



# STUDY GUIDE

## Economic and Social Council

Topic A: Strengthening Youth Involvement in the  
Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Topic B: Establishing a Comprehensive International  
Response System to Natural Disasters

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## CONTENTS

<b>1. Description of the Committee.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1 Economic and Social Council.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Mandate and Instruments.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Agenda item A: Strengthening Youth Involvement in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1 Historical Background (and Past Resolutions).....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.2 Local and National Participation.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.2.1 Voting Age and Political Processes.....	7
2.2.2 Education.....	8
<b>2.3 International Participation.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.3.1 Opportunities for Youth Dialogue and Commitment.....	9
2.3.2 Youth at the United Nations.....	9
<b>2.4 Possible Solutions.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Agenda item B: Establishing a Comprehensive International Response System to Natural Disasters.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.2 Historical Background and Past Resolutions.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.3 Impact of a Natural Disaster.....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.3.1 Impact on the Agricultural Sector and Food Security.....	13
3.3.2 Health and Sanitation Issues.....	13
3.3.3 Economic Impact.....	15
3.3.4 Population Displacement.....	16
<b>3.4 Response Strategy.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.4.1 Gender Perspective.....	18
<b>3.5 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4. Suggested Reading.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.1 Suggested Reading for Agenda Item A.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.2 Suggested Reading for Agenda Item B.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5.1 Bibliography on Agenda Item A.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5.2 Bibliography on Agenda Item B.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>6. Countries Represented.....</b>	<b>25</b>

# 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE

## 1.1 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the United Nations' main platform for debating and innovative thinking, encouraging people to agree on the way forwards, and ensuring that efforts are pooled to achieve international goals. ECOSOC was established in 1945 by the United Nations Charter as one of the organization's six main organs. It links a range of United Nations entities dedicated to sustainable development, and providing guidance and coordination. The entities include regional economic and social commissions, functional commissions that facilitate intergovernmental discussion on major global issues, and specialized agencies, programmes and funds that work all over the world, making sure that development commitments genuinely impact people's lives.

Reforms over the last decade (particularly General Assembly Resolution 68/1) have contributed to ECOSOC's leading role in identifying emerging challenges, promoting innovation, and achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development which are economic, social and environmental. ECOSOC is responsible for checking that major United Nations conferences and summits are followed up.

Besides its coordinating role within the United Nations, ECOSOC allows the rest of the world to participate and enter into partnership. It offers a unique global meeting point where many - such as policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth and over 3,200 registered non-governmental organizations - can engage in dialogue.

Each year, ECOSOC structures its work around a theme of global importance relating to sustainable development. This provides a focus for ECOSOC's various partners and the United Nations development system.

By emphasizing economic, social and environmental concerns, ECOSOC encourages those involved to agree on coherent policies and actions that create fundamental links across all three.

## 1.2 MANDATE AND INSTRUMENTS

The Economic and Social Council was created under Article 7 of the United Nations Charter. It consists of 54 Member States that are elected by the General Assembly for a period of three years. The allocation of the Council's seats is based on geographical representation: 14 are allocated to African States, 11 to Asian States, 6 to Eastern European States, 13 to Western European and other States and 10 to Latin American and Caribbean States. The United States of America, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France and China are represented on a permanent basis.

ECOSOC coordinates the work of the 20 United Nations specialized agencies (such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), nine

Functional Commissions (including the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)) five Regional Commissions, four Standing Committees and one Ad Hoc body (the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics). It also receives reports from 14 United Nations funds and programmes, and issues policy recommendations to the United Nations system and the Member States.

## 2. AGENDA ITEM A: STRENGTHENING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (AND PAST RESOLUTIONS)

For decades, the United Nations has been aware of the vital role young people play in its work. In 1965, the General Assembly proclaimed the “Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples”, which laid the groundwork for involving young people in world politics.<sup>1</sup> This declaration accords major importance to educating young people in line with United Nations ideals, and to promoting international exchange and the work of youth associations.

In 1981, the United Nations created a Youth Unit (now the Focal Point on Youth) which aims to promote youth participation in the United Nations system and in decision-making.<sup>2</sup> The body also coordinates the Youth Delegate Programme globally, enabling young people to observe and participate in United Nations meetings as part of their national delegations.

The United Nations youth agenda has been guided by the World Programme of Action for Youth since 1995. Together with its 2007 Supplement, the programme contains 15 priority areas in which the United Nations and its members aim to take action in areas where young people are concerned.<sup>3</sup> One of these areas is “full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making” and proposals for action include promoting youth associations, information and international exchange.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, to promote and coordinate the United Nations’ youth agenda, the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth position was created in 2013. The role aims to improve participation, advocate youth engagement, form partnerships with relevant stakeholders and harmonize the work of all United Nations agencies dealing with this topic.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations 1965: A/RES/20/2037, accessible on [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/3DeclarationonthePromotionamongYouthoftheIdealsofPeace,MutualRespectandUnderstandingbetweenPeoples\(1965\).aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/3DeclarationonthePromotionamongYouthoftheIdealsofPeace,MutualRespectandUnderstandingbetweenPeoples(1965).aspx)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development - Youth: About Us, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do.html>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development - Youth: World Programme of Action for Youth, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations : World Programme of Action for Youth, p. 42-43, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth: Envoy’s Workplan, <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/workplan/>

## 2.2 LOCAL AND NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Besides participating in the United Nations system, youth participation should really start at a local, regional and national level. Since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are designed to be implemented in a decentralized way and follow a multi-stakeholder approach, young people need to be involved at all possible levels. One of the main obstacles to youth participation is the shortage of information and resources. Over 90% of today's youth live in less developed countries.<sup>6</sup> A lack of general and political education, as well as insufficient access to resources and opportunities, severely impact young people's ability to participate in their local or national community.

