



SRMUN ATLANTA 2019
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Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to SRMUN Atlanta 2019 and the General Assembly (GA) Plenary. My name is Mike Engelhardt, and I will be serving as your Director for the GA Plenary. This will be my fourth conference as a SRMUN staff member. Most recently, I served as the Director for the United Nations Environment Programme - Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP-CPR) in SRMUN Atlanta 2018. I currently live and work in Washington, DC, having previously obtained a Master's degree in International Security from the University of Denver and a Bachelor's of Science degree in History from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Our committee's Assistant Director will be John Griffin. This will be John's third time as a staff member, having previously served as Assistant Director for the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) at SRMUN Atlanta 2018. John is currently a student at Florida State University, where he's pursuing a degree in International Affairs with a focus in Economics.

The GA Plenary is the main deliberative body of the United Nations (UN). As the normative center of the UN, the GA is a generator of ideas, a place of international debate, and a hub for new concepts and practices in the political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal spheres.

By focusing on the mission of the GA Plenary, we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss and work together to develop meaningful solutions:

- I. Determining Solutions for Marine Plastic Buildup and Microplastics
- II. Promoting Social Protection as a Means of Eliminating Poverty

The background guide provides a strong introduction to the committee and the topics and should be utilized as a foundation for the delegate's independent research. While we have attempted to provide a holistic analysis of the issues, the background guide should not be used as the single mode of research for the topics. Delegates are expected to go beyond the background guide and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own. The position papers for the committee should reflect the complexity of these issues and their externalities. Delegations are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies, and recommendations on each of the two topics. Delegates should visit srmun.org for more detailed information about guidelines, formatting, and the position papers. **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, November 1, 2019, by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website.**

John and I are enthusiastic about serving as your dais for the GA Plenary. We wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you in the near future. Please feel free to contact Deputy Director-General Victoria Suri-Beltran, John, or myself if you have any questions while preparing for the conference.

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Committee History of the General Assembly Plenary

In 1945, following the conclusion of the World War II, the United Nations (UN) was founded to maintain international peace and security, foster diplomatic relations, achieve international cooperation, promote human rights, and harmonize the actions of Member States towards these ends.¹ Article 7 of the UN Charter (1945) established six principal organs: the General Assembly (GA), the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Secretariat.² Of these, only the GA has universal membership, rendering it a unique forum for discussion within the UN system.³ As the normative center of the UN, the GA is a generator of ideas, a place of international debate, and a hub for new concepts and practices in the political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal spheres.⁴

The mandate of the GA is defined in Chapter IV (Articles 10-22) of the UN Charter.⁵ As stipulated by Article 10, the GA is broadly tasked with discussing “any questions or any matters within the scope of the [Charter] or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the [Charter],” and it may make relevant recommendations to Member States or to the Security Council.⁶ The primary functions and powers of the GA include initiating studies and making recommendations to promote international cooperation in various areas including politics, economics, and education, and the realization of fundamental human rights and freedoms.⁷ The GA also makes recommendations “for the peaceful adjustment of any situation, regardless of origin, which it deems likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations.”⁸ However, the GA may not make recommendations related to any dispute or situation in respect of which the Security Council is exercising its functions.⁹ The GA also serves to elect the UN Secretary-General based on recommendations from the Security Council.¹⁰

All 193 UN Member States are represented in the GA, with each Member State having one vote.¹¹ The GA may grant Observer status to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and non-Member States or entities, which allows them to participate in sessions but does not grant them voting rights.¹² The GA has six Main Committees that are topically organized within the Plenary’s main fields of responsibility: the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).¹³ The GA’s six committees discuss agenda items assigned to them, adopt draft resolutions, and submit reports on their work to the Plenary.¹⁴ It is noted that the GA Plenary may decide to address an issue without prior reference to a committee.¹⁵ In recent years, resolutions adopted by the GA Plenary, without reference to a Main Committee, have addressed diverse topics such as the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Review, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁶

¹ The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, June 26, 1945, Art. 1.

² The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Art. 7.

³ “General Assembly of the United Nations,” UN General Assembly, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/> (accessed March 3, 2019).

⁴ Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 91, 162.

“Functions and powers of the General Assembly,” UN General Assembly, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2019).

⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly* (New York: Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, 2011), https://www.unitar.org/ny/sites/unitar.org/ny/files/UN_PGA_Handbook.pdf, p. 24.

⁶ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook*, p. 63-68.

⁷ The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Art. 10.

⁸ The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Arts. 14.

⁹ The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Ch. IV.

¹⁰ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018* (Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017), <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Peace-and-Security/United-Nations-Handbook-2017-18.pdf>, p. 12.

¹¹ The United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, Art. 18.

¹² Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook*, p. 30.

¹³ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook*, p. 18.

¹⁴ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, p. 23.

¹⁵ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, p. 23.

¹⁶ “73rd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 73),” International Institute for Sustainable Development – SDG Knowledge Hub, <http://sdg.iisd.org/events/73rd-session-of-the-un-general-assembly/> (accessed March 3, 2019).

The GA's annual session begins each year on the third Tuesday of September.¹⁷ The session usually begins with speeches by each Member States' head of government or a representative.¹⁸ In addition to the annual session, the GA may also hold special sessions or "emergency special sessions."¹⁹ Special sessions are requested by the Security Council, one of the most recent being in 2016 to address the world drug problem.²⁰ Emergency special sessions are enacted by a vote of nine members of the Security Council.²¹

The GA also considers and approves the UN's budget and apportions expenses to be borne by individual Member States.²² During the 72nd session of the GA in 2017-2018, the body approved a USD 5.4 Billion biennial program budget for the UN.²³ The GA also determines the total annual contributions from each Member State and uses those contributions as the basis of the UN's yearly operating budget.²⁴ For the 2019 fiscal year, the UN calculated the net contributions from all Member States to total USD 2,849,023,329 per year.²⁵ The GA budget is used to cover a range of areas including human rights, humanitarian projects, and development, and peacekeeping operations.²⁶

¹⁷ UN DPI, *Basic Facts about the United Nations: 42nd Edition* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2017).

¹⁸ UN DPI, *Basic Facts about the United Nations*.

¹⁹ UN DPI, *Basic Facts about the United Nations*.

²⁰ "Special Sessions," UN General Assembly, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/special.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2019).

²¹ "Emergency Special Sessions," UN General Assembly, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2019).

²² UN General Assembly, Resolution 71/6, *Programme planning*, A/RES/71/6, October 27, 2016, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/71/6>, Para. 4.

²³ "Seventy-Second Session, Highlights," United Nations Department of Public Information (UN DPI), December 29, 2017, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/ga11998.doc.htm>; "General Assembly approves \$5.4 billion UN budget for next two years," UN DPI, December 26, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/12/640451-general-assembly-approves-54-billion-un-budget-next-two-years>.

²⁴ UN Secretariat, *Assessment of Member States' contributions to the United Nations regular budget for the year 2019*, ST/ADM/SER.B/992, December 24, 2018, <https://undocs.org/en/ST/ADM/SER.B/992>.

²⁵ UN Secretariat, *Assessment of Member States' contributions to the United Nations regular budget for the year 2019*.

²⁶ "General Assembly Approves Nearly \$8 Billion for 15 Peacekeeping Missions in 2016/2017," United Nations, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11794.doc.htm> (accessed July 18, 2018).

