SIXTEENTH ANNUAL ALABAMA MODEL UNITED NATIONS



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECOSOC BACKGROUND GUIDE

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

COUNCIL

Chair: Aiden Bishop Johnson

Co-Chair: [Name]



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Letter from the **DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to ALMUN XVI! My name is Shrishti Dubey and I am delighted to serve as the Director-General in the sixteenth iteration of the Alabama Model United Nations Conference. I am a senior at the University of Alabama with majors in English and Economics, as well as minors in Mathematical Statistics and Ethics. I am also pursuing my Masters' in Economics at Bama. We have learned from ALMUN XV, our first year back in person, to provide delegates with an enhanced conference. We have prepared a diverse slate of committees, from timely General and Specialized Assemblies, to unpredictable Crisis Committees, to journalistic procedure in Press Corps.

I visited my campus six years ago as a novice delegate in ALMUN X. I had the pleasure of competing in ALMUN XI in my senior year of high school, in our conference's last iteration before COVID. When I joined the University of Alabama campus as a lonely freshman, I sought out the people who had introduced me to the university and found some of my most beloved friendships. Since then, I have served as Undersecretary-General of Press Corps and General Assemblies & Specialized Assemblies to bring that community to future delegates.

In my last year here, I hope to give back and introduce more delegates like my 16-year-old self to the engagement, enjoyment, and enrichment that accompanies MUN. To help you get the most out of your time here, our time has drafted resources like the Delegate Handbook and various Educational Slides, available on our website. If you have any questions about ALMUN, your committee, or MUN, please feel free to reach out to me through the email listed below. Best of luck!

Roll Tide!
Shrishti Dubey
Director—General of ALMUN XVI
almun.dg@gmail.com

A Note on Research, Preparation, & Position Papers

Your experience as an ALMUN delegate begins during the time spent leading up to the conference. Proper research and preparation are key to a successful and valuable experience at ALMUN and any MUN conference. For new delegates, this preparation may seem like a daunting task. However, the ALMUN staff is here to help, and these notes should help you structure your lead-up time.

The first place to start your research should be your committee's Background Guide. This is a document prepared by committee staff for their specific committees' delegates. It contains historical contexts, overviews of your topics, and what the staffers will expect from delegates. This document is the perfect jumping off point for all of your research and will also help understand the innerworkings, schematics, and purpose of your character/country assignment as well as your role as a delegate during the conference. These documents can be found on the ALMUN website under your committee.

Position papers are delegates' first interactions with the dais (your committee staffers) and is the final product of a student's preparation and research for any Model United Nations conference. It contains informed perspectives and histories of the state a delegate represents and is crucial to creating an authentic MUN experience. Specific expectations for position papers are listed below.

All delegates are strongly encouraged to submit position papers. Position papers are required for a delegate to be considered for awards. Additionally, there is an award for Best Position Paper within each committee.

GENERAL & SPECIALIZED ASSEMBLIES POSITION PAPER FORMATTING

- GA & SA position papers should be two pages, each topic taking up one page. The
 topics should be separated by a page break. Do not exceed two pages.
- The document should be in single spaced, 12 pt, black, Times New Roman font.
- The document should begin with a three line header on the left side as follows:

Name of Delegate Delegate's County Assignment Delegate's Committee

• Following the header, delegates should center and identify the title of the committee, as follows:

Topic A: [Insert Title of Topic]

- Any references should be cited using footnotes in MLA format. When citing
 electronic sources, include the URL; electronic sources are strongly encouraged
 for ease of reference.
- Position papers should be saved as a PDF file and entitled "ALMUN XV_[Committee]_[Country Name]."

CONTENT OF GENERAL & SPECIALIZED ASSEMBLIES POSITION PAPERS

Position papers should include three paragraphs, outlined as follows:

 The first paragraph introduces the topic from the point of view of the nation represented. It discussed the history of the topic, specifically in relation to the country.

- 2. **The second paragraph** analyzes the topic's context in the nation and expresses most of the research done on the topic. It discusses past action or inaction, success or failure, and the nation's current thoughts and feelings on the issue.
- 3. **The third paragraph** consists of an informed discussion of solutions to be proposed by the delegate(s) at the conference. It uses the research done on the topic and synthesizes it into new and creative ideas based on the nation represented by the student.

OTHER TIPS & NOTES

- Do not write in first person! Instead, write as the nation represented (e.g. "The Republic of Burkina Faso leans...")
- Avoid the passive voice.
- Write matter-of-factly rather than with embellished language.
- Use the example position paper provided in the ALMUN Delegate Handbook for ideas on how the writing and style should look, as well as how to present the information needed to prepare for the conference.

If you are looking for more information on how a committee runs and debate flows, please check out our Delegate Handbook and Educational Powerpoints. These documents will break down everything you need to know about awards, parliamentary procedure, and writing.

