cross-sector initiatives, and collaboration between scientific evidence and Indigenous knowledge must be prioritized through leadership.<sup>120</sup> Research has shown that Member States whom prioritize STI-oriented global strategies have higher long term economic growth and sustainable competitiveness policies.<sup>121</sup> There is a direct link between STI research and economic development, however, the international community requires further policy influence from young scientists, ensuring that the views and experience of these professionals within the realm of STI are being

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*applications and other provisions of article 15 on the relationship between science and economic, social and cultural rights*, 2018.

<sup>110</sup> UNESCO contribution to the *Report of the UN Secretary-General on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs” for the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review*, 2013.

<sup>111</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture for sustainable development and the MDGs*, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Secretary-General on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals” for the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review*, 2013, p.29.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p.29-31.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p.30.

<sup>115</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets*, 2020.

<sup>116</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Report of the Secretary-General on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals” for the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review*, 2013, p.30.

<sup>117</sup> Cervantes and Jeong Hong, *STI policies for delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018.

<sup>118</sup> UNESCO, *Special session 7<sup>th</sup> World Science Forum “Enabling science through parliamentary governance”*, 2015.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>121</sup> Sener & Saridogan, *The Effects of Science-Technology-Innovation On Competitiveness And Economic Growth*, 2011, p.815.

communicated to policy-makers.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, policy-makers need to interact and collaborate with institutes and organizations to implement programs and initiatives with regard to STI.<sup>123</sup>

UNESCO established the Global Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments open access database that allows all Member States to monitor, evaluate, and share their best practices regarding STI.<sup>124</sup> The central focus of relaying science into innovation or technology is the full understanding of the data and analysis, therefore, UNESCO is aspiring to expand and enhance its University-Industry Partnerships program.<sup>125</sup> Although there is a necessity for public-private partnerships (PPPs), individuals are also crucial in the adoption of innovation and technology.<sup>126</sup> Further, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) created a Knowledge Management (KM) Strategy Framework between 2014-2017 to embolden their role in knowledge facilitation, capacity building, and the exchange of societal advancement and development.<sup>127</sup> The UNDP hosts public dialogues and has a strong digital presence due to social networking and their embedding of the KM strategy into four different areas of operation.<sup>128</sup> ECOSOC supports the enhancement of the digital world, and in collaboration with the KM Framework, is dedicated to strengthening other knowledge management hubs to encourage regional and global collaboration through peer-learning and sharing of best practices for practical and valuable policy solutions for the wellbeing of all through technological inclusion.<sup>129</sup> ECOSOC often discusses the importance of STI and its potential of culture for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs.<sup>130</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The 5<sup>th</sup> Multi-stakeholder forum on STI for the SDGs was rescheduled from May 2020 to May off 2021.<sup>131</sup> The theme of the this year's forum is "Using science, technology and innovation for accelerating action and transformative pathways", which aligns with the theme of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).<sup>132</sup>

Regional efforts for social development and the wellbeing of all through the lens of STI are critical to confronting global developmental challenges.<sup>133</sup> Through Eurostat, the statistical office for the European Union (EU), the organization of STI is divided into four categories, including: research and development (R&D), community innovation surveys, high-tech statistics, and human resources in science and technology (HRST).<sup>134</sup> Through this categorization, data on relevant matters of STI are more comprehensive, and present a comparative evaluation of national systems of EU Member States.<sup>135</sup> In relation to STI, the OECD focuses on the development of policies in industry and globalization, emerging technologies, digital economy, broadband and telecommunications, and consumer policy.<sup>136</sup> The OECD highlights the importance of policies that ensure individual and global security and privacy, which will advance economic and social progress through a safe digital realm.<sup>137</sup>

### ***Fostering Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, and Equity***

The world is experiencing a digital revolution, with more access to payments, investments, and entrepreneurship.<sup>138</sup> While digital technology is advancing rapidly, it remains accessible to less than half

<sup>122</sup> UNESCO, *Speech by Dr. Toli Onu at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Science Forum on 4-7 November 2015, in Budapest, 2015.*

<sup>123</sup> UNESCO, *Special session 7<sup>th</sup> World Science Forum "Enabling science through parliamentary governance", 2015.*

<sup>124</sup> UNESCO, *Investing in Science, Technology and Innovation, 2019.*

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> UNDP, *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework, 2014.*

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> UN ECOSOC, *COVID-19 Response, 2020, p.6.*

<sup>130</sup> UCLG, *ECOSOC meeting: "Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals", 2021.*

