



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE

ECONOMIC AND 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 the international financial and trade network. 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 address the budgetary issues within the UN 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 UN's General Assembly as a whole, see page 21.

Website: <http://www.un.org/ga/second/index.shtml>

GROUPS OF COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS: SPECIFIC ACTIONS RELATED TO THE PARTICULAR NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF LANDLOCKED AND TRANSIT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND DONOR COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS ON TRANSIT TRANSPORT COOPERATION

By the early 2000s, trade liberalization removed many of the traditional barriers to trade: high tariffs, import quotas, and other regulatory restrictions. Yet other barriers to international trade and development remain, most notably the inability of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) to freely access sea-based trade routes and the correspondingly high transit costs LLDCs incur when moving their exports across the borders of other countries to get them to the global marketplace.

LLDCs are among the least developed countries (LDCs); as a group, they face lower growth rates than other developing countries and are often at the mercy of the politics and infrastructure of transit countries. All of these factors make LLDCs vulnerable to external shocks and prevent them from fully harnessing the benefits of an open world market. Additionally, countries through which the goods from LLDCs are transported (transit countries) are often also developing and face their own challenges. These challenges include developing transport and communications infrastructures capable of handling the movement of goods and services from their own markets and those of their landlocked neighbors.

In 2001, the United Nations established the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to support LLDCs with these challenges and to assist them to meet the Millennium Development Goals. OHRLLS is designed to aid the Secretary-General with coordinating development efforts for these countries and to monitor and follow-up on the effectiveness of such efforts.

In 2003, the United Nations held the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted at the end of the conference; the Declaration created a new global framework for developing efficient transit transport systems in both landlocked and transit transport systems. The priorities in the Almaty Declaration include: developing effective national and regional transportation policies, improving infrastructure development and maintenance, reducing the costs of international trade and trade harmonization, and improving international development cooperation.

Since the Almaty Declaration was developed in 2003, LLDCs and transit developing countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America have had some success in strengthening their policy and governance reform efforts. Additionally, donor countries, financial and development institutions, and international and regional organizations have been more focused on establishing efficient transit systems. Also, there has been a greater emphasis placed on the role of the private sector in meeting the goals established under the Almaty Declaration.

Furthermore, some 20 United Nations systems and international organizations have adopted decisions to harmonize their strategic plans with the efforts of the Programme of Action. Organizations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) regularly assess their efforts to assist the success of the Almaty Declaration. In addition, there has been a greater emphasis placed on the role of the private sector in meeting the goals established in the Almaty Declaration.

In 2008, the General Assembly held a midterm review meeting of the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action. Although there has been some success on improving regulatory policies and trade harmonization, much remains to be done with respect to infrastructure building, as well as other development initiatives such as debt relief, greater investment, and pro-poor strategies for poverty eradication. The review concluded that there are several areas for action, including encouraging LLDCs to join the WTO and reduce legal obstacles to international trade, as well as pushing development partners to offer greater financial assistance and debt relief. It also asks the international community to reduce non-traditional barriers to trade, improve cross-border coordination with transit countries, and create new public-private partnerships.

In the future, it will be important to address several major issues. First and foremost is the limited funding for infrastructure investments and other changes needed to support the Almaty Declaration. Particularly following the global financial crisis, both aid budgets and access to capital have been limited, making it increasingly difficult for LLDCs to make the necessary investments to gain access to international markets. While some promising innovative financing mechanisms exist, demand for such mechanisms is far greater than the current supply. Additionally, many of these mechanisms are focused solely on infrastructure and do not address the other goals of the Almaty Declaration. Finally, the Second Committee will need to consider how



it can best achieve the areas for action identified during the 2008 mid-term review.

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

- How successful has the Almaty Declaration been in mobilizing the international community to meet the needs of LLDCs and transit countries?
- What type of incentives would encourage donors and the private sector to increase investment in transportation and communication infrastructure for LLDCs and transit countries?
- What ideas or new policies do you think would be effective in increasing trade and transit in LLDCs?

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UN DOCUMENTS

- A/RES/66/214
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 A/61/212
 A/61/302
 A/60/308
 A/60/75
 A/RES/56/227
 A/RES/56/180
 WT/L/579 Annex D
 A/RES/59/245
 A/RES/58/201
 A/RES/57/242

Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries

Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010

Declaration of African Ministers Responsible for Transport and Infrastructure

Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2020

ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES

- www.unohrlls.org – UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- www.wto.org – World Trade Organization
- www.ifc.org – International Financial Corporation
- www.unctad.org – UN Conference on Trade and Development

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY

One of the most basic human needs is access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Yet this basic need frequently goes unmet. The ability of individuals and communities to meet this need is frequently referred to as food security. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security with four facets: food availability, food access, food use and stability. Food availability refers to sufficient quantities of quality food; food access is the ability to purchase or obtain food. The fourth facet, stability, is the ability to maintain the first three facets over time, particularly through spikes in food prices, droughts, and other sudden events.