I. Determining Solutions for Marine Plastic Buildup and Microplastics

Introduction

The world's population is living, working, vacationing, and increasingly conglomerating along the coasts, and standing witness to the greatest and most unprecedented plastic waste tide ever faced. The production and consumption of plastics have been rising, worldwide, notably within the last 50 years.²⁷ During 2013, an estimated 299 million tons of plastics were produced, representing a four percent increase compared to 2012's production rate.²⁸ Based on a oceanographic model and data from the nonprofit Public Library of Science (PLOS) organization, there is more than 5.25 trillion plastic particles with a collective weight of 268,940 tons currently distributed across the world's oceans.²⁹ With the creation and dependence of plastics in the early 20th century and lack of regulation and proper recycling systems set, plastic waste and microplastics pose a threat to marine life, habitats, and human life.³⁰ Consequently, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and other United Nations (UN) bodies have recognized the importance of reducing the amount of plastic debris in the world's oceans.³¹ Despite many international conventions and resolutions on this issue, the amount of plastic debris in the world's oceans is still increasing, which demands further action by the international community.³²

The majority of the plastic debris in the world's oceans originates from ship and platform-based sources of plastic litter such as fishing and recreational ships, gas and oil platforms, shipping, cruise liners, and aquaculture spaces.³³ However, there is a significant portion of marine plastic buildup that is due to land-based sources as well, such as industrial waste, recreational areas, untreated sewage, and wind-blown debris.³⁴ Debris in the world's oceans can be distinguished by size into macro-debris (more than 20 millimeters (mm) in diameter), meso-debris (5-20 mm), and micro-debris or microplastics (less than 5mm).³⁵ Other plastic components are subject to nano-fragmentation or biofouling, which means that it decays into very small pieces or starts to decompose due to chemical processes, which has negative effects on marine life and ecosystems.³⁶ In addition, 50 percent of globally-produced plastic is buoyant, which causes plastic particles in the oceans to accumulate at subtropical ocean currents known as gyres.³⁷ Due to their stability and durability, these plastics will affect the world for centuries, unless the international community responds with technologically advanced solutions and cooperation.³⁸

History

²⁷ "When the Mermaids Cry: The Great Plastic Tide," Plastic Pollution, <http://plastic-pollution.org> (Acc

²⁸ "When the Mermaids Cry: The Great Plastic Tide," Plastic Pollution.

²⁹ M. Eriksen, L. C. M. Lebreton, H. S. Carson, M. Thiel, C. J. Moore, and J. C. Borerro, "Plastic Pollution in the World's Oceans: More than 5 Trillion Plastic Pieces Weighing over 250,000 Tons Afloat at Sea," *PLoS ONE* 9, no.12 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0111913>.

³⁰ A. Cózar, F. Echevarría, J. I. González-Gordillo, X. Irigoien, B. Úbeda, S. Hernández-León, Á. T. Palma, S. Navarro, J. García-de-Lomas, A. Ruiz, M. L. Fernández-de-Puelles, and C. M. D. Cozar, "Plastic debris in the open ocean," *PNAS* 111, no. 28 (2014): p. 10239-10244, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1314705111>.

³¹ UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), *Annual Report 2018*, 2018, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27734/PPR_2018_FINAL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³² UNEP, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 49.

³³ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011: emerging issues in our global environment*, 2011, p. 21, <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/8276>.

³⁴ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 21.

³⁵ "Macro-, Meso-, Micro-, but What About Nanoplastic?," Planet Experts, (accessed August, 29, 2019). <http://www.planetexperts.com/macro-meso-micro-but-what-about-nanoplastic/>

³⁶ D. K. A. Barnes, F. Galgani, R. C. Thompson, and M. Barlaz, "Accumulation and fragmentation of plastic debris in global environments," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 364, no. 1526 (2009), <http://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2008.0205>.

³⁷ A. Cozar et al., "Plastic debris in the open ocean," p. 10240; M. Eriksen et al., "Plastic Pollution in the World's Oceans," p. 7.

³⁸ A. Cozar et al., "Plastic debris in the open ocean," p. 10239.

The popularity of plastics exploded in the 1960s, when the newly utilized material revolutionized nearly every industry by transforming how products were packaged, shipped, stored, and consumed.³⁹ Plastics were lighter, less susceptible to breaking, and overall lowered the cost of transporting goods, also making food storage safer and easier to ship with single use containers.⁴⁰ The international community, however, began to recognize issues with plastics and debris in the oceans immediately, which led to global talks as early as the late 1960s.⁴¹ In 1973, *The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships* was one of the first to legislate regulation on what could be discharged from a ship while at sea.⁴² Amendments to this convention, later added in 1988, banned the dumping of any plastics at sea and obligated shipping ports to have means of waste disposal available to ships.⁴³ However, due to growing consumption, plastic waste generation had more than tripled in two decades.⁴⁴

While not receiving significant attention in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), international focus on the issue of plastic pollution has increased since the turn of the century. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, introduced in 2015, focuses on marine life and aspires to prevent most if not all marine pollution by 2025.⁴⁵ Efforts to reach this target include ecosystem-based approaches in which marine ecosystems will be monitored on a global and national level to further protect economic zones that are successful in defending species, habitats, and populations.⁴⁶ Economic zones would also be expanded through supervision and ecological practices to improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding these ecosystems.⁴⁷

The root causes of the plastic debris in the world's oceans, such as plastic production, consumption, and dumping, have been attempted by economic instruments; international, national and regional legislation; effective implementation of existing policies; and monitoring of the sources of marine litter.⁴⁸ These are often referred to as zero waste strategies and include waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and producer responsibility.⁴⁹ Among the key factors for the plastic debris in the world's oceans is the high demand for plastic products, which has led to increasing production of plastics.⁵⁰ Although plastic products can be very useful for preserving and protecting food and medicine, the majority of plastics currently in use could be replaced by biodegradable or reusable products.⁵¹ The number of companies producing recycled clothes, bags, and other products is rising, and further research on how to continue efforts to keep plastic out of oceans has been supported by Member States such as the United Kingdom, Finland, and The Netherlands, while the issue has also sparked a debate at the European Union (EU).⁵²

Current Situation

Plastic debris in the oceans poses an immediate and substantial threat to marine life.⁵³ According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), more than 260 species are accidentally ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic products.⁵⁴ Marine animals can further be entangled in drifting plastic parts, such as nets or plastic bags, which can cause serious physical injury or death.⁵⁵ Plastic debris thus far has lethal effects on marine life and alters

³⁹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p.21.

⁴⁰ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p.21.

⁴¹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p.21.

⁴² A. Cozar et al., "Plastic debris in the open ocean," p. 10240; M. Eriksen et al., "Plastic Pollution in the World's Oceans."

⁴³ D. K. A. Barnes et al., "Accumulation and fragmentation of plastic debris in global environments," p. 1986.

⁴⁴ D. K. A. Barnes et al., "Accumulation and fragmentation of plastic debris in global environments," p. 1986.

⁴⁵ P. Turner, "What are the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for the Ocean," Choose Your Current, <https://chooseyourcurrent.org/2017/06/sdg14-what-are-the-sustainable-development-goals-for-the-ocean-part-1/> (accessed July, 29, 2019).

⁴⁶ P. Turner, "What are the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for the Ocean," Choose Your Current.

⁴⁷ P. Turner, "What are the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for the Ocean," Choose Your Current.

⁴⁸ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ M. Allsopp, A. Walters, D. Santillo, and P. Johnston, *Plastic Debris in the World's Oceans*, Greenpeace, 2006, p. 36, http://www.greenpeace.to/greenpeace/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/plastic_ocean_report.pdf.

⁵⁰ UNEP, *Annual Report 2018*, pg. 50.

⁵¹ M. Allsopp et al., *Plastic Debris in the World's Oceans*, pg. 8.

⁵² P. Tamma, "Converting Plastic to Petrol Fuels Debate in Brussels," Politico, May 16, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/converting-plastic-to-petrol-fuels-debate-in-brussels-pollution-climate-change/>.

⁵³ UNEP, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 25.

⁵⁵ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 25.

the structure of biodiversity (the variety of plants and animals), by disrupting entire complex ecosystems.⁵⁶ Seabirds, sea turtles, and other animals can ingest small parts of plastic products that fill their stomachs, preventing them from absorbing enough food and possibly leading to obstructions.⁵⁷ Microplastics, which often enter the oceans through sewage, pose severe threats to small organisms upon ingestion, leading to intoxication and transfer of these substances throughout the food chain.⁵⁸ The UNEP has shown research highlighting the consumption of these plastic particles can lead to chemical contamination and alteration of the community structure of organisms living in the sea.⁵⁹ As an example, biodiverse and highly fragile ecosystems, such as coral reefs, can be damaged by plastic debris.⁶⁰ In 2018, a four-year study from Cornell University of over 150 coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean found reefs in Australia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand were heavily polluted with plastic which can cling to coral and eventually, sicken and killed it.⁶¹

In addition to its direct impact on marine life, plastic debris in the world's oceans has broader implications for human development.⁶² Biodiversity provides many benefits, including the protection of water resources, food, medicine, recreation, and tourism.⁶³ The detrimental effect of plastic debris on biodiversity may jeopardize the livelihoods of the world's least developed populations, who rely upon biological resources such as biomass as a source of renewable energy, plants, and ocean animals for up to 90 percent of their basic needs.⁶⁴ Additionally, toxic chemical additives used to enhance plastic products also extend into the environment and enter the food chain, further endangering human health.⁶⁵

The financial damage of plastics to marine ecosystems exceeds USD 13 Billion per year.⁶⁶ As a result, developing Member States are particularly affected by the consequences of plastic debris in the world's oceans since they often depend on fishing industries and tourism, which are vulnerable to marine pollution.⁶⁷ In just one example, the uninhabited Henderson Island, which was declared a UN World Heritage Site in 1988, has seen over 37 million pieces of plastic wash up on its shores.⁶⁸ Frequently, developing Member States find it difficult to attract investments to fund construction of the appropriate infrastructure for waste management and cleaning the oceans.⁶⁹ Further action is necessary when considering the fact that an increase in plastic production in developing Member States is expected to increase in coming years.⁷⁰ Funds, technology, and incentives for appropriate infrastructure and programs for recycling plastic products are all urgently needed.⁷¹

The UNEP and allied organizations such as Pacific Community and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) contribute to the transfer of technology; yet, there is room for growth in efforts to monitor, survey, and research the plastic debris in the world's oceans in order to prevent and reduce plastic debris.⁷² Some

⁵⁶ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 25.

