

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

AMUN's Economic and Social Council will consider five topics on its agenda. Representatives can choose to explore these topics in a number of forms: through resolutions, in less formal working groups or commissions, or through the creation of treaty or convention documents.

### STATE MEMBERS

Algeria	Croatia	Honduras	Republic of Korea
Angola	Cuba	Indonesia	Romania
Argentina	Czech Republic	Iran Islamic Republic of	Russian Federation
Austria	Democratic Republic of	Italy	Rwanda
Bahrain	the Congo	Japan	Saudia Arabia
Benin	Denmark	Mexico	South Africa
Bolivia	Egypt	Morocco	Sudan
Brazil	Ethiopia	Nepal	Suriname
Bulgaria	Fiji	Netherlands	Syrian Arab Republic
Burkina Faso	France	Nigeria	Uganda
Cameroon	Georgia	Norway	United Kingdom
Canada	Germany	Pakistan	United States
China	Greece	Peru	Venezuela
Costa Rica	Guinea Bissau	Portugal	

### BACKGROUND RESEARCH

#### RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Since 1948, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has codified the right to education for all. This right includes compulsory and free elementary and fundamental education, as well as merit based technical and professional educational opportunities. The right to education emphasizes the development of the human person and the promotion of tolerance and human dignity. All human rights covenants, treaties and declarations, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, also uphold the right to education for all.

The availability of education, or lack thereof, has two major implications. First, access to education opens the door of understanding to a host of other human rights such as the freedom of thought, an adequate standard of living, gender equity, freedom from discrimination, and the right to work and receive wages. Second, without the right to education, access to these rights and many others becomes almost impossible. In other words, individuals cannot exercise their rights without an awareness and understanding of them. It is education, therefore, that helps to prevent a person's subjugation. Further, the right to education overlaps the realms of political, civil, economic, cultural, and social rights.

The state's role in education, affirmed by international and domestic human rights law, is to protect education as a public service and good. Every state has a vested interest in the promotion of education for the development of their economic, social, and cultural

structures. However, States have traditionally not allocated adequate funds for primary elementary education, and the negative consequences have included high adult illiteracy rates, low elementary school enrollment rates, and high unemployment rates. Sustainable development and the eradication of poverty cannot be realized without universal access to adequate education. Over one hundred million children have no access to primary education. Approximately 750 million adults are illiterate, and two thirds of the illiterate are women. Many obstacles to education exist: both widespread conflict and massive debt siphon valuable resources away from education. However, countries have realized that educated individuals are empowered individuals and that empowered individuals stimulate economic and social growth.

In 1990, 149 countries committed to lowering adult illiteracy rates and providing primary education for all children by signing the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action at the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand. In 1994, the International Consultative Forum on Education reviewed the Jomtien Conference, and while progress had been made, significant shortcomings were noted. The resultant Amman Affirmation established new goals for education on both local and global levels and further called all of the participants to set firm targets and timetables for achieving their goals. At the Dakar World Education Forum in April 2000, the heads of the five agencies responsible for the Education



for All Initiative EFA UNESCO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF specified two major goals. First, all children should be able to complete a full course of primary education by . Second, gender disparity at all levels of education should be eradicated by .

In order to accomplish these goals, more financial, human and material resources are needed, as well as firm commitments from country leadership, to coordinate education reform and expansion. The first challenge lies in coordinating a framework for cooperation between development and donor agencies and countries. Second, methods of management and efficiency are needed to encourage countries in the use of those resources. Third, more collaboration is needed on both the local and global levels to encourage aid and build momentum towards the set goals. Unless these challenges are addressed, thirty two developing countries are highly unlikely to meet the above mentioned goals.

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

- How can the international community best assist countries in setting realistic education related goals and targets?
- What additional resources and assistance are needed to help countries achieve their goals? How can countries be best encouraged to meet their Education for All Initiative commitment?
- What specific problems do different regions face and what needs to happen to overcome or accommodate these challenges?
- How can global and local educational initiatives better coordinate their efforts?

