

Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome you to Southern Regional National Model United Nations Conference (SRMUN) XVI and the Economic and Social Council Plenary (ECOSOC). My name is Cardell Johnson, and it is a great honor for me to serve as the Director for ECOSOC. This marks my first year as a SRMUN staff member. However, I have seven years of MUN experience, including two at another conference. Currently, I am working towards my Masters of Public Affairs (MPA) degree in environmental policy and natural resource management and policy analysis at Indiana University.

ECOSOC was established under the United Nations Charter and is the main UN body that coordinates the economic and social work of 14 specialized UN agencies. The Council serves as a central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for making policy recommendation to member states and the United Nations system. Throughout its history, ECOSOC has taken the lead role in discussing and pursuing action on many critical issues facing the global society. It is with this idea in mind that we, the Director and Assistant Director, have chosen topics that we feel are both current and vitally important.

ECOSOC will discuss the following topics at SRMUN XVI:

- I. Sustainable Development in Post-Conflict Areas
- II. Transition from Disaster Relief to Sustainable Development Following Natural Disasters
- III. The Promotion of Economic Development in Latin America and Caribbean Region

The background guide will provide you with a foundation for your research. However, it is by no means exhaustive of the information available to you for each topic. I should remind you that thorough preparation of each topic is expected from every delegate in order to ensure the success of our committee. We have prepared a detailed bibliography to aid you in your research. This background guide will provide an initial step in your research, but you will need to do research beyond the material presented in this background guide.

Each delegation is required to submit a position paper for consideration. It should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your country's position, policies and recommendations on the three topics. A copy should be sent to Laura Merrell, Deputy- Director General ([ddg@srmun.org](mailto:ddg@srmun.org)) no later than 11:59 pm on October 29th.

We wish you all the best as you prepare for the 2005 SRMUN Conference. Should you have further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting all of you in November.

Cardell Johnson  
Director  
[cdj@indiana.edu](mailto:cdj@indiana.edu)

Laura Merrell  
Deputy-Director General  
[ddg@srmun.org](mailto:ddg@srmun.org)

## The History of the Economic and Social Council

The history of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has its origins in the creation of the United Nations after World War II. The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of the war in 1945. Article 10 of the Charter of the United Nations established the Economic and Social Council along with an entire network of other international organizations.<sup>1</sup> From its inception, ECOSOC has been the principal organ in coordinating economic and social programs as well as all other work of its various branches.<sup>2</sup> The committee's sphere of attention includes 14 UN specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and 5 regional commissions.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, ECOSOC is responsible for receiving reports from 11 UN funds and programs and issuing policy recommendations to member states and the UN System as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

According to its mandate, "ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."<sup>5</sup> In dealing with social, educational, cultural, health, development and poverty-related issues, it is important to note that ECOSOC maintains the power to make or initiate studies and reports on these matters.<sup>6</sup> It also has the responsibility of assisting in the preparation and organization of major international conferences in the economic and social related fields, and facilitating coordinated follow-ups to these conferences. The council also undertakes investigations of matters of economic and social concern and reports its conclusions and suggestions for action to the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> In essence, the roles and responsibilities of ECOSOC cover over 70 percent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.<sup>8</sup>

An important aspect of ECOSOC's operations is its interaction with its specialized agencies, commissions, funds and programs. This would include coordinating the work of specialized agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and functional commissions including the Statistical Commission, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission for Sustainable Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Population and Development Commission, and the Commission on Human Rights; and regional commissions, namely the Economic Commission for Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Western Asia.<sup>9</sup> Reports are also received from funds and programs, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).<sup>10</sup> In its effort towards long-term development and welfare establishment, "ECOSOC consults and works closely with representatives from large business sectors in addition to the nongovernmental organizations" such as those listed above.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, this makes ECOSOC different from other UN bodies whose primary interaction are with member governments only.

Over the years, the Economic and Social Council has "taken the lead role in key policy areas."<sup>12</sup> The Council has focused on topics such as poverty, the digital divide, information and communication technology, African development and financing for sustainable development among developing countries.<sup>13</sup> One of the most important areas of focus for ECOSOC has been the Commission on Human Rights. In 1948, a draft of a Universal Declaration

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<sup>1</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*. The United Nations. June 26, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> "What ECOSOC Does." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/.2004>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Policy Leadership." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/.2004>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

of Human Rights was drawn up by the Commission and adopted by the General Assembly.<sup>14</sup> In 1967, the Commission was then granted authorization to investigate and monitor violations of human rights in both developed and developing countries.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, it became the duty of the Council to supervise the activities of organizations including UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNDP and the International Narcotics Control Board, all of which involve the Commission on Human Rights.<sup>16</sup>

ECOSOC meets once a year for a four-week session.<sup>17</sup> However, since 1998, it has held another meeting each April with finance ministers heading key committees of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>18</sup> The Economic and Social Council is made up of 54 member governments, 18 of whom are elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.<sup>19</sup> Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation. The president is elected for a one-year term and is chosen amongst the small or middle powers represented on ECOSOC.<sup>20</sup> Each member of ECOSOC has one vote.

The current members of the UN Economic and Social Council include:

ARMENIA, AUSTRALIA, AZERBAIJAN, BANGLADESH, BELGIUM, BELIZE, BENIN, BHUTAN, BURUNDI, CANADA, CHILIE, CHINA, COLOMBIA, CONGO, CUBA, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GHANA, GREECE, GUATEMALA, INDONESIA, ITALY, HUNGARY, INDIA, IRELAND, JAMAICA, JAPAN, KENYA, LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA, MALAYSIA, MAURITIUS, MOZAMBIQUE, NAMIBIA, NICARAGUA, NIGERIA, PANAMA, POLAND, QATAR, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SAUDI ARABIA, SENEGAL, SWEDEN, TUNISIA, TURKEY, UKRAINE, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ZIMBABWE.

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<sup>14</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The United Nations General Assembly. December 10, 1948.

<sup>15</sup> "Commission on Human Rights." The United Nations Commission on Human Rights.  
<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/2/chr.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Background." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. [http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/ecosoc\\_background.html](http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/ecosoc_background.html)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

## I. Sustainable Development in Post Conflict Areas

### *Introduction*

Preventing armed conflict, as well as mitigating its effects, has become an important concern throughout the international community. Since the end of World War II, more than 160 wars have been recorded.<sup>21</sup> Within the last decade, approximately one-third of all countries in the world have experienced violent conflict.<sup>22</sup> However, the number and nature of these conflicts has changed significantly in recent years. Today's conflicts are mostly fought within state boundaries, whereas in the past, wars took place across borders.<sup>23</sup> According to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), twenty-three of the twenty-five major armed conflicts in 2000 were fought within countries.<sup>24</sup> "Wars are no longer fought only on battlefields between large armies; rather they are often waged in cities and villages by militia, driven by long-simmering ethnic and religious ideologies and fueled by a struggle for political and economic control."<sup>25</sup>

Armed conflicts have resulted in the loss of lives of over 50 million.<sup>26</sup> Ninety percent of the victims are civilians, of which many are women and children.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, armed conflict has created over 20 million refugees that are in need of protection and assistance, as well as over 25 million internally displaced persons.<sup>28</sup> These conflicts not only destroy the lives of their victims and survivors, but they set back development by decades. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), armed conflict increases poverty as well as leads to degradation of the environment.<sup>29</sup> Conflict, whether primitive or urbane in its methods, has long impacted the environment in a number of negative ways. Actions in conflicts such as the Roman salting of Carthaginian land in the Punic Wars, General William Tecumseh Sherman's destruction of the Confederate South during the American Civil War, the use of the defoliant Agent Orange in the Vietnam War and the ignition of Kuwaiti oil wells in the Persian Gulf War, have all left the environment in both physical and financial ruin following their conclusion.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the actual conflict itself, the preparation for the conflict and its aftermath both have a direct effect on the environment. This impact includes issues such as the abandonment of ordnance and munitions testing.<sup>31</sup> Further, this constant degradation of the environment has the ability to hinder sustainable development in developing countries.

### *Sustainable Development*

Sustainable development as defined by the United Nations is meeting the needs of today without compromising those for future generations.<sup>32</sup> One of the most urgent global issues facing the international community today is armed conflict. Conflict is a major problem because it often increases poverty in poor areas. As defined by the UNDP, "human poverty is the denial, or deprivation of opportunities and choices that would enable an individual to lead a long, healthy, and creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self respect and the respect to others."<sup>33</sup> Current statistics show that 2.8 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.<sup>34</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>21</sup> Armed Conflict and the Environment 2003. The United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wildlife Fund. New York and Washington, D.C. 2003. <http://www.worldwildlife.org/bsp/publications/africa/chapt.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> "Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. Conflict Prevention and Peace Building." United Nations Development Programme. July 15, 2005. [http://www.undp.org/bcpr/conflict\\_prevention/index.htm](http://www.undp.org/bcpr/conflict_prevention/index.htm)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> "SIPRI Yearbook 2000." The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. <http://editors.sipri.org/pubs/yb00/ch1.html>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *Global Report 2004*. United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. New York: United Nations. 2004  
<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/template?page=publ&src=static/gr2004/gr2004toc.htm>

<sup>29</sup> "Facts and Figures on Poverty." United Nations Development Programme. 2003.  
<http://www.undp.org/teams/english/facts.htm>

<sup>30</sup> Rebecca Steffoff. *Environmental Disasters*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers. 1994, p. 83-90.