<sup>131</sup> UN ECOSOC, *STI Forum.*

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> USAID, *Science Technology and Innovation, 2021.*

<sup>134</sup> EU, *Science, technology and innovation – Overview.*

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> OECD, *Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation.*

<sup>137</sup> OECD, *Digital economy.*

<sup>138</sup> United Nations, *Igniting SDG Progress Through Digital Financial Inclusion, 2018.*

of the global population, with one third of adults unable to use banks, making them unbanked.<sup>139</sup> Advancement in any area of STI is consistent with the progress of humankind and continued development, however, humankind is vulnerable to the growth of digital breakthroughs, as it may contribute to greater inequality amongst individuals, organizations, and Member States.<sup>140</sup> As highlighted by ECOSOC and in the 2030 Agenda, stronger policies need to be put in place to ensure the wellbeing of all, and that no one is left behind.<sup>141</sup> Digital accessibility, inclusion, and equity through STI mechanisms create numerous opportunities for societies to be more interconnected, collaborative, and transformative.<sup>142</sup> For example, the IIASA contributes to the goals of digital accessibility, inclusion, and equity, through collaborative sessions of the UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs (IATT), which includes members of civil society, scientific and private sector communities.<sup>143</sup> The sessions focused on the way in which society generates power and livelihood through STI, and how STI can foster renewable and sustainable development.<sup>144</sup>

Digital financial tools, including online banking, are an imperative component of inclusivity, equality, and accessibility.<sup>145</sup> Although financial inclusion is increasing, there are still gaps within society which will only be furthered by digital finance if left unaddressed by the international community.<sup>146</sup> In 2018, a staggering 31% of the adult population were unbanked, however, this rate is growing with the increased global access of digital finance tools.<sup>147</sup> Digital financial services have the potential to assist low-cost business structures and entrepreneurship, which could create 95 million new jobs by 2025.<sup>148</sup> Additionally, by digitizing payments, economic inclusion is promoted globally, which creates a direct channel for financial inclusion.<sup>149</sup> A solution to the complexities exposed by cash, credit, and cheque, would be digitizing the financial world to improve credit scores, streamline payments, increase revenue, reduce fraud, and avoid global disparities in wage.<sup>150</sup> There is room for growth within the realm of digital accessibility, inclusion, and equity, especially for Member States with less access to financial services. By shifting the focus to digital financial services for all, strong policies, leadership, and governance are essential to the foundation and success of this digital revolution for the wellbeing of all.<sup>151</sup>

### **Highlighting Innovation amid A Global Crisis**

Societal disruptors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, invite the opportunity to innovate during unexpected, unprecedented times and highlight the ability for society to adapt due to evolving global demands.<sup>152</sup> With globalization comes competition, therefore, many Member States work to strengthen global competitiveness through STI, while simultaneously focusing on sustainable and long-term growth.<sup>153</sup> ECOSOC has highlighted STI opportunities for global rejuvenation and development in the face of COVID-19.<sup>154</sup> Although the COVID-19 vaccine is a highlight of STI during a global crisis, the pandemic also encouraged innovations in education provision through digital learning platforms, updated curriculums, and grading procedures.<sup>155</sup> Further, COVID-19 updated the norms of the private sector

<sup>139</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets*, 2020.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> United Nations, *The Impact of Digital Technologies*.

<sup>143</sup> International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, *Workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs*, 2020.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> United Nations, *Igniting SDG Progress Through Digital Financial Inclusion*, 2018.

<sup>146</sup> The World Bank, *Financial Inclusion on the Rise, But Gaps Remain, Global Findex Database Shows*, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Manyika et al, *How digital finance could boost growth in emerging economies*, 2016.

<sup>149</sup> United Nations, *Igniting SDG Progress Through Digital Financial Inclusion*, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> OECD, *Innovation, development and COVID-19: Challenges, opportunities and ways forward*, 2020.

<sup>153</sup> Sener & Saridogan, *The Effects of Science-Technology-Innovation On Competitiveness And Economic Growth*, 2011, p.815.

<sup>154</sup> UN ECOSOC, *COVID-19 Response*, 2020, p.1.

