Dear Delegates,

In February 2015, your country will encounter many issues in the domain of Economic & Social development. The member nations of the UN must address the changing landscape of global economies and social progress. Currently, the most critical issues in Economic and Social Council revolve around building peace and prosperity through science, technology, innovation, and post-conflict recovery. In this report, we will further examine two topics: firstly, science, technology, and innovation (STI) in promoting Millenium Development Goals. And secondly: peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.

The report is organized as follows: Section I gives you an overview of ECOSOC's historical role and current responsibilities, as well as great achievements we've brought forth. The next section will cover topics 1 and 2 of the debates. Both topics 1 and 2 have a depth and complexity which we hope the debate will be able to bring out. So our background guide will cover multiple positions and perspectives, which are important to understand before formulating your nation's argument.

Both issues are of interest to us, since we are seniors in Media Studies and Brain & Cognitive Studies. We look forward to a lively debate, and to meeting all of you personally! Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,
Chairs Jenny Sangliana & Mei Zuo

Topic 1: The critical role of Science, Technology and Innovation in the achievement of Millenium Development Goals

Outline

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Introduction

The role of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in the world's economies is growing, as the world globalizes. For some countries, there's been a gradual shift from traditional economies towards innovation economies, that are less reliant on traditional physical resources, and more reliant on creative capital and information capital. This trend is becoming more and more apparent. However, other countries are not yet at the stage where this shift might occur. And thus, there is a science, technology, and innovation (STI) disconnect between certain countries. As a result, the Economic and Social Council must address the following questions: how big is the STI gap between countries? What are the impacts that STI has on different countries? What are the precise ways in which STI relates to the Millenium Development Goals? Does STI lead to progress? If yes, how can ECOSOC use our powers and functions to further promote STI? If not, then what are the specific risks and long term risks of STI?

History and Mandate

On June 26, 1946, United Nations' Charter was signed by 51 member nations; and in Chapter X, the Economic and Social Council was founded as a Principal Organ of the United Nations. Currently there are 54 members in the committee. ECOSOC membership is in high demand because the committee has oversight responsibility for 14 specialized UN agencies with many resources, and is responsible for organizing and delegating tasks between different UN bodies.

The goal of ECOSOC is to understand common issues related to "international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters," according to Chapter X, Articles 62-66 of the charter. ECOSOC also engages other UN bodies as a mediator towards common goals and operational discussions. But most importantly, ECOSOC makes recommendations

to the General Assembly, to reshape the direction of policy making.

Recently, ECOSOC was given 2 new responsibilities, related to our topic of discussion. During the 2005 World Summit, it was established that ECOSOC would publish an Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and a biannual Development Cooperative Forum (DCF). While the DCF is targeted mostly towards international development agencies, the AMR has a more general scope, which encompasses our topic today. Every year, ECOSOC must do a thematic and critical review of how the world is progressing towards the Millenium Development Goals.

2013 AMR

The purpose of the AMR is spolight a specific theme in the Millenium Development Goals, which leads to policy-makers speeding up progress in that theme. Because Science, Technology, and Innovation is critical to many of the 8 MDGs, the 2013 AMR chose STI as its theme. The report was extremely collaborative, with co-authors from 25 other UN agencies.

The central argument of the 2013 AMR is that while “overcoming 21st century challenges such as extreme poverty, inequality and environmental degradation will likely draw on a range of innovations from science, technology and culture in the public and private sectors,” there are still major risks in taking a one-size-fits-all policy approach. How can we reach our Millenium Development Goals through STI, without increasing inequality and overlooking least developed countries?

Potential MDG Progress

There is enormous potential for Science, Technology, and Innovation to act as a tool for societies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and pursue sustainable development. Because “STI can significantly impact each of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. Specifically, STI drives the dynamic transformation of economies, through productivity growth, which influences economic growth. STI also affects economic growth through the knowledge spill-overs it generates between countries, firms, and industries. Moreover, it provides opportunities to “leapfrog” intermediate development stages. In turn, higher incomes and employment reduce poverty and help people meet their basic needs, including food security, health and education. Over time economic growth fuelled by innovations in science and technology can increase social cohesion, stability, and democratic governance. In some of the most successful emerging economies, economic growth in recent decades has led to a virtuous circle in which an expanding middle class began to insist on greater social, economic, and political participation. Advances in education, science, technology, and economic growth in these and similar economies are improving the prospects for peace and security.”

Potential

Progress was listed in the report as such:

- fostering access to knowledge;
- increasing productivity, industrialization, economic growth and the creation of decent jobs;
- promoting health and access to essential drugs;
- achieving food security through sustainable, equitable agricultural systems and by raising production and incomes, especially of smallholder farms;
- promoting renewable energy technologies in order to respond to the dual challenge of reducing energy poverty while mitigating climate change.