This issue is evidently linked to other problems such as the limited opportunities available to women and indigenous peoples. Including young people (especially marginalized groups<sup>7</sup>) in national political decision-making is therefore a prerequisite for implementing the SDGs.

### 2.2.1 VOTING AGE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

Most countries allow citizens to vote from the age of 18, but some have higher minimum ages that prevent young people from voting.<sup>8</sup> A high minimum voting age might have a negative impact on young people's desire to engage in politics, and most importantly, it prevents them from taking part in vital decisions related to their future. Government policy can disregard young people's interests and ideas, without feeling the consequences.

Those against a low minimum voting age often argue that young people are immature. However, some as young as 16 can drive, serve in the army, work and pay taxes, and be criminally responsible for their actions.<sup>9</sup> Even denying 18-year-olds the right to vote (still prevalent in some countries), prevents them from actively participating in society and from making their voices heard in government.

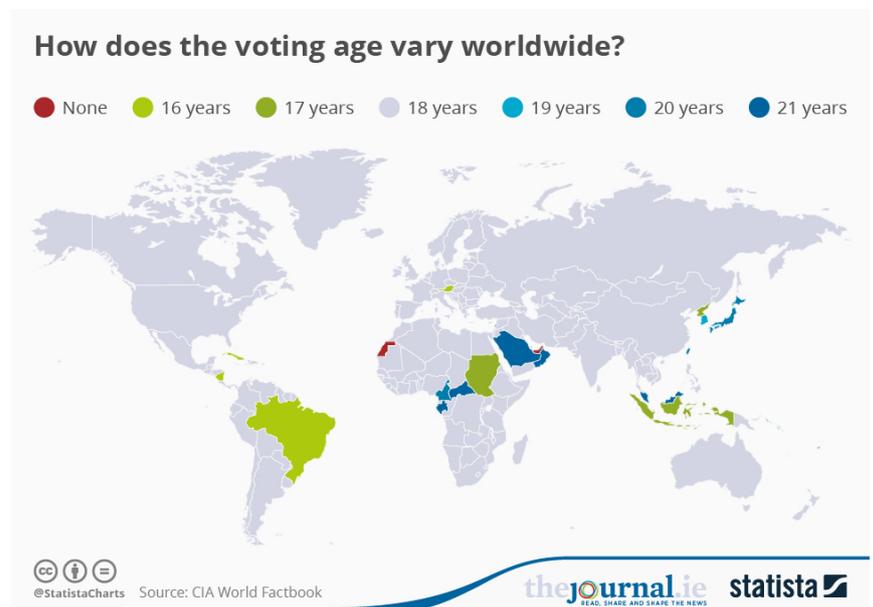


Figure 1: Variations in voting age. Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/4424/how-does-the-voting-age-vary-worldwide/>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Development Programme 2017: Fast Facts - Youth as Partners for the Implementation of the SDGs, [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/results/fast\\_facts/fast-facts--youth-as-partners-for-the-implementation-of-the-sdgs.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/results/fast_facts/fast-facts--youth-as-partners-for-the-implementation-of-the-sdgs.html)

<sup>7</sup> United Nations: Youth Participation Factsheet, p. 3, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/factsheets/youth-participation.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> CIA World Factbook Library: Suffrage, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2123.html>

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian 2017: The Guardian view on the voting age, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/08/the-guardian-view-on-the-voting-age-time-to-lower-it-to-16>

Linked to this issue is the fact that young people represent only 2% of the world's members of parliament, which is particularly due to age restrictions on running for elected office.<sup>10</sup> The United Nations has launched the "Not Too Young To Run" campaign to address the problem. Furthermore, young people should be actively consulted on policies that concern them, and so inclusive political systems with comprehensive consultation mechanisms are vital.<sup>11</sup>

Young people also need to be provided with opportunities such as political and leadership training that will facilitate their active participation. The United Nations has collated examples of good practice in a factsheet.<sup>12</sup> These include youth training programmes and measures to actively promote youth participation in public policy-making.

### 2.2.2 EDUCATION

Education is central to the "development and [...] improvement of the lives of young people".<sup>13</sup> However, even skills such as literacy and numeracy are not always taught, especially in less developed regions: 10.6% of young people worldwide are non-literate, according to United Nations estimates.<sup>14</sup> Millions of children are not enrolled in primary school and so are deprived of the most basic skills and knowledge that could enable them to participate in social and political life. This primarily concerns marginalized groups such as women, indigenous peoples, migrants and disabled persons.