<sup>155</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond*, 2020, p.26.

through improved mental and physical health frameworks, working from home, and encouraging healthy work-life balances.<sup>156</sup> By harnessing the power of human-centered and sustainable technologies and innovation, the spheres of global health response, education, and the private sector will be able to flourish as a result of the vulnerabilities exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>157</sup> COVID-19 both exposed vulnerabilities, and highlighted crisis response within the international community, and further invites human-centered and sustainable technologies and innovation to respond to complex emergencies in the future.<sup>158</sup>

ECOSOC responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with effective policies, setting a precedent for future crises and global crisis management, ensuring the continued advancement of STI through the global health crisis.<sup>159</sup> The multilateral approach was guided by ECOSOC's view of longevity, sustainability, and practical preparedness for future global shocks.<sup>160</sup> ECOSOC first tackled the economic impacts of COVID-19 by calling for global action and investment at the Financing for Development Forum on 23 April 2020, and to follow-up, on 2 June 2020.<sup>161</sup> The ECOSOC COVID-19 response also included heavy emphasis on how to adhere to the 2030 Agenda, the *Paris Climate Agreement*, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* on Financing for Development, as well as called upon Member States to invest in the Solidarity Response Fund, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, the COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, and the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.<sup>162</sup> The ACT Accelerator can be utilized, along with the help of Member States, to correct the mistakes of the HIV/AIDS crisis and its delayed vaccine response, over forty years ago.<sup>163</sup> ECOSOC President, His Excellency, Munir Akram, outlined a three-pronged approach to the priorities of ECOSOC, including: COVID-19, the SDGs, and climate action.<sup>164</sup>

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, indicated the vaccine roll-out provides hope to many in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>165</sup> António Guterres emphasizes that it is imperative for COVID-19 vaccines to be seen as a global public good, and that accessibility is prioritized not only for wealthy nations, but developing Member States too, as unequal vaccine distribution highlights the disparities in society, which is both economically and epidemiologically defeating.<sup>166</sup> Although vaccine rollout will likely be a lengthy and ongoing process, a major success and highlight of the COVID-19 pandemic should be the role of STI in COVID-19 response; the world will not advance or achieve the SDGs without modern technological and scientific responses to global issues.<sup>167</sup> Solidarity and equity are fundamental to ensure universal access to the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>168</sup> STI is not only critical in response to global crises, but also in strategic planning and preparedness, therefore, the focus of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to ensure that data, analysis, information, and response plans are policy-based and based off of an STI-focused approach.<sup>169</sup> The full global impact and scale of COVID-19 is yet to be determined, yet, it is widely understood as a major global crisis that exposed societal and environmental vulnerabilities.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Guterres, The world of work cannot and should not look the same after this crisis, *Policy Brief on COVID-19 and the World of Work*, 2020.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> UN ECOSOC, *COVID-19 Response*, 2020, p.1.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> UN ECOSOC, *High-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (A/75/93-E/2020/64)*, 2020.

<sup>162</sup> UN ECOSOC, *COVID-19 Response*, 2020.

<sup>163</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Unequal Vaccine Distribution Self-Defeating, World Health Organization Chief Tells Economic and Social Council's Special Ministerial Meeting*, 2021.

<sup>164</sup> UN ECOSOC, *COVID-19 Response*, 2020, p.3.

<sup>165</sup> Guterres, Only together can we end this pandemic and recover, *COVID-19 Response*, 2021.

<sup>166</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Unequal Vaccine Distribution Self-Defeating, World Health Organization Chief Tells Economic and Social Council's Special Ministerial Meeting*, 2021.

<sup>167</sup> UNCTAD, *Science, technology and innovation efforts to address COVID19*.

<sup>168</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Unequal Vaccine Distribution Self-Defeating, World Health Organization Chief Tells Economic and Social Council's Special Ministerial Meeting*, 2021.

<sup>169</sup> UNCTAD, *Science, technology and innovation efforts to address COVID19*.

<sup>170</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative. *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.9.

## Conclusion

ECOSOC focuses primarily on promoting higher standards of living, and economic and social progress, while advocating for the wellbeing of all.<sup>171</sup> The 2030 Agenda highlights the necessities for the world to advance sustainably and responsibly, however, a refocused approach to finance, governance, and policies are necessary for STI to support in the journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>172</sup> Science-policy-society is one of the most fundamental solutions to achieving the 2030 Agenda.<sup>173</sup> Some of the opportunities for STI growth include utilizing digital financial tools, and creating stronger response methods for global health crises.<sup>174</sup> STI has a large impact on innovation for social development, especially for achieving the SDGs.<sup>175</sup> Greater urgency regarding universal access to data, the digital world, all rights laid out in the UDHR and the 2030 Agenda is required for the advancement of humankind, in addition to international cooperation and exchange of best practices for the wellbeing of all.<sup>176</sup>

## Further Research

Considering the ECOSOC mandate and how STI impacts the global community, delegates should examine the following: How can ECOSOC ensure that effective policies are in place to encourage STI and its rapid advancement? How will ECOSOC address the lasting impacts of COVID-19 for social development and the wellbeing of all? international community? How does ECOSOC currently promote the wellbeing of all and how can the relationship with STI encourage further development? What is ECOSOC's role in the pursuit of the SDGs, specifically goals 3 and 9? How can ECOSOC encourage digital accessibility among Member States, and how can ECOSOC assist in closing the gap of the digital divide?

