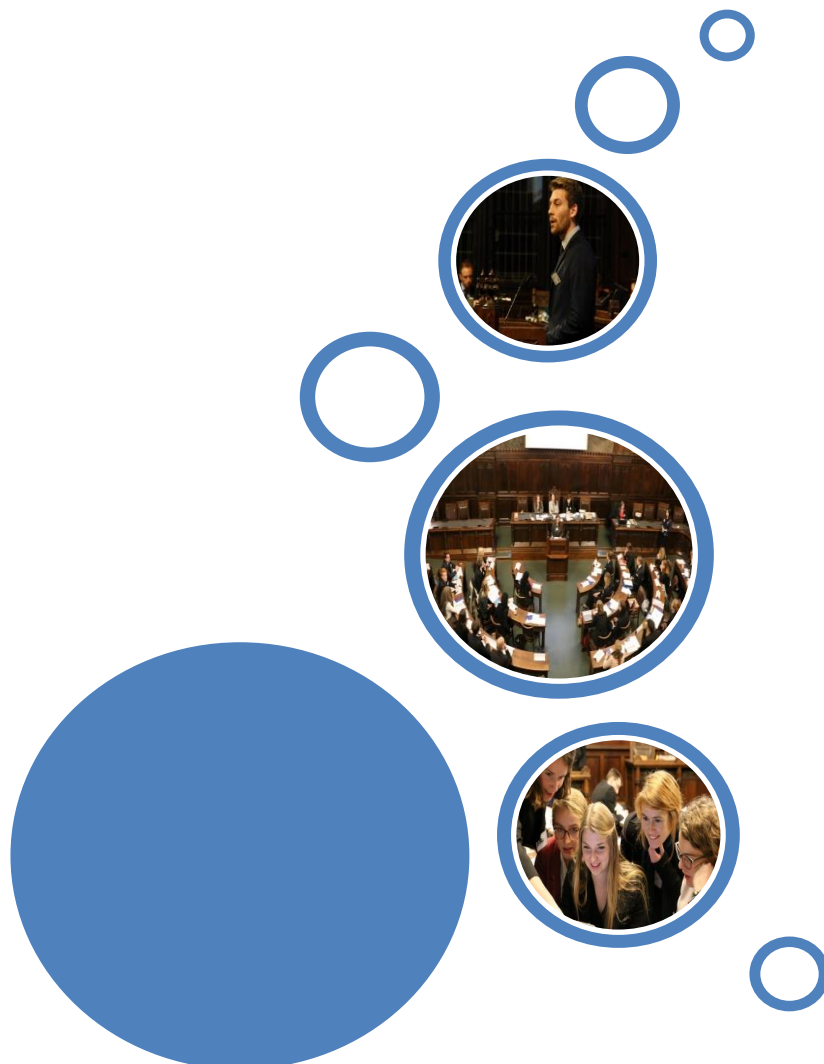# ECOSOC

Background Guide

Karoline Färber, Alexandra Höfler, Lukas Marschallek

Staff

Karolina Färber (Director)

Karoline studies International Relations and Social Sciences at the University of Erfurt. Having participated in various national and international Model UN conferences as chair and delegate, she has most recently led the European Council at DomMUN 2016. At EfMUN 2018, she will serve as the Director of the ECOSOC. She is happy to assist you during the conference.

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Lukas studies International Relations and Economics at the University of Erfurt. He has gathered MUN experience by participating in several national and international MUN conferences. Last year he functioned as a staff member that prepared the delegation from the University of Erfurt for the NMUN conference in Japan. He gathered his most recent chairing experience serving as the Rapporteur of the Security Council at DomMUN 2016.

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to EfMUN 2018 organized by the Model United Nations Delegation of the University of Erfurt. We are looking forward to an exciting conference that offers enriching and innovative learning opportunities for those interested in international relations, multilateral negotiation processes and intercultural communication.

The topics under discussion for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are:

> I.   Enhancing Rapid Response Mechanisms to Global Health Crises,
>
> II. Mitigating the Negative Effects of Climate Change.