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- UN Index to Economic and Social Development Education. [www.un.org/esa/subindex/uctgry.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/subindex/uctgry.htm)
- UNESCO Education For All. [www.unesco.org/education/efa/](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Right to Education Information. [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu/i/ecored.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu/i/ecored.htm)

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- E/ /L. , July , Suriname: draft resolution Human Rights Education
- E/CN. / / / , January , Annual report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education
- E/ / , June , Report of the Secretary General containing a draft text of an international development strategy for the first decade of the new millennium
- E/ / , Progress report on the implementation process of the education for all objectives
- E/ / , Resolution / of the Commission on Human Rights
- HR/CN/ , April , "Commission on Human Rights Establishes Special Rapporteurs on Foreign Debt Burdens, Right to Education"

### *Additional Web Resource:*

[www.worldbank.org/education/](http://www.worldbank.org/education/)

## **THE INTEGRATION OF GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WOMEN**

The effort to further integrate women's and human rights is gaining more attention on both the national and global levels. Statistically speaking, escalating poverty among women has been correlated to their unequal situation in the labor market, their treatment under social welfare systems and their position in the family.

Despite the increased attention given to women's rights, women still retain inferior status in many societies.

of the . billion people living in poverty worldwide are women. Two thirds of the world's illiterate population, approximately million total illiterates, are women, and that number is not expected to change in the next two decades. Women and girls comprise half of the world's refugees and, as refugees, are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence while in flight, in refugee camps and/or during resettlement.

Worldwide, women work more hours than men, although most of their work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. Women hold less than of worldwide jobs in the managerial, administrative and manufacturing sectors. They receive a disproportionately small share of credit from formal banking institutions. The participation of women in economic and political decision making remains very limited. Women occupy only of parliamentary seats and make up less than of the world's heads of state. The starkest reflection of the low status accorded to women is the discrimination against them in the law. In many countries, the treatment of women, whether in terms of property rights, rights of inheritance, laws



related to marriage and divorce, or the rights to acquire nationality, manage property or seek employment, reflects their lesser position overall within the country and society.

Since its inception, the United Nations has attempted to address this issue. In 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was created to present problems and make recommendations involving the rights of women to ECOSOC. By examining various cases, the CSW attempts to discern patterns of when, where, and how women are mistreated. Essentially, by determining these patterns, the CSW then makes recommendations to solve larger problems that stem from a series of case studies.

Another organization, the Division of the Advancement of Women, was originally a section of the Human Rights Division and then the branch of the Promotion and Equality of Men and Women. They assisted the CSW and helped establish the groundwork for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 to reinforce existing provisions and international instruments and thereby combat continuing discrimination against women. This Convention was more specific in its goals to integrate women into the global society, where women can enjoy full equality with men. Essentially, this Convention required States to recognize the important economic and social contributions of women within the family and to society as a whole. Recognition of this type can only be achieved if there is a change in perception of women. Therefore, the convention recommends educating both men and women to overcome prejudices and practices based on stereotyped roles.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), was created in 1981 as an innovative and catalytic fund. The Fund has supported and developed numerous projects throughout the developing world that promote the political, economic, and social empowerment of women. In particular, UNIFEM has developed an outreach program known as the Regional Programme Advisors (RPAs). The RPA serves as the front line contact between UNIFEM and its partners and clients. With this UNIFEM is able to develop and oversee projects in twelve countries, while identifying trends and issues affecting women in the region. At this point, UNIFEM has three major goals: strengthening women's economic capacity, engendering governance and leadership, and promoting women's human rights. These principles were derived from the Beijing platform in 1995.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth World Conference for Women, held in 1995. It attempted to outline the important areas

in which women's rights needed to be improved, although it also acknowledged the advances that had been made. The declaration recognizes the important link between women's rights and poverty, and is dedicated to removing any obstacles that currently create inequality between men and women. It also states clearly that women's rights are human rights, and should be protected as such. The Beijing Platform identifies key areas of women's rights, and sets forward actions to be taken by governments, regional, and international organizations in order to accomplish strategic objectives. Beijing charges the UN and its associated organizations with following up on the Platform for Action, by monitoring and implementing the individual objectives.