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*UNCTAD provides this report to explore the necessity for knowledge transfer through technology for stronger development in areas of science and innovation. This report explains the importance of data transfer, sharing of best practices, and the building and maintaining of innovation frameworks for Member States. Delegates will find this source useful as they explore issues of STI policy and its direct relation to the development of all.*

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2013). *Science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture for sustainable development and the MDGs*. Retrieved 15 February 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/science-technology-and-innovation-sti-and-culture-sustainable-development-and-mdgs>

*ECOSOC published this document to further the understanding between the relation of the global need for STI, within the context of the SDGs and MDGs. This report is useful for delegates, as the United Nations Secretariat requested information from programs across the UN system; the requested information is attached within the website. The nature of STI is always evolving, therefore, delegates should keep in mind that the SDGs*

<sup>171</sup> UN ECOSOC, *What does ECOSOC do?*.

<sup>172</sup> Walsh et al, *The role of science, technology and innovation in the UN 2030 agenda*, 2020.

<sup>173</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative. *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.90.

<sup>174</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets*, 2020; Sener & Saridogan, *The Effects of Science-Technology-Innovation On Competitiveness And Economic Growth*, 2011, p.815.

<sup>175</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation for the post-2015 development agenda (E/CN.16/2014/2)*, 2014, p.2.

<sup>176</sup> The World in 2050 Initiative. *Innovations for Sustainability: pathways to an efficient and sufficient post-pandemic future*, 2020, p.90.

*have built upon the momentum of the MDGs, and the framework of Rio+20. Delegates will find this source insightful.*

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*UNESCO emphasizes the need for R&D, which will be evident to delegates upon their research and overall understanding of effective policies for STI, especially for promotion of science-policy-society. UNESCO published this report to outline why STI is essential for economic development and social progress. With its additional resources attached to national STI policies, UNESCO Science Reports, Global Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments, science governance structures, and examples of science and technology parks, delegates will find this resource useful in their understanding of the global STI support system and emerging trends. Delegates will find this resource useful for understanding the importance of investment into STI for adherence to the Global Goals, economic and social development, and scientific governance.*

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*UNIDO published this report to identify the significance of innovation rates in comparison to the productivity of Member States. Discussing the importance of SDG 9 Delegates will find this article useful in understanding the social and economic impacts of innovative and scientific sustainable development through industry. UNIDO uncovers why STI investment is crucial for the development of inclusivity and accessibility. Further, delegates will gain a deeper understanding of the implications of low investment into innovation, technology, and scientific development.*

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## II. Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations

*“We are in a world in which global challenges are more and more integrated, and the responses are more and more fragmented, and if this is not reversed, it’s a recipe for disaster.”<sup>177</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has strived to solve problems of international character in the economic, cultural and social realms.<sup>178</sup> Coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance depends on the synchronous actions of diverse actors in the international system, whose efforts are aimed at reducing need, risk, and vulnerability levels among populations.<sup>179</sup> The UN system intervenes when either natural or human-made disasters surpass the relief capacity of Member States alone, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) acting as the principal UN entities tasked with providing humanitarian aid.<sup>180</sup>

Among the most pressing global issues are: food and energy insecurity, water scarcity, forced displacement, rapid and unplanned urbanization, natural disasters, armed conflict, acts of terrorism, and epidemics.<sup>181</sup> These trends contribute to the population’s diminished resilience and increased shock susceptibility, with disproportionate effects on persons with disabilities, women, children, the elderly, and the marginalized and poor, who additionally face multiple barriers in accessing assistance during emergencies.<sup>182</sup>

Even though in recent years, synergy between the international humanitarian system, as well as development, and peacebuilding actors has augmented, humanitarian relief supply-demand gaps still exist.<sup>183</sup> Failure to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the UN will negatively impact the attainment of the goals contained within *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, inefficient coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the UN will reverse development gains and aggravate the need for humanitarian assistance, which already is expected to increase by 40% in 2021, with 235 million people projected to need humanitarian assistance and protection, contrasted to the 168 million people who received this type of aid in 2020.<sup>185</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

The UN first formally incorporated humanitarian coordination as a priority in 1971 through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2816, which established the Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator in Geneva; currently the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>186</sup> However, it was not until the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 in 1991, that foundations were laid for the

<sup>177</sup> UN Secretary-General, *World Economic Forum Annual Meeting*, 2019.