The ECOSOC is one of the main bodies of the United Nations (UN) system and is responsible for the majority of the operational work within the UN. ECOSOC oversees a vast number of specialized agencies, funds and programs as well as functional commissions. Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld pointed out correctly that "while the Security Council exists primarily for settling conflicts [...] the Economic and Social Council exists primarily to eliminate the causes of conflict."

This Background Guide shall provide you with an overall understanding of the ECOSOC. To this aim, it explains the ECOSOC's composition and role within the UN to facilitate an understanding of its capabilities with regards to the agenda topics. The respective chapters then introduce the topics in more detail. Helping to define a starting point for delegates' individual research, the sections give an outline of relevant international and regional frameworks and point to options for further analysis.

As you add your Member State's specific position to the information provided in this Background Guide, you will be able to convincingly negotiate during the conference with your fellow delegates.

If you have any further questions, feel free to send an email to mun@uni-erfurt.de.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Karoline Färber. Alexandra Höfler and Lukas Marschallek
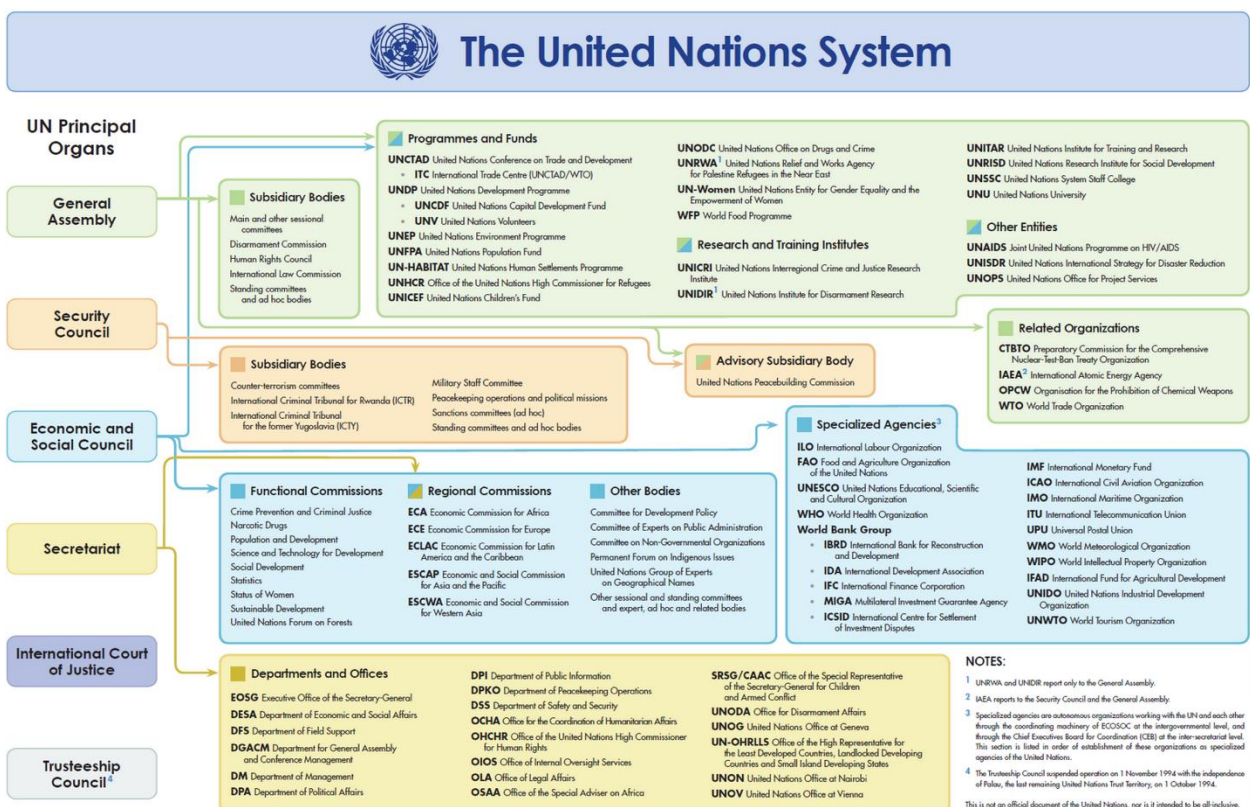
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COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

General Overview

The United Nations (UN) was officially founded on October 24, 1945 after the collapse of the League of Nations and two devastating world wars.[1] 150 states met at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in 1945 in San Francisco, USA, to develop the United Nations Charter. The Charter states the primary purposes of the UN:

- "To maintain international peace and security [...]