⁵⁷ A. Cozar et al., "Plastic debris in the open ocean," p. 10239.

⁵⁸ UNEP, *Plastics in Cosmetics – Are we Polluting the Environment through our Personal Care?*, 2015, p. 19, <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/9664>.

⁵⁹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ UNEP, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 3.

⁶¹ C. Joyce, "Plastic Pollution is Killing Coral Reefs, 4-year Study Finds," National Public Radio, January 25, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/25/580227045/plastic-pollution-is-killing-coral-reefs-4-year-study-finds#targetText=Plastic%20Pollution%20Is%20Killing%20Coral,du%20to%20unusually%20warm%20water>.

⁶² UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 28.

⁶³ A. Shah, "Why Is Biodiversity Important? Who Cares?," *Global Issues*, January 19, 2014, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/170/why-is-biodiversity-important-who-cares> (accessed July, 29, 2019).

⁶⁴ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Why is biodiversity important for development?*

⁶⁵ UNEP, *Valuing Plastic: The Business Case for Measuring, Managing and Disclosing Plastic Use in the Consumer Goods Industry*, 2014, <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/9238>.

⁶⁶ UNEP, *Annual Report 2014*, 2014, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9420/-UNEP_2014_Annual_Report-2015UNEP_Annual_Report_2014_Production_LQ.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.

⁶⁷ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 22, 23.

⁶⁸ C. Domonoske, "Millions of Pieces of Plastic are Piling up on an Otherwise Pristine Pacific Island," National Public Radio, May 15, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/15/528470657/millions-of-pieces-of-plastic-are-piling-up-on-otherwise-pristine-pacific-island>.

⁶⁹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 22, 23.

⁷⁰ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 22, 23.

⁷¹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 22, 23.

⁷² UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 22, 23.

Member States and regional sea bodies have taken active measures to control the amount and impact of marine debris in the world's oceans.⁷³ For instance, the Commission of the EU is developing assessment methods for marine debris that should be available by 2020.⁷⁴ The EU's Water Framework Directive requires potential pollutants be removed from wastewater prior to disposal into surface water.⁷⁵ Finally, some Member States are practicing sustainable land management to prevent phosphorus loss to water bodies resulting from soil erosion.⁷⁶ This agricultural efficiency is essential to the preservation of water ecosystems and will aid in meeting increasingly strict environmental regulations in the EU.⁷⁷

The Pacific island Member States have also exhibited leadership due to being among the most affected by this issue.⁷⁸ In 2010, a study from the journal *Science* found that over 275 million metric tons of plastic waste was generated by coastal Member States, with between 4.8 and 12.7 million metric tons of that plastic entering the oceans.⁷⁹ The Member States along the Pacific Ocean were the biggest contributors.⁸⁰ According to a 2015 study from the Ocean Conservancy, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam were the largest ocean plastic polluters.⁸¹ In 2019, the Member State of Samoa became the latest Pacific Island State to ban single-use plastics.⁸² Similar bans have taken effect in the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu. Other Pacific Member States with a full-ban on plastic bags include China, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand.⁸³

Actions Taken by the United Nations

The GA focuses on the broader framework in which these actions are embedded, making general statements on the current situation, evaluating ongoing efforts, and creating new bodies.⁸⁴ The GA has devoted increasing attention to the issue of marine pollution, particularly with respect to the impact on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the need for international cooperation to protect the world's oceans.⁸⁵ In December 2002, the GA's A/RES/57/141 established a Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-Economic Aspects.⁸⁶ The idea for this process emerged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, and the resolution took effect in 2004.⁸⁷ A/RES/57/141 seeks to support decision-making by providing scientific information on the current state of the marine environment and thus also evaluates the amount and impact of debris in the oceans.⁸⁸ A/RES 60/30 of November 2005, A/RES62/215 of December 2007, and A/RES/63/111 of December 2008 emphasized the vulnerability of SIDS to the impact of marine pollution and ask for stronger cooperation concerning reducing and preventing pollution from ships and from land.⁸⁹

⁷³ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 24.

⁷⁴ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 24.

⁷⁶ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 24.

⁷⁷ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, p. 24.

⁷⁸ I. V. Abano, "Philippines and Pacific Island Countries Step up Battle Against, Plastic Pollution in the Pacific Ocean #WED2018," Earth Journalism Network, June 5, 2018, https://earthjournalism.net/stories/copy_of_philippines-and-pacific-island-countries-step-up-battle-against-plastic-pollution-in-the-pacific-ocean

⁷⁹ I. V. Abano, "Philippines and Pacific Island Countries Step up Battle Against, Plastic Pollution in the Pacific Ocean."

⁸⁰ I. V. Abano, "Philippines and Pacific Island Countries Step up Battle Against, Plastic Pollution in the Pacific Ocean."

⁸¹ I. V. Abano, "Philippines and Pacific Island Countries Step up Battle Against, Plastic Pollution in the Pacific Ocean."

⁸² Waste Management and Pollution Control, "Samoa Joins the Fight Against Plastic Pollution," SPREP, January 31, 2019, <https://www.sprep.org/news/samoa-joins-the-fight-against-plastic-pollution>.

⁸³ "Ever More Countries are Banning Plastic Bags," The Economist, July 24, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/07/24/ever-more-countries-are-banning-plastic-bags>.

⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *Summary of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment*, 2016, p. 36, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RPROC/Summary.pdf.

⁸⁵ UN General Assembly, Resolution 60/30, *Oceans and the Law of the Sea*.

⁸⁶ UN General Assembly, Resolution 60/30, *Oceans and the Law of the Sea*, p. 9.

⁸⁷ UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, *Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects*, 2016, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.htm.

⁸⁸ UN General Assembly, *Summary of the first global integrated marine assessment*, p. 36.

⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, Resolution 60/30, *Oceans and the law of the sea*, p. 5, 10, 12; UN General Assembly, Resolution 62/215, *Oceans and the law of the sea*, A/RES/62/215, December 22, 2007, p. 3, 16, <https://undocs.org/A/RES/62/215>;

With A/RES/60/30, the GA resolution called for “national, regional, and global actions to address rising plastic pollution.”⁹⁰ A/RES/60/30 also accentuated for Member States, particularly Member States bordering straits that have been used for international travel, to cooperate on agreements relating to the control, prevention, and reduction of pollution from ships. The resolution also encouraged Member States to develop and promote bilateral and regional-based plans in response to the rise of incidents relating to marine debris.

The GA receives reports from, and cooperates with, other UN bodies, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the UNEP, to monitor and reduce the amount of plastic debris in the world’s oceans.⁹¹ The IMO, a specialized agency of the UN and the global “authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping,” has put pressure on governments to improve facilities for garbage at local ports and terminals -- as outlined in Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).^{92,93} In accordance with the MARPOL Convention, the IMO seeks to prevent and respond to the pollution caused predominantly by ships.

UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO), with cooperation with UNEP, has worked to develop guidelines on monitoring marine litter.⁹⁴ IOC-UNESCO was established in 1960 and is the “only competent organization for marine science within the UN system.”⁹⁵ Among other activities, IOC-UNESCO coordinates to monitor the world’s oceans through the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), which comprises of numerous programs that seek to observe and analyze the world’s oceans. Sponsored by IOC-UNESCO, UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the International Council for Science (ICSU), GOOS constitutes a platform for international cooperation to observe the oceans, generate oceanographic products and services, and foster interaction between actors from science and civil society.⁹⁶

The UNGA’s A/RES/69/245, agreed upon on December 29, 2014, addressed the negative impacts of plastic debris and microplastics on the world’s oceans.⁹⁷ At its first session during June 2014, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) adopted A/RES 1/6 on “marine plastic debris and microplastics,” thereby strengthening UNEP’s mandate to act.⁹⁸ In this resolution, the body requested UNEP’s executive director “to undertake a study on plastic debris and microplastics in the world’s oceans” together with other institutions and to support Member States with developing action plans against marine debris.⁹⁹ On World Oceans Day on June 8, 2015, UNEP recommended a ban of microplastics in cosmetics and promoted an online application that allows users to check which cosmetics contain microplastics.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, in 2017, the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) published a global assessment on microplastics that confirmed that

UN General Assembly, Resolution 63/111, *Oceans and the law of the sea*, A/RES/63/111, December 5, 2008, pp. 7, 15, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/63/111>.

⁹⁰ UN General Assembly, Resolution 60/30, *Oceans and the Law of the Sea*, A/RES/60/30, March 8, 2006, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_30.pdf.

⁹¹ UNEP, *UNEP Year Book 2011*, pg. 29.

⁹² “Introduction to IMO,” International Maritime Organization, <http://www.imo.org/en/About/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁹³ “Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships,” International Maritime Organization, <http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/PollutionPrevention/Garbage/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁹⁴ “Marine Pollution,” UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/ioc-oceans/focus-areas/rio-20-ocean/blueprint-for-the-future-we-want/marine-pollution/>

⁹⁵ “Homepage,” IOC-UNESCO, <http://www.ioc-unesco.org>

⁹⁶ “Who we are,” The Global Ocean Observing System, https://www.gooscean.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=120

⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, Resolution 69/245, *Oceans and the law of the sea*, A/RES/69/245, December 29, 2014, p. 29, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/69/245>.

⁹⁸ UNEP, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ UNEP, *Resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its first session on 27 June 2014*, June 27, 2014, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17285/K1402364.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁰⁰ UNEP, *Resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its first session on 27 June 2014*.

microplastic contamination has impacted over 100 species and thousands of organisms.¹⁰¹ This report emphasized that the effects of microplastics on marine environments and resulted in the increased support for studies to be carried by the UNEP on the distribution of such debris.¹⁰² Microplastics were found to be concentrated in five main ocean “hot-spots,” those being sea surface, water column, shoreline, seabed, and biota.¹⁰³ By identifying the areas of prioritization in tackling the issue of microplastics, as well as the key transport mechanisms that contribute to the flux of microplastics between each ocean “hot-spot,” the GESAMP has contributed to more effective research initiatives by the UNEP to tackle the ongoing crisis of microplastic contamination.¹⁰⁴

In December 2018, then-GA President Maria Fernanda Espinoza launched a new initiative focused on plastics called the Campaign Against Plastic Pollution.¹⁰⁵ In launching the initiative, Espinoza said, “[I]t is estimated that by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the sea. Microplastics are now confirmed in table salt, in fresh water, each person on the planet is believed to have plastic in their bodies.”¹⁰⁶ The campaign would focus on global advocacy and internal initiatives to reduce plastic at the UN, while also highlighting other new initiatives from the UNEP such as the Global Plastics Platform and the Clean Seas campaign.¹⁰⁷

Single-use plastics account for a little over half of all plastic products produced around the world, and these items include grocery bags, cups and lid, straws, food wrappers, and other types of packaging.¹⁰⁸ The 2030 SDGs are all focused on improving global communities but specifically Goal 14 targets conservation and sustainable use of the oceans including addressing plastics.¹⁰⁹ The UNEP recently released a report on how to use legal limitation on plastic consumption to achieve goals such as SDG 14.¹¹⁰ There is currently no universal legislation on this issue but Member States have begun legislation to nationally implement many core similarities. Member States such as Australia, Canada, and Kenya passed legislative bans or a tax on the production or use of these single-use plastics.^{111,112} By mid-year in 2018, the UN found 127 Member States have implemented varied legislation on single-use plastics.¹¹³ In most of these Member States, this legislation focused on banning the use of plastic shopping bags that are consumed at a rate of about one trillion bags per year, globally.^{114, 115}

Challenges

Resistance to regulation of plastic bags and other consumer plastic products is a multi-faceted issue ranging from political and corporate influences to scientific studies on the impact of these bans. A study in California examined counties that had banned single-use grocery bags to see if the policy worked as intended.¹¹⁶ Nearly 140 cities and counties were studied and data showed a reduction of millions of pounds of plastic per year from grocery-bag usage,

¹⁰¹ “Newly published GESAMP report on Microplastics,” UNESCO, February 3, 2017, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/newly_published_gesamp_report_on_microplastics/ (accessed July, 29, 2019).

¹⁰² “Newly published GESAMP report on Microplastics,” UNESCO.

¹⁰³ “Newly published GESAMP report on Microplastics,” UNESCO.

¹⁰⁴ “Newly published GESAMP report on Microplastics,” UNESCO.

¹⁰⁵ “Assembly President Launches New Initiative to Purge Plastics and Purify Oceans,” UN News, December 4, 2018, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/12/1027571>

¹⁰⁶ “Assembly President Launches New Initiative to Purge Plastics and Purify Oceans,” UN News.

¹⁰⁷ “Assembly President Launches New Initiative to Purge Plastics and Purify Oceans,” UN News.

¹⁰⁸ J. Griffin, “Plastic Pollution,” SLO Active, <https://sloactive.com/plastic-pollution/> (accessed April 7, 2019).

¹⁰⁹ J. Griffin, “Plastic Pollution,” SLO Active.

¹¹⁰ UNEP, *Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics*, December 8, 2018, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27113/plastics_limits.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹¹¹ UNEP, *Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics*.

¹¹² I. Calderwood, “16 Times Countries and Cities Have Banned Single-Use Plastics,” Global Citizen, April 25, 2018, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/plastic-bans-around-the-world/>.

¹¹³ UNEP, *Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics*, December 8, 2018, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27113/plastics_limits.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹¹⁴ L. Parker, “Plastic bag bans are spreading. But are they truly effective?” National Geographic, April 17, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/04/plastic-bag-bans-kenya-to-us-reduce-pollution/>

¹¹⁵ “Fact sheet: how much disposable plastic we use,” Earth Day Network, published April 18, 2018, <https://www.earthday.org/2018/04/18/fact-sheet-how-much-disposable-plastic-we-use/>.

¹¹⁶ R. Taylor, “Bag leakage: The effect of disposable carry out bag regulations on unregulated bags,” *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 93, Pages 254-271, (accessed April 10, 2019).

but found the bans caused a 120 percent increase in the consumption of unregulated bags such as the four-gallon trash bags.¹¹⁷ The theory has been that people often reused these grocery bags for other occasions and now needed to buy the trash bags -- that used more plastic -- causing up to 30 percent of the plastics initially taken away in the ban to then end up sold in other forms.¹¹⁸

The United States of America (US) is one of the largest consumers and producers of single use plastic packaging in the world, producing 34.5 million tons in 2015 alone.¹¹⁹ Of the 34.5 million tons of plastic, 9.3 percent was recycled, while the rest going in landfills, bodies of water, or shipped overseas.¹²⁰ The largest limitation to recycling is the lack of economic incentive to do so.¹²¹ Corporate bottom lines often come first, leading to the exploitation of loopholes in regulation such as the exportation of plastic waste to Member States with less restrictive regulation of waste disposal as a cheaper alternative to reusing plastics as new products.¹²² This led to 78 percent of US' plastic waste being sent overseas to Member States, primarily in southeast Asia where it's already considered to have a waste mismanagement rate of more than five percent.¹²³

Conclusion

Decades of ignoring the prevalent issues in the use and disposal of plastics has manifested as crisis of pollution in the oceans and on the beaches all over the globe. Plastics heavily impact marine life and in turn cost billions in terms of USD to the global economy in clean-up cost, loss of fish populations, tourism, and more. The UNGA is working in connection with other UN bodies such as the International Maritime Organization and UNEA to develop frameworks and solutions.¹²⁴ Many Member States and corporations are moving in the correct direction by banning single use plastics or finding alternatives for their product lines. Awareness of the issues at hand and the current solutions is a vital key to the mitigation of marine impact though information campaigns have been underperforming, while collaboration on an international level involving public and private sectors may be necessary to fully solve this issue.