<sup>178</sup> UN, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*.

<sup>179</sup> UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations*, 2018.

<sup>180</sup> UN, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*.

<sup>181</sup> UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations*, 2018.

<sup>183</sup> UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, 2020.

<sup>184</sup> UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, 2020, p. 16.

<sup>185</sup> UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, 2020; UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, 2019.

<sup>186</sup> UN OCHA, *Twenty-five Years of Humanitarian Coordination*, 2016, p. 1.

modern international humanitarian system.<sup>187</sup> Humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence govern the modern humanitarian system, a system characterized by how humanitarian assistance and socioeconomic development act as complements to each other.<sup>188</sup> Resolution 46/182 also enabled the creation of mechanisms that provide humanitarian relief, as well as resulted in the conception of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and OCHA, all of which are crucial to assisting populations during and after a crisis.<sup>189</sup>

2015 was also a crucial year for improved coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the UN as a result of the 2030 Agenda and the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (SFDRR) (2015) being put into effect.<sup>190</sup> The 2030 Agenda is a tool to promote sustainable development for all Member States and to ensure that no one is left behind.<sup>191</sup> Its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call on diverse international actors, most notably humanitarian stakeholders, to “reduc[e] vulnerability, doubl[e] down on risk management, and tackl[e] root causes of crises and conflict.”<sup>192</sup> The SFDRR, an international accord on disaster risk reduction, contains seven concrete targets and four priorities, outlining prevention of new risk, reduction of existing risk and strengthening of resilience.<sup>193</sup> The synergy between both policy instruments can be seen by the fact that the SFDRR complements monitoring of 11 SDG indicators.<sup>194</sup> Additional international frameworks to ease humanitarian need, solve conflict, and prioritize vulnerable groups include the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (2015), and UN Security Council resolution 1325 at 20 years: *Perspectives from Feminist Peace Activists and Civil Society* (2020).<sup>195</sup>

In 2020, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 75/124 (2020), General Assembly resolution 75/125 (2020), and General Assembly resolution 75/127 (2020) reiterated not only the crucial role of implementing the SFDRR into mitigating the effects of disasters via technology use but also allowed for more inclusivity by recognizing that humanitarian personnel are at increased insecurity risk, and that sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) intensifies among victims of humanitarian crises.<sup>196</sup> In tandem, these resolutions provide Member States with the opportunity to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.<sup>197</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) hosts special meetings to raise awareness of and outline strategic responses to global emergencies, including those related to global health, to develop high-level strategic responses.<sup>198</sup> These special meetings play an important role in informing Member States about humanitarian need and resource mobilization.<sup>199</sup> ECOSOC also serves as a platform to discuss

<sup>187</sup> UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, (A/RES/46/182), 1991.

<sup>188</sup> Rysaback-Smith, *History and Principles of Humanitarian Action*, 2016, p. 1; UN DESA, *Humanitarian SDGs: Interlinking the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the Agenda for Humanity*, 2019, 3.

<sup>189</sup> UN OCHA, *Resolution 46/182, which created the humanitarian system, turns twenty-five*, 2016.

<sup>190</sup> UN DESA, *The 17 Goals*; UNDRR, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 2015.

<sup>191</sup> UN OCHA, *Twenty-five Years of Humanitarian Coordination*, 2016, p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> UN OCHA, *Leaving No One Behind: Humanitarian Effectiveness in the Age of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> UNDRR, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 2015.

<sup>194</sup> UNDRR, *The Sendai Framework and the SDGs*.

<sup>195</sup> UNFCCC, *What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?*, 2021; UN DESA, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development*, 2015; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *UNSCR 1325 at 20 Years: Perspectives from Feminist Peace Activists and Civil Society*, 2020.

<sup>196</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Cooperation on Humanitarian Assistance in the Field of Natural Disasters, From Relief to Development* (A/RES/75/124), 2020, p. 6; UN General Assembly, *Safety and Security of Humanitarian Personnel and Protection of United Nations Personnel* (A/RES/75/125), 2020, p. 2; UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations* (A/RES/75/127), 2020, p. 5.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*.

