MAHAMAYA
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

ECOSOC

STUDY GUIDE

Message from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

As the chairs of the ECOSOC, we expect all delegates to use this study guide as a reference and starting point for your own comprehensive research. The study guide provides a basic overview of the issue, including definitions, topic breakdowns, and relevant UN conventions and resolutions. This document is not meant to be used as a substitute for your own research. We encourage you to conduct your own research to gain a deeper understanding of your country's stance with regard to the topic. During the two days of debate, we urge you to be well-prepared in order to articulate your country's position clearly and persuasively. This means that you should come to the committee sessions with a thorough understanding of the issues at hand, and be able to present your nation’s stance in a logical and coherent manner. You should also be prepared to engage in constructive dialogue with other delegates and to negotiate potential solutions.

Additionally, we expect you to be respectful toward your fellow delegates while maintaining a positive and professional demeanor at all times. Remember that the goal of Model UN is not to "win," but to work together to find realistic and practical solutions for the betterment of the world.

Hoping to see you all at conference!

Best regards,
Chairs of ECOSOC.

Introduction to the Committee

The Economic and Social Council is the heart of the United Nations system in advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. ECOSOC encourages agreement on coherent policies and actions that make fundamental links across these three dimensions.

Building on its coordination role within the UN system, ECOSOC is a gateway for UN partnership and participation by the rest of the world. It offers a unique global meeting point for productive discussion among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth, and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations.

Today, we stand at the dawn of a new era. The technological revolution is transforming our lives at breakneck speed, dramatically altering the ways in which we work, learn, and even live together. Artificial intelligence (AI) is undergoing exponential growth and finding new applications in an ever-increasing number of sectors, including security, environment, research and education, health, culture, and trade.

The AI revolution offers new opportunities, but it is important to take into account the socioeconomic impact it could potentially have.

Conference Topic

Investigating the viability of AI-based labour and its potential socioeconomic consequences.

Topic Breakdown

I.AI-based Labor

AI-based labor refers to the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to automate various tasks that were previously done by humans. This can include things like data entry, customer service, and even complex tasks such as financial analysis and medical diagnosis. AI-based labor can take many forms, including software programs, chatbots, and virtual assistants. The goal of AI-based labor is to improve efficiency and reduce costs by automating repetitive or time-consuming tasks, while also freeing up human workers to focus on more complex and creative work.

One major risk posed by AI-based labor is the potential for job displacement. As machines and algorithms become better at performing tasks traditionally done by humans, there is a risk that certain jobs will become obsolete. This could lead to significant unemployment and economic disruption, particularly in industries that are heavily automated. Additionally, as AI systems become more advanced, there is a risk that they will be able to perform tasks that were previously thought to be the exclusive domain of humans, such as decision-making and problem-solving. This could lead to a widening skills gap, where the jobs of the future require advanced technical skills that many workers do not possess.

Another risk is the potential for bias and discrimination in AI systems. As AI systems are trained on historical data, they can inadvertently learn and replicate biases that exist in that data. This can lead to unfair and discriminatory outcomes, particularly in areas like hiring and lending. There is also a risk of centralization of power, as AI is typically controlled by large companies and organizations, giving them an even greater level of control over society.

It's important to note that, while there are risks and challenges associated with AI-based labor, there are also many potential benefits. AI has the potential to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the quality of goods and services. There is also the potential for AI to create new job opportunities and to help bridge the skills gap by providing workers with the tools and training they need to adapt to the changing nature of work.

II.Potential Socioeconomic Consequences

During the period when Homo erectus introduced fire and the fourth industrial revolution, technology has taken a giant leap while changing the lives of mankind drastically. Unarguably, Artificial Intelligence Technology has become the dominating factor that will be leading the social and economic network of the upcoming eras. Will artificial Intelligence based labor be able to diminish the issues that society faces in the status quo and ease the lives of individuals? Or will it amplify more negative externalities and create more issues?

Let’s have an overview of the positive and negative impacts of AI-based labor.

●Achieving high productivity with maximized efficiency through automation.