Committee Directive

Ahead of arriving to SRMUN Atlanta in November, delegates should familiarize the scope of the UNGA and the bodies it governs. Delegates understand know what powers and authority the GA does and does not have within the organization and on a global platform. Delegates must research their Member State's efforts in eradicating marine plastic buildup, from a national, regional, and international levels. What programs has your Member State introduced or already enacted to address these issues? During the conference, delegates will need to be prepared on ways to collaboratively work to continue addressing current and future plastics pollution of the world's oceans. Delegates are encouraged to look for current UN bodies and programs that could be improved upon, and if so, what steps should be under consideration. Some guiding questions include: How can current international recycling practices be improved? How can more Member States reduce their consumption of single use plastics? What type of plastic use possess the largest threat? How can awareness be improved in both developed and developing Member States?

¹¹⁷ R. Taylor, "Bag leakage: The effect of disposable carry out bag regulations on unregulated bags."

¹¹⁸ R. Taylor, "Bag leakage: The effect of disposable carry out bag regulations on unregulated bags."

¹¹⁹ United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), "Facts and Figures about Materials, Waste and Recycling," February 2016, <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/plastics-material-specific-data>

¹²⁰ US EPA, "Facts and Figures about Materials, Waste and Recycling."

¹²¹ J. Dell, "157,000 Shipping Containers of U.S. Plastic Waste Exported to Countries with Poor Waste Management in 2018," Plastic Pollution Coalition, March 6, 2019, <https://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/blog/2019/3/6/157000-shipping-containers-of-us-plastic-waste-exported-to-countries-with-poor-waste-management-in-2018>

¹²² Dell, "157,000 Shipping Containers of U.S. Plastic Waste Exported to Countries with Poor Waste Management in 2018."

¹²³ Dell, "157,000 Shipping Containers of U.S. Plastic Waste Exported to Countries with Poor Waste Management in 2018."

¹²⁴ UNEP, *Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics*."

II. Promoting Social Protection as a Means of Eliminating Poverty

Introduction

The exact definition of social protection has varied within the United Nations' (UN) agencies and programs, but the topic has been addressed in many of the organization's mandates and activities.¹²⁵ According to the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), social protection can be defined as "all measures providing benefits in cash or in kind to guarantee income security and access to health care."¹²⁶ UN reports have further described social protection to include education, social care and services, and family support, notably for children and adult dependents.¹²⁷ Social protection systems also secure safeguards from financial instability as a result of a person's age, disability, illness, employment injury, maternity, unemployment, and even general poverty.¹²⁸

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has an annual tradition of passing a resolution acknowledging the effects of poverty.¹²⁹ Specifically, as noted in A/RES/61/141, poverty "is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development," particularly for the developing Member States.¹³⁰ Poverty has been an obstacle to protecting and promoting children's rights, and action from national and international levels is needed to eradicate the problem.¹³¹ Determining the severity of child poverty, however, must not solely be based with general poverty, and must take into account access to basic social services, education, nutrition, sanitation, shelter, and water.¹³² Internationally, the poverty level has been slashed by more than 50 percent since 2000, but one in ten people within various developing Member States still live on less than USD 1.90 per day -- a cost that has been recognized as the internationally-agreed poverty line.¹³³

Social protection programs helps address poverty by lifting people out of poverty and providing a safety net to prevent people from slipping back into such levels. According to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2018, social protection measures may "act as cushions for individuals and families against economic shocks and other life contingencies and enhance their capacity to manage and overcome the challenges that affect their well-being."¹³⁴ However, too often, many people around the globe are not given basic protections from the surprises that may occur in daily life.

History

Social protection programs have been a focus of the UN since before the body was officially created.¹³⁵ The International Labor Organization (ILO), originally an agency of the League of Nations, gathered to publish the

¹²⁵ International Labour Organization, *Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors*, <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?id=55065>

¹²⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection: Report on the World Social Situation 2018*, ST/ESA/366, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/06/rwss2018-full-advanced-copy.pdf>

¹²⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection: Report on the World Social Situation 2018*, ST/ESA/366.

¹²⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection: Report on the World Social Situation 2018*, ST/ESA/366.

¹²⁹ "UN General Assembly adopts powerful definition of child poverty," The United Nations Children's Fund, January 10, 2007, https://www.unicef.org/media/media_38003.html

¹³⁰ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 61/146, *Rights of the Child*, A/RES/61/146, January 23, 2007, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_61_146.pdf.

¹³¹ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 61/146, *Rights of the Child*, A/RES/61/146, January 23, 2007,

¹³² "UN General Assembly adopts powerful definition of child poverty," The United Nations Children's Fund, January 10, 2007, https://www.unicef.org/media/media_38003.html

¹³³ "Ending Poverty," The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/poverty/> (accessed August 31, 2019).

¹³⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Council: Commission on Social Development, *Emerging Issues: Social Protection*, E/CN.5/2011/8, December 16, 2010, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2011/8>.

¹³⁵ Sachiko Yamamoto, "The ILO – 90 Years of Hope," The International Labour Organization, April 21, 2009, https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/articles/WCMS_106113/lang-en/index.htm

Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944.¹³⁶ The declaration stated, “all human beings...have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.”¹³⁷ This was echoed four years later by the UNGA upon the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which, among other topics, stated, “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization . . . of the economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.”¹³⁸

In 1995, 186 Member States gathered for the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark.¹³⁹ The summit’s end result was the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, which included ten commitments related to social development and a program of action.¹⁴⁰ The ten commitments included, “eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each [Member State], supporting full employment as a basic policy goal, attaining universal and equitable access to education and primary health care, accelerating the development of Africa and least developed Member States,” and increasing resources and cooperation to social development through the UN.¹⁴¹ At Geneva in 2000, the UNGA held a special session to follow up on the Copenhagen Summit.¹⁴² At the special session, the Member States reached further agreements on issues of national taxation and new sources of finance whilst also encouraging the need for greater transparency with organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).¹⁴³ Member States also recognized that progress had not been made on reducing poverty and unemployment in line with goals set from the Copenhagen summit.¹⁴⁴

Moving forward, social protection was a large focus of the UN, particularly the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000.¹⁴⁵ It was the main focus of MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, which aimed to half the amount of people whose income was less than USD 1.00 per day and “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.”¹⁴⁶ When MDGs expired, UN Member States ensured social protection continued as a major focus of the organization and adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes targets aimed at improving social protections.¹⁴⁷

Current Situation

With the creation of the SDGs, Member States agreed to live in a world with social protection, where mental, physical, and social well-being are guaranteed.¹⁴⁸ SDG Goal 1.3 calls for the implementation of “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve sustainable

¹³⁶ Yamamoto, “The ILO – 90 Years of Hope,”

¹³⁷ International Labour Organization, *Declaration Concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organization (The Philadelphia Declaration)*, May 10, 1944, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO#declaration.

¹³⁸ United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>.

¹³⁹ “Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995,” The United Nations, A/CONF.166/9, <https://undocs.org/A/CONF.166/9> (accessed July 15, 2019).

¹⁴⁰ “World Summit for Social Development 1995,” The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-summit-for-social-development-1995.html> (accessed July 15, 2019).

¹⁴¹ “CDOSD Part C,” The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-summit-for-social-development-1995/wssd-1995-agreements/cdosd-part-c.html> (Accessed July 15, 2019).

¹⁴² “Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the General Assembly During its Twenty-Fourth Special Session, 26 June – 1 July, 2000,” The United Nations General Assembly, A/S-24/10, <https://undocs.org/en/A/S-24/10> (accessed July 15, 2019).

¹⁴³ “Social Summit +5: 24th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Geneva 26 June – 1 July 2000,” The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/social-summit-5.html> (accessed July 15, 2019).

¹⁴⁴ “Social Summit +5: 24th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Geneva 26 June – 1 July 2000,” The United Nations

¹⁴⁵ “We Can End Poverty: Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015,” The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml> (accessed April 15, 2019).

¹⁴⁶ “We Can End Poverty: Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015,” The United Nations.

