United Nations Economic and Social Council
Background Guide
Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Economic and Social Council of the 2014 Canadian International Model United Nations!

2014 is a critical year for the United Nations as it marks the near-end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), calling upon the international community to design, develop and implement a new framework for international development: the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Building upon decades of work, the entire UN system, its Member States, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders have spent the past few years exploring, debating, and collaborating to build consensus on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Will it have goals, targets, and indicators: MDGs+? Will there be separate Sustainable Development Goals, or will they be integrated into the MDGs+? How will the agenda be implemented, and who will be accountable? How will the roles of developed and developing countries differ?

These questions, and many others, are crucial to the creation of a new framework that will empower Member States and other stakeholders to drive the development of a world that is prosperous, sustainable, and equal, enshrining the values of the UN and global citizens.

As delegates to ECOSOC, your role is a critical one, and you will need to address these questions at CANIMUN. Recognizing the importance of 2014 to the future of international development, we have focused the topics of this year’s CANIMUN on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its many components. As the organization leading the Canadian consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the United Nations Association in Canada views CANIMUN as an invaluable source for the input of youth, young scholars, and future global leaders, in the international debate. We look forward to your spirited discussions and resolutions, and will incorporate these important outcomes into our research that we will take to the UN in the months following.

Your voices will be heard by our national and international partners, including governments and the UN. Be thoughtful, innovative, and inclusive contributors to this important dialogue.

This background guide is an excellent start to your research into “The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to education” and “Private Sector Involvement in Sustainable Development”. ECOSOC will be led by Director, Anna Luu-Nguyen, and Chair, Sevda Sparks. Please do not hesitate to contact them at ecosoc.canimun@gmail.com with any questions or comments you may have. You will also submit your position papers, due February 21st, to their email address. Please visit our website at www.canimun.org for further instruction.

On behalf of your Secretariat and CANIMUN staff, good luck with your research and we look forward to meeting you in March!

Sincerely,

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I. The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to education

Introduction

Since the adoption of the common goals for the international community to achieve by 2015, comprised in the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All Assessment, the situation regarding education has increased considerably in respect of the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which aims to achieve universal primary education. In developing countries, enrolment in primary school has reached 90% in 2010, compared to 82% in 1999. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of children out of school decreased by 45 million. However, many issues still exist preventing the full realization of the 2015 goal with approximately 57 million children around the world who have not entered primary school. Of that statistic, more than 50% are girls. Such barriers include gender disparities, poverty, humanitarian emergencies and conflicts, the lack of resources and recruitment of teachers.

International Framework

The right to education is a basic human right mentioned in many of the core international human rights instruments. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III)) was adopted on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly, establishing fundamental and universal human rights. Its Article 26 affirms that “everyone has the right to education”, which “shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), written in 1966 and which entered into force in 1976, states in its Article 13 that “primary education shall be compulsory and available free for all”. The ICESCR further states that “education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” The right to education is also emphasized in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979, of which Article 10 provides guidelines to ensure the realization of gender equality. The Convention on the Rights of Child of 1989 also contains the same principle of compulsory and free primary education in its Article 28. Each convention of the core international human rights instruments created its own monitoring committee composed of independent experts responsible for supervising the implementation of the instrument and providing recommendations following the review of each State Party’s report.

In April 2000, Member States committed to the achievement of quality basic education for all by 2015 at the World Education Forum, based on the 2000 Education for All (EFA) Assessment, which provided specific analysis on a national level. The Dakar Framework for Action sets the following six goals: expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities; universal access to and completion of basic education; reduction of the adult illiteracy rate; improvement of learning achievement; expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills; and knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development. Yearly, a Global Monitoring Report is

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published by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The 2012 Report showed that progress has taken a step back, and if it continues to slow down, the EFA goals and MDGs will not be met by 2015.\textsuperscript{14}