<sup>31</sup> Susan D. Lanier-Graham. *The ecology of war: Environmental impacts of weaponry and warfare*. New York: Walker Publishing. 1993, pp. 52-122.

<sup>32</sup> "About Us." United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd.htm>

<sup>33</sup> *Human Development Report: making new technologies work for human development*. United Nations Development Programme. New York: United Nations. 2001. <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2001/en/>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

approximately 40 percent of the population in South Asia and more than 46% in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than \$1 per day.”<sup>35</sup> During conflict, hunger is used as a weapon. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as of 2004, 35 of the world’s poorest countries face serious food shortages; and that civil discord led to this shortage in 26 of the 35 countries.<sup>36</sup> Hunger and malnutrition is one of the leading causes of poverty, especially among children.<sup>37</sup> According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, “Conflict creates poverty, which results in hunger. Markets and livelihoods are disrupted, leaving households without sufficient resources to get food.”<sup>38</sup> Additionally, conflicts destroy food stocks as well as the means of food production. Food relief is often diverted from the intended beneficiaries to the military and their supporters.

In addition to increased hunger, armed conflict has created a large amount of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).<sup>39</sup> By the end of January 2004, The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) reported a 13% increase in the number of Refugees from 2003 of 17 million to 19.2 in 2004.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, they reported that the number of IDPs at the end of 2004 reach 24.6 million, an estimated 9.7% increase.<sup>41</sup> The most immediate and devastating impact of violence-induced displacement, whether cross-border or internal, is the resultant loss of access to land, property, jobs, assets and therefore means of livelihood.<sup>42</sup> In Kenya, for example, it was the destruction of cattle through armed conflict that triggered the displacement of the local population.<sup>43</sup> In this instance, the displaced persons were denied their livelihoods and traditional support structures. This impoverishment extends to lack of access to health services and education, food insecurity, and increased morbidity and mortality.<sup>44</sup> In Somalia, IDP’s account for over 50% of the Somali Population identified as chronically food insecure.<sup>45</sup> The displaced are also more vulnerable to infectious and communicable diseases.<sup>46</sup> Many die from preventable and treatable infectious, often exacerbated by malnutrition.

Further, in refugee and IDP camps, employment opportunities are either sporadic or non-existent, and opportunities outside of camps depend on relations with local community and whether their skills match local demand.<sup>47</sup> IDPs and refugees living in host communities often have limited economic opportunities. Thus, many IDPs migrate to urban areas in search of employment and better opportunities. The movement of populations during and after conflict has a major impact on the sustainable development of human settlements, and therefore on reconstruction activities. According to UN HABITAT, approximately 57% of persons fleeing from conflict tend to migrate to urban areas which lack the basics of life, leaving many inhabitants caught in a spiral of increasing vulnerability.<sup>48</sup> Demand for commercial and residential land in cities has led to the use of unsuitable terrain prone to natural hazards.<sup>49</sup> Further, the lack of infrastructure and basic sanitary services increases the risk of health and vulnerability in cities. Thus unsupported urbanization will constrain sustainable development of cities, as well as hampering the well being of the inhabitants and increasing their vulnerability to future conflicts and disasters.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Assessment of the World Food Security Situation*. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/009/J4968e/j4968e00.htm>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Affected Populations in Africa*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2004.

[www.ochaeth.org/HotTopics7/Downloadables/HOAAffectedPopulationsReportMay2004.pdf](http://www.ochaeth.org/HotTopics7/Downloadables/HOAAffectedPopulationsReportMay2004.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*. United Nations Human Settlement Programme. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2003, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## *The Impact of Conflict on the Environment*

In addition to increased levels of poverty, there has been an increasing amount of environmental degradation due to armed conflict. Habitat destruction and the accompanying loss of wildlife, as well as the deterioration of natural resources such as water, are among the most common and far-reaching impacts of conflict on the environment. Habitats are directly affected during armed conflict. For example, vegetation may be cut, burned or defoliated to improve the mobility or visibility for troops.<sup>51</sup> For instance, in 1991, the Rwandan army cut over 850 acres of forests through the Bamboo Forest in order to reduce the possibility of ambush along a key trail.<sup>52</sup> When people are temporarily resettled, they often clear away vegetation to farm and to obtain firewood.<sup>53</sup> These practices swiftly lead to deforestation and erosion. Since refugees and internally displaced people are often located in ecologically marginal and vulnerable areas, the ability of the environment to subsequently recover may be limited. Moreover, when displaced people return to their homelands, they are often forced to rely heavily on natural resources until they can re-establish their normal livelihoods.<sup>54</sup>

Since the Vietnam War, an ample amount of documentation has been produced proving the effect of conflict on the environment.<sup>55</sup> Thus, governments and the international community placed more attention on protecting the environment from the negative effects of conflict and warfare. In 1976, the first of two international legal documents aiming to protect the environment from armed conflict were developed. The first was known as the *Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques* (ENMOD). This document prohibits the use of the environment as a tool for warfare.<sup>56</sup> Approximately a year after ENMOD was enacted, the *Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949*, was adopted.<sup>57</sup> This document's most important statement toward protecting the environment from military made it, "...prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment."<sup>58</sup> Article 55(1) of *Protocol I* is also significant because it provides for a direct and explicitly stated protection of the environment.<sup>59</sup> This article states that, "Care shall be taken in warfare to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage. This protection includes a prohibition of the use of methods or means of warfare which are intended or may be expected to cause such damage to the natural environment and thereby to prejudice the health or survival of the population."<sup>60</sup> Both ENMOD and *Protocol I* were revolutionary because they aimed to directly and overtly protect the environment from conflict, something that was never accomplished prior to 1976.

Following the Vietnam War, the international community took a step away from generalization, establishing specific guidelines for particular environments, rather than the environment as a whole. For example, specific attention was paid to forests, which led to the creation of the *Inhumane Weapon Convention* (IWC) in 1981.<sup>61</sup> The IWC prohibits making forests and other forms of plant cover an object of attack unless it is being used for camouflage to conceal the enemy.<sup>62</sup> Another environment-specific international agreement was created in 1983, addressing the environmental state of the world's oceans.<sup>63</sup> The *Convention on the Law of the Sea* set a precedent for offenders,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> William Thomas. *Scorched earth: The military's assault on the environment*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers. 1995, p. 41.

<sup>56</sup> A/RES/31/72. *Convention on the prohibition of military or any hostile use of environmental modification*. United Nations General Assembly.

<sup>57</sup> 1125 UNT.S. 17512. *Protocol [I] Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts*.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> 1342 UNT.S.22495. *Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects* (opened for signature October 10, 1980).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> A/RES/48/263. *Convention on the law of the sea*. United Nations General Assembly.

both military and civil, who cause damage to the world's open waters.<sup>64</sup> The United Nations took an important step to protect the environment with the production of the *World Charter for Nature* (1982), adopted by General Assembly *Resolution 37/7*, with a majority of 111 Member States voting in favour.<sup>65</sup> One of the *World Charter for Nature's* general principles states that "nature shall be secured against degradation caused by warfare or other hostile activities."<sup>66</sup> This principle also marks a significant improvement over the *Stockholm Declaration* of 1972, as it mandates that this protection "shall be reflected" and practiced on national and international levels.<sup>67</sup>

The purpose of the *World Charter for Nature* was to prevent environmental disasters from happening due to war. However, following the Gulf War from 1990-1991, the subject of environmental damage accrued from military conflict has drawn a greater scrutiny from scholars and state governments.<sup>68</sup> An example of the environment receiving damage due to military conflict was found by The Institute for Advanced Studies in Aspen, Colorado, right after the war. The Institute reported that atmospheric anomalies in the Rocky Mountains in the United States were largely caused by vast amounts of chlorinated organic chemicals released in the air by the Kuwaiti oil fires, and it lasted nearly 200 days.<sup>69</sup> The polychlorinated hydrocarbons released by the oil rig fires interfere with the formation of ozone, destroying it.<sup>70</sup> This degradation of the ozone layer leaves the Earth and its inhabitants open and unprotected against harmful ultraviolet solar radiation.<sup>71</sup> Also, burning of the Kuwaiti oil released environmentally dangerous sulphur dioxide, which indirectly contributes to ozone depletion because it releases chlorine ions in the upper atmosphere, which are also key factors of ozone loss.<sup>72</sup> Environmental perils of this magnitude pose threats to the health of not only humans but wildlife.