¹⁴⁷ “Sustainable Development Goals,” The United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> (accessed April 15, 2019)

¹⁴⁸ “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” The United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> (accessed August 31, 2019).

coverage of the poor and vulnerable.”¹⁴⁹ Expanding on the issue further, Goal 3.8 states, “achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.”¹⁵⁰ Goal 8.6 calls for “full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including younger people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” by 2050.¹⁵¹ Finally, Goal 10.4 calls for Member States to “adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage, and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.”¹⁵²

The World Bank, an international financial organization with UN connections and has participated for the SDGs to end poverty, developed a new social protection and labor strategy that build on a four-plank platform targeting gaps in access to food, health care, education, finance, and jobs.¹⁵³ These four platforms are: integration across programs and functions, access to social protection programs, promotion to ensure access to opportunities, and shared knowledge of effective social protection approaches.¹⁵⁴ The strategy document has called for “improving evidence, building capacity, and sharing knowledge across [Member States] to facilitate informed country-specific, fiscally sustainable social protection and labor programs and systems.”¹⁵⁵ The strategy called for greater connectivity and communication between World Bank programs in order to increase each program’s effectiveness.¹⁵⁶

Six years later, the World Bank published an update to this strategy, titled *The State of Social Safety Nets: 2018*. The report found that developing Member States spend an average of 1.5 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on social safety net programs. By region, Member States in Europe and Central Asia led the way with 2.2 percent. By contrast, East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and North African Member States all spend approximately one percent of their GDP on social safety net programs.¹⁵⁷ The report also found that in general, spending on social programs is increasing in developing Member States with programs in Indonesia, Senegal, Tanzania, and the Philippines all increasing the percentage of people covered by specific programs.¹⁵⁸ In Tanzania’s case, between 2013 and 2016, the African Member State increased its spending on its Productive Safety Net Program from .03 to 0.3 percent of its GDP.¹⁵⁹

Actions Taken by the United Nations

Although the groundwork for implementing social protection programs has been tasked for the UN’s subsidiary organs, the GA does address the need for social protection through a series of yearly resolutions.¹⁶⁰ In addition to annually highlighting child poverty and their rights in its resolutions, the UNGA has passed yearly resolutions on the

¹⁴⁹ “Social Protection,” The World Bank Group, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialprotection/overview#1> (accessed April 12, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ “Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for all at all Ages,” The United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3> (accessed April 16, 2019).

¹⁵¹ “Sustainable Development Goal 8: Promote Sustained, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment, and Decent Work for All,” The United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8> (accessed April 16, 2019).

¹⁵² “Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries,” The United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10> (accessed April 16, 2019).

¹⁵³ The World Bank Group, *World Bank Spring Meetings Highlight the Power of Safety Nets to ‘Close the Gap, The World Bank*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23168059~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html> (accessed June 3, 2019).

¹⁵⁴ The World Bank Group, *Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity: The World Bank’s Social Protection and Labor Strategy 2012 – 2022*.

¹⁵⁵ The World Bank Group, *Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity*.

¹⁵⁶ The World Bank Group, *Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity*.

¹⁵⁷ The World Bank Group, *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018*, (Washington, DC, The World Bank Group, 2018) <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29115/211254.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

¹⁵⁸ The World Bank Group, *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018*.

¹⁵⁹ The World Bank Group, *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018*.

¹⁶⁰ “UN Resolutions on Social Development,” The United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/dspd/publications/united-nations-resolutions-on-social-development/un-ga-resolutions-on-social-development-2018.html> (accessed July 15, 2019).

rights of persons with disabilities and for the elderly; these are groups that particularly require social protections.¹⁶¹ The GA passed A/RES/72/143 in 2018, *Cooperatives in Social Development*, which recognizes the role cooperative enterprises have in supporting social protection.¹⁶² The GA also annually passes a resolution calling for the continued implementation of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995 and the 24th special session of the GA held in 2000.¹⁶³

The UN, through its various organs, focuses on social protection programs. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) laid out their own strategic framework in 2012. The UNICEF framework was focused on three principles: a progressive realization of universal coverage; nationally owned and run programs; and, social protection programs that are inclusive of all members of a society.¹⁶⁴ To that end, UNICEF has developed a myriad of different programs with various Member States, these include supporting national governments in creating social protection floors, or basic levels of social security guarantees, in Burkina Faso, Haiti, and Thailand; creating community-based labor targeting programs in Malawi; and, creating new models of cash-transfer, or the infusion of cash to the poor, for sub-Saharan Africa not based on the conditional cash transfers of Latin America or the unconditional cash transfers of Europe.¹⁶⁵

Through ECOSOC, the UN's Commission on Social Development (CSocD) has maintained an active role in social protection.¹⁶⁶ In February 2019, the CSocD met for its 57th session, with the priority theme of "Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage, and social protection policies."¹⁶⁷ During this CSocD session, the Vice President of ECOSOC stressed how income inequality had increased across many Member States and gaps remained high in health and education, and observed that "a world in which extreme wealth coexisted with extreme poverty, was a world of strife."¹⁶⁸ The session concluded with the commission adopting four resolutions, including two resolution that addressed social dimensions of the African Union (AU) program New Partnership for African Development and the challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage, and social protection policies.¹⁶⁹

In 2009, the UN partnered with the ILO to create the ILO-UN Social Protection Floor Initiative. The initiative aims to create a global social policy ensuring universal access to essential health care and maternity care, basic income security for children (family allowances), basic income security for people unable to work (disability, unemployment assistance), and basic income security for the elderly (pensions).¹⁷⁰ Currently, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) is taking the lead in bringing together 32 different development bodies to increase

¹⁶¹ "United Nations General Assembly, *Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: Situation of women and girls with disabilities*, A/RES/72/162, December 19, 2017. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/162>

¹⁶² United Nations General Assembly, *Cooperatives in Social Development*, A/RES/72/143, December 19, 2017. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/143>

¹⁶³ United Nations General Assembly, *Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the Twenty-Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly*.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework: Integrated Social Protection Systems: Enhancing Equity for Children*, (New York: UNICEF, March 2012), https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/UNICEF_Social_Protection_Strategic_Framework_full_doc_std.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework: Integrated Social Protection Systems: Enhancing Equity for Children*.

¹⁶⁶ "Commission for Social Development (CSocD)," UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/united-nations-commission-for-social-development-csod-social-policy-and-development-division.html> (accessed April 18, 2019).

¹⁶⁷ "57th Session of the Commission for Social Development," UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/united-nations-commission-for-social-development-csod-social-policy-and-development-division/csod57.html> (accessed April 18, 2019).

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Commission for Social Development, *Report on the Fifty-Seventh Session (7 February 2018 and 11-21 February 2018)*.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations Commission for Social Development, *Report on the Fifty-Seventh Session (7 February 2018 and 11-21 February 2018)*.

¹⁷⁰ Victoria Giroud-Castiella and Clara van Panhuys, "Social Protection Floor," International Labor Organization, January 21, 2019, <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowTheme.action?id=1321>

cooperation in global efforts of social protection.¹⁷¹ As of 2019, the UNDG has teams working in all regions of the globe to create working groups and plans for social protection.¹⁷² In Southern Africa, UNDG and Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO) created the UNDG-RIASCO Social Protection Platform in Southern Africa to, “facilitate information and knowledge sharing, to increase coordination among UN agencies active on social protection in the region, and to develop joint policy guidance for United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs).”¹⁷³

To support this initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN launched the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷⁴ As it relates to social protection, the UN also created the Thematic Window for Social Protection Funds (SPF Window) as part of the joint fund.¹⁷⁵ According to the UN,

“[T]he SPF Window will enhance the capacity of the participating UN agencies to support as the implementation of social protection floors in countries while ensuring that approaches used at the national level are aligned with a common vision and approach . . . to this end, for countries in conflict or crisis situations, the SPF Window would offer integrated support linking humanitarian responses to recovery and development efforts, including early investments in social welfare institutions.”¹⁷⁶

The joint fund initially aimed to raise USD 290 Million, per year, and a number of Member States have announced contributions including Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, as well as the European Commission.¹⁷⁷

Case Study: The Nordic Model

Among developed Member States, the Nordic Member States, including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are widely seen as having some of the best social protection programs in the world.¹⁷⁸ The so-called, “Nordic Model” is built on a system of generally higher taxes that provides all citizens with free education and healthcare, generous pensions and maternity/paternity benefits, and a generally high standard of living.¹⁷⁹ The responsibility for distributing these benefits is split between national, regional, and local authorities but ultimate responsibility for implementation rests with the national governments.¹⁸⁰ According to the Nordic Council, “Collective efforts to develop the welfare state were made possible by the Nordic principles of openness, transparency, and freedom of expression.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ “The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-1),” International Labor Organization, <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowProject.action?id=2767>

¹⁷² “The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-1),” International Labor Organization.

¹⁷³ “The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-1),” International Labor Organization.