Improving the quality of primary, secondary and tertiary education is therefore a prerequisite, not only so that young people have better opportunities, but also so that they can become involved in implementing the SDGs. Indeed, if children have a good education and sufficient knowledge, they can fully and effectively participate in "the processes of social, economic and political development".<sup>15</sup> According to the United Nations, "increased attention to improving participation rates of young people, particularly marginalized youth, is needed to ensure that they acquire the knowledge, capacities, skills and ethical values needed to fulfil their role as agents of development, good governance, social inclusion, tolerance and peace".<sup>16</sup> In addition, learning about human rights and the SDGs is crucial to ensuring that they are effectively implemented by young people.

## 2.3 INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Just as young people should be more involved in national decision-making processes, they should also be given the chance to participate at an international level. The SDGs were designed as a global initiative and can only be implemented through international communication and cooperation at all levels.

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<sup>10</sup> Not Too Young To Run: Facts and Figures, <http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/facts/>

<sup>11</sup> General Assembly: Youth development links to sustainable development, Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/190, p.10-12, <http://undocs.org/A/72/190>

<sup>12</sup> United Nations: Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making, p. 3-5, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations: Youth and Education Factsheet, p. 1, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-education.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

### **2.3.1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH DIALOGUE AND COMMITMENT**

One particular challenge for young people who wish to make a change and contribute to the SDGs is access to reliable and useful information. While this issue is clearly linked to infrastructure and internet access, the quality and availability of information also needs to be improved. The Youth for SDGs Action Network has, for example, created an online platform where young people can present SDG-related initiatives, find out more about possible commitments and find sources of inspiration and assistance for their projects.<sup>17</sup> Another example in this regard is AIESEC's Youth 4 Global Goals initiative which aims to connect young people and raise awareness about the SDGs.<sup>18</sup>

Such exchange and educational opportunities are valuable experiences for participants. They provide the chance not only to learn more about the SDGs, but also to implement them and form a worldwide network of young people. Unfortunately, they often lack funding and practical support from governments, and this is undoubtedly an area that needs to be addressed.

### **2.3.2 YOUTH AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

Youth participation concerns the work of every single programme and specialized agency within the United Nations' vast system. Some agencies or programmes have developed youth-centred approaches to include young people in decision-making and in implementing policies. For instance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have set up youth advisory councils or youth fora within their respective systems.<sup>19</sup> These provide a setting where young people can express their views, propose policies and establish links between the concerned United Nations programme and young people all over the world. These councils often include youth representatives from minority groups, such as indigenous people and persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the youth delegate programme provides young people with the opportunity to represent their country's youth alongside their national delegation at the United Nations General Assembly and in specific organs such as the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>20</sup>

However, these examples of youth participation are not replicated by all United Nations organs. In some cases, young people are still excluded from decision-making despite being key stakeholders.

## **2.4 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

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<sup>17</sup> Partnerships for SDGs - Youth for SDGs Action Network, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

<sup>18</sup> Youth 4 Global Goals, <https://youth4globalgoals.org/learn-about-the-goals/>

<sup>19</sup> Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth: United Nations Programmes on Youth, <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/un-programmes-youth/> (UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNESCO)

<sup>20</sup> General Assembly: Youth development links to sustainable development, Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/190, p.12, <http://undocs.org/A/72/190>;

United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development - Youth Delegate Programme, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/youth-delegate-programme.html>;

This section offers a few aspects you can consider in the course of your research and eventual resolution.

- **Improving national opportunities:** Voting, primary education and, above all, learning about the political system and the SDGs, needs to be improved worldwide. Even in developed countries, young people often lack opportunities for political participation and feel excluded from the decision-making process. It would be beneficial to include young people in consultations, such as by involving youth committees in legislative processes.<sup>21</sup> In addition, youth-led initiatives need the resources to thrive and have an impact, so they should be allocated more funding. Governments should also address the struggles facing young members from marginalized groups by promoting their social and political participation and designing inclusive education systems.

- **Improving international opportunities:** With the advances in digital innovation and globalization, there must be better access to training and work opportunities in order to meet the global economy's growing demand for qualified workers. However, that would only solve part of the problem. Millions of young people worldwide have no access to education at all.<sup>22</sup>

Governments should make more effort to support education and networking opportunities for young people worldwide, so that these initiatives achieve their full potential via financial or practical assistance. Recognizing that young people's potential, commitment and expertise can contribute to implementing the SDGs on an international level is a vital step towards their active participation.

- **Developing a coherent United Nations approach:** Although the United Nations offers various opportunities for young people, they are still excluded from decision-making in numerous areas. Many Member States declare their commitment to fostering youth participation,<sup>23</sup> but how can the United Nations genuinely achieve results? Its diverse specialized agencies have often developed their own approaches, and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth position was partially created to coordinate these aspects and solutions within the system.<sup>24</sup> How can the good practice demonstrated by certain programmes and specialized agencies be transmitted to the United Nations more generally? How can the United Nations raise awareness among young people of the SDGs, and how can the latter become more involved when United Nations-related bodies implement the SDGs?