In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the \textit{Millennium Declaration} (A/RES/55/2), a global partnership between governments to reduce poverty by 2015 by targeting eight specific areas of action, commonly known as the Millennium Development Goals.\textsuperscript{15} Two years later, the Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the UN Development Group created the Millennium Project, an independent advisory board headed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, advisor to the Secretary-General, and issued a report named \textit{Investing in Development: a Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals}.\textsuperscript{16} The report sets out a course of action that all governments should follow towards the full realization of the MDGs by 2015.\textsuperscript{17}

Since 2010, UNESCO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Senegal, Canada, Germany, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, joined efforts in a series of 11 thematic meetings to ensure continuity in the development goals after 2015.\textsuperscript{18} The group appointed a task team and a high-level panel of eminent persons and a special advisor on post-2015 development planning, as well as many national and regional consultations.\textsuperscript{19} In March 2013, the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda was held in Dakar, Senegal, and welcomed Member States, the private sector, civil society and UN agencies.\textsuperscript{20} Upon reviewing the challenges post-2015, the conference declared that “equitable quality lifelong education and learning for all” must be the cornerstone of the development agenda.\textsuperscript{21} The September 2013 Consultation also resulted in the publication of the report titled \textit{Making Education a Priority in the Post-2015 Development Agenda}, the main objectives being:

- Stimulate wide-ranging discussion at the global, regional and country levels on progress made and lessons learned from the education-related MDGs and EFA goals;
- Generate consensus on the most effective way to reflect education, training and learning in the post-2015 development framework;
- Develop ideas about how progress towards greater education quality and equity may be measured, including what goals and targets need to be defined.\textsuperscript{22}

In September 2012, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, launched the Global Education First Initiative, combining the expertise of UN multilateral agencies, governments, civil society and the private sector to facilitate the achievement of the goals and commitments ahead of 2015.\textsuperscript{23} The Initiative focused on three aspects: the necessary resources and investments for the achievement of universal primary education, the improvement of the quality of learning, and the sustainability of education policies.\textsuperscript{24} The main purpose of the Initiative is to tackle the principal barriers to each aspect and prepare appropriate responses to ensure the full realization of universal education. These barriers are: humanitarian emergencies (environmental or armed conflicts), the issues of child labour, gender discrimination, poverty and hunger, inadequate adaptation of education in daily lives (skills, language, family environment, values, etc.), lack of trained personnel and learning materials, equipment and resources, among others.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{UN System Involvement}

In 2000, the Secretary-General created the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), regrouping various UN bodies and intergovernmental agencies aiming to tackle the specific issue of gender equality in education worldwide and

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\textsuperscript{15} United Nations, \textit{Millennium Development Goals, Background}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{16} United Nations Millennium Project, \textit{About the UN Millennium Project}, 2002.
\textsuperscript{17} United Nations Millennium Project, \textit{Overview}, 2002
\textsuperscript{23} Global Education First Initiative, \textit{Partnerships}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{24} United Nations Millennium Development Goals, \textit{Global Education First Initiative}, 2013
\textsuperscript{25} Global Education First Initiative, \textit{Priorities}, 2013.
\end{flushright}
ensuring the full participation of young girls in all levels of education and in society. By being the main organization to specially focus on girls’ education, the UNGEI assists governments in fulfilling the following responsibilities, among others:

“… Improving the quality and availability of girls’ education, accelerating action on girls’ education and revitalizing the broad social mobilization and high-level political action, relying on a broad alliance of committed partners who are mobilized to provide direct support, mobilizing resources for targeted project interventions, promoting strategies that put the needs of the most disadvantaged, including girls and women, first in education policies, plans and budgets, and removing barriers to learning, such as school fees and other education costs and violence in and around schools, and to support the continuation of education in emergency situations such as areas affected by armed conflict, natural disasters or external shocks, as well as in post-crisis and fragility contexts.”

The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar has mandated UNESCO to globally coordinate the EFA movement, comprising the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the World Bank, in five key areas: policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy, mobilization of funds and capacity development. In 2011, UNESCO reviewed the structure of the EFA coordination, and included regional and national coordination mechanisms for the review of global monitoring reports.