- "To develop friendly relations among nations based on the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples [...]

- "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion [...]

- "To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends."[2]

To these aims, six organs were established: The Security Council (SC), the General Assembly (GA), the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council and the International Court of Justice.[3]

The ECOSOC serves the purpose to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to implement and monitor

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[1] UN, *History of the United Nations,* n.d.

[2] UN, *Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Ch. I, Article 1.*

[3] UN, *Main Organs,* n.d.

the progress of internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits, such as the transformative and comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets.

In addition, the ECOSOC is the supervising body of the subsidiary and expert bodies, commissions and specialized agencies that address the manifold aspects of economic, social, and environmental development.

History

In 2016, the Economic and Social Council celebrated its 70th anniversary. Its first meeting was held in London in 1946 to establish the Council as the main body on economic, social and environmental issues of the international community – the heart of the UN development system.[4] Over the last 70 years, ECOSOC, and most prominently its many subsidiary bodies, conducted expert analyses and issued reports, introduced global norms and advocated for sustainable economic, social and environmental development. A major milestone in the work of the Council is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eradicate poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.[5] Therefore, this year's ECOSOC theme focuses on "eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges."[6] ECOSOC's work in support of the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda will be broad and further includes topics such as financing for development, humanitarian affairs and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. This process requires the joint efforts of the UN system as a whole and partnerships with all relevant development stakeholders and actors.[7] It is in this spirit that ECOSOC functions as a platform for the implementation of the SDGs and its targets.

Governance, Structure and Membership

ECOSOC consists of 54 Member States where each member is elected for a three-year term.[8] The allocation of seats follows equitable geographical distribution and is, therefore, comprised of 14 African states, 11 Asia-Pacific states, six Eastern European states, ten Latin American and Caribbean states, and 13 Western European and other states.[9] Each member has one representative and one vote in the Council, and all decisions are made by a simple majority of those members present and voting. [10] ECOSOC meets twice annually, once for an organizational session and once for a substantive session, which is further divided into five 'segments' focusing on separate thematic aspects of the Council's work, including the High-level Segment, Integration Segment, Operational Activities for Development Segment, Coordination and Management Meetings, Humanitarian

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[4] ECOSOC, *ECOSOC-70: Taking Action to Improve Lives*, 2016.
[5] UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2016.
[6] ECOSOC, *E-Discussion on the 2017 ECOSOC Theme*, 2017.
[7] ECOSOC, *Promoting sustainable development*, 2016.
[8] New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 136.
[9] Ibid.
[10] ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council*, 1992, p. 22; UN, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter X.

Affairs.[11] In 2013, the GA adopted resolution 68/1 reviewing the working methods of ECOSOC to further strengthen its mandate and functionality.[12]

Subsidiary bodies

ECOSOC oversees 14 subsidiary bodies, particularly the regional and functional commissions which hold their own sessions and provide recommendations, draft resolutions, and annual reporting to the Council.[13] There are five regional commissions focusing on economic integration, overseeing the implementation of regional sustainable development initiatives, and addressing economic and social issues in sub-regions by fostering multilateral dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration within and between regions.[14] Furthermore, there are nine functional commissions which are "deliberative bodies whose role is to consider and make recommendations on issues in their areas of responsibility and expertise."[15] Functional commissions, in particular, have the responsibility to follow up on the major UN conferences, in accordance with the role of ECOSOC.[16]

Additionally, there are seven Expert Bodies which are composed of governmental experts. These committees are focused on narrow topics that ECOSOC deems important and require additional attention in order to improve the information, guidance, policy or regulations. Other subsidiaries include standing committees, ad hoc, and other related bodies.[17]