Since early 2008, rising global food prices have posed a major threat to global food security. In addition to food prices roughly doubling in nominal terms over the last decade, prices have been incredibly unstable. Price spikes have driven prices up to 250 percent of the 2002-04 baseline measurements several times. These prices have created a global food crisis. Numerous factors have contributed to the crisis, including a steadily increasing global population, decline in agricultural development and investments, environmental degradation and climate-related events such as droughts and floods.

Residents of developing countries have been the most affected by the rise in food prices. The global economic downturn has also increased hardship for the world's most vulnerable groups, particularly women and children in developing countries. Before the food crisis began, there was an estimated 854 million undernourished people worldwide. Today, challenging conditions have increased the number of undernourished people to almost one billion. Rising, volatile food prices directly undermine countries' efforts to achieve the poverty reduction and hunger elimination goals set out in Millennium Development Goal One.

In response, the United Nations created the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) in 2008 to develop a unified strategy for addressing challenges to food security, particularly rapidly rising food prices. The Task Force is officially chaired by the UN Secretary-General and brings together heads of specialized UN agencies and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In June 2008, the HLTF created the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) to respond to the immediate food crisis and improve long-term food security mechanisms to prevent a new crisis. The CFA also calls upon governments, international and regional organizations,



and civil society groups to implement recommendations that can assist communities and countries with improving food security. To address the immediate crisis, the CFA identifies four key objectives: improving emergency food assistance; increasing availability of food from smallholders and supporting agricultural development; adjusting trade and tax policies; and managing macroeconomic expectations. The CFA also identified four objectives for addressing long-term structural barriers to food security: expanding social protection systems; increasing availability of food from smallholders and supporting agricultural development; protecting and managing ecosystems; and improving international food markets. In 2010, the HLTF updated the CFA with lessons learned from the first two years of implementation.

Notably, agricultural development and assistance to smallholder farmers is a key strategy for both short-term and long-term food security. Globally, over two billion people live and work on small farms. These farmers are critical to the success of the global food system: improving their agricultural techniques can dramatically increase crop yields, reduce environmental damage and help to stabilize global food prices. The FAO is the primary UN agency responsible for assisting in this mission. The FAO offers technical expertise and training to both States and sub-national governments, primarily aimed at improving agricultural policies and crop yields. It also helps to publish and disseminate the latest information on effective food and agriculture policies. In recent years, the FAO has been increasingly focused on identifying the potential ramifications of global climate change on agriculture.

In 2011, the UN General Assembly adopted several resolutions related to agriculture and food security. Through these resolutions, the General Assembly urged the strengthening of international efforts to develop sustainable agricultural technologies and promoted their transfer to developing countries under fair terms. The General Assembly has also urged Member States to remove restrictions on food exports. The General Assembly also supports the FAO's efforts to promote, support and facilitate the exchange of experiences among Member States on ways to augment sustainable agriculture and management practices. Previously, the UN has also stressed the need for additional training and assistance for smallholders and women farmers.

While the FAO has examined the ramifications of climate change on agricultural producers, it is the role of the General Assembly to analyze the work of the FAO and determine what measures need to be taken to alleviate negative impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security. Many strategies – ranging from increased investment in new research to the development of alternative crops – have been suggested, but the debate continues on the most effective measures for addressing the implications of climate change. As food prices have risen, States have also debated the impacts of increasing production of biofuels on global food prices. Some experts argue that the use of staple foods in the creation of biofuels is driving food prices even higher. The issue is contentious; pitting food security against sustainable energy development, and it is unclear how the General Assembly will balance the two.

Another issue before the Assembly is how to best empower women and girls who participate in agricultural production. Rural women and girls are one quarter of the world's population, and many of these women are directly engaged in agriculture. The United Nations estimates that female farmers represent only five percent of agricul-

ture extension service recipients globally. At the same time, they are frequently not offered the same opportunities for education and exposure to new farming techniques, lowering their crop yields and diminishing their economic opportunities. While the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the FAO have continued to call for the empowerment of rural women, there is much room for improving the lives of women. The United Nations estimates suggest that closing the gender gap in agricultural development could help alleviate hunger for more than 150 million people, almost entirely in developing countries.

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

- How are States and other stakeholders implementing the CFA, and are these steps improving food security?
- What steps should the FAO and UN system take to offer better opportunities to women and girls in agriculture?
- How will climate change affect agricultural development, and what role does the international community have in mitigating its effects?
- How is the increasing production of biofuels affecting the cost of staple foods, and how should the international community balance food security with the need for sustainable energy?

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A/C.2/66/SR.21
A/C.2/66/SR.22
A/C.2/66/SR.38
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ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES

www.fao.org/giews/pricetool2/ – National basic food prices, Food and Agriculture Organization,
www.who.int/nutrition/topics/emergencies_collaboration/en/index.html – Health Impacts of the Global Food Security Crisis, World Health Organization
www.srfood.org – UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food
www.un.org/millenniumgoals – Millennium Development Goals
www.reliefweb.int – Relief Web
www.un.org/en/issues/food/taskforce/background.shtml – Global Food Security Crisis, United Nations