In September 2000, the international community agreed to set international goals and commitments in regard to education to reinforce the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Article 26, which states that “everyone has the right to education”. The Millennium Declaration (RES A/55/L.2) setting out the MDGs was adopted unanimously and fixed 8 goals with specific targets to be met by the year 2015. The second goal, the achievement of universal primary education, puts emphasis on ensuring that by 2015, all children, boys and girls, complete a full course of primary school. The third goal promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women, and targets the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015.

In July 2011, the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) of the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC focused on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education" in order to formulate better responses to new challenges and include new stakeholders in the achievement of the goals by 2015, by:

- Assessing the state of implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda with a focus on its education-related goals and objectives;
- Analyzing key challenges affecting the achievement of the internationally agreed goals and commitments related to education;
- Considering recommendations and proposals for action, including new initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the implementation of education-related objectives at all levels;
- Promoting broad-based engagement by encouraging input from a broad-range of stakeholders.

Prior to the AMR in April 2011, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued its report Theme of the Annual Ministerial Review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education, which served as a basis for discussion. The AMR resulted in the Ministerial Declaration affirming the following: education must be a priority in national development strategies, as it is linked to sustainable development, professional and skills development and economic growth; governments and agencies should tackle the issues of illiteracy amongst the population and


discrimination of all kinds against girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and the poorest and most vulnerable; and education must remain a priority in conflict and post-conflict situations and humanitarian emergencies.35

In August 2012, ECOSOC adopted the resolution entitled The Role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education (E/RES/2012/2), which emphasizes the necessity for:

“… relevant United Nations entities working in the education, health and food sectors, within their respective mandates, [to] seek synergies to enhance enrolment, retention, participation and achievement of girls and boys at school and [to] maximize interventions to the benefit of children (…) the relevant United Nations entities and the international financial institutions working in the economic and educational fields to strengthen their collaboration in order to advance, as appropriate, technical and vocational training, higher education, access to and participation in the workforce and the promotion of entrepreneurship among youth (…) [and to] assess emerging trends in education and training, particularly the increased focus on learning outcomes, teacher training and the use of information and communications technologies in education processes, and to analyse the implications for their programmes on education”.36

Key Issues and Remaining Challenges

As 2015 approaches, there are still 57 million children who are out of school.37 Although progress has been made since the establishment of the agreed upon goals and commitments, the international community needs to tackle the variety of issues having a direct effect on the non-realization of goals regarding education.

The principal challenges are extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, which are intrinsically linked.38 Children living in the poorest countries do not have access to basic water, sanitation, health care or food, which are necessary to be able to concentrate in school, and they are often asked to work at a young age to provide their families with resources instead of attending primary school.39 Child labour occurs where regulation is lacking, despite its prohibition by the International Labour Organization. It becomes a vicious circle for the children, as basic education is the key to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition.40 In order to ensure the realization of MDG2 and the EFA goals, the international community must achieve MDG1, which aims to eradicate poverty and hunger.41

Gender discrimination is also an issue, as more than 50% of out-of-school children are girls, or an estimated 31 million worldwide in 2012.42 The environment in school is often not adapted for girls, notably because of the lack of female teachers and hygiene facilities in the schools which often leads to discrimination, exploitation and violence towards girls.43 Because girls are often denied access to basic education, sometimes by policies and legislation of the country itself, they lack crucial information about early marriage, pregnancy and birth, health issues and poverty.44 The international community must work on gender parity in education as a basis to achieve gender equality; “when all children have access to a quality education rooted in human rights and gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come.”45

Another key challenge in achieving universal primary education lies in conflict and humanitarian emergency situations.46 For instance, in 2011 28 million children were thrown out of school in conflict regions. These children may become child

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36United Nations Economic and Social Council, The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education (E/RES/2012/2), 10 August 2012.
soldiers. Education becomes a lower priority in these situations, making reconstruction even more difficult and affecting directly all positive results of gender parity, reduction of poverty and hunger, and respect of basic human rights. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) working under UNESCO published the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction in 2004, putting education as a priority with coordination of delivery of food, medication and other basic materials and the reconstruction of basic facilities such as hospitals, in post-disaster coordination.