Approximately 10% to 30% of the world's current environmental damage, according to The Science for Peace Institute at the University of Toronto, is directly caused by the militaries of the world.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, a German report concluded that approximately two-thirds of a particular type of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) comes from the world's air forces alone.<sup>74</sup> Landmines placed by militaries are also a big concern; as early as 1985, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), led by Dr. Arthur Westing, discovered at least 15 million landmines in Poland, and more continue to be found on a daily basis.<sup>75</sup> Landmines are not only a threat to human personnel, but also harm the environment when detonated. They leave massive holes in the ground, ruining plant life and, sometimes, wildlife. As of 1988, only a dozen states claimed to protect at least 10% of their land, while only 40 more states claimed 5% or more of their land area was listed as protected by law.<sup>76</sup>

In a move to improve the state of their environments, states met at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.<sup>77</sup> At the UNCED, member states renewed their support for the *Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*.<sup>78</sup> The states present wished to reaffirm their original commitment they had made through the *Stockholm Declaration* to protect man and the environment from unnecessary harm. What originated from the UNCED was an international

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<sup>64</sup> George K. Walker. "Oceans law, the maritime environment, and the law of naval warfare." *International law studies, 1996: Protection of the environment during armed conflict*. Ed. Richard J. Grunawalt and John E. King & Ronald S. McClain. Newport, RI: Naval War College. 1996, p. 189.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Rear Adm. Bruce A. Harlow & Cmdr. Michael E. McGregor. "International environmental law considerations during military operations other than war." *International law studies, 1996: Protection of the environment during armed conflict*. Ed. Richard J. Grunawalt and John E. King & Ronald S. McClain. Newport, RI: Naval War College. 1996, pp. 320-1.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Jurgen Brauer. "The effect of war on the natural environment." June 2000. Paper for "Arms, Conflict, Security and Development Conference, Middlesex University, London. <http://www.aug.edu/~sbajmb/>

<sup>73</sup> Susan D. Lanier-Graham. *The ecology of war: Environmental impacts of weaponry and warfare*. New York: Walker Publishing. 1993, pp. 52-122.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. Arthur Westing (Ed.). *Cultural norms, war and the environment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1988) p. 154.

<sup>77</sup> A/CONF.151/26. *Report of the United Nations conference on environment and development*. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: United Nations. 1992.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



document known today as the *Rio Declaration*.<sup>79</sup> Especially relevant is Principle 24, which states: “Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.”<sup>80</sup>

### ***The Role of UN Agencies***

The United Nations system has worked to prevent armed conflicts and mitigate the impacts that they may have on sustainable development. The UNDP has done much to foster and facilitate discussion on the inter-links between armed conflict and sustainable development. These bodies have developed many initiatives to help reduce risk to sensitive populations and to mitigate the effects of conflict on the development process. The UNDP was established in 1965 and is the main UN agency that works to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development as well as good governance.<sup>81</sup> Recognizing that the effects that many countries are vulnerable to from conflict and the impact that conflict has on sustainable development, the UNDP formed the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR).<sup>82</sup> The BCPR is a commission within the UNDP that works with governments to develop their technical and national capacities to manage crisis and post conflict situations.<sup>83</sup> Also, the BCPR works to ensure that the UNDP plays a crucial role in transitions between relief and development, as well as promote linkages between UN peace and security and development.<sup>84</sup> Thus far, the UNDP has provided support to 40 countries, including Mozambique, Guatemala, Kenya, Ethiopia and Albania.

Like the UNDP, the UNEP works to mitigate the impact that armed conflict has on sustainable development. In 2001, the UNEP established the Post Conflict Assessment Unit (PCAU).<sup>85</sup> The PCAU works to investigate environmental impacts of conflicts and pre-existing chronic environmental problems, identify risks to human and environmental health, recommend strategic priorities for cleanup and remediation as well as work to strengthen the capacity of authorities for environmental management and protection.<sup>86</sup> Results from UNEP’s post-conflict assessments can be used to promote sustainable use of natural resources, facilitate planning for refugee return, identify natural resources for reconstruction and identify high priority projects and funding mechanisms to improve or remediate environmental threats.<sup>87</sup> The UNEP has completed PCAU’s in the Balkans, Albania, Iraq, Liberia, Palestine, Afghanistan and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.<sup>88</sup>

### ***The Role of NGOs***

Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) normally play extremely crucial roles in determining the outcome of international laws, especially when they deal with the environment.<sup>89</sup> In 1996, there were more than 4000 exclusively environmental NGOs around the world.<sup>90</sup> That number has likely grown over the past eight years. Regional and domestic NGOs and, especially, international NGOs (INGOs) are both playing a large role in negotiating more effective international agreements.<sup>91</sup> NGOs are crucial elements for providing research data and forums for lobbying national governments in attempting to achieve their goals. Although The World Conservation

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “About Us.” United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/about/>

<sup>82</sup> “Crisis Prevention and Recovery.” United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/bcpr/about.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> “Post Conflict Assessment Unit.” United Nations Environment Programme. <http://postconflict.unep.ch/about.htm>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Bas Arts. “The impact of environmental NGOs on international conventions” *Non-state actors in international relations*. Ed. Arts Bas, et al. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing. 2001, pp. 195-209.

<sup>90</sup> Thaddeus C. Trzyna, et al. *World directory of environmental organizations* (5th ed.). London: Earthscan Publications. 1996, p. 21.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



Union (IUCN) is considered to be an intergovernmental organisation (IGO), it is also widely accepted to be an INGO.<sup>92</sup>

A good example of an INGO that remains a leader in undertaking large efforts to safeguard and remediate the environment is Green Cross International, founded by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1993.<sup>93</sup> Through their “Addressing the Environmental Consequences of Wars and Conflicts” programme, Green Cross International strives to promote awareness and provide aid to those affected by armed military conflict.<sup>94</sup> A few major NGOs and INGOs leading the way in establishing a stronger base for environmental protection are, among others: ConverNet, the International Peace Research Association, the World Foundation for Environment and Development and EarthWatch International.<sup>95</sup>

NGOs employ numerous methods to defend their principle views and values; among these chief means are networking, protesting and attending conferences.<sup>96</sup> In addition to working closely with state governments, many NGOs also work closely with private businesses.<sup>97</sup> A major obstacle that many NGOs encounter is that of finding funds to subsidise their efforts.<sup>98</sup> Many arguments can be made that certain sources of monies for NGOs can affect their policy and views on certain issues.<sup>99</sup> A second major obstacle for NGOs to overcome is that of credibility and legitimacy in the international community.<sup>100</sup> If NGOs are not credible and accountable within their own community, they will not be taken seriously by the state governments, some of them criticise.<sup>101</sup>

Environmental NGOs typically possess many resources that they can use at their disposal to pursue their interests.<sup>102</sup> Successful NGOs link global and local interests by working across national boundaries, something state governments and some international organisations might be reluctant to do.<sup>103</sup> Some states consider these actions by NGOs to challenge the very essence of national sovereignty, and that is where resistance is most often found to occur.<sup>104</sup> To encourage trans-national cooperation, however, international environmental NGOs typically are involved in debt-for-nature swaps, where they purchase national debt on the secondary market, exchange it for local currency, and finally execute their projects with local NGOs.<sup>105</sup> The state typically benefits by alleviating a small portion of its debt and simultaneously funding its conservation efforts.<sup>106</sup>

### ***A Look at the Future: New International Accords?***

Even if new safeguards are developed, a greater collective consciousness regarding the effects of warfare on the environment must exist within the international community. This can be accomplished by recognising that the environment is still under threat from not only military but human activities as well.<sup>107</sup> The states involved must educate their citizens and involve NGOs in the decision-making process. This can ensure a fair and balanced piece of legislation designed to protect the rights of an offender of the environment, as well as holding them accountable and liable for their actions. Also, the new international agreements, if chartered, must be able to ensure compliance and the enforcement of the punishment handed down to the offender. Since Iraq can be used to set an example for future offenders of environmental offences, the militaries of the world need to be held to a higher standard in

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> “Mission.” Green Cross International. <http://www.greencrossinternational.net/GreenCrossFamily/index.html>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Thaddeus C. Trzyna et al. *World directory of environmental organizations* (5th ed.). London: Earthscan Publications. 1996, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> “Advocacy methods for NGOs.” Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/index2.htm>

<sup>97</sup> “NGOs and states & business.” Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/index3.htm>

<sup>98</sup> “Funding for NGOs.” Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/fundindx.htm>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> “Celebrity and legitimacy of NGOs.” Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/credindx.htm>

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Princen. “NGOs and environmental diplomacy.” *Environmental NGOs in world politics: linking the local and the global*. Ed. Thomas Princen, & Matthias Finger. London: Routledge. 2001, p. 36-8.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Julian P. Robinson. *The effects of weapons on ecosystems*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1979, p. 68.

preventing negative impacts to the environment. By developing new international accords, an obvious large advantage is the wide adherence of the stated policies by States.

### ***Conclusion***

Although it seems inevitable that armed conflict will never cease to exist, steps can be taken to minimize the amount of resulting damage done to the environment. Previous multilateral agreements and conventions have attempted to prevent environmental damage by militaries and have had some degree of success. A large number of NGOs and state governments are putting forth a large effort to educate international citizens in how the environment around them is shaped by their actions. They are also helping the global citizens to realize the potential negative effects armed conflict can have on the environment and possible alternative methods of fighting that reduces wanton destruction of nature. This movement intends to help people around the world realise how pure natural resources and a clean environment can be to improving their quality of life and the overall health of the Earth. Militaries are also attempting to keep a keen eye on the environment by properly disposing of hazardous wastes and run a “greener” military. There are many different ways the environment is still impacted by military conflict, though, and that is one unique obstacle that makes finding successful solutions to this problem very difficult.

