



CHAPTER SIX

THE ECONOMIC & SOCIAL COUNCIL

MEMBERS OF THE ECONOMIC & SOCIAL COUNCIL

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CAMEROON
CANADA
CHINA
COLOMBIA
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CUBA
DENMARK
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
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HAITI
INDIA
INDONESIA
IRELAND
JAPAN
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KYRGYZSTAN
LATVIA
LESOTHO
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MALAWI
MAURITIUS
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NIGERIA
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PURVIEW OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Economic and Social Council is the principal UN organ responsible for coordinating economic, social and related works of 14 specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and five regional commissions. ECOSOC accepts reports and recommendations from other UN bodies, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Along with its coordinating role, ECOSOC gathers information and advises Member States on economic, social, humanitarian and human rights programs. ECOSOC also coordinates and collaborates with autonomous specialized agencies that work closely with the United Nations. These organizations include multilateral financial and trade institutions, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

Website: www.un.org/en/ecosoc/

POVERTY ERADICATION

The international community has achieved great progress in reducing poverty around the world. Since 1990, the number of people living in extreme poverty—defined by the United Nations as living with less than \$1.25 per day—has been halved. This is a great achievement, but the challenge is not over: 1.2 billion people, roughly one-fifth of the world's population, continue to live in extreme poverty. The gains are not even: Sub-Saharan Africa has more than twice the amount of people living in extreme poverty compared to three decades ago. Though it has seen improvements in the last several years, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for more than a third of the extreme poor globally. Every Member State has a vested interest in this topic, but least developed countries and lower middle income countries are affected the most.

Eradication of poverty has been a priority of the United Nations since its conception, though the issue became an increasing focus of the organization in the 1990s. In 1996, the General Assembly declared

the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, which served to focus international attention on the issue. It also prioritized eradication of poverty as an issue for the UN technical and specialized agencies, which are coordinated by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). While some of these agencies, like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have traditionally worked directly on issues related to ending poverty, others like the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank Group and others are increasingly focused on the issue as well.

Ending extreme poverty became a central priority with the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the Millennium Summit in 2000. The first Millennium Development Goal set an international target of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. The other seven MDGs set targets in education, gender equality, food security and other issues that help improve the human condition (and contribute to the eradication of poverty). The international community has seen tremendous success in meeting the MDGs. The most recent progress report from the UN Secretariat suggests that many of the targets, including the poverty reduction goal, will be met by 2015.

Yet the international community must continue to work on ending poverty and preventing gains from being lost. As ECOSOC has made clear in its recent resolutions, poverty is a complex issue, with numerous contributing factors. Armed conflicts around the world have threatened to send populations back into extreme poverty. Recently, the UN and the World Bank joined forces in the Great Lakes campaign to help prevent extreme poverty in a region previously wracked by conflict. The campaign will allocate 1 billion U.S. dollars in new funds for infrastructure projects, health and education services and cross-border trade in the Great Lakes region of sub-Saharan Africa as an incentive to keep peace and security in countries with conflicts. It is uncertain as to whether or not this will truly make a difference as the campaign will focus on the countries destabilized by conflict. It has been a difficult feat to



accomplish in the past as these countries are extremely vulnerable to relapse when conflict returns.

Major disruptions to social services and to markets can drive families and communities back into poverty. Food prices have been rising more dramatically since 2008. Since the world's poorest households spend the largest share of their income on food staples, this rise in price has had a disproportionately negative effect on them.

In 2015, the international community will reconvene to establish a new set of internationally-agreed development goals that will extend through 2030. Ahead of that meeting, the international community will need to assess the progress that has been made and determine which issues it will prioritize for the next 15 years. There is an emerging international consensus that ending extreme poverty—not merely halving it—is a worthy goal for 2030. In May 2013, the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP) released its report. Throughout, the HLP makes clear that ending extreme poverty should be the top priority of the international community. While it is not particularly contentious that extreme poverty should be reduced wherever possible, Member States may disagree on the methods by which poverty reduction should be accomplished. Options include fostering general economic growth, official development assistance, foreign direct investment, improving access to financial tools such as banking and many more.

The global financial crisis continues to erode gains against poverty and has disproportionately affected the poorest States. Concerns over sovereign debt have made increasing government spending unattractive in many developed States. With the fight against poverty stalling and funding tight, ECOSOC must consider how to protect the gains it has won while also making continued progress. If the international community is to achieve its MDG targets for poverty eradication, those that have recently transitioned out of extreme poverty must continue to receive support and consideration. Social entrepreneurs and non-profits are increasingly applying novel technology and techniques that act as service multipliers, allowing them to do more with the same resources. Identifying these technologies and their applications and supporting their use with financial incentives and awareness is vital. If poverty is to be eradicated, the international community must continue to take a holistic approach to the issue, addressing infrastructure, macroeconomic regulations and trade barriers, health, and education. This broad mission mandates close cooperation amongst the different bodies of the UN and its many partners. ECOSOC must go beyond just prioritizing poverty eradication for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and be prepared to outline key policy options and strategies for minimizing redundancy while maximizing impact.