Although the UN has done much in the field of integrating human and gender rights for women, many issues remain unresolved. The issue of women's rights itself is considered a part of the mainstream branch of human rights. However there is more agreement among countries about the notion of human rights, rather than that of women's rights. For instance, all but twenty six States have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, making it the second most widely ratified human rights treaty. In April 1991, the Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution calling for the further integration of the human rights of women throughout the UN system. Specifically, it asked that there be further cooperation between the CSW, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is hoped that further integration and cooperation will increase the protection of the human rights of women worldwide.

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

- What is your country's position on the integration of gender and human rights?
- What actions has your country taken either on its own or in accordance with other countries and NGOs for the integration of gender and human rights?
- What measures can be taken to assist countries with this issue, while maintaining their sovereignty?

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“New Report Documents UNFPA Efforts.” *UN Wire*, February

“Reducing Gender Gap Cuts Poverty, World Bank Says.” *UN Wire*, March

“Thousands Expected At New York Meeting.” *UN Wire*, March

“UN Dialogue On Women Indicates Shift In Thinking.” *UN Wire*, October

“UN Meeting Concludes With Focus On Gender, HIV/AIDS.” *UN Wire*, March

“UN Report Shows Gender Discrepancies Persist; More,” June .” *UN Wire*, June

“Women Contribute Most, Despite Poverty.” *UN Wire*, July

“Women's Rights Vary Widely In Region,” *UN Wire*, December

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GA/ , June , “Speakers in Special Session Place Emphasis on Right of Women to Enjoy Equality in Decision making and Power Roles”

GA/SHC/ , October , “Obstacles on Road to Women’s Advancement Discussed in Third Committee”

*Additional Web Resources:*

[www.unhchr.ch/women/index.html](http://www.unhchr.ch/women/index.html)

[www.unhchr.ch/html/th/kit.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/th/kit.htm)

[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu/womenpub .htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu/womenpub.htm)

[www.un.org/womenwatch/resources/stats.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/resources/stats.htm)

[www.unifem.undp.org/about.htm](http://www.unifem.undp.org/about.htm)

[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/human.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/human.htm)

**CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

When one encounters the term “desertification,” images of sweeping sands and strong winds may come to mind. But, in reality, desertification has little to do with deserts beyond the fact that that both occur in arid geographies. A desert is a climatic region that receives scarce and erratic precipitation because of its location in

the interior of a continent, distant or isolated from an ocean or its location in a region of almost perpetual high pressure, and therefore lack of moisture uplift that would create clouds. Therefore, one could very easily argue that deserts are completely the work of nature.

Desertification, on the other hand, is the degradation of the land and biota that occurs because of drought and poor land use practices. These practices or actions may include war, overgrazing, deforestation, imprudent agriculture or poor water use. Desertification, therefore, could be defined as human environmental degradation superimposed upon a natural drought occurrence. As a result, desertification can have a drastic impact on the social fabric of a nation or region. As many economies affected by desertification are agriculturally based, an entire nation can be driven further into poverty. Until remedial measures are taken, the land degradation poverty cycle can be difficult to escape.

The condition of desertification has plagued semi arid geographies throughout the twentieth century. In the s, a stunning example of desertification occurred in the United States the “Dust Bowl” conditions of the Great Plains. Although the term had yet to be coined, the extensive prairie and woodland clearing and grazing during a time of drought caused a desertification incident.