### ***Committee Directive***

In order to adequately address this important topic, it is important for delegates to do thorough and thoughtful research. Delegates should be familiar with the major environmental conventions and treaties presented to you within this background guide. It is important to know if your country participated in the discussion of these documents and if they have signed and ratified them. It is also important to know your countries stance on many other important environmental issues.

Delegates should investigate and examine the numerous causes and effects of military conflict on the environment. Some causes may include landmines, chemical weapons and small arms. Effects may include loss of biodiversity, destruction of the landscape and the tainting of natural resources. A focus should be placed on how to prevent such matters from occurring, as well as how to enforce and ensure compliance of the stated provisions.

While this problem is both broad and complex, it is essential that delegates attempt to create very focused, innovative and creative approaches to these important issues.

## **II. Transition from Disaster Relief to Sustainable Development Following Natural Disasters**

### ***Introduction***

The world today faces an increasing number of environmental emergencies. Over the course of the last decade alone, several landslides, floods, earthquakes and droughts have severely threatened the environment and the people which live in it.<sup>108</sup> Forest fires in Brazil and Indonesia destroyed a rich source of biodiversity and released high quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, exposing millions of people to unknown and potentially dangerous health risks.<sup>109</sup> The possibility of a breach of the Sarez Dam in Tajikistan, the largest in the world, could be the worst natural disaster in history, posing a threat to millions of people.<sup>110</sup> Hurricane Mitch wreaked mass destruction in Central America, and a spillage of cyanide-tainted water from a gold mine in Romania may pose severe health threats to its citizens.<sup>111</sup> These environmental harms are likely to have destructive, long-term repercussions on the world and its inhabitants.

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<sup>108</sup> “Practical Results, The Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE).” The United Nations Relief Web. Oct. 16, 2000. <http://www.reliefweb.int/ochaol/programs/response/unep/euag21.htm>.

<sup>109</sup> “Fighting the Forest Fires-UNEP’s Klaus Tumopfer Urges Teamwork in UN Response.” The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Mar. 27, 1998. <http://www.reliefweb.int>

<sup>110</sup> “Five Central Asian Countries at Risk of Flood From World’s Largest Dam.” *M2 Presswire*. June 22, 1999.

<sup>111</sup> “UNEP and UNDP to Prepare Action Plan for Central America in Wake of Hurricane Mitch.” *M2 Presswire*. Nov. 17, 1998. See also “Chronic Pollution Risk After EastEurope Cyanide Spill: Report.” Agence France Presse. April 19, 2000. See also “Baia Mare Examined.” *The Mining Journal*. May 5, 2000.

In the early morning hours of December 26, 2004, a massive earthquake that registered 9.0 on the Richter Scale occurred in the Indian Ocean.<sup>112</sup> The earthquake generated a tsunami that was among the deadliest disasters in modern history. The tsunami wreaked devastation along the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand, the Maldives and other countries where the 30 meter waves hit.<sup>113</sup> Even areas on the coast of East Africa sustained damage and recorded fatalities. It is estimated that approximately 270,000 people lost their lives from the initial wave itself and in the following flooding.<sup>114</sup> In the days and weeks following the tragedy, the international community pulled together to provide aid and comfort to the millions of people left homeless and heartbroken in one of the poorest regions of the world. Millions of dollars have been pledged by numerous governments, organizations and private companies to help rebuild the lives of these individuals. However, a great question remains. Is it enough to merely bring their quality of life back to the levels it was before that December day, or should the international community strive for something better?

Because of increased environmental degradation, emerging trends suggest that the frequency of and vulnerability to such hazards is likely to get worse. Predictions of climate change point to rising sea levels, more variability in rainfall and temperatures with effects such as increased number and intensity of floods and droughts and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and tornadoes.<sup>115</sup> Growing vulnerability to natural hazards will have adverse socio-economic impacts for livelihoods, migration patterns and conflict.<sup>116</sup> Environmental accidents and pollution transcend national boundaries, causing severe disasters for neighboring countries. International concerns arise when national borders alone are insufficient to combat such situations. Many factors cause a traditional nation state to become less capable of addressing its citizens' needs and the problems that affect the country. Obviously, developing countries will be least able to adapt to changes or pursue strategies that will reduce the many varied effects of natural disasters.<sup>117</sup>

The recent tragedy caused by the Tsunami in Asia is evidence of this. More than 270,000 people were killed.<sup>118</sup> Further, 5 million individuals have been made homeless, one third of them being children.<sup>119</sup> The economic costs are running into the billions of US dollars.<sup>120</sup> Out of these considerable costs came the comfort of the world's demonstrated solidarity through relief efforts to the affected countries. However, while the Asian Tsunami mobilized the international community to act on this particular natural hazard, there are many other natural disasters that get much less or no media attention. Such natural disasters include the locust plague in Africa, the hurricanes and floods that devastates Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries on a regular basis and the devastating effect of earthquakes in various regions.<sup>121</sup>

Natural disasters of the past ten years have claimed the lives of nearly 600,000 people and have cost in excess of \$670 billion in material damage.<sup>122</sup> The majority of these losses are concentrated in developing countries. Of the people exposed to earthquakes, tropical cyclones, floods and droughts, 85% live in countries having either medium or low human development.<sup>123</sup> According to global databases, over 3 million people have lost their lives in large-

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<sup>112</sup> "Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning," The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.  
<http://unisdr.org/ppew/tsunami/back-information/backinfor-historical.htm>

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> *ECOSOC Meeting on the transition from relief to development following natural disasters*. The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.  
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/briefingnote.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram. "Panel Discussion on the Transition from Relief to Development following Natural Disasters: Speaking Notes for the President of the Economic and Social Council." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.  
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/finalspeech.pdf>

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> *ECOSOC Meeting on the transition from relief to development following natural disasters*. The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.  
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/briefingnote.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

scale natural disasters in the last two decades.<sup>124</sup> Natural disasters reportedly affected on average 211 million people per year from 1991-2000.<sup>125</sup> This is seven times more than the average of 31 million people annually affected by conflict.<sup>126</sup> Associated economic costs currently exceed US \$90 billion a year.<sup>127</sup> Such staggering figures do not include the full social, economic and psychological impact of disasters on its victims. Another dimension of the issue is that assistance tends to be focused on immediate relief and soon diminishes.<sup>128</sup> This topic will examine the possibility of trying to promote a longer view of post-disaster recovery so that immediate relief efforts are tied in better with long-term sustainable development strategies.

### ***History of United Nations Action***

As the world develops, there is an increased risk of environmental and humanitarian disasters.<sup>129</sup> The international community has experimented with coordinated disaster response for almost as long as it has with international governance. Until recently, such response reflected the traditional categorization of disasters as either “natural,” caused by events beyond human control or “man-made,” humanitarian disasters such as internal strife or war.<sup>130</sup> In the aftermath of World War I, the League of Nations organized action on behalf of refugees and, in 1927, organized a convention establishing the International Relief Union (IRU).<sup>131</sup> The IRU's primary objectives were to offer assistance where disasters exceeded the resources of stricken peoples; coordinate relief organizations during public disasters; encourage the study of disaster prevention; and induce mutual international assistance.<sup>132</sup> However, its financial resources were too limited for it to take much more than symbolic action. To prepare for Europe's post-war relief requirements, forty-four states signed a convention in 1943 creating the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).<sup>133</sup> The UNRRA was subsequently dissolved and replaced by separate specialized United Nations agencies, leaving little central coordination among donors and recipients and no focal point concentrating solely on disasters.<sup>134</sup>

Several major natural disasters coupled with the problematic response of UN agencies, prompted the General Assembly to establish the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) in 1972.<sup>135</sup> The UNDRO worked in the areas of relief coordination; disaster preparedness, including disaster assessment and relief management capability; and the prevention, study, and application of appropriate measures such as collecting and disseminating information.<sup>136</sup> Albeit unsuccessful, UNDRO attempted to be primarily a coordinating agency, not an operating one.<sup>137</sup> Regarding the division between types of disasters, UNDRO focused on natural disasters, allowing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to maintain its leading role in humanitarian disasters.<sup>138</sup>

As the frequency, severity and complexity of humanitarian disasters increased, however, this arrangement proved inadequate. In 1991, the Kurdish refugee crisis clearly demonstrated that the UN system lacked the capacity to

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<sup>124</sup> Praveen Pardeshi. “Post-Disaster Recovery: Guidelines and Good Practices.” The United Nations Economic and Social Council. February 2005. <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/recovery%20guidelines.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> *ECOSOC Meeting on the transition from relief to development following natural disasters*. The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.  
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/briefingnote.pdf>

<sup>129</sup> EU/AG/16. *Major Activities of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit*. The Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies. Sept. 8, 1998.