<sup>199</sup> UN ECOSOC, *BRIEF VII. ECOSOC Addressing Emergency Issues*, 2020.

numerous disease outbreaks, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, avian flu in 2005, Ebola in 2014, and climate-affected sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in 2018.<sup>200</sup> In May 2020, ECOSOC convened an informal briefing to address the best policy approaches to tackle the noxious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring the attainment of the SDGs.<sup>201</sup>

The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) serves as a platform to discuss methods for strengthening the coordination of the humanitarian assistance of the UN.<sup>202</sup> Since 1998, HAS offers Member States and key partners for development the opportunity to engage in dialogue on how to combat the most pressing humanitarian issues.<sup>203</sup> The 2020 meeting, “*Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centered solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principle*,” addressed topics such as providing long-lasting solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), utilizing technologies to enhance humanitarian efforts, improving the response of health systems in the face of increasingly complex challenges, and tackling GBV in humanitarian contexts.<sup>204</sup>

Organizations such as OCHA, IASC, and CERF are crucial in assisting populations and coordinating response during and after disasters.<sup>205</sup> OCHA, coordinates humanitarian response, advocates to raise awareness of crises, sets the humanitarian agenda for sector reform to enhance the capacity of national governments, offers information management, and mobilizes humanitarian financing tools to ensure a swift response to complex human-made and natural emergencies.<sup>206</sup> OCHA supports IASC Scale-up Responses, large-scale disasters that overwhelm the international humanitarian system, such as the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the widespread conflict in the Republic of Yemen, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing East Africa locust infestation.<sup>207</sup> Established in 1992, IASC is an inter-agency forum aimed at creating policies for humanitarian aid as well as developing solutions on how to improve IASC’s response.<sup>208</sup> In its latest Work Plan (2019-2020), IASC delineated five Strategic Priorities ranging from how to maximize timeliness, appropriateness, transparency and cost effectiveness of assistance to guaranteeing long-term impact of their strategies.<sup>209</sup> When IASC determines the Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation reaches Level 3 for major emergencies, the CERF plays an indispensable role facilitating funding and advocacy.<sup>210</sup> Launched in 2006, the CERF provides reliable humanitarian assistance to natural disaster and armed conflict victims through the provision of medicine, food, shelter and water and sanitation services.<sup>211</sup>

OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service facilitates data and information exchange between government donors, UN agencies and funds, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and humanitarian partners to determine to what degree and where to allocate resources for in-crisis communities, thereby facilitating field coordination by clarifying strategy and decision-making.<sup>212</sup> The Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS), a joint UN-European Commission framework, guides international actors in mobilizing humanitarian assistance in the first phase after major disasters via map and satellite imagery.<sup>213</sup> The UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT), besides designing maps to

<sup>200</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*.

<sup>201</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response*, 2020.

<sup>202</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2020.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> UN OCHA, *Resolution 46/182, which created the humanitarian system, turns twenty-five*, 2016.

<sup>206</sup> UN OCHA, *Current Emergencies*.

<sup>207</sup> UN OCHA, *East Africa Locust Infestation*.

<sup>208</sup> UN OCHA Services, *Inter-Agency Standing Committee*.

<sup>209</sup> UN OCHA Services, *IASC Work-Plan 2019-2020*, 2019.

<sup>210</sup> UN CERF, *Strategic use of CERF Information Paper*, 2015.

<sup>211</sup> UN CERF, *Who We Are*.

<sup>212</sup> OCHA Services, *Humanitarian Aid Contributions*, 2021.

<sup>213</sup> GDACS, *Mobile Tools for GDACS on the Move*.

facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance utilizes satellite imagery in response to humanitarian emergencies and for the application of international humanitarian law.<sup>214</sup>

### ***Strengthening Preparedness for Health Emergencies***

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the depth and breadth of worldwide inequalities, including in pandemic preparedness.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies immediately responded to the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak promptly by scaling up resource mobilization to invest into a sound recovery post-pandemic.<sup>216</sup> Member States have complemented these measures with aggressive tracing, early quarantine measures and testing to respond more effectively to the public health emergency.<sup>217</sup>

In November 2020, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted resolution 148/19 (2020) to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, improve infectious disease preparedness, and achieve the WHO's Triple Billion targets, aligned to the SDGs and aimed at bettering world health by 2023.<sup>218</sup> To strengthen preparedness for health emergencies, the WHA suggested the incorporation of a universal peer review system in tandem with periodic compliance evaluations to enhance the binding potential of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005).<sup>219</sup> Member States also recommended increased cooperation and coordination with the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, the inclusion of disease-specific plans to national action health security agendas, and the use of technologies for contact-tracing.<sup>220</sup>