Socioeconomic progress basically depends on the manufacturing and service distribution process. Income rates can be shifted to the peak by enhancing the quantitative and qualitative features of manufacturing and management sectors. Strengthening the labor force is one of the best methods to achieve this goal. Substitution of AI-based labor in the place of human labor will result in more benefits because companies can extend working hours, labor can be obtained in a cheap manner, and less attention needed to be supplied for health care and infrastructure facilities of the workers. Accordingly, organizations get a chance to lower the cost devoted to the laborers and invest that in other sectors. In addition, due to the maximized efficiency of the production sector, the overall profit can be uplifted. In conclusion, positive results can be obtained by automating the labor force using AI technology.

●Upgrading the quality of the work environment using AI-based Cobots.

Quality of the work environment will be determined based on factors such as safety of the workplace, minimum health risk factors, less danger to life, and physical and mental satisfaction of employees. Standardized robots or machines were introduced through the industrial revolution in order to ensure the above factors.

In-depth, there is a chance for human laborers to get skeletal and muscular pains when engaging in monotonous hard physical activities. Furthermore, there is a life risk for laborers when working in sites exposed to hazardous chemicals. Even though most of these risk factors were eliminated by using machines or standardized robots, less collaboration between humans and machines has emphasized less safety when both share the same workspace. With the invention of the concept of ‘Collaborative robots’ using artificial intelligence, it has proven that better communication and connection can be built between the worker and the machine. This will avoid the mental stress, and physical danger of human labor and create a satisfying workspace. Accordingly, enhancing the quality of the work environment will yield more economical advantages.

●Contraction of job opportunities due to AI.

At the time when machines replaced human labor during the first industrial revolution, the same question was debated. However, with time people reorganized their working places and introduced new job opportunities where both low-skilled and high-skilled employees benefited. But unlike that time, with the use of AI technology, there is an advanced risk of disappearing low-skilled job opportunities, while creating moderate impacts on high-skilled professions. This is because the nonroutine cognitive tasks still need to be fulfilled by humans.

In one aspect, AI has the capability to expand more job opportunities in the field of ICT and technology which require advanced educational qualifications and higher problem-solving and analytical skills. Obtaining these job opportunities is complex for individuals who are ‘earning for the day and living’ because it requires many expenses to obtain the qualifications sufficient to get into this field. This reflects the fact that there is a greater chance of creating income inequality and widening the gap between the poor and the rich which will be the root cause for many socio and economical issues. Apparently, it's clear that some bottlenecks prevail in adopting AI-based labor.

●A Challenge to Social Security.

There is uncertainty regarding the trust in data collected at organizations or companies by AI, because owners can create logical sequences upon their authority.

Furthermore, it is easier to use this technology for fraud, criminal and antisocial misconduct. Logical knowledge deployed on AI machines has the capability of replicating themselves for their better version and it's hard to determine a threshold for the development of AI technology. This conveys the message that there is a probability of developing AI technology beyond human control. This will be a threat to social security and become a catastrophe in the end.

Accordingly, it's clear that AI-based labor could be like a ‘double-edged sword’. Therefore creating policies to mitigate the negative consequences is essential.

United Nations Systems and Ethics on Artificial Intelligence

●United Nations System-wide Strategic Approach and Road Map.

Recognizing the transformative power of artificial intelligence, and the need for it to serve as a force for good, HLCP, addressed the need for significant investment in capacity-building in order to harness AI in a manner that benefits those at risk of being left behind, especially in developing countries.

In April 2019, HLCP members re-emphasized the transformative effect of AI on societies and approved theUnited Nations system-wide strategicapproach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence,which was subsequently endorsed by CEB.

The implementation of the strategic approach and its road map for action are being carried forward through the collaborative efforts of relevant United Nations entities, under the leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), taking into consideration the strengths of each entity, together with relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including those that are operationally oriented.

●Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

In September 2022, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed and subsequently approved the Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System, developed through the HLCP Programmes. These Principles were developed by a workstream co-led by (UNESCO) and the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the United Nations Secretariat (OICT). The Principles are based on theRecommendationon the Ethics of Artificial Intelligenceadopted by UNESCO’s General Conferencein November 2021.

This set of ten principles, grounded in ethics and human rights, aims to guide the use of artificial intelligence (AI) across all stages of an AI system lifecycle across United Nations system entities. It is intended to be read with other related policies and international law, and includes the following principles: do no harm; defined purpose, necessity, and proportionality; safety and security; fairness and non-discrimination; sustainability; right to privacy, data protection and data governance; human autonomy and oversight; transparency and explainability; responsibility and accountability; and inclusion and participation.

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