<sup>130</sup> Barbara J. Brown. “An Overview of the Structure of the Current System.” *Disaster Assistance*. p. 11.

<sup>131</sup> J.W. Samuels. *The Relevance of International Law in the Prevention and Mitigation of Natural Disasters, in Disaster Assistance: Appraisal, Reform and New Approaches*.

<sup>132</sup> *Convention Establishing an International Relief Union*. The League of Nations. July 12, 1927.

<sup>133</sup> Randolph C. Kent. *Anatomy of Disaster Relief: The International Network in Action*. 36 (1987) (1937).

<sup>134</sup> B.G. Ramcharan. “The International Law and Practice of Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy.” *Global Watch*. 1991. pp. 59-60.

<sup>135</sup> A/RES/26/2816. Assistance in cases of natural disasters and other disaster situations. United Nations General Assembly

<sup>136</sup> B.G. Ramcharan. “The International Law and Practice of Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy.” *Global Watch*. 1991. pp. 59-60.

<sup>137</sup> Randolph C. Kent. “Anatomy of Disaster Relief: The International Network in Action.” (1987) (1937).

<sup>138</sup> Barbara J. Brown. “An Overview of the Structure of the Current System.” *Disaster Assistance*. p. 11.

respond to a major humanitarian emergency.<sup>139</sup> The General Assembly reacted by calling on the Secretary-General to strengthen coordination among the UN bodies concerned with disaster response.<sup>140</sup> In reply, the Secretary-General created the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), supported by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA).<sup>141</sup> The DHA, recently renamed the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA), incorporated UNDRO and expanded its mandate from primarily natural disasters to include longer-lasting, man-made disasters such as the Kurdish refugee crisis.<sup>142</sup> In 1997, the Secretary-General made additional structural changes and proposals with the hope of “greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts, and agility in responding to the pressing needs of the international community.”<sup>143</sup> The present UN system addresses disasters through a cycle of prevention, relief, and rehabilitation. The UN agencies, programs and funds, particularly those that work in development, take a leading role in prevention and rehabilitation. But when a disaster is impending or occurring, the UN system, in addition, may respond through the Secretary-General or the Security Council.

### *Disaster Response*

Disaster response strategy is a complex subject. The field encompasses a wide range of events and requires the skills of multiple UN bodies. The UN system currently divides disasters into two categories: complex humanitarian emergencies and natural, technological and environmental disasters. A complex humanitarian emergency is defined as a “humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country program.”<sup>144</sup> Complex humanitarian disasters tend to have multiple causes, such as wars, civil strife, oppression and ethnic and religious violence. They tend to last longer, affect larger areas and consume more resources than natural disasters.<sup>145</sup> Natural, technological and environmental disasters include elemental disruptions, such as hurricanes and volcanic explosions, biological disasters, accidental disasters, such as chemical spills and disasters that occur over time, such as desertification and climate change.<sup>146</sup> With the exception of long-term degradation, these tend to require a specific response over a fairly limited period of time.<sup>147</sup>

The United Nations’ classification somewhat preserves the conventional division of disasters into natural and man-made. However, there is consensus among those who have studied disaster response that the conventional division obscures the fact that human behavior lies at the core of most disasters.<sup>148</sup> Inhabitants may actually create the conditions for a “natural” disaster. Furthermore, both natural and man-made disasters can have similar effects, such as creating flows of refugees and internally-displaced persons.<sup>149</sup> Theoretically, man-made disasters, such as refugees fleeing persecution, may involve complex political issues, while natural disasters, like a volcanic eruption, may not. Nevertheless, as the past famines in North Korea and Ethiopia vividly demonstrated, even “natural” disasters may be deeply political.<sup>150</sup> The United Nations’ current classifications attempt to take these defining problems into account by categorizing disasters not just by their cause but also by the nature of the response required.

Consequently, disasters touch many aspects of the UN system, both areas of specific expertise and levels of operation. Coordination between these components is, thus, vital but difficult. “A working global disaster relief system must reconcile a basic paradox: to obtain maximum public support, its many components must remain

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<sup>139</sup> A/51/950. *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. United Nations Office of the Secretary General

<sup>140</sup> A/RES/46/182. Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> A/51/950. *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. United Nations Office of the Secretary General

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> ST/DHA/97/72. *Working Paper on the Definition of Complex Emergency*. United Nations Department of Humanitarian Inter-Agency Standing.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Stephen Green. “International Disaster Relief: Toward a Responsive System.”

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

responsive to their own special constituencies; yet to carry out relief operations effectively, these components--and their potentially conflicting interests--must be melded into a whole," each aware of what the others are doing.<sup>151</sup>

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) defines recovery as the "decisions and actions taken after a disaster with a view toward restoring or improving the pre-disaster living conditions of the stricken community, while encouraging and facilitating necessary adjustments to reduce disaster risk."<sup>152</sup> Disaster recovery is primarily about shifting the focus from saving lives to restoring livelihoods; effectively preventing the recurrence of crisis situations; harnessing conditions for future development; building national capacities; empowering communities; and determining and addressing root causes and vulnerabilities.<sup>153</sup> Recovery programs should be considered as an integral part of the developmental process at all levels. In order to do so, it is key to have a clear understanding of what reconstruction means and requires.

In current disaster relief, there are several areas where conventional strategies fail to grasp the opportunity to lead to sustainable development. Responses to crises are still dominated by humanitarian assistance and emergency management. While both of these efforts are still needed, emergency relief does not address the underlying risks that provoked the disaster nor does it stimulate rapid recovery.<sup>154</sup> Secondly, because of the nature of recovery/development funding, a gap is generated between the ending of humanitarian assistance and the initiation of reconstruction programming.<sup>155</sup> This gap succeeds in leaving affected people without support for recovery efforts. Also during this gap between the end of relief and the beginning of development, people begin to recover spontaneously, rebuilding and reproducing conditions even more risk prone than those that existed before the crisis occurred.<sup>156</sup> Most importantly, reconstruction is often designed to return a country to the conditions of development it enjoyed *before* a disaster. This often means that not only are better more innovative initiatives than previous ones being advocated, the conditions of risk which existed before the crisis are being rebuilt as well.<sup>157</sup> This only serves to prepare the ground for future disaster situations while increasing the debts of concerned countries.<sup>158</sup> Most donors and stricken communities view disaster recovery as a short process, 1-3 years long. However, for recovery to be truly effective as a means to sustainable development, it should have long-term goals of at least 5-10 years. This type of recovery could effectively be called "Transformative Recovery."<sup>159</sup>

### ***The Role of Sustainable Development in Disaster Relief***

As a concept, sustainable development following disaster relief remains imprecise. Although the concept is vague, it is nevertheless widely endorsed by national and international decision makers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and scholars.<sup>160</sup> Currently, the UN's Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) defines it as, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>161</sup> Thus, sustainable development continues to shape not only international, regional and bilateral agreements, especially on environmental issues, but also legal and policy decisions on the national level.

Sustainable Development was first discussed among world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. At this summit, they created a comprehensive plan of action, called *Agenda 21*, to implement their goals.<sup>162</sup> This plan

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Praveen Pardeshi. "Post-Disaster Recovery: Guidelines and Good Practices." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. February 2005. <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/recovery%20guidelines.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Alhaji B.M. Marong. "From Rio to Johannesburg: Reflections on the Role of International Legal Norms in Sustainable Development." *International Environmental Law Review*. 2003. pp. 22-26.

<sup>161</sup> "World Summit on Sustainable Development Meets in Johannesburg." The World Summit on Sustainable Development Department of Public Information. <http://www.un.org/events/wssd/summaries/envdevj1.htm>

<sup>162</sup> A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1. *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development



further attempts to clarify the meaning of sustainable development and to provide content for the concept.<sup>163</sup> A detailed 500-page document, *Agenda 21* prescribes numerous policies, programs and processes for international organizations and government officials to follow in order to implement the recommendations and declarations of the Rio Summit.<sup>164</sup> In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the world's leaders again met to discuss the successes and set-backs that had been faced since the Rio summit.<sup>165</sup> It would be an accurate assessment to state that sustainable development has emerged as an international paradigm for the new millennium in reconciling and integrating the goals of economic development, social development, and environmental protection, goals that can often be at odds with one another.