Functions and Power

The Economic and Social Council's mandate is articulated in the Charter of the United Nations (1945) as follows:

"The Economic and Social Council may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters and may make recommendations with respect to any such matters to the General Assembly to the Members of the United Nations, and to the specialized agencies concerned. It may make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all."[18]

The Council fulfills its mandate under the overall authority of the General Assembly, in conjunction with the work completed by its subsidiary bodies and in consultation with a broad range of non-UN stakeholders.[19] In order to foster a productive dialogue on sustainable development and ensure holistic and comprehensive policy recommendations ECOSOC engages a wide variety of stakeholders – policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, major groups, foundations, business sector representatives and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations.[20]

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[11] ECOSOC, *The New ECOSOC – Overview of functions and working methods*, 2014.

[12] 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.

[13] Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Functional Commissions*, 2014.

[14] UN Regional Commissions, *About – What we do*, n.d.

[15] Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Functional Commissions*, 2014.

[16] UN ECOSOC, *Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related field (E/RES/1998/46)*, 1998, p. 76.

[17] ECOSOC, *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, n.d.

[18] UN, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter X, Article 62.

[19] ECOSOC, *Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council*, 1992, p. 4.

[20] ECOSOC, *About ECOSOC*, n.d.

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United Nations Regional Commissions. (n.d.) *About – What we do.* [Website]. Retrieved 12 November 2017 from: http://www.regionalcommissions.org/about/the-regional-commissions/what-we-do/.

ENHANCING RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISMS TO GLOBAL HEALTH CRISES

Introduction

The 21st century has experienced several health crises. These include the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, the four major outbreaks of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Korea, the pandemics of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and of H1N1 and H5N1 influenza.[21] Furthermore, the Zika Virus afflicted much of South America and has steadily increased its geographical distribution.[22] Most recently, the cholera outbreak in Yemen has become the largest epidemic worldwide, reaching a count of almost 900,000 persons infected.[23] These epidemics serve as a "stark reminder of the threat to humanity posed by emerging communicable diseases."[24] Therefore, the ECOSOC remains committed to actively combatting global health crises.

In September 2015, Member States adopted the successor framework of the Millennium Development Declaration and its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which target all three dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic, social and environmental progress.[25] The three health-related MDGs are subsumed under SDG 3, which aims to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".[26] The goal includes eight targets, of which target 3.3 is the most relevant for the response to global health crises.[27] The ECOSOC will have to focus on enhancing national capacities to follow the means of implementation of this target.

The challenges of achieving the targets of SDG 3 are significant. Constituting a threat to international peace and security,[28] the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa in 2014 marked a significant health crisis during which international support was crucial to curbing the outbreak.[29] As the virus transcended the regional boundaries of West Africa,[30] multiple failures during the Ebola response demonstrated the international community's ill-preparedness in countering global health crises.[31]

As such, the Ebola epidemic "has demonstrated the critical importance of national emergency preparedness, and the potential benefits of giving it priority in national planning."[32] Thus, response mechanisms are needed more than ever to prevent another Ebola outbreak in the future.[33]

Most recently, the international community has turned its attention to the cholera outbreak in Yemen, which emerged in the context of the Yemeni civil war and is among the main causes for avoidable deaths in Yemen.[34] To date, the epidemic has affected 90 percent of districts across 21 of 22 governorates.[35] However, the provision of assistance by United Nations bodies and non-

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[21] UN General Assembly, *Protecting humanity from future health crises. Report of the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises (A/70/723)*, 2016, p. 4.

[22] Natela Menabde, *WHO Response to the PHEIC: Zika, Microcephaly, and Guillain Barré Syndrome*, 2016, p. 2.

[23] UN OCHA, *Yemen: Fastest growing cholera epidemic ever recorded brings number of cases to 895,000*, 2017.

[24] UN General Assembly, *Protecting humanity from future health crises*, p. 4.

[25] UN DESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, n.d.

[26] UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – Goal 3*, n.d.

[27] "By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases." Ibid.