Please submit all position papers to <u>this Google Form</u> no later than February 4th, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. CT.

DELEGATES THAT DO NOT SUBMIT POSITION PAPERS WILL BE INELIGIBLE FOR AWARDS.

Letter from the Chair

Welcome delegates!

My name is Aiden Bishop Johnson and I will be your chair for the United Nations

Economic and Social Council. I am a freshman college student majoring in International

Studies focused on the Middle East and Africa while minoring in Arabic. This is my first

time working with ALMUN, but I was previously co-chair for Alabama's collegiate level

Model UN conference AIRMUNC and have traveled with the Alabama Model UN team

to Georgia and Washington D.C.. Outside of Model UN and academics I enjoy playing

music with my friends, boxing, cooking, and reading.

I chose this committee as the focus of our weekend due to its broad and open nature,

which I hope delegates will take advantage of to come up with interesting and unique

policy solutions. The specific topics of food security and global poverty were chosen for

the unique situations surrounding them; both have been successfully on the decline for

years but recently the future of these issues seems less certain. Once again, this

encourages interesting and unique policy solutions. I am very excited to see how

delegates can both learn from the past and adapt to the future.

Roll Tide,

Aiden Bishop Johnson

Chair of ECOSOC

Committee Overview

Formed in 1945, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six main governing bodies of the United Nations and oversees 28 smaller committees on a wide range of specialized topics. The council is responsible for all policies surrounding sustainable development, whether they be economic, social, or environmental. This broad focus means the committee has previously discussed anything from women's rights to forestry to illegal drug trafficking. ECOSOC has the highest assigned budget of an United Nations subsidiary body and has worked with 3,200+ different Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) (1)¹. In the previous year they have utilized this budget in the gathering of data for use by governments and charities, providing food assistance to over 100 million people, protecting 13.3 million refugees, and many other important humanitarian causes (2)². This session of ECOSOC will be tasked with tackling complex global problems surrounding food security in the face of climate change and the rise of global poverty after many successful decades of decline.

¹ Britannica 2023

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2022

TOPIC A:

Food Security In the Face of Climate Change

Introduction

Food security is not just about people starving, although preventing deaths from a lack of food is an important part of it. Food security is when a person can always physically and economically obtain enough food that is nutritious and sustaining. This problem has many aspects to it, making it difficult to solve in its entirety. The first problem is the unavailability of food in certain regions, so ensuring a certain region can either generate enough food via domestic production or import to sustain itself is of paramount importance. The second issue is the prohibitive pricing of food in some areas. A family can starve with a market just down the street if it is impossible for them to make a livable wage. Often people are forced to live off of whatever the cheapest staple crop in their region is, and many of these crops are carbohydrates that are healthy and filling, but lack protein and micronutrients that our bodies need to function. Finally, this entire system must be stable. Anything from droughts to political instability to global trade patterns can interrupt someone's ability to eat, and handling these are an important part of food security (3)³.

³ World Bank 2022

History of the Issue

For most of human history people grew their own food. This led to widespread food insecurity and reliance on unstable weather patterns and frequently changing growing seasons. This food insecurity was very different than it is today. It was not a global issue, and food was not as much of a commodity that could be traded globally. Our modern food systems, and food insecurity as it exists today, were born once modern colonialism spread and industrialization started. Instead of only relying on domestic production, large Western European empires would use their colonies as extra land to grow both food and crops to sell. From the mid-1800s until the 1940s, the world would see a trend of increased globalization and inequality within the food market. At this time it was set which countries would eat and which would starve in the new world order. Western Europe, Australia, the U.S., and a few select others brought food insecurity down to record lows during this time, while at the same time nations in Southeast Asia and North Africa saw 50 million deaths from famine in only 20 years (4)4.

Around the 1950s, international organizations such as ECOSOC and the FAO would start the first multinational campaigns against hunger. These campaigns, combined with better global access to technology like fertilizer, high-yielding crops, and pesticides, caused food insecurity to drop globally in the 1950s and 1960s (5)⁵. The complexity of food insecurity would show itself in the 1970s, where despite the food insecurity still being on the decline, many people would lose their lives to starvation. A particularly strong drought would hit South America during a powerful El Niño cycle,

⁴ Otter, Chris 2010

⁵ Dag Hammarskjöld 2015

which combined with multiple oil crises, led to massive increases in the cost of living and of industrial farming $(6)^6$.

Moving forward from the 1970s, the world would continue its decline in food insecurity. This was once again led by better agricultural technology, but also a massive decline in poverty. More people could afford food, even with the average cost of food rising. This trend would continue until 2019 and 2020, when for the first time in decades there would be a global food crisis spanning multiple years (6).