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations: Youth Participation Factsheet, p. 3, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-participation.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> United Nations: More than half of children and youth worldwide 'not learning' – UNESCO, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/09/more-than-half-of-children-and-youth-worldwide-not-learning-unesco/>

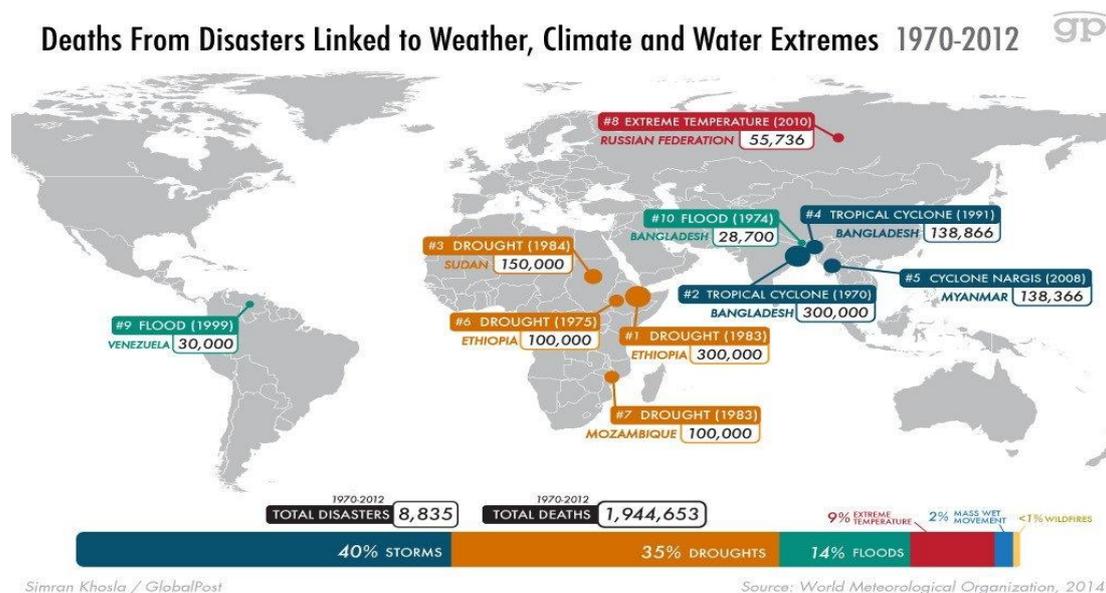
<sup>23</sup> Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth: World Leaders Bring Youth to the Global Stage at the 72nd UN General Assembly, <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/10/world-leaders-bring-youth-global-stage-72nd-un-general-assembly/>

<sup>24</sup> Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth: Envoy's Workplan, <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/workplan/>

## 3. AGENDA ITEM B: ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE SYSTEM TO NATURAL DISASTERS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The 2009 United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction Terminology describes a disaster as follows: “A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources”.<sup>25</sup> A disaster caused by natural hazards, also known as a “natural disaster”<sup>26</sup>, can cover a range of phenomena: geological natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides; disasters linked to climate change and meteorological stimuli such as drought, cold waves, heat waves, avalanches, wave surges (for example, tsunamis and tidal waves), and wind storms (for example, cyclones, hurricanes, storms, tornadoes, tropical storms, typhoons and winter storms).<sup>27</sup> Natural disasters usually occur unexpectedly and it is often difficult to quantify the potential loss they cause to people’s lives, health, livelihoods, assets and services.



To reduce the continual impact of natural disasters on society’s development, authorities must establish regulations and standards. These can be used to control a building’s design, construction, materials, alteration and occupancy, which are all necessary to ensure people’s safety and welfare, and to minimize the negative impact of natural disasters. The building should meet technical and

<sup>25</sup> United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), (May 2009) “2009 Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, a Disaster” Available at: [http://www.unisdr.org/files/7817\\_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/files/7817_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Definition of “Natural Disaster”, Business Dictionary (online) Available at: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/natural-disaster.html>

<sup>27</sup> UNSD Workshop on Environment Statistics (Abuja, 19-23 May 2008) “Natural Disaster” Available at: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/UNSD\\_UNEP\\_ECOWAS%20Workshop/Session%2004-1%20Natural%20disasters%20\(UNSD\).pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/UNSD_UNEP_ECOWAS%20Workshop/Session%2004-1%20Natural%20disasters%20(UNSD).pdf)

functional requirements. Regulations should draw on what we have learnt from our past and be tailored to national and local needs.

### 3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PAST RESOLUTIONS

The General Assembly's 78th plenary meeting adopted resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991), which aimed at the "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations".<sup>28</sup> The document contained a comprehensive annexe on emergency humanitarian assistance in the event of a natural disaster. Resolution 46/182 recalled resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971, and subsequent resolutions and decisions on humanitarian assistance (including resolution 45/100 of 14 December 1990).