The world became more aware of the problem of desertification in the late s. The Sahel area of North Africa, the subhumid/subarid region on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, suffered a six year drought. While traditional nomadic migration and agricultural activity patterns had environmental degradation in check before , medical, political and economic improvements, coupled with above average rainfall, caused a sharp population increase in the s. Political border changes induced a migratory population to become sedentary and changed their land use from some grazing to irrigated agriculture and grazing. Because of the increase in land clearing for agriculture, increased demand for firewood and increase in cattle herd sizes, the Sahel was hit particularly hard by this drought.

In the s, the United Nations attempted to address this massive problem. Roughly billion was dedicated to the situation in Africa. It was later found that only billion was actually used on fieldwork. This fact would make future negotiations more difficult for African nations seeking assistance in addressing desertification.

In the s, the Convention to Combat Desertification was created as a result of Agenda . There was much debate on a definition of desertification and determining its position as a world problem. It was the African countries that lobbied to put desertification on the agenda of the conference. Not until France and the United States convinced the European Community to do



so was there global support for the measure. The Convention is now widely supported, as over nations have signed the document.

Desertification is not merely an African issue. Desertification affects the Middle East, India, western China, southern Australia, Chile, Peru, Brazil, United States, Mexico and other places. More than fifty one million square kilometers are affected by desertification this affects one billion people. Over million people already live in areas in which land has been degraded. The Great Plains of the US did recover from desertification; other regions can, too. But, as it took a concentrated effort for the Plains to recover, it may take an equal or greater effort in other areas, as well.

The Convention to Combat Desertification is implemented through action programmes. Action programmes are comprehensive in that they address the causes of desertification and seek to reverse it. In addition to national plans, there are regional and sub-regional plans which complement national plans when transboundary resources, like lakes and rivers, are involved. Additionally, in a “radical departure” from earlier development goals, local governments, communities and NGOs are an integral part of the program of action’s development and implementation.

The Convention also includes some financing mechanisms. These include cooperation between donor and recipient nations, but affected countries do most fund raising. International agencies supply funding as well. The future successes under this convention will, however, rely on innovative sources of funding. Yet, the commitments to funding are often the challenge to implementing treaties dedicated to sustainable development issues, and the Convention to Combat Desertification is no exception.

The Convention is a means to address a serious sustainable development challenge. Desertification is an environmental issue with far reaching human impact. Food security, water quality, migration and political stability are intimately tied to land degradation issues. This again proves that humans are inextricably linked to the environment. It is therefore imperative to properly address social issues as well as to look to nature.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include:

- How can countries be best encouraged to develop comprehensive land management plans and to address remediation?
- Can regional coordination be enhanced in the worst affected areas?
- How can countries be encouraged to develop and implement action programs for desertification?
- What funding sources does your country favor to cover the cost of these programs?

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- “Developing Countries Plan Joint Projects.” *UN Wire*, March .
- “Global Meeting Produces Big Plans, Small Budget.” *UN Wire*, November .
- “Leaders Lament Low Funding For Conventions,” *UN Wire*, March .
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- GA/SM/ , June , “Assembly President Calls on States That Have Not Yet Done So to Become Parties to Anti desertification Convention”
- GA/SM/

### *Additional Web Resources:*

- [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)
- [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)
- [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)
- [www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int)
- [www.unccd.int/main.php](http://www.unccd.int/main.php)

## **ASSISTANCE TO THIRD STATES AFFECTED BY THE APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS**

International economic sanctions, usually imposed by the Security Council, are now one of the primary tools in the UN’s efforts to maintain international peace and security. There is, however, significant concern that the application of these sanctions may not have the desired effect in causing States to change their behavior. More importantly, the negative impacts of sanctions imposed in the s are now clear. These include the potential for grave humanitarian consequences to the target population, which is often more affected than the country’s leadership. For the purposes of this topic, another important effect is the negative impact of



sanctions on third States. When sanctions are imposed on a country, they often cut off trade and external contacts with other nations. This may just be trade in armaments, but often includes all trade outside of basic humanitarian considerations. Sanctions against oil exports from Iraq are a good example of this phenomenon. Cutting off trade not only affects the target nation, but also has detrimental consequences to non target nations, called “third States,” who are the regular trading partners of the target nations.