⁶ Roser, Ritchie, and Rosado 2019

Past Solutions

In the past, the world has had multiple different solutions to feeding its people. The largest contributor towards combating food insecurity of the past 60 years has been increasingly effective agricultural technology and land use. Cereals, the name given to grain plants like wheat, account for 50% of all calorie consumption in many countries. From 1961 to 2021 it became possible to harvest three times as much cereal from an acre of land. What this looks like is that over 60 years global land use for farming cereals only went up 15%, and total production went up 250%. In countries like China, this gap is 11% for land use to 490% production. This rise in efficiency came from technology like fertilizer, pesticides, tractors, irrigation, and high-yield crops being better designed and more accessible (7)7. Both China and India significantly reduced their food insecure populations at a faster than average rate (even when compared to other countries that increased their cereal yield) through reducing poverty, allowing more people to afford food (7). Many countries also have unique policies to their own situations that are important to evaluate. The United Arab Emirates is one of the highest scoring countries in food security, despite being in an otherwise food scarce region. The government has created an incentive program for buying local, a funding program for local farmers, and has built labs to create and adapt technologies for their unique climate (8)8.

⁷ Ritchie 2017

⁸ Sengupta 2021

Current Issues

Food security after decades of progress has the potential to severely worsen. In the short term, the Covid pandemic collapsed global supply lines, which led to a food crisis in 2020. In the longer term, populations are growing very quickly, especially in Africa, where food insecurity is at its worst. Climate change can reduce the amount of arable land and the quantity of nutrients within that land, therefore leading to less overall food production. For decades, overfarming has taken more nutrients out of the soil than have been reintroduced, leaving some land now useless (9)9. Most of those struggling with food insecurity in the modern day live in countries destroyed by conflict, making both settling down to farm and stably trading for food nearly impossible (10)¹⁰. All of these problems of weak supply chains, rapid population growth in the world's most insecure regions, climate change, a history of overfarming, and the instability caused by conflict must also be balanced with a concern for the cost and guaranteed availability of the end product. The issue is complex, but people have solved it before. For decades progress was made, and there is much potential for progress to be made again.

⁹ Broom and Brene 2020

¹⁰ World Food Programme 2023

Potential Solutions

There are many potential solutions to this issue, and all delegates should be encouraged to seek out and design unique and interesting ones to discuss over the weekend. A good place to start is by reimplementing past solutions, and one of the largest eliminators of food insecurity historically was more efficient land use. Delegates can find ways to better utilize land, develop new technologies, make technology more accessible, utilize more efficient agricultural products, or adjust our current growing systems to be more efficient. Delegates could also target food waste, which is a major issue, especially in developed countries. Approximately a third of all grown food gets wasted, occurring during every stage of production, distribution, and consumption (11)11. Finding ways to eliminate this through better farming techniques, more efficient transport, universal access to refrigeration, or more considerate consumerism all have potential. Welfare/relief programs also can be utilized on a national or global scale to stabilize those countries that rely heavily on unstable market conditions or weather patterns (12)12. This could take the form of subsidies, direct cash transfers, nationalized food distribution, or partnerships between nations guaranteeing a more accountable market. Delegates are also encouraged to bring any solutions they come up with or adapt themselves that are not listed in the background guide.

¹¹ Concern Worldwide US 2022

¹² McCarthy 2022

Questions to Consider

- 1. How can individual countries utilize their unique positions and strengths to do their part to relieve food insecurity nationally and internationally?
- 2. What solutions can the entire global community work together towards in order to support a more food secure future?
- 3. How can food systems become more resilient to a changing climate and its effects of soil nutrient depletion, rising sea levels, increased natural disasters, and other potential issues?
- 4. How can the global community mitigate and prevent deadly famines and other extreme food supply failures?

TOPIC B:

Extreme Global Poverty's Rise

Introduction

The global poverty line is currently set at \$2.15 a day (13)¹³. This has been consistently adjusted for inflation to always stay at the same purchasing power, and is the relative global standard to stay alive. This level of income is obviously still a bare minimum to get by and it does not guarantee any acceptable level of healthcare, education, or security. Poverty is the ultimate decider of life expectancy, food security, safety, and nearly all other aspects of life. The results are clear, but the causes can be complicated. Often people are stuck in poverty due to a lack of work opportunities besides subsistence farming in their entire region. Other times it is war, leaving any sort of stable institutions destroyed. The global poor are isolated in rural communities, refugees, citizens of disaster-stricken nations, the working poor in large developing cities, and so many others in exceptional circumstances. Poverty at a global scale is the result and cause of all other developmental issues. Food insecurity causes poverty, which in turn causes more poverty. This makes poverty a very complex issue, but also one that can therefore be handled in a variety of clever and unique ways.