Since then, the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Assistance Segment has been dedicated to creating an environment for developing the capacity of various entities: national and local authorities, national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and Member States' national and local non-governmental and community-based organizations. They aim to provide timely humanitarian assistance, and encourage the international community, certain United Nations entities, and other relevant institutions and organizations to support national authorities in their capacity-building programmes. This could be through technical cooperation and long-term partnerships that recognize the key role they play in providing humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, ECOSOC's actions support national efforts to achieve Priority 5 of the Hyogo Framework for Action: "Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels". This takes countries' circumstances and capacities into account, in coordination with relevant bodies. On 30 November 2007, States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement unanimously adopted the "Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance" (also known as the "IDRL Guidelines") at the thirtieth International Conference of the Movement. They aimed to help governments be better prepared for common legal problems in international response operations. Governments can use the Guidelines to avoid needless delays when disseminating humanitarian relief, and to ensure that the assistance provided is better coordinated and of a higher standard. In 2008, the United Nations General Assembly adopted three resolutions (resolution 63/139, 63/141, and 63/137) encouraging states to make use of them. The latest ECOSOC resolution to mention the IDRL Guidelines was resolution 2014/13, 14 August 2014, on the "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

### 3.3 IMPACT OF A NATURAL DISASTER

As the frequency and severity of disasters triggered by natural hazards have continued to rise over the last three decades, so too has their socioeconomic impact. Disasters between 2003 and 2013 cost some \$1.5 trillion worldwide in terms of economic damage. In the last few years, according to the 2015 Secretary-General's report on the Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, "Economic losses [from natural hazard-induced disasters] have reached an

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<sup>28</sup> A/RES/46/182 of 78th plenary meeting (19 December 1991) "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations" Available at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>

average of \$250 billion to \$300 billion a year". It is therefore necessary to examine what aspects of society and people's lives have been affected and how.

### **3.3.1 IMPACT ON THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND FOOD SECURITY**

National and international disaster loss databases typically report on populations affected, and on damage to housing and other infrastructure, but they seldom mention damage or losses in the agricultural sector.<sup>29</sup>

When examining the wider impact of disasters, studies testify that besides production losses, medium and large-scale disasters can have a significant impact across the food value chain. They can have negative consequences on the trade flow of agricultural commodities, sector growth, food and non-food agricultural industries, and national economies. For example, crop production losses caused by the 2010 floods in Pakistan directly affected cotton ginning, rice processing and flour and sugar milling, while the importing of cotton and rice surged. Half of the \$10 billion subsidy was given to the agricultural sector to repair damage and loss. Sector growth dropped from 3.5 per cent to 0.2 per cent between 2009 and 2010. National gross domestic product also fell from 2.8 per cent to 1.6 per cent within the same time period.<sup>30</sup>

A disaster's impact on agriculture also directly affects people's livelihoods and food security. Disasters can lead to unemployment and a decline in wages and, in turn, a decline in the incomes of farmers and farm labourers. Food is less readily available in local markets, which leads to a rise in the price of food. These pressures reduce a household's purchasing power, restrict access to food, deplete savings, force people to sell vital productive assets, and erode livelihoods. Food quantity and quality are compromised, and food insecurity and malnutrition increase, particularly in the most vulnerable households.

A disaster's impact could be mitigated if there is better understanding of the availability of macroeconomic buffers, and of the link between a catastrophe and its impact on food crises.

### **3.3.2 HEALTH AND SANITATION ISSUES**

Systematically observing the effects of natural disasters on human health has led to different conclusions about how diverse they can be.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Climatic Exposure**

Some health hazards are linked to people being exposed to the elements, even after disasters in temperate climates. Nevertheless, if the population is kept dry, reasonably well-clothed, and is able to find windbreaks, death from exposure does not appear to

<sup>29</sup> Olumuyiwa S Adedeji, Jana Gieck-Bricco, Vera V Kehayova (March 2016) "Natural Disasters and Food Crises in Low-Income Countries : Macroeconomic Dimensions" International Monetary Fund [online] Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Natural-Disasters-and-Food-Crises-in-Low-Income-Countries-Macroeconomic-Dimensions-43794>

<sup>30</sup> "The impact of disasters on agriculture and food security" (2015). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/a-i5128e.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> "NATURAL DISASTERS Protecting the Public's Health." Pan American Health Organization [online] Available at: [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/1913\\_VL206114.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/1913_VL206114.pdf)

be a major risk in Latin America and the Caribbean. The need to provide emergency shelter therefore varies greatly depending on local conditions.