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

- How can ECOSOC expand on the recommendations brought forth by the HLP?
- What support can the international community offer for promising techniques or technologies for combating poverty?
- How can the UN strengthen its leadership role in promoting international cooperation for development and its role at the regional level?

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PROMOTING EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST MIGRANTS, MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

People often seek opportunities outside their homeland in order to better their lives and the lives of their families. These migrants are often those who are unable to find work within their borders, move between countries seeking seasonal work, or find more attractive remuneration for their skills abroad. There are currently an estimated 214 million international migrants representing 3 percent of the world's population. This number includes all persons living outside of their home country, including voluntary migrants as well as refugees. Generally, however, UN initiatives address the specific challenges presented by refugee populations through different mechanisms than



the ones meant to address the issues of migrants and migrant workers.

Most countries are involved in migration issues as a sending country (those with large numbers of citizens living and working abroad), as a transit country (countries through which migrants travel before reaching their final destination), or as a receiving country (countries in which migrants live and work). At the level of international concern, attention must be given not only to generalized political or economic issues but also to the guarantee of basic human rights, personal security and health of individuals and groups, as migration reflects the increasingly complex movement between States. Around 60 percent of migrants move either between developing or between developed countries, while 37 percent migrate from developing to developed countries and only 3 percent migrate from developed to developing countries.

Though migrants include people who leave their home country voluntarily and legally, many migrants from vulnerable populations do so without documentation or legal status, which makes it virtually impossible to know the size of migrant populations between countries. Furthermore, migrants, migrant workers and their families are vulnerable to abuse, violence, and exploitation during all stages of the migration process, from preparation, departure, transit, through the duration of their stay until the return to their State of origin. Undocumented or irregular migrants are especially vulnerable. They face several challenges, including the inability to seek protection or relief from the governmental authority of the State in which they find themselves. In most cases, migrants are denied basic labor protections, guarantees of due process, personal security and health care. They also often face extended detention or mistreatment, unsafe working conditions due to operating outside of workplace safety laws and, in some cases, enslavement, rape and murder. Undocumented migrants are also more likely to be targeted by unscrupulous employers, sexual predators, criminal traffickers, and smugglers. Some migrant rights groups have also claimed, however, that the increased correlation of “migrant” with “illegal” has also increased violence directed toward populations of legal, documented migrants, especially in countries with weak economies, high unemployment, and large numbers of ethnic and religious minorities.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has strongly condemned criminal acts against migrant workers and has called for adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The Convention on Migrant Workers Rights was drafted beginning in 1980, and signed in 1990, but did not enter into force until it was ratified by 20 States in 2003; currently 46 Member States have ratified the Convention. This Convention creates a worldwide standard in terms of migrants’ access to fundamental rights in areas including, but not limited to, labor markets, education and court systems. To date, most of the States that have ratified the treaty are sending countries rather than transit countries or receiving countries, reflecting widely differing attitudes toward migrants in different States. Even so, many other human rights conventions provide rights to migrants, and if States have ratified other human rights treaties and conventions, they still must adhere to those standards when dealing with migrants.

Because of the diversity of migrants and their political and economic circumstances, migrant issues are diverse, inextricably linked to a host

of other contemporary international concerns. Recently, the United Nations has focused its attention on the increasingly alarming situation of smuggling and trafficking of migrants. The Smuggling of Migrants Protocol (ratified by 122 States as of 5 January 2010) established global norms on smuggling migrants that go beyond the existing human rights obligations of States. As border control laws become more stringent, migrants are turning to riskier paths in order to cross secured borders. Migrants using these riskier routes or methods of transport may lose their lives or become victims of human trafficking. Smuggling by sea, while only accounting for a small number of smuggled migrants, results in a disproportionately high number of deaths among migrants in transit.

As the status of migrants and their safety continues to evolve, the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have sought solutions to the violence to which these migrants fall prey. In July of 2012, UNODC assumed chairmanship of the Global Migration Group (GMG). Created by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2006, this group is comprised of 14 UN agencies and its aim is to improve the management of cross-border migration as well as promote further research and development in all issues relating to migration. Currently, the inter-agency organization is promoting a wider application of all relevant and international regional instruments relating to migration. The GMG is also encouraging a more coherent, comprehensive and better-coordinated approach to the complex problem of international migration.

ECOSOC, along with its regional and functional commissions, will continue to be central to these discussions, especially as they are related to human rights concerns. In 2010, the 12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice took place in Salvador, Brazil. One of the eight substantive issues discussed at the Congress was the issue of violence against migrants and their families. The working paper produced by the Conference includes both analysis of emerging issues and discussion of recommended actions at the national and international levels. ECOSOC is now in a position to take action on some of these recommended items as well as to address the issue of violence toward migrants in a comprehensive manner. Some of the impediments to the UN’s efforts to combat violence against migrants and their families include the disconnect between policies and strategies in sending, transit and receiving states, the ways Member States classify migrants as well as the lack of infrastructure to address transnational concerns.

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

- What international, regional or sub-regional mechanisms or standards can be established to address the classification and documentation of migrants and migrant workers?
- How can the international community encourage cooperation between sending, transit and receiving countries on the issue of migrants?
- How can the international community encourage the adoption of best practices regarding the prevention of violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families?



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