A wide variety of UN bodies have addressed this issue in the past several years, including ECOSOC, the Security Council SC, the General Assembly GA, and an ad hoc group the GA created in 1990, the “ad hoc expert group meeting on developing a methodology for assessing the consequences incurred by third States as a result of preventive or enforcement measures and on exploring innovative and practical measures of international assistance to the affected third States.” SG Report: A/ 1990 / 1

The key underlying questions involve burden sharing and an equitable distribution of the costs of sanctions. The UN is actively trying to ascertain how to make sanctions work more effectively against the target State, while not unfairly discriminating against one or more third States who happen to have relations with the target. This is both in the interests of equity, but more importantly it is recognized that States are less likely to support sanctions against a target if they are also negatively affected by those sanctions.

Issues under discussion on this topic include: measures for improving the abilities of the SC and its sanctions committees; a review of the capacity and mechanisms of the Secretariat for implementation of sanctions; the need for additional financial resources to assist third States; and the need for a comprehensive methodology to evaluate the economic situation in non target States. Another issue is that problems can still continue after sanctions are lifted, since the effects are not immediately eliminated or even mitigated.

Specific suggestions to relieve this problem come from a number of directions. One suggestion looks at the need to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of sanctions on the target’s populace. The World Food Programme WFP, which traditionally provides significant assistance to target populations, suggests that exemptions can be made to give third States priority as the primary suppliers of humanitarian supplies for the target’s populace. Another suggestion is that the SC should more actively consult affected third States when discussing the initial application or continuation of sanctions.

Many suggestions also involve financial compensation for third States. This may be in the form of International

Financial Institutions’ opening credit lines to assist third States. Other possibilities are that donor countries can be encouraged to give trade preference to third States, or to support investment in those States. The most discussed financial solution is the possibility of creating a fund within the UN to support third States, based on how negatively their economies are affected by sanctions against a target State.

At this point in time, the UN is actively searching for answers to an acknowledged problem, but has been unable to come to agreement on what form those answers should take.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include:

- What solutions does your government support to assist third States affected by sanctions?
- How will funding be generated to pay for these efforts? Who should pay for these efforts?
- How can the international community quantify the actual effects of sanctions on third States?

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GA/L/ , October , Speakers Call for Means to Ameliorate Affect of Sanctions on Third Parties in Sixth Committee

GA/L/ , October , US Warns Legal Committee of Weakened Effectiveness of Security Council If 'Unwise' Measures Adopted to Mitigate Sanctions" Unwanted Impacts

GA/L/ , October , Support Expressed in Fourth Committee for Expert Group to Study Measures to Help Third States Affected by Sanctions

GA/L/ , September , Impact of Economic Sanctions on Third States must Be Assessed Through Agreed Methodology, Sixth Committee Told

SC/ , April , Speakers Call for Clearer Definition, Tighter Targeting of Un Sanctions as Council Draws on "Lessons Learned" to Refine Sanctions Regimes

## **REPORT OF FAO**

In addition to the four main topics on ECOSOC's agenda, the Council will also receive a report on the final day from the Food and Agriculture Organization FAO . As an agency which works closely with other UN bodies, FAO provides periodic reports to ECOSOC on its work throughout the year. While these reports are generally accepted pro forma, ECOSOC may also choose to take some action on the recommendations contained in a report. Please note that FAO may also choose to provide a draft resolution on steps that ECOSOC can choose to take, but this will be at FAO's option.

It is recommended that all Representatives assigned to ECOSOC also review the background section on FAO Chapter V , and Representatives may choose to do some additional research into these topics.