**Water Supply and Sanitation**

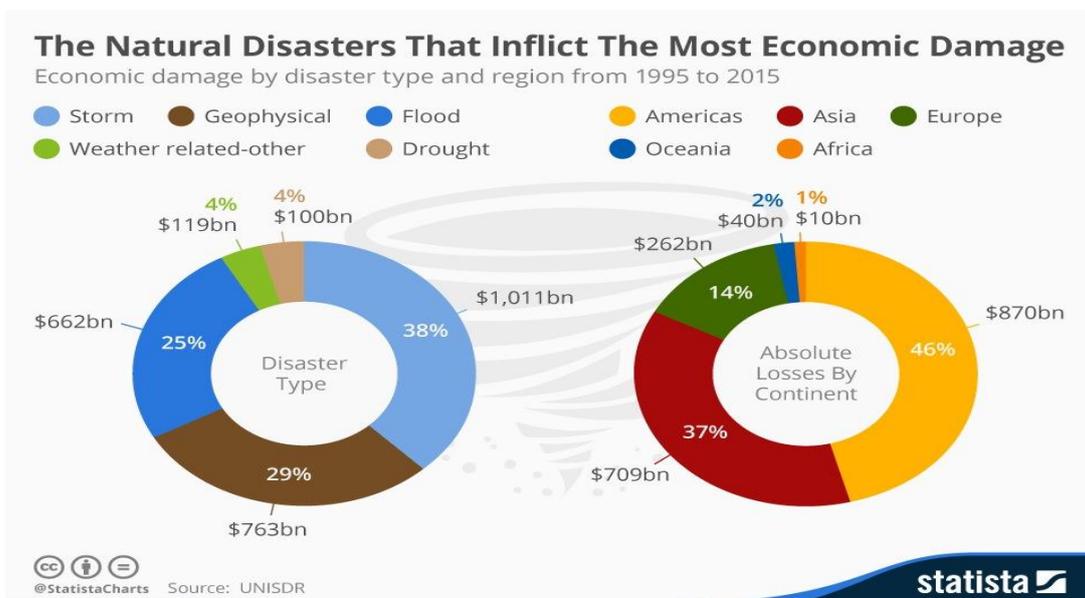
Drinking water supply and sewerage systems are extensive, often in disrepair, and can be exposed to a variety of hazards following a natural disaster. Sanitation deteriorates because of the shortage of good quality drinking water, and the fact that people struggle to dispose of excreta and other waste matter. This creates an environment conducive to the spread of various diseases.

**Mental Health**

There are few cases of anxiety, neurosis, and depression following disasters, and family and neighbours in rural or traditional societies are able to deal with them temporarily. Humanitarian volunteers and workers, on the other hand, are at high risk. Efforts should be made to preserve family and community social structures wherever possible. In industrialized or metropolitan areas in developing countries, the process of rehabilitation takes its toll on mental health problems.

**Damage to the Health Infrastructure**

Natural disasters can seriously damage health facilities, water supplies and sewage systems, which has a direct impact on the health of the population who is dependent on such services. Natural disasters jeopardize the lives of those in structurally unsafe hospitals and health centres, and make it difficult to provide adequate health services to disaster victims. As a result of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the water supply systems of 23 hospitals in Honduras were damaged or destroyed, and 123 health centres were affected. Peru reported that nearly 10 per cent of the country’s health facilities suffered damage as a result of El Niño events, 1997–1998.



### 3.3.3 ECONOMIC IMPACT

In our increasingly interconnected economy, it is rare for one geographic area alone to bear the brunt of the economic fallout.<sup>32</sup>

One of the biggest problems for areas affected is business disruption. Major disasters often damage roads, communications infrastructure, and buildings, meaning that local businesses might have to shut down for some time until the aftershock dies down. Reuters claims that factories for manufacturers like Sony, Honda and Toyota were closed after a series of earthquakes struck Japan.

Rank	Economic Cost (billions)	Insured Losses (billions)	Uninsured Losses (billions)	Disaster	Year	Location
1	\$221.6	\$36.9	\$184.7	Tohoku Earthquake/ Tsunami	2011	Japan
2	\$209.2	\$104.9	\$104.9	Atlantic Hurricane Season	2005	USA, Mexico, Caribbean, Bahamas
3	\$160.8	\$4.8	\$156	Kobe Earthquake	1995	Japan
4	\$92.5	\$0.4	\$92.1	Sichuan Earthquake	2008	China
5	\$81.5	\$1.9	\$79.6	Drought	1988	USA
6	\$73.2	\$30.8	\$42.2	Hurricane Sandy	2012	USA, Caribbean, Bahamas
7	\$71	\$24.7	\$46.4	Northridge Earthquake	1994	USA
8	\$60.6	\$0.7	\$59.9	Drought	1980	USA
9	\$51	\$0.6	\$50.4	Irpinia Earthquake	1980	Italy
10	\$47	\$16.2	\$30.8	Floods	2011	Thailand

Table 1: The world's costliest natural disasters (source: Aon Benfield, 2015)

Although less obvious, a natural disaster can have a huge impact on commodity prices. Hurricane Katrina's entry point is significant because nearly half of the USA's petrol consumption comes from

<sup>32</sup> "The Impact Of Natural Disasters On The Global Economy," TheONEBrief [online] Available at: <http://www.theonebrief.com/the-impact-of-natural-disasters-on-the-global-economy/>

refineries on the Gulf Coast that were hit by the storm. As a result, oil and gas supplies were affected immediately after Katrina made landfall. Higher petrol prices had a knock-on effect on industry in other areas such as the cost of transportation and consumer goods, as profit margins were diminished. The copper market suffered in a similar way as earthquakes in Chile choked production and inflated copper prices worldwide. Such price hikes are not just limited to market-traded commodities. When natural disaster strikes, scarcity rules, and regular staples such as food, merchandise and even housing become commoditized.<sup>33</sup>