Risks & Challenges

The biggest risk in an audacious, overarching STI policy, is that the needs of Least Developed Nations might get overlooked. According to the report, “managing existing technology and non-technological innovation also counts. National and international policies, including intellectual property systems, need to adapt to this evolving environment and address the special needs of different countries, especially the least developed countries (LDCs).” While some members would prefer a straightforward, “one-size-fits-all” STI policy for all member nations, other members are arguing for more adoption time and differential treatment with regards to Intellectual Property, percentage of funding going towards research, and energy policies.

Furthermore,“the public sector has special responsibility for monitoring the risks and challenges pertaining to STI policies and strategies. For example, uneven access to technologies, such as broadband Internet, is an area of concern for policymakers because it limits opportunities and can exacerbate inequalities.” For instance, some STI industries disproportionately disclude women and ethnic minorities, which is a major long-term development concern. Inequality in STI is not sustainable. In addition, ECOSOC must protect the freedom of information as a fundamental right, and manage risks around the private monopolization of STI sectors.

Country Blocks

Alliances in ECOSOC have historically been quite regionally based, and voting is oftentimes along those lines. Currently, there are 13 spots for European and western nations, 6 spots for Eastern European nations, 11 for Asian nations, 10 for Latin American nations, and 14 for African nations. Each member may have one vote. With present and voting members, all decisions are done on a simple majority.

When it comes to the topic of science, technology, and innovation, countries that rely on innovation economies, with strong tech & IT businesses and large research universities, have

historically formed alliances around innovation funding. Similarly, countries with strong healthcare and pharmaceutical industries have also formed alliances.

Nonetheless, emerging market nations also have shared interests around the ability to innovate with restrictions. Many of the these nations aim to build IT and innovation economies, and have recently invested many resources to build educational and innovation hubs, which sometimes attract outside investment. BRIC nations are racing to solidify STI goals.

When it comes to the topic of peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, regional alliances and differences arise. Particularly in the middle-east, political interests play a major role in a nation's perspectives on this topic. Historically, countries have made decisions on this issue based on security alliances in place. One must also not neglect the sensitivity of this issue to the country experiencing the conflict or peacebuilding process.

Nonetheless, the biggest division around the STI issue will revolve around funding. Nations will differ with regards to which STI goal is most important. And strong debate will surround the issue of Intellectual Property policies, with stark differences arising between developed and Least Developed Nations.

Conclusion

Science, Technology, and Innovation form an integral part of understanding Millenium Development Goals. But more work must be done to understand and measure its quantitative impacts on each of the 8 MDGs. Furthermore, there has not been enough research done on the many risks of STI. Some countries are growing STI at an exponential rate, while other countries are only flatlining. Will this only increase global inequalities?

With this in mind, there are immediate actions that ECOSOC must take. If we find that STI can make a direct positive impact towards achieving a certain part of a Millenium Development Goal, then we must make immediate policy recommendations to catalyze that impact. However, if there are certain risks related to the rapid unregulated growth of STI, then ECOSOC is responsible for understanding those risks and form regulatory recommendations. Ultimately, the Economic and Social Council is the leader in building a framework towards economic and social progress.

Citations

http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/adv2013/13_amr_sg_report.pdf
http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amr2013.shtml
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Topic 2: Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Recovery

Peacebuilding is a type of intervention which is designed to prevent the start of a violent conflict and thus aims to create sustainable peace. After a certain period of conflict, it is not only important to help the region to recover from the damage to the economy or the social lives caused by the conflict but it is also important to build peace and ensure the conflict does not arise again.
For years in the UN, there have been resolutions passed regarding effective conflict management and channels through which peace should be built, but in light of the new conflicts across the world (Egypt, Syria, Israel-Palestine, Pakistan, Russia-Ukraine) these resolutions need to be re-evaluated for what should the most effective ways of post-conflict recovery.
This topic can be divided into various sub-topics:

1. Socio-political recovery
2. Economic Growth especially during leadership transition
3. Foreign Aid and investments
4. UN peacekeeping missions
5. Health and mental illness in post-conflict regions
6. Infrastructure

We expect that the delegates will research effective policies for each of these areas and propose a guideline of how regions recovering from conflict can be aided to not only continue to build peace but also form a economically and socially sound population.

Delegates must also understand that certain factions of the civil society might need special attention (children, women, elderly, disabled & wounded, veterans) and come up with policies that would impact them in the best possible way.

Potential Bloc Formations:
African Union
European Union
South-Asian (India-Pakistan- Bangladesh-Srilanka)
Middle East
Asia
South America

Helpful Links:

1. http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/oesc/peacebuilding.shtml
2. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9184/WDR2011_0010.pdf?sequence=1
3. http://www.obsafrique.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/ISSLanzeracReportSep2010.pdf

4. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2012/76
5. http://www.cepal.org/en/publications/post-conflict-peacebuilding-strategies-and-lessons-bosnia-and-herzegovina-el-salvador
6. http://www.beyondintractability.org/userguide/peacebuilders
7. http://www.usip.org/category/issue-areas/post-conflict-reconstruction