While sustainable development following natural disasters calls for different actions in every region of the world, the efforts to build a truly sustainable society require three key areas of focus: economic growth and equity, conserving natural resources and the environment and social development.<sup>166</sup> The long term success of these efforts will depend on new approaches to transform every level of society through capacity building. Capacity building is the reinforcement of human, institutional or community performance, skills, knowledge and attitudes on a sustainable basis.<sup>167</sup>

While it is clear that every type of disaster presents a unique set of problems and challenges, there are issues in common to most natural disasters, and lessons to be learned from experience addressing these challenges across the board. Building local, national and regional capacity is an essential element of disaster relief, recovery and risk reduction. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, it is often family, neighbors, communities and local response actors that provide the first line of defense.<sup>168</sup> National actors must lead the recovery efforts from the outset. Participation from local disaster management experts and technicians will help ensure that recovery programming considers the needs and capacities of the affected population and involvement of national decision makers is critical to building consensus around recovery priorities, roles, responsibilities and resources.<sup>169</sup>

To ensure ownership by national actors, external support must build upon, not duplicate, existing capacities, knowledge and strengths, and build up local institutions through transfer of technology and expertise.<sup>170</sup> Approaches should include assistance with the formulation/revision of disasters preparedness plans, hazards and risk mapping, training and simulations exercises, international investment in community, local, national and regional disaster preparedness and response institutions, advocacy and awareness campaigns and the development of early warning capacities.<sup>171</sup>

### ***Economic Support for Sustainable Development***

Disasters undermine development by contributing to vulnerability and furthering poverty. As the Secretary-General noted, in the context of the Asian Tsunami,

long-term development challenges are considerable. We know from experience that the poor always suffer the most enduring damage from such natural disasters, as their assets are often completely wiped out. So we need to focus on longer-term recovery and reconstruction, and ensure that from now on, there are no gaps in the future funding efforts.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> "Agenda 21." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.  
<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm>.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> *Johannesburg Summit 2002 Pamphlet*. The World Summit on Sustainable Development. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2002. <http://www.un.org/jsummit/html/brochure/brochure12.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> *ECOSOC Meeting on the transition from relief to development following natural disasters*. The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.  
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/briefingnote.pdf>

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram. "Panel Discussion on the Transition from Relief to Development following Natural Disasters: Speaking Notes for the President of the Economic and Social Council." The United Nations Economic and



Under the *UN Charter*, one of the purposes of the United Nations is to reduce economic hardship.<sup>173</sup> There are few times in which this goal is more important than in the time following a disaster. The economic distress that follows disasters is widely regarded as a cause of civil unrest. The alleviation of such suffering and the promotion of economic development fosters peaceful relations among peoples and nations; and thus may prevent future conflict.<sup>174</sup> In the overall UN system, therefore, economic development is a strategic, as well as a humanitarian objective.

While the monetary response of the international community following the Asian Tsunami was reassuring; support often drops precipitously once the response phase to a natural disaster is complete and media and public interest has subsided. After 1998's Hurricane Mitch, only a small percentage of promised funds were ever paid out.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, almost two years after the Bam Earthquake of December 2003, many of the displaced are still living in temporary shelter.<sup>176</sup>

The transition from relief to development refers to the need to enlarge the boundaries of humanitarian assistance in order to contribute to longer-term rehabilitation of communities.<sup>177</sup> For example, in the case of the Asian Tsunami, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that Asian fisheries and aquaculture lost more than \$500 million dollars in the disaster.<sup>178</sup> International assistance in the economic is therefore crucial for the recovery of the countries concerned. Failing to invest in post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation is tantamount to ignoring the potential for valuable development opportunities.

### ***Conclusion***

There is simply no way natural disasters may effectively be prevented. However, it is within the power of the international community to reduce the impact of their destructive effects. This year has succeeded in being a pivotal year for the United Nations in terms of disaster relief and development. Out of much tragedy comes the unique opportunity to focus on turning disaster aid into sustainable development and enacting real change in affected countries. It is important that the United Nations acknowledge that disasters contribute to violence and global stability and can erase hard earned standards of development that many countries have achieved. By improving the international system's ability to prevent, mitigate and manage natural disasters, the international community can maximize long-term peace and security.<sup>179</sup> Creating an environment where lasting peace can take hold and reducing future disaster risk enables vicious cycles of poverty and conflict to be broken.

Experiences show that if efforts are made to support local and national recovery processes at early stages, if risk and vulnerability reduction considerations are factored into all recovery activities, if the synergies between development, humanitarian and other actors involved in the response phase are properly captured, then it is possible to close the gap between relief and development and transform crisis into opportunities for development.<sup>180</sup>

### ***Directive***

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Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/finalspeech.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*. The United Nations. June 26, 1925.

<sup>174</sup> Alhaji B.M. Marong. "From Rio to Johannesburg: Reflections on the Role of International Legal Norms in Sustainable Development." *International Environmental Law Review*. 2003. pp. 22-26.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram. "Panel Discussion on the Transition from Relief to Development following Natural Disasters: Speaking Notes for the President of the Economic and Social Council." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/finalspeech.pdf>

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> ECOSOC Meeting on the transition from relief to development following natural disasters. The United Nations Economic and Social Council. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2005.

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/briefingnote.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> Praveen Pardeshi. "Post-Disaster Recovery: Guidelines and Good Practices." The United Nations Economic and Social Council. February 2005. <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/docs/recovery%20guidelines.pdf>

This topic is both broad and complex. In order to adequately understand the various dimensions of disaster relief and recovery, it is essential to research any and all disaster situations both within delegates' countries and regions within the last twenty years. Further, there are many situations that, while they might not have had direct effect on all delegates, provide excellent examples of typical disaster relief patterns.

Further, it delegates should consider the following questions: Does the international community in general, and developing countries in particular, have mainstreamed disaster risk reduction and transformative recovery processes? Are there proper assessments of the needs, capacities, vulnerabilities, and causes of disaster situations and recovery? What are some of the ways that the economic revitalization of communities can be contributed to? How can we build local and national capacities for increased sustainable development following natural disasters? Finally, how may the international community improve upon and maintain sustainable coordination efforts?

### **III. Economic Development in Latin America**

#### ***History and Background***

Over the last three decades, the Latin American and Caribbean states (LACS) have been seeking ways to significantly bolster economic development throughout the region. Latin America had experienced steady economic growth in the three decades after World War II.<sup>181</sup> However, the debt crisis of the 1980s revealed some of the structural weaknesses of Latin American and Caribbean economic development.<sup>182</sup> In response, most countries of the region designed and implemented structural reforms with the aim of creating more stable economies that would be capable of sustainable growth.<sup>183</sup> Thus, many LACS focused on eradicating poverty in order to bring about economic change.<sup>184</sup> Poverty is one of the most urgent global issues facing the international community today. As defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "human poverty is the denial or deprivation of opportunities and choices that would enable an individual to lead a long, healthy and creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self respect and the respect of others."<sup>185</sup>

After a decade of high poverty rates in many LACS, the levels are beginning to level off due to the concerted efforts of governments and communities.<sup>186</sup> Further, the region is seeing an increase in economic growth.<sup>187</sup> According to the Economic Commission of Latin American and Caribbean (ECLAC), the region's economy expanded by 5.5% in 2004.<sup>188</sup> This is reported to be the highest growth in the region since 1997.<sup>189</sup> Further, ECLAC boasts that per capita income grew by 4% in 2004 and that vigorous world trade growth increased exports in the region by 22%.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, ECLAC reports that the unemployment rate in the region dropped from 10.7 to 10%. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this is the most region-wide significant drop in unemployment since 1998.<sup>191</sup> Higher employment rates and the modest recovery in income have had a significant effect on poverty rates.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Andre A. Hofman. *The Economic Development of Latin America in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. North Hampton, MA: Edward Elgar. 2000, p. 8.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>183</sup> Thomas Bulmer. *The Economic History of Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994, p. 81.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Programme. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2004, p. 22.

<sup>186</sup> "Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean 2003-2004." United Nations Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean.

<http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/8/15398/P15398.xml&xsl=/de/tpl-i/p9f.xsl&base=/tpl-i/top-bottom.xsl>

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> "Latin America in the Global Economy: Challenges and Opportunities." The International Monetary Fund. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2005/020405.htm>

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

According to ECLAC, the percentage of poor people is estimated to have fallen from 44.5% in 2003 to 42.9% in 2004.<sup>193</sup>

Despite these successes, the gains in poverty reduction have not been dramatic. Today, approximately 200 million people in the Latin America and Caribbean region live in poverty according to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).<sup>194</sup> Additionally, the IADB reports that the income inequality in the region remains the worst of any developing region in the world.<sup>195</sup> Within the LACS, poverty is more concentrated within specific groups and sectors in society.<sup>196</sup> Poverty is becoming more urban, and is more prevalent among women and certain ethnic and racial groups.<sup>197</sup>

Noting the adverse impact of poverty on development, it is important to address the root causes of poverty. One of the leading causes of poverty is the international debt crisis. According to the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, the overall foreign debt for Latin America in 2004 was \$720 billion, which amounts to \$357 for every man, woman, and child in Latin America.<sup>198</sup> In the majority of these countries, more than 40% of their government's budgets are spent in annual debt service.<sup>199</sup> This amounts to over four times the amount spent on health care and education in most developing countries.<sup>200</sup> The issue of debt relief first arose when developing countries faced mounting problems during the 1980s in meeting their debt obligations.<sup>201</sup> These problems included rising oil prices, increasing interest rates on borrowing, and declining terms of trade for goods from the developing world.<sup>202</sup>

### ***1980s International Debt Crisis***

The origin of the international debt crisis lay partly in the international expansion of U.S. banking organizations during the 1950s and 1960s in conjunction with the rapid growth in the world economy.<sup>203</sup> For example, more than a decade before oil prices quadrupled in 1973-74, the growth rate in the real domestic product of the LDCs averaged about 6 percent annually.<sup>204</sup> For the remainder of the 1970s, the growth rate slowed but averaged a respectable 4 to 5 percent.<sup>205</sup> Such growth generated new U.S. corporate investment in these markets, and the international banks followed by establishing a global presence to support such activity.<sup>206</sup>

In the 1960's and early 1970's, developing countries borrowed increasing amounts of foreign capital to fuel economic growth.<sup>207</sup> It was widely expected that these debtor states would be able to pay their debt when commodity prices rebounded.<sup>208</sup> Unfortunately, commodity prices never rose enough to assist developing countries. Furthermore, the oil crisis of the 1970's further intensified the situation by raising the overall cost of transporting commodities to markets.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> "2004 Annual Report: The Region in 2004." Inter-American Development Bank.