¹³ World Bank 2022

History of the Issue

For most of the 20th century global poverty fluctuated with no positive trend over time. Some select countries saw success stories like Italy, Japan, and arguably some countries in Latin America. Yet as a general trend, most nations saw little progress and people would spend their whole lives in the same conditions they were born in. That was until the 1990s. Starting in the 90s measures started to be taken to eliminate poverty both on a global level led by the United Nations and at a national level within the governments of many countries. The UN increased aid and many members pledged to forgive developing nations' debts. Actions that were invaluable, but nowhere near the full situation. Most of the people who were lifted out of poverty lived in China, and then later India. During the 90s and early 2000s, China industrialized, opened trade, gained foreign direct investment, funded better education, and built huge infrastructure projects. India would also see a similar path after opening their economy to the outside world and making similar investments into their own people and nation (14)14. This progress would continue for decades until the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. This huge hit combined with continued slow economic stagnation would increase poverty on a global scale significantly. Conservative estimates say that eliminating global extreme poverty is set back by four years, other estimates project that the long-term institutional effects could send some already unstable nations spiraling to collapse (15)15. The future of poverty globally is uncertain, and it is unknown when progress will return to levels seen only a few years ago.

¹⁴ Tompkins 2021

¹⁵ World Economic Forum 2021

Past Solutions

There have been many attempts made to eliminate poverty by every nation and this creates a large amount of available data and past solutions to look at. In the 1990s, the United Nations encouraged and facilitated debt forgiveness for developing economies, allowing governments to put money that was previously for debt payments towards investing in their own people. China, South Korea, India, and many other nations that have seen significant reductions in extreme poverty all opened up their markets drastically. These policies allowed for industrialization, better access to technology, foreign direct investment, and just an overall larger economy (14,16)¹⁶¹⁷. The creation of freer markets does have the worrying downside of creating wealth inequality gaps that keep a percentage of people as in a struggling, urban, poor working class. Some nations like Tajikistan have seen some of the fastest poverty alleviation by attending stabilizing peace agreements to end civil conflicts (17)18. China, Kyrgyzstan, and most nations that have sustained, long-term growth invest heavily into health and education (18)¹⁹. Social and welfare programs of all kinds are directly linked to alleviating poverty, particularly in countries with large regional differences in income. Healthcare investments specifically, when done efficiently, have a high proven correlation with poverty alleviation (19,20)²⁰²¹.

¹⁶ Tompkins 2021

¹⁷ Santacreu and Zhu 2018

¹⁸ Tarbox 2020

¹⁹ International Monetary Fund 2014

²⁰ Kim, Park, and Atukeren 2020

²¹ Asai et al. 2019

Current Issues

Poverty is very different now than it was in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. China and India will continue to grow, but now most of the world's extremely poor live in war-torn or rural areas within Sub-Saharan Africa. These people are much harder to get to, and face greater institutional challenges. Reaching these people with proper health, education, and working opportunities is more difficult than it was with the large concentrated populations within China and India.

Countries that were once making record progress are now reverting due to the 2020 pandemic. Many working-aged citizens died, the price of medical supplies soared due to demand from Western countries, and the instability in markets affected these poorest countries the most. The elimination of extreme poverty went from nearly guaranteed to trending backwards. Rebuilding failing infrastructure and getting necessary trade back to developing economies can begin to undo the destruction from the pandemic.

These new problems also exist in addition to the struggles faced in the 1990s. Funding education, healthcare, and government programs is still expensive. Building up an economy that can industrialize, urbanize, and bring in new technology has still only been accomplished on a large scale by a few select nations. The difficulty of designing institutions that actually invest into a country's population for long-term, sustained progress is still there, and is only added on to by the new demographic of extreme poor and drawn out pandemic consequences.

Potential Solutions

The modern state of poverty needs careful solutions. Stabilizing many countries and regions would make the entire project easier, but doing so is not an easy feat. Having the global community step in to end conflicts and stabilize governments has the potential to be the major institutional change needed. This also has the potential to be a colonialist takeover that would only continue the suffering. If done properly though, it would stabilize economies, allow people to settle down and start businesses, limit violent deaths, create a government that serves the people, and many other positive effects. Countries that do have enough infrastructure in place to distribute money, healthcare, and education could get global funding to expand to poorer rural areas within their borders. Supplies could be distributed by UN associated bodies and NGOs, or through international cooperation. Encouraging the opening of markets could be the boost some nations needed, but others could require protections for their local economy against foreign imports. Both can be valid solutions, just when and where both are used is the factor. Inequality domestically and internationally leads a multitude of wealthy people, even in countries where many live below the \$2.15 a day poverty line. Flattening this inequality and spreading out resources in a more equal way might make the difference needed in many resource heavy economies of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Questions to Consider

- How can the world go back to reducing extreme poverty after four years of regression?
- 2. What can be done internationally through the United Nations programs and advising to target areas with high poverty?
- 3. With China and India accounting for the majority of people rising out of poverty over the past 30 years, and their rapid growth slowing, how can the world keep poverty on the decline?

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