[28] UN Security Council, *Resolution 2177 (S/RES/2177)*, 2014.

[29] Ban Ki-Moon, *Statement by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the transition of UN Ebola emergency response*, 2015.

[30] WHO, Ebola Situation Report, 30 March 2016.

[31] UN General Assembly, *Protecting humanity from future health crises*, p. 7.

[32] Adeyemi Okunogbe, *What the Ebola Crisis Taught Us About Emergency Preparedness in Africa,* 2015.

[33] UN ECA, *Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola on Africa*, 2015, p. 48–54.

[34] WHO, *Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017*, 2017.

[35] UN OCHA, *Yemen: Fastest growing cholera epidemic ever recorded brings number of cases to 895,000*, 2017.

governmental organizations alike has been severely hampered in the course of the civil war, particularly due to the closure of all land, sea and airports.[36] Although the epidemic currently remains localized within the country, the danger of spillovers to neighboring states continues to be a constant threat as more than 180,000 individuals have fled Yemen.[37]

Both the Ebola and the cholera crisis show that rapid response mechanisms are indispensable to managing health crises globally. Despite major advancements in combatting infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis, progress must be accelerated significantly to meet the SDG health targets by 2030.[38] Therefore, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the respective specialized agencies are now needed more than ever as coordinators of such response mechanisms.

International & Regional Framework

Health crises do not only create regional emergency situations but may also have global implications. As a result, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly has continuously turned its attention to the issue of global health, aiming to "[strengthen] the management of international health crises" in the context of its global health efforts.[39] Recently, the UN General Assembly has also discussed global health in relation to economic growth.[40]

Within the UN system there are several subsidiary organs and specialized agencies focusing on health and health work, most prominently the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO was established on 7 April 1948 with the key objective of "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health,"[41] functioning as main authority in the field of international health work. Its main decision-making body, the World Health Assembly, considers recommendations by the five active main organs of the UN and regularly reports to the ECOSOC.[42]

In accordance with its *International Health Regulations* (2005),[43] the WHO instituted a Strategic Health Operations Centre (SHOC), which "monitors global public health events around the clock, and facilitates international collaboration during public health emergencies and daily operations."[44] In addition, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) "ensures that the right technical expertise and are skills are on the ground where and when they are needed most."[45] The WHO was one of the first agencies to provide help to West African countries in their struggle against the Ebola outbreak.[46] It later partnered with the *UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response* (UNMEER), the first health-related UN Mission established by the UN Security Council.[47]

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[36] WHO, *WHO warns that more people will die if ports in Yemen do not reopen to humanitarian aid*, 2017.

[37] UNHCR, *Yemen. Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan*, 2017.

[38] UN ECOSOC, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Report of the Secretary-General (E/2017/66)*, 2017, p. 4–5.

[39] UN General Assembly, *Global health and foreign policy: strengthening the management of international health crises (A/RES/70/183)*, 2015.

[40] UN General Assembly, *Global health and foreign policy: health employment and economic growth* (A/RES/71/159), 2016.

[41] WHO, *Constitution of the World Health Organization*, 2006, Art. 1.

[42] Ibid., Art. 18 (i) and (j).

[43] WHO, *International Health Regulations (2005)*, 2008, p. 4.

[44] WHO, *Strategic Health Operations Centre (SHOC)*, 2016.

[45] WHO, *Strengthening health security by implementing the International Health Regulations (2005): Global Alert and Response Network*, n.d.

[46] WHO, *WHO issues roadmap for scaled-up response to the Ebola outbreak*, 2014.

[47] UN Security Council, Resolution 2177.