Besides the aforementioned measures, the international community highlighted the significance of prioritizing the findings of the global scientific community in any response efforts during the adoption of WHA resolution 148/19 (2020).<sup>221</sup> Attendees similarly underscored that improved health measures respect the sovereignty of Member States while ensuring technologies that store and share sensitive user data are used with a respect for privacy rights.<sup>222</sup>

### ***Empowering Women and Girls During Humanitarian Emergencies***

According to OCHA, there are 67 million women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>223</sup> Humanitarian emergencies impact women and girls at a greater scale than boys and men, with women and girls facing greater vulnerability to sexual exploitation and GBV, and more difficulties accessing services and resources, chiefly medical care, food, and water.<sup>224</sup> These disparities create long-term obstacles for women and girls.<sup>225</sup> For example, when removed from school, girls suffer setbacks not only to their education, but also their economic freedom later in life.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, when women and girls survive GBV, their likelihood of experiencing detrimental mental and physical health, unwanted pregnancies, and exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) increase.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> UNITAR, *UNOSAT Mapping*; UNITAR, *Satellite Analysis and Applied Research*.

<sup>215</sup> WHO Director-General, *Strengthening Preparedness for Health Emergencies: Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)*, 2021, p. 4.

<sup>216</sup> Covid-19 Response, *ECOSOC's Response to Covid-19*, 2020.

<sup>217</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, *Improving Pandemic Preparedness: Lessons From COVID-19*, 2020, p. 26.

<sup>218</sup> U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, *EOP on Resolution EB146.R10 Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations*, 2020; WHO Director-General, *Strengthening Preparedness for Health Emergencies: Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)*, 2021.

<sup>219</sup> WHO Director-General, *Strengthening Preparedness for Health Emergencies: Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)*, 2021, p. 4.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>223</sup> Women's and girls' rights and agency in humanitarian action, *Reliefweb*, 2019.

<sup>224</sup> Care Action, *Gender in Humanitarian Emergencies*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>225</sup> WHO, *Gender, Climate Change and Health*, p. 17.

<sup>226</sup> Care Action, *Gender in Humanitarian Emergencies*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>227</sup> UNICEF, *Gender-Based Violence In Emergencies*, 2020.

The humanitarian system must include space for women and girls to play more active roles in leadership and decision-making.<sup>228</sup> UN Women, for example, developed a series of flagship programs in five different languages and based on a human rights approach to empower women working in conflict and humanitarian emergencies.<sup>229</sup> Each of the twelve flagships aims to dismantle structural barriers to gender equity and is aligned to the agency's Strategic Plan.<sup>230</sup> Notably, Goal 4 of UN Women's Strategic Plan is that "peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women leadership and participation."<sup>231</sup> Actively involving women and girls can also result in more equal access to food as well as to water, sanitation and hygiene services.<sup>232</sup>

Other ways to include women and girls in leadership positions and in decision-making processes during emergency responses include creating safe spaces where life-saving information can be shared.<sup>233</sup> One example of success is the Gwai Grandmothers Group in Mberengwa, Central Zimbabwe, a group composed of 16 grandmother groups that take care of 500 orphan children, teach SRH (sexual and reproductive health), life skills, and youth empowerment, and have fundamental responses for disaster relief by granting water access to areas with drought.<sup>234</sup> In Turkey, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) created a safe space where women living in refugee camps can not only socialize, but also engage in informal awareness-raising, contributing to women's protection and empowerment.<sup>235</sup> Future endeavors should continue to strive to respond to the rights and needs of women and girls during humanitarian emergencies.<sup>236</sup>

Recently, the WHO began implementing a project in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at increasing the quality of health services available for survivors of GBV and at preventing GBV.<sup>237</sup> To complement this project, UNICEF and partners work to combat the social and environmental drivers of GBV through the Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence program.<sup>238</sup> UNICEF further contributes to the social empowerment of women and girls via the Adolescent Girls Toolkit for Iraq, which contains learning sessions and tools that promote life skills, SRH, GBV prevention and financial literacy.<sup>239</sup>

## Conclusion

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance is a priority for the UN, and in particular of ECOSOC, which periodically hosts special meetings to raise awareness of worldwide emergencies.<sup>240</sup> Through ECOSOC and HAS, partners from the public and private sector are able to work together to continuously improve the contributions of UN agencies to alleviating the global burden of humanitarian catastrophes.<sup>241</sup> In recent years, international humanitarian efforts to deliver aid at times of emergency have meliorated; however, the transition from relief to development is yet to be attained.<sup>242</sup> This can only be done within a sustainable development framework that ensures no one is left behind, by promoting the involvement of those most disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and by making disaster prevention the cornerstone of emergency responses.<sup>243</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Women's and girls' rights and agency in humanitarian action, *Reliefweb*, 2019.