¹⁷⁴ “UN Launches New Fund to Assist Country Efforts to Achieve 2030 Agenda,” The United Nations, April 24, 2018, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/04/un-launches-new-fund-to-assist-country-efforts-to-achieve-2030-agenda/>

¹⁷⁵ “Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors,” <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?id=55065> (accessed June 2, 2019).

¹⁷⁶ “Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors.”

¹⁷⁷ “UN Launches New Fund to Assist Country Efforts to Achieve 2030 Agenda,” The United Nations, April 24, 2018, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/04/un-launches-new-fund-to-assist-country-efforts-to-achieve-2030-agenda/>

¹⁷⁸ Thomas C. Frohlich, Michael B. Sauter, and Evan Comen, “Countries With the Most Generous Welfare Programs,” 24/7 Wall St., November 30, 2016. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/countries-most-generous-welfare-programs-110004319.html>

¹⁷⁹ James McWhinney, “The Nordic Model: Pros and Cons,” Investopedia, June 25, 2019. <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100714/nordic-model-pros-and-cons.asp>

¹⁸⁰ “Social Protection in the Nordic Countries: Scope, Expenditure, and Financing, 2015/2016” Nordic Social Statistical Committee, Accessed June 30, 2019. <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1148493/FULLTEXT02.pdf>

¹⁸¹ “Social Policy and Welfare,” The Nordic Council, <https://www.norden.org/en/information/social-policy-and-welfare> (accessed June 30, 2019).

The Nordic Model is seen in many ways as a manifestation of old northern European traditions of egalitarianism and community.¹⁸² The Member States have been cooperating in many ways since the late 1800s.¹⁸³ In the 1920s, there was close coordination amongst them for reform of family laws and the five Member States met regularly in the 1920s and 1930s with the goal of “equality for citizens of all five countries towards national social legislation.”¹⁸⁴ After World War II, the Member States signed the Nordic Social Security Treaty in 1955 which was, “concerned with benefits offered by the individual Member States due to current social legislation in the case of old age, reduced capacity to work, sickness, accidents, and occupational diseases, unemployment, pregnancy and birth of children as well as to children, surviving relatives and needy.”¹⁸⁵

In 2016, all five Member States spent over a quarter of their GDP on social protection programs, with Finland and Denmark spending the second and third most in all of Europe with 32 and 33 percent, respectively.¹⁸⁶ Social program expenditure per capita in each Member State has also increased more than 50 percent in the last fifteen years with Norway’s spending per capita doubling from EUR 80,237 (nearly USD 88,344) to EUR 167,381 (approximately USD 184,300) between 2000 and 2015.¹⁸⁷ Besides providing for their populations, this spending has also had the effect of lowering the income inequality. Since 2017, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden all have comparatively lower income inequality and poverty rates when compared to other developed Member States.^{188,189}

Case Study: Ethiopia’s Third Adaptable Program Loan Safety Net Project (PSNP)

In 2005, Ethiopia, with assistance from the World Bank, launched the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP).¹⁹⁰ The program was designed to address chronic food insecurity whilst also addressing environmental degradation.¹⁹¹ The PSNP was built around using geographic and community-based targeting to identify food insecure households and provide them with cash or in-kind food payments in exchange for working on public works projects.¹⁹² In addition to providing poor households and the unemployed with direct food or monetary aid, the program was also able to successfully prevent famine when drought hit Ethiopia in 2011.¹⁹³ Ethiopia also acted to diminish the food gap from 3.6 months to 2.3 months and has seen a 50 percent reduction in soil erosion and sediment losses.¹⁹⁴

In addition to implementing the program, Ethiopia has also continued to support the program by introducing back-up systems designed to assist during emergencies.¹⁹⁵ When events occur that are outside the means of the PSNP, the

¹⁸² McWhinney, “The Nordic Model: Pros and Cons.”

¹⁸³ Klaus Petersen, “Constructing Nordic Welfare? Nordic Social Political Cooperation 1919-1955,” <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/nord-wel/files/2009/03/ncoc-petersen-2006-part-i.pdf>

¹⁸⁴ Petersen, “Constructing Nordic Welfare? Nordic Social Political Cooperation 1919-1955.”

¹⁸⁵ Petersen, “Constructing Nordic Welfare? Nordic Social Political Cooperation 1919-1955.”

¹⁸⁶ “Social Protection in the Nordic Countries: Scope, Expenditure, and Financing, 2015/2016” Nordic Social Statistical Committee.

¹⁸⁷ “Social Protection in the Nordic Countries: Scope, Expenditure, and Financing, 2015/2016” Nordic Social Statistical Committee.

¹⁸⁸ “Income Inequality,” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm> (accessed June 30, 2019).

¹⁸⁹ “Poverty Rate,” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm> (accessed June 30, 2019).

¹⁹⁰ “Ethiopia’s Safety Net Programme Enhances Climate Change Resilience of Vulnerable Populations,” European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/case-studies/ethiopias-safety-net-programme-enhances-climate-change-resilience-vulnerable_en

¹⁹¹ “Ethiopia’s Safety Net Programme Enhances Climate Change Resilience of Vulnerable Populations,” European Commission.

¹⁹² “Ethiopia’s Safety Net Programme Enhances Climate Change Resilience of Vulnerable Populations,” European Commission.

¹⁹³ The World Bank Group, *World Bank Spring Meetings Highlight the Power of Safety Nets to ‘Close the Gap, The World Bank*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23168059~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html> (accessed June 3, 2019).

¹⁹⁴ “Ethiopia’s Safety Net Programme Enhances Climate Change Resilience of Vulnerable Populations,” European Commission.

¹⁹⁵ Matt Hobson and Laura Campbell, “How Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is Responding to the Current Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn,” Humanitarian Practice Network, March 2012, <https://odihpn.org/magazine/how-ethiopia%20s-productive-safety-net-programme-psnp-is-responding-to-the-current-humanitarian-crisis-in-the-horn/>

program's contingency budget kicks in.¹⁹⁶ When that is exhausted, Ethiopia set up a Risk Funding Mechanism (RFM) to allow the PSNP to scale up in times of crisis and allow a more rapid response than typical PSNP payments.¹⁹⁷ In 2011, when drought occurred in some parts of the Member State, the federal government triggered the RFM, allowing 6.5 million existing PSNP clients and 3.1 million people living in PSNP areas to receive assistance within six weeks of the original request, four months earlier than would have been possible by the current PSNP.¹⁹⁸ In studying the RFM, the Humanitarian Practice Network concluded that, "the release of resources through the RFM is likely to have prevented households from having to engage in destructive coping strategies during the months leading up to the November harvest."¹⁹⁹

In total, it is estimated that over eight million people take part in the PSNP, making it one of the largest social protection programs in Africa.²⁰⁰ The actual impact of the program is varied. Between 2008 and 2012, nearly 500,000 households graduated from the PSNP system and, according to survey's conducted in the Member State, urban poverty in Ethiopia decreased from 33.2 percent to 25.7 percent from 1995 to 2011, while rural poverty dropped from 47.5 percent to 30.4 percent.²⁰¹ In contrast, at the same time, the poverty severity index measuring the depth of poverty in the Member State actually rose between 2005 and 2011.²⁰² According to a report in *Agriculture & Food Safety*, "while the proportion of people below the poverty line and the average gap that separates the poor from the poverty line have declined in the past two decades, there has only been poor improvement in the distribution of income among the rural poor."²⁰³

Conclusion

As 2020 approaches, it will mark 25 years since the World Summit for Social Development. Social development still remains a strong focus of the GA with the passage of the third consecutive UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2027), as passed by A/RES/73/246 with the theme "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty."²⁰⁴ It is time however, for the international community to renew that commitment to social protection that was on display in Copenhagen. Even with much progress made so far, there are still billions of people around the world without adequate social protection at risk of slipping back into poverty. There is not one solution to providing social protection programs or, too, fighting poverty. Different solutions and different programs may work for different Member States however with increased focus and cooperation, the global community can make a new commitment to supporting its citizens who are most vulnerable.

Committee Directive

¹⁹⁶ Hobson and Campbell, "How Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is Responding to the Current Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn."

¹⁹⁷ Hobson and Campbell, "How Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is Responding to the Current Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn."

¹⁹⁸ Hobson and Campbell, "How Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is Responding to the Current Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn."

¹⁹⁹ Hobson and Campbell, "How Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is Responding to the Current Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn."

