



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE

ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE

The Second Committee makes recommendations on means to improve the economic development of Member States and maintain the stability of international financial and trade networks. The economic issues considered by the Second Committee are distinguished from those considered by the Fifth Committee in that this Committee deals solely with financing the economic assistance to Member States, whereas the Fifth Committee addresses the budgetary issues within the United Nations System. The Second Committee does not address social issues that affect development; such issues are considered by the Third Committee. For more information concerning the purview of the United Nations General Assembly as a whole, see page 22.

Website: www.un.org/ga/second/index.shtml

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” Food security is a complex sustainable development issue and is intimately tied to agricultural development, nutrition and health. Additionally, it affects both economic development and trade. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that one billion people go to bed hungry each night, including 200 million children. Both physical access to food and affordability are issues with global ramifications. As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approaches this year, and with the global population estimated to reach nine billion by 2050, the issues of agricultural development, food security and nutrition become even more important.

The issue of sustainable agriculture and food security was first raised at the third session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in 1995. It was noted in the Commission’s report that progress had been met in certain regions, but that sustainable agriculture had not progressed far enough on a global scale. This concern was reiterated at the World Food Summit of 1996, where representatives called for at least halving the number of malnourished people by 2015. This was specifically tied to the Millennium Development Declaration of 2000 through Millennium Development Goal (MDG) one: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Thus far, the MDGs have framed the United Nations topic for this discussion, although the 2008 global economic recession spurred a food crisis, leading to the G-8’s 2012 creation of the New Alliance for Food and Security.

Agriculture is the largest employment sector in most developing countries and is crucial to a country’s food security. The ability to produce nutritious, healthy food options within one’s own borders supports a healthier, better-fed populace while stimulating the economy by reducing food imports (or increasing exports). Some argue that increasing global trade in food reduces employment opportunities within domestic agricultural sectors; it, therefore,

may be important for States to closely examine trade agreements and tariffs to protect national food security as well as employment.

One relatively new factor relevant to food security and nutrition is the creation and cultivation of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). While the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that GMO foods currently on the international market pose no scientifically verified threat to human health, some States, especially in Western Europe, have at least partially banned these foods from production and import. Additionally, the GMO seed and associated fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides can be difficult for small and subsistence farmers to afford. Supporters counter that this technology allows important crops to grow in otherwise-difficult climates and increases the yields of staple crops in order to meet the nutritional needs of a growing population. Both private and governmental organizations are still determining where these new technologies fit in the broader landscape of sustainable agricultural development.

Agricultural developments address the first of the three food security pillars as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO): availability, or sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis. With developments in agriculture, like mobile applications such as MbeguChoice, which allows Kenyan farmers to select which seeds suit their climactic conditions, the possibility of universal food security grows. This is particularly important for rural communities: while recent decades have shown an increasing trend toward urbanization in both developed and developing countries, approximately 75 percent of those experiencing food insecurity live in rural areas.

However, it remains important that food be able to provide adequate nutrition. WHO defines the second pillar as access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Lack of infrastructure is a major stumbling block to access to food security. If a State does not have the infrastructure or political stability to move produce and food from where it is produced or imported to where people live, it has failed to provide food security. If scarcity or monetary inflation make access to food impossible for citizens, the State has again failed to secure access to food for its citizens. Having identified access to a consistent source of nutritional food as a right, many developing countries in particular may require assistance, either through development or private sector contributions, to be able to provide adequately for their citizens.

The final pillar on the WHO scale is use: the appropriate use of food based on basic nutrition and care. Many States do not or cannot provide education concerning nutrition for their citizens, or they offer programs that are coupled with food that is considered highly unhealthy. In recent years, the United States has struggled with the use of government food subsidies for low-income families to purchase “junk food;” or food that is not fresh, healthy or nutritious. Critics argue that fresh, healthy and nutritious foods are consistently more expensive or difficult to procure, putting low-income families at an impasse: do they let their children go hungry, or do they purchase the more readily available, unhealthy alternatives at a lower cost that allows for adequate caloric consumption without the corresponding nutrition? Knowledge about choosing and



preparing nutritious food remains key to food security in both developed and developing countries.

With the MDG deadline passing, the global community is developing its post-2015 agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Food security for all is a vital part of the new Goals, and States must take action to support it. Shifts in trade policies and conflict zones continue to erode access to affordable, nutritious food; the rise of non-State actors and their territorial gains also stifle access. Developments in agriculture must be encouraged and shared, and differences explored and compromises reached, if the international arena plans to support nine billion people by 2050. The advancement of technology, coupled with investment in infrastructure and development, will shape the conversation on food security, while water crises and global climate change threaten new populations with food insecurity and shortages. It is more important than ever that access to sustaining, nutritious food remains a basic human right.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can Member States ensure that all people have access to affordable, nutritious food?
- What agricultural policies or approaches might increase food security and affordability?
- What implications do national trade policies have on food security, and how can the international community work to mitigate any negative effects?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Feed the Future (2012). President Obama Announces New Alliance for Food Security & Nutrition to Fight Global Hunger.
- Kariuki, James (2015). Online platform to help farmers get quality seeds. Daily Nation.
- The Economist (2015). The Good, the Bad and the Hideous. The Economist. 28 March.
- United States Agency for International Development (2015). Agriculture and Food Security.

UN DOCUMENTS

- United Nations, General Assembly (2000). United Nations Millennium Declaration. 8 September. A/RES/55/2.
- United Nations, General Assembly (2013). Agriculture development, food security, and nutrition: Report of the Secretary-General. 13 August. A/68/311.
- United Nations, Millennium Development Goals (2015). We Can End Poverty: Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015.
- United Nations, Sustainable Development (2015). Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: Food Security.
- United Nations, World Health Organization (2015). Trade, foreign policy, diplomacy and health: Food Security.

PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, INCLUDING ECOTOURISM, FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Over the last 150 years, a series of new transportation technologies have vastly expanded travel opportunities. As both the economic costs

and the time involved decreased, global travel for pleasure and business drastically increased. The modern tourism industry was born. For many States, encouraging tourism is a national priority. The advantages are clear: increased trade, new opportunities for local businesses and new tax revenue for the State. In 2014, tourism generated more than \$1 trillion in economic activity. Many States have used the revenues from tourism to fund large-scale anti-poverty programs. Tourism can also generate a positive public perception of countries, a “soft power” trait that many States aim to cultivate. Despite the huge benefits of booming tourism, there are major drawbacks, most notably the environmental impact of the tourism industry. Every part of tourism has the potential to have a negative environmental impact, from the construction of roads, airports and infrastructure, to the pollution caused by moving more than 1 billion tourists across international borders each year. Additionally, construction of hotels, golf courses and other amenities can damage local ecosystems.

In response, States are increasingly looking at environmentally sustainable tourism models, including ecotourism. Ecotourism strives to generate “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.” In addition, through promoting awareness about the fragility of unique environments and communities, ecotourism strives to maximize the benefits of safe and sustainable international travel, while generating reverence for and preservation of social, cultural and biological diversity.

Tourism has been discussed at the United Nations for decades, largely because of its importance to national economies and economic development. In 1954, the United Nations held a Conference on Customs Formalities for the Temporary Importation of Private Road Motor Vehicles and for Tourism, which was attended by a number of international tourism organizations, including the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO). In 1970, IUOTO members voted to become the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Most of UNWTO's work has focused on promoting tourism, developing policy recommendations on managing the tourism sector and developing international standards of ethics for both Member States and organizations in the tourism industry. In 2003, the UNWTO officially became a specialized agency of the United Nations.

The sustainability of the tourism industry first appeared on the international agenda when the General Assembly adopted A/RES/S-19/2 in 1997. The resolution tied tourism to the 1992 World Summit's Agenda 21, which focused on sustainable development as a tool to alleviate poverty. This was the first time tourism was discussed with respect to sustainability. In 2002, UNWTO unanimously adopted the 2003 programme Sustainable Tourism—Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP). ST-EP works to ensure poor segments of the population in developing or least developed countries share in the positive economic impact of tourism. Through focusing on sustainable tourism in social, economic and ecological ways, ST-EP activities play a role in alleviating poverty, encouraging development and creating jobs for the incredibly poor.

Other United Nations agencies have also taken note of the environmental impact of tourism. The United Nations Environment Programme has noted that tourism is increasingly contributing to a worldwide “loss of biological diversity,” both through habitat loss for endangered species and by exposing foreign fauna and flora to isolated environments.



In December 2012, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on sustainable tourism. The resolution was based on a report by the UNWTO and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and encourages States to invest and create business ventures to promote sustainable tourism, particularly in areas of financial need. Additionally, the resolution addresses the common loss of biodiversity and the need for transparent policy to foster growth. Finally, the resolution encourages local and indigenous communities to host tourists and promote the natural environment. Other recent discussions have focused on conservation and protection of the environment, specifically with finding sustainable uses of nature through tourism.

There are new models of cooperation emerging at the regional level around ecotourism. The Central American Integration System, an economic and political organization of Central American States, encourages partnerships between non-governmental and private organizations and is an exemplary model that has seen success in Latin America. The impact this group has had on tourism and ecotourism stems from this regional agreement on peace and economic development, encouraging States to open their borders and collaborate for prosperity. This regional model could positively impact how other regional States respond and unite to create a friendlier and open environment, creating positive outcomes for both tourism and ecotourism. UNWTO reports predict further successes in preserving environmental resources and also drastically reducing poverty rates. Despite this, countries that lack infrastructure for tourism pose a different challenge, as funding such projects is difficult, regardless of their potential profitability. Countries also sometimes lack knowledge of how to effectively manage businesses and advertise to tourists, while others are stigmatized as unsafe, whether for health concerns, civil unrest, or other negative perception.

Looking ahead, there are a number of factors that Member States must consider on the issue. Current ecotourism models are often more expensive than traditional tourism models, which can diminish the economic returns that a State sees from its tourism industry. States will need to determine how to balance the economic gains of tourism with the need to protect biodiversity and the environment. States must also consider how tourism contributes to climate change, which could itself have deleterious effects on tourism-driven economies. Finally, Member States should consider what new or creative models may blend sustainable tourism with poverty reduction.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can ecotourism be harnessed to enhance international development and economic growth in developing countries while protecting the integrity and sovereignty of tourism-dependent populations?
- How has climate change directed the growth of international tourism, and what does the future hold for tourism in resource-sensitive regions?
- What can or should the international community and Member States do to support or promote ecotourism?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amzat, Ajibola (2015). UN Adopts Sustainable Tourism As Tool For Poverty Reduction, Environmental Protection. The Guardian. 23 January.
- Ecotourism Conference (2015). Conference Overview.

Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (1992). Agenda 21. 3-14 June.

World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2015). UNWTO Annual Report 2014.

World Tourism Organization UNWTO. History of UNWTO.

UN DOCUMENTS

United Nations, General Assembly (1997). Programme of the Implementation of Agenda 21. 19 September. A/RES/S-19/2.

United Nations, General Assembly (2011). Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection. 24 January. A/RES/65/173.

United Nations, General Assembly (2012). Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. 22 December. A/RES/66/197.

United Nations, General Assembly (2012). Sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America. 22 December. A/RES/66/196.

United Nations, General Assembly (2014). Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection. 19 December. A/RES/69/233.