[http://www.iadb.org/exr/ar2004/LAC\\_summary.cfm?language=en&parid=4&itemlid=2](http://www.iadb.org/exr/ar2004/LAC_summary.cfm?language=en&parid=4&itemlid=2)

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Programme. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2004, p. 27.

<sup>199</sup> John Serieux. *Debt Relief for the Poorest Countries*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2003, p. 12.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Phillip Wellons. *Passing the Buck: Banks, Government and Third World Debt*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1987, p. 225.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Scott B. MacDonald, Margie Lindsay and David L. Crum. *The Global Debt Crisis: Forecasting for the Future*. New York: Pinter Publishers. 1990, 3-4.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

In Latin America, borrowing had increased steadily in the early 1970s, and after the 1973 oil embargo it escalated significantly.<sup>210</sup> By 1971, total outstanding debt in Latin America from all sources amounted to approximately \$29 billion.<sup>211</sup> By 1978, this number had risen to approximately \$159 billion. During the late 1970s, the signs of impending crisis began to become clearer and were more widely recognized. Some observers believed that the ability of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to continue servicing their debts was deteriorating quickly.<sup>212</sup> The second major oil shock of the decade occurred in 1979, intensifying LDC debt-service problems.<sup>213</sup> At this time, the debt-service ratios of Latin American nations averaged more than 30 percent of export earnings, a level above what bankers traditionally considered acceptable.<sup>214</sup> Some of the developing countries, such as Brazil, had debt service near 60 percent during this period.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, Latin American nations continued their heavy borrowing during these years. Between the start of 1979 and the end of 1982 total Latin American debt more than doubled, increasing from \$159 billion to \$327 billion.<sup>216</sup>

Between 1975 and 1979, external debt payments doubled among developing countries and by the end of 1987 that number had risen to fifty-six countries that were highly indebted.<sup>217</sup> Critics point to the Mexican Crisis as the first real indicator that there was an international problem.<sup>218</sup> The Mexican Crisis began in 1982 when the Mexican government informed its creditors that it could not repay its debts.<sup>219</sup> When this occurred the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group stepped in with new loans under strict conditions to help pay the interest.<sup>220</sup> However, this relief did not help and Mexico found itself in more debt than before. Like Mexico, other countries received new loans to pay off the interest of previous loans.<sup>221</sup> This pattern was cycled repeatedly in the following years as more countries found themselves in situations similar to Mexico's. In many countries, debts continued to rise because new loans were added to the existing debt; moreover, countries continued to default on previous loans, all of which threatened the entire international system of credit.<sup>222</sup>

In 1985 the Baker Plan was enacted to relieve some of the developing world's debt.<sup>223</sup> The Plan called for private banks to increase their lending to those LDCs facing debt problems and for the World Bank Group and other multilateral lending institutions to increase their support for debt reduction.<sup>224</sup> In return, the Baker Plan called upon LDCs to increase efforts to adopt sound economic policies and to encourage private sector and foreign direct investment.<sup>225</sup> Overall the Plan called for an increase in economic growth. Although the Plan was designed to promote economic growth in LDCs, many scholars believe it was a failure because lending institutions did not want to issue new loans when countries could not pay back their current loans.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, countries were not willing to change their economic policies because they feared that changes would lead to an increase in poverty.<sup>227</sup>

Although the Baker Plan failed, the international community was persistent in trying to solve the debt crisis. In 1989, the U.S. Secretary of Treasury, Nicholas Brady, the Bush Administration, the World Bank and the IMF created the Brady Initiative.<sup>228</sup> This plan encouraged banks to engage in "voluntary" debt reduction schemes.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Eliana Cardoso and Ann Helwege. *Latin America's Economy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 1995, p. 106.

<sup>211</sup> "External Debt Statistics." The World Bank.  
[http://www.worldbank.org/data/working/QEDS/sdds\\_countrydata.html](http://www.worldbank.org/data/working/QEDS/sdds_countrydata.html)

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Eliana Cardoso and Ann Helwege. *Latin America's Economy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 1995, p. 106.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> John Serieux. *Debt Relief for the Poorest Countries*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2003, p. 207.

Additionally, it called for countries to implement market liberalizations in exchange for a reduction of the commercial bank debt, and in many cases, new loans from commercial banks and multilateral agencies.<sup>230</sup> Although this plan was supposed to help all developing countries, it was specifically designed for Latin American states.<sup>231</sup>

When the plan was introduced to the international community, it garnered skepticism because people thought that it would fail like the Baker Plan; however, it was embraced because it proved to be more flexible than previous plans dealing with individual countries' characteristics and creditors' desires.<sup>232</sup> Overall the plan was cited as a moderate success. Mexico received debt reductions as did Costa Rica (1992), Venezuela (1990), Uruguay (1991), Argentina (1992) and Brazil (1992).<sup>233</sup> By 1994 eighteen countries had agreed to deals for over \$60 billion in debt reduction and about \$190 billion in reconstruction and development.<sup>234</sup> Although the initiative was cited as a success the plan did not provide sufficient debt-forgiveness for all the countries in question.<sup>235</sup> The debt crisis continued and began to have a larger effect on countries in Africa and in Latin American states.

### ***The Role of the World Bank and IMF***

Since their establishment in 1945, the World Bank and IMF have attempted to meet the challenges and special problems associated with development. Two of the most important issues facing these multilateral institutions are debt relief and poverty. The IMF and World Bank Group began to design a debt reduction initiative that focuses on reducing debt in the 41 poorest countries.<sup>236</sup> In 1996, the IMF and World Bank Group established the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, which provides over \$3.6 billion to eligible countries following sound economic policies to help them reduce their external debt burden to sustainable levels.<sup>237</sup> In order to be considered for HIPC Initiative assistance, a country must undergo two phases of adjustment and reform programs supported by the IMF and World Bank.<sup>238</sup> These reform policies are known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).<sup>239</sup> They require specific economic, political, or social changes within a country.<sup>240</sup>

Thus far, the HIPC Initiative has been the most comprehensive plan introduced to reduce the external debt of developing countries.<sup>241</sup> In theory, the HIPC Initiative is a way of increasing the accountability and transparency of nations.<sup>242</sup> In the past, lending institutions and other donors provided countries with assistance for health and education programs.<sup>243</sup> In most cases, countries did not use the money for education and health care programs. Instead, these states spent it on military equipment and/or for servicing debt.<sup>244</sup> Therefore, the education levels continued to decline and most developing countries continue to lack basic health care services or sanitation systems.<sup>245</sup>

Although HIPC is a very detailed strategy for debt reduction among the 41 poorest nations, it has not had a major impact in terms of global debt reduction.<sup>246</sup> In fact, since the program began in 1996, only one country has received

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 209

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>234</sup> Ian Vaquez, "The Brady Plan and Market Based Solutions to the Debt Crisis," *The Cato Journal*. 1993.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> "Debt Relief Under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives: A Fact Sheet." The International Monetary <http://imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> John Serieux. *Debt Relief for the Poorest Countries*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2003, pp. 43.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>243</sup> Michael Rowbotham. *Goodbye America: Globalization, Debt and the Dollar Empire*. Concord, MA: Jon Carpenter Publishing. 2000, p. 105.