Case Study: The Bolsa Familia Program in Brazil

In 2003, Former President Lula Da Silva of Brazil, with the technical and financial support of the World Bank, created the Bolsa Familia program which aims to reduce poverty by providing the families with the lowest income revenue with conditional cash transfers. The Brazilian government transfer funds to families who in return will ensure their children attend school and are provided basic education. In 2010, an estimate of one-third of the children in Brazil benefited directly from the Bolsa Familia program. This program works in accordance with the MDGs, notably the first goal, which aims to reduce poverty, and the second one, achieving universal primary education. The number of drop-out children reduced by 7.8%, and as of 2009, 94% of qualifying children are enrolled in primary school.

The Bolsa Familia program is also intended to benefit low-income families in other areas, such as rural development, by providing the necessary resources, technical assistance and social inclusion for parts of the Brazilian society, which never benefited from national social programmes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although significant progress has been made since the establishment of the internationally agreed goals and commitments regarding education, we are still far from reaching the said goals in 2015. The role of the United Nations, especially the specialized agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF under the ECOSOC, is critical in the coordination of efforts to realize these goals and commitments. However, it is ultimately up to the Member States to ensure achievement of what was unanimously adopted in 2000.

Questions for Delegates

1. How can the education principles of the Bolsa Familia program be transposed to the international community to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs and the EFA goals?

2. How can the international community eradicate gender disparities to ensure the full participation of girls in educational programs?

3. What should be considered urgent in the post-2015 agenda with regards to education?

4. How can the international community address the various barriers to the full realization of the internationally agreed goals and commitments regarding education?

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49 International Labour Organization, Brazil’s Conditional Cash Transfer Programme Bolsa Familia, March 2012.
52 Mourão, Macedo de Jesus, Bolsa Familia (Family Grant) Programme: an Analysis of Brazilian Income Transfer Programme, 2011.
Bibliography


II. Private Sector Involvement in Sustainable Development

Introduction

In 1987, the report *Our Common Future* (or the Brundtland Report) published the first definition of sustainable development: “[i]t is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs”.53 Since then, the international community's conceptualization of sustainable development, taking into consideration the constantly changing world, has expanded to include the following:

- “the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs”.

The private sector is the driver of economic growth and, in recent years, has been notably proactive in contributing to the sustainable development agenda through the implementation of green economy and socially responsible policies.55 Globalization has heightened the need for Member States and UN bodies to partner with the private sector to advance the sustainable development agenda, especially as we approach the post-2015 period.

International Framework

In 1987, following the World Commission on Environment and Development, the Brundtland Report was issued as an annex to the General Assembly resolution titled *Development and International Cooperation: Environment* (A/42/427)56, to present a broad definition of sustainable development.57 At the time, cooperation between the public and private sectors was already encouraged in various fields, particularly those concerning environmental regulations, loans and credit, urban strategies and housing, and generally in international efforts to help developing countries58.

“The importance of private investment and the key role of transnational corporations have already been highlighted. It is inconceivable that a successful transition to sustainable development can be achieved unless the policies and practices are reoriented around sustainable development objectives. Those external agencies that support and facilitate private investment, particularly export credit and investment insurance organizations, should also incorporate sustainable development criteria into their policies and practices.”59

In 1992, governments convened at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or Earth Summit) in Rio, to create the Commission on Sustainable Development and publish *Agenda 21*, which proposes many recommendations for effective sustainable development to international stakeholders in all sectors.60 Its Section 3: *Strengthening the Role of Major Groups*, calls the businesses and industries to practice responsible entrepreneurship for better resource management and to be compliant with environmental laws and regulations to decrease negative impacts on the environment.61 The *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (the Rio Principles) was also adopted at the Earth Summit, setting 27 principles as a foundation for the application of sustainable development.62 In June 1997, the 19th Special Session of the General Assembly adopted the *Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21* (Resolution S-19/2, annex).63