²⁰⁰ Kalle Hirvonen, "Improving the Resilience of the Poor in Ethiopia Through Community Based Health Insurance," International Food Policy Research Institute, June 5, 2018, <http://www.ifpri.org/blog/improving-resilience-poor-ethiopia-through-community-based-health-insurance>

²⁰¹ Diriba Welteji, Kerime Mohammed, and Kedir Hussein, "The Contribution of Productive Safety Net Program for Food Security of the Rural Households in the Case of Bale Zone, Southeast Ethiopia," *Agriculture & Food Security* 2017 6:53, October 11, 2017, <https://agricultureandfoodsecurity.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40066-017-0126-4>

²⁰² Welteji, Mohammed, Hussein, "The Contribution of Productive Safety Net Program for Food Security of the Rural Households in the Case of Bale Zone, Southeast Ethiopia."

²⁰³ Welteji, Mohammed, and Hussein, "The Contribution of Productive Safety Net Program for Food Security of the Rural Households in the Case of Bale Zone, Southeast Ethiopia."

²⁰⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 246, *Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)*, A/RES/73/246, December 20, 2018, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/246

The GA requires a global consensus to address this problem but there are multiple approaches to the issue of social protection and poverty. Action can be taken by expanding resources of international organizations and encouraging more cooperation between Member States. Delegates should identify their Member State's national, bi-lateral, and regional methods on how to best to implement social protection programs. Delegates should be familiar how their Member State has addressed poverty. What are your Member States' social protection programs towards poverty? What results have such programs encountered and how may fellow Member States learn from it? Focus could also be given to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that operate or support programs in many Member States. Member States can find examples of successful social protection programs all around the world but are there areas to better target poverty levels? What type of social programs would benefit your Member State? How do Member States ensure proper funding programs and ensure they are effective? What methods can different Member States undertake to work together?

Annotated Bibliography

I. Determining Solutions for Marine Plastic Buildup and Microplastics

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. (1982). Accessed June 24, 2019.
http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as UNCLOS, is a pivotal document on law and order in the world's oceans and seas. UNCLOS contains rules governing the most important aspects of the uses of international waters and marine resources. Among other features, UNCLOS cements national sovereignty over territorial seas and coastal regions. It further emphasizes that Member States must prevent and control marine pollution and "are liable for damage caused by violation of their international obligations to combat such pollution."

United Nations Environment Programme. (2011). UNEP Year Book 2011: Emerging Issues in our Global Environment. Accessed June 24, 2019. http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8276/-/UNEP%20Year%20Book%202012%20emerging%20issues%20in%20our%20global%20environment-2011UNEP_YEARBOOK_Fullreport.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s year book from 2011 includes an in-depth assessment of plastic debris in the world's oceans. The 2011 year book edition has details and explanations to the root causes and consequences of this global issue as well as existing initiatives to improve the situation. It analyzes the impacts of plastic debris on marine life and ecosystems and elaborates on social and economic effects of plastic debris in the world's oceans. The chapter further gives a broad overview of existing international and regional frameworks and initiatives by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The fact that this book is from 2011 and still contains the most relevant information on the plastic debris in the world's oceans shows that the situation has not improved since and effective actions are urgently needed.

United Nations Environment Programme. (2014). UNEP Year Book 2014: Emerging Issues in our Global Environment. Accessed June 24, 2019. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9240/-/UNEP%20Year%20Book%202014%3a%20emerging%20issues%20in%20our%20global%20environment%20UNEP_YEARBOOK_2014.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

The UNEP year book from 2014 includes an entire chapter on plastic debris in the ocean. It describes the situation of plastic in the marine environment and discusses the threat of microplastics to marine life. It further provides an overview of existing international, national, and regional agreements on the protection of the seas and the disposal of plastic at sea. On page 52, the chapter discusses how the inputs of plastic debris into the ocean could be reduced and thereafter the report concentrates on proposals to reduce the overall production of plastic. Last but not least, the document lists a number of valuable sources for further research on plastic debris in the world's oceans and should therefore be regarded as one of the most important resources with which to start research on this topic.

United Nations Environment Programme. (2014). *Valuing Plastics: The Business Case for Measuring, Managing and Disclosing Plastic Use in the Consumer Goods Industry* [Executive Summary]. Accessed June 24, 2019. <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9238/-/Valuing%20plastic%3a%20the%20business%20case%20for%20measuring%2c%20managing%20and%20disclosing%20plastic%20use%20in%20the%20consumer%20goods%20industry-2014Valuing%20plasticsF.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y>

After giving an overview about the current situation concerning plastic debris in the world's oceans, this document concentrates on analyzing how companies can contribute to reductions in the amount and impact of plastic debris. It formulates clear recommendations for companies and illustrates how they can benefit from these actions. Among other factors, it discusses changes in attitudes and behaviors as well as innovations in alternatives for plastic products.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session. (2009). *Oceans and the law of the sea* (A/RES/64/71) [Resolution]. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/64/L.18 and Add.1). Accessed June 24, 2019. <http://undocs.org/A/RES/64/71>

As one of the most recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions on the law of the sea, this document contains valuable information on the international framework on the pollution of the world's oceans and seas. While the resolution does not specifically mention plastics, it addresses the severe impact of debris on marine life, ecosystems, and small island states. It expresses the UNGA's appreciation of UNEP's initiatives to develop partnerships with states and civil societies in order to raise awareness on this issue. It further asks Member States to integrate the issue of marine debris into their national strategies. Accordingly, this document is a pivotal resource while analyzing the international legal framework on debris in the world's oceans.

II: Promoting Social Protection as a Means of Eliminating Poverty

The World Bank Group, *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018*, (Washington, DC, The World Bank Group, 2018). Accessed July 8, 2019.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29115/211254.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

The World Bank Group completed a substantial report on the global state of social protection safety nets around the globe in 2018. Using data from the Atlas of Social Protection: Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE) and their own empirical data, the report looks at where each individual region and most Member States are succeeding and failing in their social safety nets. It also delves into developed Member States and the threats to social protection faced in those Member States.

United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework: Integrated Social Protection Systems: Enhancing Equity for Children*, (New York: UNICEF, March 2012). Accessed July 8, 2019.

https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/UNICEF_Social_Protection_Strategic_Framework_full_doc_std.pdf.

In 2012, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) came out with their social protection framework, which centered on their specific priorities for the future. UNICEF's social protection work focuses on social transfers, social access and support for car services, and legislation and policies to ensure non-discrimination. It also focuses specifically on the vulnerability of children. The report also highlights the work UNICEF had already completed to implement social protection programs for children in developing Member States in Africa and the Americas.

The World Bank Group, *Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity: The World Bank's Social Protection and Labor Strategy 2012 – 2022*, (The World Bank Group, April 2012). Accessed July 8, 2019.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/443791468157506768/pdf/732350BR0CODE200doc0version0REVISED.pdf>

In 2012, the World Bank created their own social protection strategy for the next decade. The World Bank's strategy for the next ten-plus years focuses on four key points: strengthening systemic approaches, ensuring inclusion, responding to crises, and enhancing productivity. It also lays out the principles of engagement for the World Bank, which include focusing on evidence-based knowledge, tailoring operations to country context, and collaborating across sectors. The report goes into great detail about where current efforts succeed and fail and where those efforts need to go in the next decade. It offers realistic expectations for the future and lays out their vision of how goals should be achieved.

United Nations Development Programme *World Centre for Sustainable Development (Rio+ Centre), Social Protection for Sustainable Development: Dialogues Between Africa and Brazil*, (Rio de Janeiro: United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Accessed July 8, 2019.

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rblac/docs/MinisterialForum/UNDP-RBLAC-UNDP%20SP4SD%20Dialogues%20Brazil%20Africa.pdf>.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) report provides a thorough briefing of the current efforts in both Brazil and Africa to improve social protection. The report first looks at the current situation of social protection in Africa and specifically at the Member State of Senegal. It then spends time looking at how Brazil was able to forge its own system of social protection and how the South American Member State has assisted African Member States recently in developing their own social protection plans and safety nets. The report also relates back to how the cooperation works toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

International Labour Organization, "Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors," Accessed June 2, 2019.
<https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?id=55065>

Produced when the UN's Joint Fund was just being created, this document lays out the methods that the Joint Fund will be used to assist developing Member States. The Joint Fund calls to follow four key principles, harmonization and institutionalization, preparation and prevention, reinforcement, not replacement, and inclusion of the forcibly displaced. It also calls for the creation of the Joint Fund Window for Social Protection, which was later implemented. The fund focuses on a three-layer funding approach with the first layer being UN bodies which focus on crisis relief, the second being the World Bank focusing on non-crisis relief, and the third being the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) focusing on social protection systems building.