To facilitate efforts, the UN Secretary-General set up a High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises in 2015.[48] Although the Panel has ceased to exist, its recommendations continue to be of utmost importance in combatting global health crises.[49] To monitor the implementation of the Panel's recommendation and to ensure that these were in line with the Secretary-General's observations,[50] the Global Health Crises Task Force was established for the period of 2016-17.[51] Throughout its reports, the Task Force identified nine priority areas for monitoring, including strategic support for national health systems to prevent global health crises and to support regional arrangements to prevent and respond to health crises.[52]

Besides the WHO and special agencies, there are further programs and funds that address different aspects of health, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP),[53] UN Population Fund (UNFPA),[54] and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).[55]

To ensure access to disaster-stricken countries, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) has issued the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, which contains, among others, the priority goals of "[s]trengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk" as well as "[e]nhancing disaster preparedness for effective response".[56]

The ECOSOC coordinates all these efforts, particularly through its Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS).[57] Thus, the HAS is essential to enhancing rapid response mechanisms to global health crises.

In this context, the ECOSOC has most recently focused on the strengthening of emergency humanitarian assistance, recognizing that "humanitarian emergencies weaken the ability of social services, including health systems, to deliver essential life-saving assistance, and produce setbacks in health development."[58]

Despite the mechanisms and strategic planning already in place, the threat of global health crises is still looming over our heads. One major criticism of the WHO's response to the Ebola outbreak was the significant delay in declaring the epidemic an emergency.[59] In contrast, the situation in Yemen has been addressed rather comprehensively due to the deteriorating effects the civil war had on Yemeni's public health.[60] Nevertheless, experts have pointed to the necessity to reform the WHO and its rapid response mechanisms to global health crises. The Commission on a Global Health Risk Framework for the Future as well as the Harvard LSHTM Panel have both issued extensive recommendations possible reforms.[61]

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[48] United Nations, *Secretary-General Appoints High-Level Panel on Global Response to Health Crises (SG/A/1558)*, 2015.

[49] UN General Assembly, *Protecting humanity from future health crises*.

[50] UN General Assembly, *Strengthening the global health architecture: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises (A/70/824)*, 2016.

[51] United Nations, *Global Health Crises Task Force*, n.d.

[52] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Global Health Crises Task Force (A/72/113)*, 2017, p. 4.

[53] UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being*, n.d.

[54] UNFPA, *HIV & AIDS*, n.d.

[55] UNAIDS, *Homepage*, n.d. See also ECOSOC, *Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/RES/2017/25)*, 2017.

[56] UNISDR, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 2015, p. 14.

[57] ECOSOC, *Humanitarian Affairs Segment*, 2015.

[58] ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/RES/2017/14)*, 2017, op. 18.

[59] Maria Cheng and Raphael Satter, *"Emails: UN health agency resistsed declaring Ebola emergency"*, 2015.

[60] Security Council Report, *UN Documents for Yemen*, n.d.

[61] Commission on a Global Health Risk Framework for the Future, *The Neglected Dimension of Global Security. A Framework to Counter Infectious Disease Crises*, 2016; Harvard-LSHTM Independent Panel on the Global Response to Ebola, *Will Ebola change the game? Ten essential reforms before the next pandemic*, 2015.

Conclusion

As has been outlined in this segment, the international level is pivotal to fighting current health crises and preventing future ones. Within its mandate, it is up to the ECOSOC to evaluate and discuss the effectiveness of the international response efforts to fighting global as well as regional health crises. Only through such assessment processes can the response to health disasters be improved.

Further Research

When researching the topic of response mechanisms to global health crises, delegates of the ECOSOC plenary should focus on possible reform points of the health work coordination system of the WHO: What lessons can be learned from the mistakes during the Ebola epidemic 2014? How would an approach to reform of the WHO's response mechanisms look like? In that regard, it is also crucial to look at evaluation processes for the WHO's response to the Zika Outbreak in South America. Such assessment processes could also be deemed necessary for other ECOSOC programs or specialized agencies.

Besides researching their respective national response plans, delegates of the ECOSOC are strongly encouraged to research aspects that have not been mentioned or only briefly touched upon in this short outline on response mechanisms to global health crises. These aspects include, among others, the issue of gender in health crises, the impact of climate change on human health, or the relation of public health crises to peace and security.

Further Links

United Nations General Assembly. (2016). *The new United Nations approach to cholera in Haiti (A/RES/71/161).* [Resolution]. http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/161.

> This resolution adopts a new approach to combatting the cholera epidemic in Haiti, which has raged in the country since 2010.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2017). *Yemen 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan.* https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2017_HRP_YEMEN.pdf.