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emphasizing cooperation between public and private sectors, notably in energy matters, financing and technology transfer.\textsuperscript{64} Ten years later, in 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the \textit{Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development} and its \textit{Plan of Implementation}\textsuperscript{65} were adopted, reiterating principles set forth in previous years and the role of the private sector.\textsuperscript{66} This Declaration emphasizes an enhanced role of ECOSOC in the pursuit of sustainable development, notably in changing the patterns of consumption and production that are contrary to sustainable development and protecting the natural resources that are the basis of economic and social development.\textsuperscript{67}

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set out by the \textit{Millennium Declaration} (A/RES/55/2) in September 2000 in order to reduce poverty and inequalities by 2015.\textsuperscript{68} The eighth MDG, which aims to develop a global partnership for development, addresses in one of its targets the role of the private sector to “make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications”.\textsuperscript{69} By 2013, over six billion mobile phone subscriptions had been registered worldwide and affordable access to Internet had increased greatly in developing countries, where 65\% of Internet users are located.\textsuperscript{70} Although more people are joining the information and technology society, in developing countries, some regions are still out of reach and the gender gap is still visible: there are 16\% less women using the Internet than men.\textsuperscript{71}

In January 2012, the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability published its report following a series of meetings in 2010 and 2011, titled \textit{Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing}. The report contains various recommendations for the development of new policies and the conduct of human activities in order to ensure a sustainable global economy and institutional governance.\textsuperscript{72}

The report states the following regarding the role of the private sector:

“Non-governmental actors have also become key players in international relations and sustainable development. In the private sector, progressive companies are moving away from the voluntarism of ‘corporate social responsibility’ and towards much harder-edged, genuinely systemic approaches – both in their own activities (such as mainstreaming sustainability in supply chains through the use of standards or joining voluntary emission trading markets) and in their public policy (for example, coalitions of companies demanding tougher emissions targets and greater long-term certainty in environmental regulations and pricing”).\textsuperscript{73}

In 2012, the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) resulted in the decision to establish Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in conjunction with the post-2015 MDGs (MDGs+) and based on the principles set forth in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, to better realize the post-2015 development agenda. The Rio+20 resulted in the adoption of Resolution A/RES/66/288 entitled \textit{The Future We Want}, which emphasizes the next steps towards implementing the SDGs, and underlines the role of the private sector, as follows:

“… the implementation of sustainable development will depend on active engagement of both the public and private sectors… the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including through the important tool of public-private partnerships. We support national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives taking into account the importance of corporate social responsibility. We call on the private sector to engage in responsible business practices, such as those promoted by the UN Global Compact.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{68}United Nations Millennium Development Goals, \textit{Background}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{70}United Nations Millennium Development Goals, \textit{Goal 8 Fact Sheet}, September 2013.
\textsuperscript{72}United Nations Global Sustainability Panel, \textit{Background}, January 2012.
\textsuperscript{74}United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, \textit{The Future We Want}, June 2012, p7.
UN System Involvement (what has the UN done already?)

In 2000, the Secretary-General launched the UN Global Compact initiative, composed of more than 10,000 corporate participants and businesses of the private sector, in order to ensure corporate sustainability, defined as a “company's delivery of long-term value in financial, social, environmental and ethical terms”. The Global Compact develops strategies for the private sector for the respect and realization of the UN goals in terms of sustainable development. Of the Ten Principles regulating the Global Compact’s course of action, three are related to environment and call businesses to “support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges, undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies”. In the Global Compact Governance Framework, adopted in 2005 to review the governance structure and make the Global Compact more inclusive, the relationship with the United Nations was reinforced as follows:

“The Global Compact is taking on new importance within the UN itself. The GCO and the six participating UN agencies (OHCHR, ILO, UNEP, UNODC, UNDP, UNIDO) have formed an Inter-Agency Team to pool and leverage their expertise. A number of participants and other stakeholders, including governments, expressed their clear preference that the Global Compact retain its strong linkage with the Secretary-General’s office and not be subsumed within another UN department. The Global Compact Office will remain within the Office of the Secretary-General.”