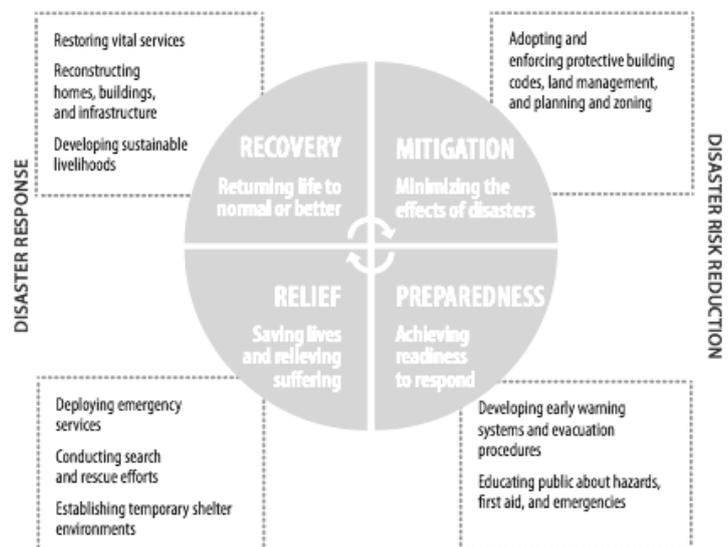
### 3.3.4 POPULATION DISPLACEMENT

When large, spontaneous or organized population movement occurs, humanitarian assistance is urgently needed. People may move to urban areas where public services cannot cope, and this could result in an increase in disease and mortality. If much of the housing is destroyed, large population displacement may occur within urban areas as people seek shelter with relatives and friends. Surveys of settlements and towns around Managua, Nicaragua, following the December 1972 earthquake indicated that 80-90 per cent of the 200,000 displaced persons were living with friends and relatives; 5-10 per cent were living in parks, city squares, and vacant lots; and the remainder were living in schools and other public buildings. After the earthquake that struck Mexico City in September 1985, 72 per cent of the 33,000 homeless found shelter in areas close to where their homes had been destroyed.

## 3.4 RESPONSE STRATEGY

The preambulatory clause of ECOSOC Resolution 2008/36 (“Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”) recognises the relationship between emergency, rehabilitation and development, and the need for a smooth transition from one to the other. The resolution states that emergency assistance should support relief and long-term aid, and that measures should be put in place to ensure future development. Disaster response is an important component of international humanitarian aid and requires the expertise of many specialized bodies, including government entities, the military, intergovernmental organizations (typically United Nations agencies), international and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and affected civilian populations. No single agent can undertake all aspects of relief and recovery. Many specialists are needed to address survivors’ needs (which span health, nutrition, emergency shelter, rebuilding livelihoods, and water and sanitation). They must collaborate in order to pool their specific knowledge, experience and technologies, use resources as

**FIGURE 2: PHASES OF DISASTER RESPONSE**



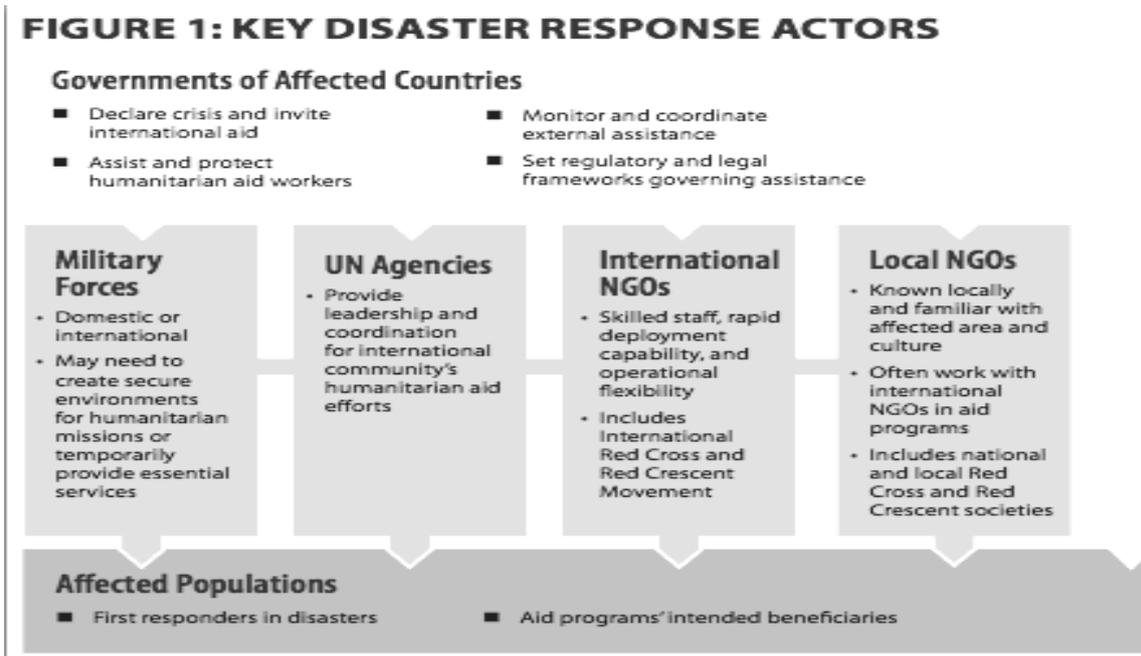
they collaborate in order to pool their specific knowledge, experience and technologies, use resources as

<sup>33</sup> Elmerraji J. (August 25, 2017) “The Financial Effects of a Natural Disaster,” INVESTOPEDIA [online] Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0311/the-financial-effects-of-a-natural-disaster.aspx>

best they can, and ensure that they use tried and tested solutions. Apart from experts seeing to post-disaster needs, disaster response has several other phases. It is essential to note that the order of these phases is not set in stone. The “cycle pattern” could be altered if people are feeling fragile after being caught up in armed conflict. If a disaster occurs in a country which lacks the necessary resources or which has been engaged in protracted conflict, the situation may be exacerbated and this could affect the phases of the cycle.