> This document foresees, inter alia, the strengthening of the management of communicable diseases in Yemen, including treatment and prevention.

World Health Organization. (2016). *Zika Strategic Response Plan Quarterly Update.* [Report]. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/250626/1/WHO-ZIKV-SRF-16.4-eng.pdf?ua=1.

> This document updates the Zika Strategic Response Plan, giving key information on the situation, the response and updated funding information for organizations working as part of the response.

World Health Organization. (2016). *World Health Statistics 2016: Monitoring the SDGs.* [Report]. http://who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/en/.

> This annual report delivers the latest data on the progress in implementing the health-related SDGs.

World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Global Health Observatory (GHO) data.* [Website]. http://www.who.int/gho/en/.

> This website presents health-related statistics for more than 1000 indicators for its Member States, including communicable diseases.

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Mitigating the Negative Effects of Climate Change

"The Paris Agreement is a monumental triumph for people and our planet; it sets the stage for progress in ending poverty, strengthening peace and ensuring a life of dignity and opportunity for all."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon[62]

Introduction

Climate change is any drastic environmental change measured over time that has serious economic and social implications, such as global health risks, rising sea levels that concern particularly Small Island Developing States, natural disasters in coastal regions, food insecurity and famine in dry, landlocked developing countries and many more. [63] Climate change has been part of the international agenda since December 1988, when it was first discussed by the General Assembly (GA) in resolution 43/53 on the "protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind".[64]

Human action on earth is the major cause for a significantly increased production of greenhouse gases. The process of "global warming" has clearly accelerated in past years and needs to be addressed by the international community. The changing climate is not only affecting human health negatively but also many crop yields.[65] Today, the vast majority of scholars in the field emphasize that measures are urgently needed to stop this process or life on earth will be altered forever. However, to have a significant impact on the climate and reduce the negative effects of climate change, major advancements in technology and innovations are necessary to strengthen the accessibility and utilization of renewable energy and foster a sustainable low-carbon production and consumption. Currently, only 20% of the global energy supply is comprised of renewable energy.[66]

Climate change will, in the long-term, be likely to exceed the capability of natural, managed and human systems to adapt. In the past 30 years, emissions of greenhouse gases increased by 70%, without any counteraction taken by governments. Emissions of the six main greenhouse gases are projected to rise by 25 to 90% by 2030. With the current rising occurrences of natural disasters and the increasing temperature on earth, long-lasting solutions become more and more urgent. Any comprehensive solution to climate change will stabilize concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a safe level, a goal defined as the central objective of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, this will come at a considerable price. In order to return the emission of greenhouse gases to current levels, more than USD 200 billion will be necessary by 2030, according to the projections of UNFCCC.

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[62] Ban Ki-Moon, *Remarks to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*, 2015.
[63] United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate change: basic information*, 2016.
[64] UN General Assembly, *Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/RES/43/53)*, 1988.
[65] United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate changes impacts and adapting to change,* 2016.
[66] Ibid.

International & Regional Framework

In GA resolution 43/53 the international community already addressed climate change as a common concern of mankind urging governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as scientific institutions to collaborate in a concerted effort to protect our climate.[67] In 1994, the GA adopted resolution 48/189, which created the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change which achieved near-universal membership in the following years.[68] Its mandate includes the stabilization of greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere at an acceptable level, the prevention of a disruption of the climate system, and the deceleration of global warming.[69]

GA resolution 57/258 highlights the importance of the cooperation between the Member States to tackle climate change inviting the international community to an annual World Climate Conference.[70] Furthermore, GA resolution 63/281 of 2008 on "Climate Change and its possible security implications" pointed out the impacts of climate change, including rise of sea levels and therefore invited all relevant organs of the UN again to intensify their efforts in considering addressing climate change.[71] For policymakers to come up with suitable and adequate solutions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issues regular reports on the causes and effects of climate change. These reports provide valuable adaptation and mitigation options.[72]