In the last Annual Report (2011) of the UN Global Compact, significant improvements have been made by companies in the implementation of environmental policies, notably in terms of sustainable consumption and cleaner and safer production modes.

The 57th Session of the General Assembly declared by resolution A/RES/57/254 that 2005-2014 is the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) with the following primary objective: “to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. This educational effort will encourage changes in behaviour that will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations.” The resolution identifies three spheres for ensuring proper education for sustainable development in the post-2015 agenda: economic development, social development and environmental protection. UNESCO was designated to coordinate the efforts and activities surrounding the DESD, and as such, has built and strengthened partnerships with various governments, members of civil society and NGOs, and members of the private sector, as was prescribed in the International Implementation Scheme for action.

In 2007, UNESCO, partnering with the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC), published the report of the International Consultation on Education for Sustainable Development titled Engaging the Corporate Sector. The report was developed as a “result of UNESCO’s appreciation of the importance of the corporate sector in promoting sustainable development and its wish to engage more closely with business and industry to explore ways in which learning-based appreciation to sustainable development can be integrated into their training and capacity building programmes”. This Consultation was attended by various members of the private sector strongly engaged in education for sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda.

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75 United Nations Global Compact, Overview of the UN Global Compact, 2013.
82 United Nations General Assembly, President of the 65th Session, Sustainable Development : Background, 2011.
In June 2013, ECOSOC held the 2013 Ethiopia High-Level Symposium on “a renewed global partnership for development for a post-2015 era”, in which many stakeholders from civil society and the private sector participated, in preparation for the 2014 United Nations Development Cooperation Forum.86 The summary of the Symposium emphasizes that:

“There is demand for an increased role of the private sector in the renewed partnership for development, and to find ways to hold it accountable. The private sector, and specifically small and medium enterprises, has the resources and knowledge to become true drivers of development. Challenges such as energy, food security and urban development require the private sector to play a leading role. The private sector could engage in international development cooperation with a programmatic and systematic approach leveling its activities up from solely philanthropy to core business activity.”87

Within ECOSOC, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established in 1992 to monitor the progress of the principles set forth in Agenda 21 and is the council’s main functioning body on sustainable development.88 In 2003, the Commission established a multi-year programme of implementation cycles, each of which focuses on a particular issue, such as energy management, sanitation and biodiversity, among others.89 At the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, the ECOSOC decided to implement a universal intergovernmental High-Level Political Forum, to gradually replace the CSD, to conduct periodic reviews and follow-ups in the post-2015 era.90

The ECOSOC hosts various conferences with the participation of the private sector, notably the event “How corporate philanthropy can contribute to advancing the Millennium Development Goals, particularly for sustainable development” in February 2008, to promote public-private partnerships with philanthropic organizations.91 In October 2013, ECOSOC held the Switzerland High-Level Symposium on “Development Cooperation in a Post-2015 Era: Sustainable Development for All” as a step towards the Development Cooperation Forum to be held in 2014.92 The outcome document of the Symposium sets a base for the discussions about the remaining challenges: the interchanging geography of poverty, the creation of a new and unified development agenda and the integration in the world’s economy.93 Last November, ECOSOC and the Second Committee of the General Assembly met at a joint meeting titled “Finding solutions for addressing sustainable development challenges and accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”, addressing the necessity for public and private partnerships in the post-2015 agenda.94

In August 2012, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was created in order to include scientific and technical expertise from the private sector to face the remaining challenges of the realization of the MDGs towards 2015, working closely with United Nations agencies, multilateral financing institutions, as well as other international organizations in this regard.95 The members of the SDSN, mostly experts of the private sector, have targeted 12 issues, including but not limited to demography issues, peace building, social inclusion, governance and energy.96

**Key Issues and Remaining Challenges**

Although progress has been made, the international community, in collaboration with the private sector, needs to consider the period post-2015. Extreme poverty and social inequality, along with unsustainable consumption and production patterns