ECOSOC has established specialized Ad Hoc Advisory Groups to support regions or countries emerging from conflicts or natural disasters (such as the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries emerging from conflict). Moreover, the organ has used its partnerships and bilateral collaboration to point out how important it is to aim for sound socioeconomic development in order to tackle the aftermath of natural disasters at every phase of the cycle.

Here are some examples of United Nations organizations and programmes that support ECOSOC’s fight against natural disasters: the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, (UNISDR) the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide who makes recommendations to the Secretary-General.



Furthermore, regarding the issues of disaster response, warning, prevention and treatment, ECOSOC actively cooperates with other International Organizations (IOs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), the World Bank (WB), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as with NGOs like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, Doctors Without Borders).

In recent years, ECOSOC has emphasized through its fora the importance of building partnerships by offering a platform for businesses, private foundations, governments, academics, and other bodies to come together and define new ways of working towards sustainable development.

### **3.4.1 GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

Given that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, it requires an “All of Society Inclusive Approach”. The empowerment of women is a crucial ingredient in building disaster resilience. A gender perspective on DRR helps to address women’s vulnerabilities so they can effectively prepare, confront, and recover from disasters.<sup>34</sup>

Consistent advocacy over the last ten years has resulted in increasing acknowledgement of the constructive role women play in disaster risk reduction. Numerous countries have recognized the importance of the gender dimension when reducing disaster risk and responding to disaster, and have actively involved men and women in their planning and implementation. Civil Society and women’s organizations have adopted innovative, gender equitable, pro-poor work to reduce disaster risk and build communities’ resilience. Furthermore, the international community has promised to focus on gender equality and women’s rights in disaster risk reduction. This commitment is established in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as other international agreements such as the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Commission on the Status of Women’s resolutions 56/2 and 58/2 on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters.<sup>35</sup>

## **3.5 CONCLUSION**

Taking everything into consideration, the serious impact of natural disasters on the global community’s socioeconomic status means that available resources must be adapted to resolve the situation for the international community and for regional, national and local entities. ECOSOC’s action plan must be clarified so that it differentiates between each type of disaster and its magnitude. ECOSOC must support where possible through proposals, research, dialogue and awareness, and by closely monitoring each programme. There must be more funding, adequate cooperation with IOs and NGOs, and better communication with national and regional bodies. Inevitably, ECOSOC has to confront some major challenges which can have a significant impact on economic and social conditions at a national, regional or international level. These include (but are not limited to):

- Increasing inequalities within and between states
- Profound demographic and epidemiological changes
- Increased migratory flows
- Depleted natural resources
- The adverse impact of environmental degradation
- The prospect of irreversible climate change

<sup>34</sup> Redfern C. (September 2016) “Why are women always affected more by natural disasters than men?” Marie Claire UK [online] Available at: <http://www.marieclaire.co.uk/reports/women-affected-by-natural-disasters-502942>

<sup>35</sup> GENDER AND A LEADING ROLE FOR WOMEN IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION [online] Available at: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/advocate/gender>

The aforementioned variables often complicate ECOSOC's efforts considerably. Such trends can hinder international intervention, funding, development operations, and the general progress of a society affected by disaster as it strives for prosperity and sustainable development.

## 4. SUGGESTED READING

### 4.1 SUGGESTED READING FOR AGENDA ITEM A

- **Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965)**, A/RES/20/2037, 1965, [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/3DeclarationonthePromotionamongYouthoftheIdealsofPeace,MutualRespectandUnderstandingbetweenPeoples\(1965\).aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/3DeclarationonthePromotionamongYouthoftheIdealsofPeace,MutualRespectandUnderstandingbetweenPeoples(1965).aspx)
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- **World Programme of Action for Youth**, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>

### 4.2 SUGGESTED READING FOR AGENDA ITEM B

- Sustainable Development: Knowledge Platform: Disaster Risk Reduction [online] <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/disasterriskreduction>
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## 6. COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Argentina	Peru
Australia	Poland
Brazil	Republic of Korea
Chile	Russian Federation
China	Rwanda
Colombia	Save the Children
France	Serbia
Germany	Somalia
Ghana	South Africa
Greece	Spain
Greenpeace	Turkey
Guyana	Uganda
Honduras	United Arab Emirates
India	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Indonesia	United States of America
International Committee of the Red Cross	Venezuela
Iraq	Viet Nam
Italy	Zimbabwe
Japan	
Mexico	
Morocco	
Norway	
Oxfam	
Panama	