In September 2015, Member States convened at the Sustainable Development Summit and adopted a new development framework that will guide the work of all stakeholders for the next 15 years.[73] This 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a comprehensive and transformative guidance for the UN system and Member States to bring prosperity to all its people within the boundaries of our planet. ECOSOC is the main body to follow-up and review the implementation of the agenda and help national implementation and localization of its targets engaging UN and non-UN actors, such as civil society, academia and the private sector alike.[74] The document addresses climate action most prominently in SDG 13 on Climate Action, SDG 14 on Life Below Water and SDG 15 on Life on Land. However, not only do the goals take into account the need to address negative effects of climate change,[75] but also concentrate on making cities and human settlements more resilient to natural shocks.[76]

The last World Climate Conference (COP21) was held in Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015.[77] Its outcome document, the Paris Agreement on climate change, is a groundbreaking agreement between Member States committing to a new dimension to combat climate change and addressing its adverse effects on the planet and society.[78] In May 2016, ECOSOC convened a special meeting on the impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon. Due to the more severe climatic changes nowadays, this phenomenon poses a number of risks to the tropical Pacific region. In order to mitigate the negative effects on the respective countries, ECOSOC has tried to identify together with other UN agencies the economic, social and environmental dimensions and to discuss

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[67] UN General Assembly, *Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/RES/43/53)*, 1988.
[68] UN General Assembly, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (A/RES/48/189)*, 1994.
[69] Ibid.
[70] UN General Assembly, *World Climate Change Conference (A/RES/57/258)*, 2003.
[71] UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications (A/RES/63/281)*, 2009.
[72] IPCC, *Climate Change 2014 – Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers*, 2014, pp. 17-31.
[73] UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2016.
[74] Ibid.
[75] UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – Sustainable Development Goals*, 2016.
[76] Ibid., SDG 11.
[77] UNFCCC, *Adoption of the Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1)*, 2015.
[78] Ibid.

measures undertaken by countries to increase their resilience.[79] Just recently, in November 2017 the UN Climate Change Conference took place in Bonn, Germany. Leaders of national governments and other stakeholders gathered to discuss actions to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.[80] The Fijian COP23 Presidency announced an inclusive approach for sharing best practices and implemented guidelines which will make the Paris Agreement operational. Furthermore, a Gender Action Plan which aims to increase the participation of women in all UNFCCC processes was launched as well as the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, to give a greater voice to indigenous people in the climate negotiations.[81] The 24th session of the COP will take place 2018 in Katowice, Poland.[82]

Conclusion

Despite being a constant part of the United Nations agenda since 1988, climate change has become increasingly important as it poses a threat to food security, perpetuates poverty causes and causes natural disasters to occur more frequently. In order to effectively and sustainably mitigate the negative effects, the international community needs to work closely together addressing the root causes as well as take measures for immediate relief.

Climate change is, fundamentally, a sustainable development challenge, that should be linked more firmly to the broader development agenda, including poverty reduction and other internationally agreed development goals. Many sectors must be involved, including finance, energy, transport, agriculture and health, with the United Nations playing a major convening role by serving as an intergovernmental platform.

Further Research

Climate change poses countless threats to the Member States and finding solutions for them lies in the hands of the international community. Exemplary questions delegates can consider during their preparation are:

What are the most challenging effects of climate change for my country? Consider if you are representing a Small Island Developing State, or are you in a landlocked, tropical or dry region, and if you are representing a developing or a developed country. What are the respective responsibilities of developing countries and developed countries in mitigating the negative effects of climate change?

In addition, which are the ways to adapt to a changing climate? How can communities become more resilient to natural and economic shocks caused by climate change? What is the relationship between economic development and necessary climate action (SDG 13)? What else can the international community do to mitigate the negative effects of climate change?

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[79] ECOSOC, *ECOSOC Special Meeting - Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon: Reducing risks and* capturing opportunities, 2016.
[80] UNFCC, UN Climate Change Conference, 2017.
[81] COP23 FIJI UN Climate Change Conference Bonn 2017, Key Achievements from COP23, 2017.
[82] IISD SDG Knowledge HUB, UNFCCC COP 24, 2017.

Further Links

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