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94 International Institute for Sustainable Development, ECOSOC, UNGA Second Committee Discuss Public Private Partnership, 6 November 2013.
are major issues in the realization of sustainable development. Three challenges have been identified by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the post-2015 era: sustainable cities, food security and energy transformation.\(^9\)

For example, if current trends continue, the future presents significant challenges to achieving sustainable cities: “95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in developing world, 828 million people live in slums today and the number keeps rising, (…) and rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health”.\(^8\) The lack of funds for basic services such as sanitation, health care, water and electricity, adequate housing and infrastructure is still flagrant, and these issues must be considered to implement sustainable cities and human settlements, as set forth in Chapter 7 of Agenda 21.\(^9\) The UN Global Compact has identified 4 spheres for action: economical, ecological, political and cultural in its Cities Programme for the post-2015 agenda.\(^10\)

As food insecurity still affects 1 billion people in the world, the international community and the private sector must address the issues of food supplies and food production to ameliorate the current agricultural practices that are endangering the environment.\(^1\) The role of the private sector will be crucial in the next decades, notably in research and development, biotechnologies, infrastructure and water management, and food sustainability and security.\(^12\)

The current trends in energy usage show a dependence of consumers on biomass and thermal energy, overuse of electricity, greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, which are obstacles to reaching a sustainable environmental programme.\(^13\) UNDP identified the “universal access to modern energy for the poor and quality, security and affordability of modern energy” as the basis for action for sustainable energy usage.\(^14\) As such, the private sector, in collaboration with the United Nations, must focus on new patterns of consumption, waste management, use of biofuels, research and development and general energy access in order to be able to implement an international standard for energy sustainability.\(^15\)

**Case Study: Sustainable Development in Mongolia**

Mongolia is a landlocked country with an economy dependent primarily on mining activities and livestock production. The lack of diversity in economical activities and employment of the population and the negative effects of climate change are two of a variety of factors impacting environment and poverty in the country. In order to adhere to the Rio Principles and ensure sustainability of the country’s environment, the Mongolian government, in collaboration with UNDP, created the XacBank in 1999 as a micro-finance project for the population. XacBank provides loans to small businesses and farmers that meet the conditions of creating job opportunities for the population in need and respecting certain standards of corporate governance.\(^16\) When it became a commercial bank in 2006, XacBank kept its vision of socially and environmentally responsible practices, increased partnerships with the private sector and the government, and as such, “established an Eco-Unit, which provides subsidized loans to ‘green’ businesses and promotes sustainable practices such as energy efficiency”.\(^17\) XacBank is thus an example of a successful partnership between a UN body, government and the private sector for sustainable development.

**Conclusion**

The role of the private sector is essential in conducting sustainable development programmes, especially in the post-2015 development agenda. Partnerships between the private sector and UN bodies are well-established, thanks in large part to the

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\(^{9}\) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges* (E/2013/50/Rev. 1), 2013.


\(^{10}\) UN Global Compact, *The UN Global Compact Cities Programme*, 2013.

\(^{11}\) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges* (E/2013/50/Rev. 1), 2013, p xii.


\(^{13}\) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges* (E/2013/50/Rev. 1), 2013, p xiii.


continuing efforts of the Secretary-General for the realization of the MDGs by 2015, but must be expanded in support of the post-2015 agenda. The sectors that are still in great need of these partnerships (as well as the development of regulations) include sustainable cities, food security and energy transformation. It is up to the international community and Member States of the UN to collaborate with the private sector to develop and implement more initiatives to support sustainable development.

Questions for Delegates

In your discussion, you should consider the main challenges set forth by the UNDP:

1. How are the current trends in city development and slums impacting the realization of the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, and what should the international community focus on to ameliorate the situation?

2. How can the private sector collaborate with UN bodies to implement new production patterns to ensure food security? How can the international community implement a set of standards for sustainable energy consumption and transformation, and what should this plan of implementation focus on?