<sup>229</sup> UN Women, Flagship Programming Initiatives, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> UN Women, Flagship Programming Initiatives, 2015, p. 23.

<sup>232</sup> Care Action, *Gender in Humanitarian Emergencies*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>233</sup> OCHA Services, *Safe Spaces for Women and Girls (SSWG) Standardization and Technical Guidance – How to set up a SSWG in practice, October 2017 | Rohingya Crisis, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh*, 2017.

<sup>234</sup> Humanitarian work requires women, *Reliefweb*, 2019; Finish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, *FELM in Southern Africa*, 2020, p. 10.

<sup>235</sup> UNFPA, *Women and Girls Safe Spaces*, 2015, p. 21.

<sup>236</sup> Women's and girls' rights and agency in humanitarian action, *Reliefweb*, 2019.

<sup>237</sup> WHO Health Cluster, *Gender-Based Violence in Health Emergencies*, 2021.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> UNICEF and UNFPA, *Adolescent Girls Toolkit*, 2017, p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> UN ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meetings on Emergency Situations*.

<sup>241</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2020.

<sup>242</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Enhancing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

## Further Research

When researching this topic further, delegates should be guided by the following questions: What additional barriers might persons with disabilities, women, children, the elderly, and the marginalized and poor, face in accessing assistance during emergencies? How can the members of the international community (citizens, NGOs, states, etc.) help overcome these hindrances using a holistic approach? What can Member States do guarantee attainment of the SDGs while continuing to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and other events causing humanitarian emergencies? In what ways can technology strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the UN? How can the international humanitarian system move from relief to development?

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*Improving Pandemic Preparedness: Lessons From COVID-19 CFR is a Task Force Report that includes the main conclusions gathered from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report particularly emphasizes the relevance of allocating more resources for pandemic preparedness to prevent another catastrophe similar to COVID-19. Besides learning from the current pandemic, delegates will find strategies and recommendation that if well-implemented, will successfully curb emerging diseases and global health crises.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (1991). *Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations (A/RES/46/182)*. Retrieved 13 February 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/46/182>

*This resolution provides the foundations of the modern international humanitarian system. Its adoption additionally resulted in the establishment of agencies such as the IASC, OCHA, and CERF, all of which are crucial to assisting populations during and after a crisis. Consulting this resolution will provide delegates with a more solid understanding on the framework that continues to guide humanitarian assistance efforts.*

United Nations, Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Retrieved 15 February 2021 from: <https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework>

*The SFDRR is a major international agreement that guides Member States on how to safeguard development gains in the face of disaster. The document, cognizant of Member States' crucial role in disaster risk reduction, provides targets and priorities aimed at protecting the livelihoods, health, economy, and wellbeing of communities. Referring to the SFDRR will provide delegates with additional insight on the strategy the international system employs to contribute to disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, an important driver for humanitarian emergencies.*

United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2015). *Leaving No One Behind: Humanitarian Effectiveness in the Age of the Sustainable Development Goals*. Retrieved 17 March 2021 from: [https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/HEStudy\\_20151109\\_Small.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/HEStudy_20151109_Small.pdf)

*This study contains the findings of 1600 surveys conducted around the globe to determine whether the needs of people who require humanitarian assistance are being met. With the consideration of the SDGs, the study further emphasizes how paramount it is to go beyond satisfying the necessities of vulnerable people and instead focus efforts on ensuring breaking the humanitarian crisis cycle. In this study, delegates will be able to find information on why context matters during humanitarian emergencies. Further, delegates will encounter five approaches that not only provide guidance on how to support people during crises, but that also encourage moving vulnerable people out of them.*



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*This WHO Director-General Report evaluates the implementation of the IHR, the basis of international public health and health security law, during the COVID-19 response. The report particularly centers around the need of every nation to integrate the IHR to their own national emergency plans. Delegates will find this resource useful to learn about strengthened multi-stakeholder approaches to public health threats.*

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