<sup>244</sup> John Serieux. *Debt Relief for the Poorest Countries*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2003, p. 106.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 61-2.

complete debt relief, Uganda.<sup>247</sup> However, as of September 2003, a total of 23 countries have reached their decision point and are moving to the second phase of the HIPC Initiative.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to the HIPC initiative, the World Bank and IMF formed the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) in 1999.<sup>249</sup> PRSP's describe a country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty.<sup>250</sup> "PRSP's are prepared by governments through a participatory process that involves civil society, development partners, including the World Bank and IMF."<sup>251</sup> Currently, 54 countries have engaged in the PRSP process.<sup>252</sup> Many of these countries have incorporated the environment sector into their papers to support sustainable development.<sup>253</sup> For example, in 2000, Cameroon established an environmentally-based PRSP.<sup>254</sup> According to the World Resources Institute, between 1990 and 1997, deforestation rates increased from 300,000 hectares to approximately 700,000 hectares per year.<sup>255</sup> Under the PRSP Cameroon developed a National Forest Strategy (NSF) in which the government agreed to the sustainable use of forests.<sup>256</sup> The IMF has reported that since the implementation of Cameroon's PRSP, approximately 6 million hectares of forests were under sustainable management and the rates of deforestation decreased by 0.2%.<sup>257</sup> The PRSP is considered by many countries to be more effective at improving livelihoods because under the HIPC programme, funding from the education, environment, and health care sectors for example, were cut to service debt.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, countries have more of a participatory role in the PRSP process. The PRSPs are developed by the countries in consultation with the IMF and World Bank.<sup>259</sup>

### ***The Role of the United Nations***

In the year 2000, the leaders of 189 nations agreed to support global development objectives referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>260</sup> The MDGs are composed of eight fundamental goals which are further divided into 18 specific targets designed to serve a blueprint and plan of action.<sup>261</sup> The UNDP has been assigned the task of tracking the progress toward the achievement of the MDGs.<sup>262</sup> In collaboration with the ECLAC, the UNDP works in the region to promote sustainable development.<sup>263</sup> In 2002 and 2003, the UNDP appropriated 40% of its resources for sustainable development programs.<sup>264</sup> This amount is expected to increase by 10% in the next 5 years.<sup>265</sup> The UNDP has cited Costa Rica as a success of its sustainable development initiatives. Since the UNDP sustainable development operations began in Costa Rica in 1998, the country has seen a 3.2% increase in its literacy rates, a 12% increase in education levels, and a 2.1% decrease in unemployment.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> "Debt Relief Under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives: A Fact Sheet." The International Monetary Fund. <http://imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> "Reduction Strategy Papers." The World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/>

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> "Cameroon and the IMF." The International Monetary Fund. <http://www.imf.org/external/country/cmr/type=9998>

<sup>255</sup> *Analysis of Access to Central Africa's Forests*. World Resources Institute. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute. 2004, p. 34.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> John Serieux. *Debt Relief for the Poorest Countries*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2003, p. 106

<sup>259</sup> "Reduction Strategy Papers." The World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/>

<sup>260</sup> "Millennium Development Goals." The United Nations. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> "Meeting the Millennium Poverty Reduction Targets in Latin American and the Caribbean." United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/rblac/documents/poverty/mdg/libro70.pdf>

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.



The UNDP, along with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), created The Poverty Mapping Programme (PMP). This programme seeks to promote the use of poverty maps in policy making and targeting assistance, particularly in the areas of food security and environmental management.<sup>267</sup> A poverty map is a geographical profile that shows where poverty is concentrated in a country. This information is essential in order for decision makers to determine the policy that should be employed and where the policy might have the greatest impact.<sup>268</sup> The World Food Programme (WFP) used poverty maps in Cambodia, for instance, to help target the poorest districts for food aid.<sup>269</sup> Like Cambodia, South Africa, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua and Panama have had success with poverty mapping. In 2001, the government of Ecuador asked the UNDP and UNEP to produce poverty maps with information on sanitation and water supplies in Quito to check an outbreak of cholera.<sup>270</sup> The UNDP and UNEP worked with the health and water agencies in Quito, Ecuador, to create a map that showed high risk areas.<sup>271</sup> The maps were able to show that cholera was following the river floodplain, moving through poor areas.<sup>272</sup> This information was provided to local health agencies that were able to warn people to boil water and take other preventive measures.<sup>273</sup> Through the use of poverty mapping, the government was able to contain the outbreak within three months.<sup>274</sup>

Another UN agency that works to enhance development is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). UNCTAD is the focal point within the United Nations for integrated treatment of trade and development issues, acting as a forum for intergovernmental discussions and deliberations on trade and development issues.<sup>275</sup> UNCTAD also works in co-operation with other organizations to provide technical assistance to developing countries at helping them link trade and development. For example, in 2003, UNCTAD established the Debt Management Financial Analysis System Programme (DMFAS).<sup>276</sup> Through this programme, UNCTAD works with 65 low and middle income countries, whose economies account for more than \$500 billion of outstanding debt.<sup>277</sup> Activities under this programme will help assist governments in meeting common debt management challenges they face, such as how to develop the appropriate institutional and administrative structures for debt management.<sup>278</sup> As of the end of 2004, 17 LACs were selected for receiving assistance.<sup>279</sup>

### ***The Role of Civil Society***

The role of civil society in combating poverty and sustainable development is one of most importance. NGO's are crucial because many of them have local based knowledge and understand the needs of the population they are serving. Also, they incorporate community participation into their processes which gives them credibility when working in communities. This is why NGOs are the key link between decision-makers and the general population that policies are affecting. Furthermore, most of the UN's works is accomplished with the assistance of many NGOs. The UNEP and UNDP especially have partnered with many NGOs to implement its sustainable development programs.<sup>280</sup> In addition, many NGOs have developed programs to combat poverty and promote sustainable development. For example, the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Education for Sustainability (EFS) Programme focuses on promoting the concept of sustainability and efficient use of resources. WWF works to promote EFS in the following key areas: professional development among educators; resource development;

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<sup>267</sup> "Mapping and Analysis of Poverty, Environment and Food Security: Case Studies." United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and United Nations Environment Programme.  
[http://www.povertymap.net/publications/doc/brussels\\_2003/background.pdf](http://www.povertymap.net/publications/doc/brussels_2003/background.pdf)

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> "About UNCTAD." United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.  
<http://unctad.org/templates/page.asp?intITEMid=1530&lang=1>

<sup>276</sup> "Debt Management." United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. <http://r0.unctad.org/dmfas/>

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> "UNDP and Civil Society Organizations." United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/cso/>



community-based education; and “greening primary education.”<sup>281</sup> In addition to the EFS, the World Wildlife Fund has collaborated with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) which works with governments in South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Costa Rica, Argentina, Mexico and Bolivia.<sup>282</sup> SIDA works with these countries to enhance the capacity of policymakers and stakeholders to integrate environmental issues into their macroeconomic reform programs.<sup>283</sup>

Another dimension to the poverty-development relationship is gender. Approximately two-thirds the of the world’s poor are women.<sup>284</sup> Women play a key role in managing and preserving biodiversity, water, land and other natural resources, yet their importance is often ignored or exploited.<sup>285</sup> The Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) works to empower women living in poverty.<sup>286</sup> WEDO’s Sustainable Development Programme (SDP) seeks to strengthen international networking between women and environmental groups as well as mobilize women’s involvement in environmental and sustainable development decision-making. Additionally, the programme helps provide women and young children with basic education.<sup>287</sup>

Another NGO that works to reduce poverty and increase sustainable development is the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). In 2002, the ICSW partnered with the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS) with its Municipal Action for Urban Poverty Reduction Programme which has built 18,000 homes in lower income areas with safe sewage and sanitation systems benefiting 90,000 individuals.<sup>288</sup> The programme also enrolled 100 children in vocational training sessions and has been successful at enhancing community participation in environment and development related projects.<sup>289</sup> Because of the expertise many NGOs have on development and poverty issues, these organizations will play a very important part in the development of the LACs.

### **Conclusion**

The Latin American and Caribbean States have recovered much of the economic ground lost during the 1980s and are stronger as a result of some structural reforms. However, many of the deeply rooted historical problems of the region remain to be resolved. Additionally, the poverty rate among the region is still alarmingly high. A cornerstone for reducing poverty over time is sustained economic growth. Without sustainable development and economic reform, the hard won gains of the last decade could be lost.

### **Committee Directive**

Therefore, in your research you should consider the aspects of poverty that coincide with economic issues such as unequal distribution of wealth, debt management, and unemployment. Additionally, some consideration should be given to trade and how it can be used to bolster and sustain development. An analysis of these issues in correspondence with the unique historical and cultural facets of the Latin American and Caribbean region is essential to understanding this topic.

While delegates from regions other than the LAC might not see the benefit in studying this region, finding solutions to this issue could have implications for their own countries. Therefore, finding examples of economic successes either within your own country or in others and properly analyzing them could prove to be effective.

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<sup>281</sup> “Conservation Programmes/Environmental Education.” World Wildlife Fund.

<http://www.wwfchina.org/english/loca.php?loca=93>

<sup>282</sup> “Ecoregions.” World Wildlife Fund.

[http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/where\\_we\\_work/ecoregions/global200/pages/home.htm](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/ecoregions/global200/pages/home.htm)

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> *Untapped Connections: Gender, Water, and Poverty*. Women’s Environment and Development Organization. New York and Geneva: United Nations, p. 31.

<sup>285</sup> *Women and the Environment*. United Nations Environment Programme and Women’s Environment and Development Organization. New York and Geneva: United Nations. 2002, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> “About WEDO.” Women’s Environment and Development Organization. <http://www.wedo.org/about/about.htm>

<sup>287</sup> “Programs.” Women’s Environment and Development Organization. [www.wedo.org/programs/sustainable.htm](http://www.wedo.org/programs/sustainable.htm)

<sup>288</sup> “Global Events.” International Council on Social Welfare. [www.icsw.org/globalevents.html](http://www.icsw.org/globalevents.html)

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

Other crucial questions to look at would be, are there changes within international lending institutions that could be made in order to better enhance the economic situation of the Latin American and Caribbean region? Do structural readjustments really work? Are there any ways that the region could become economically solvent without having to rely so heavily on lending institutions?