

General Assembly First Committee

Topic A: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers

“UN DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration] programmes have increasingly been carried out in environments where the majority of former combatants are youth.”¹ DDR is the process of addressing the socioeconomic problems faced by ex-combatants that find themselves lost in a post-conflict society and empowering them to resume normal life.² On February 12th, 2020 Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the Security Council, reminding them of the precautions that need be taken to protect children exposed to war including those used as soldiers.³ The United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Center created the *Operation Guide to Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, which was recently revised and updated in 2019 and provides Member States guidance on how to implement DDR throughout a conflict.⁴ While children are sometimes used in conflict for their specific advantages as recruits, *S/RES/2225* clearly indicates this practice violates international law, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*.⁵

Topic B: Confidence Building Measures

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are procedures created and intended to prevent hostilities, reduce tensions, and create a trust at international, regional, sub-regional, and bilateral levels.⁶ The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) works closely with the General Assembly First Committee to provide organizational support of decisions of the committee and other relevant disarmament bodies and plays a large role in CBMs.⁷ CBMs encompass transparency in armaments, such as use of and reporting to the UN Register of Conventional Arms, the establishment of demilitarized zones, peacekeeping operations staffed by international forces, and open dialogue about military topics.⁸ *A/RES/74/39*, passed in December of 2019, provided general support for the continued use of CBMs, but many implementation specifics are left out.⁹ This is to say that, while Member States continue to agree that CBMs are vital, defense and security remain personal obligations of Member States and building trust remains a difficult topic for balancing sovereignty and good guidance.

¹ <https://www.unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

² https://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx

³ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-02-12/remarks-security-council-briefing-children-armed-conflict>

⁴ <https://www.unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20Guide.pdf>

⁵ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2225>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/cbms/>

⁷ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/about>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/cbms/>

⁹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/39>



General Assembly Second Committee

Topic A: Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development

Over the last four decades global poverty has decreased dramatically, from nearly 50 percent to approximately 10 percent.¹⁰ While the factors that decrease poverty are many, principal among them are industrialization, international trade, and related services; there has yet to be a single country to reach a high level of development without an advanced industrial sector.¹¹ While industry can be economically beneficial, there is widespread international recognition that many can be left behind and some environmental externalities can occur. To provide a framework for industrial development that is not only inclusive, but sustainable, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) adopted the *Lima Declaration* in 2013, building off a 1975 declaration of the same name.¹² The *Lima Declaration* recognizes the need to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – and has resulted in ongoing international discussions on inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) hosted by UNIDO each year. In 2015, the General Assembly adopted *A/RES/70/1*, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which included the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 9th SDG includes the promotion of ISID, which has renewed international focus on the subject.¹³

Topic B: Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness

When a natural hazard negatively affects people, it becomes a disaster, incidences of which are increasing in both number and severity. These disasters have the greatest impact on those who have the least resources: developing countries and the vulnerable populations therein.¹⁴ Since 1994, the United Nations has attempted to strengthen the capacity of states to prevent and respond to disasters, building on a long history of responding to specific incidents. After a series of deadly earthquakes and hurricanes in the 1960s, the General Assembly created the United Nations Disaster Relief Office, now known as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), to help Member States better coordinate, prepare for, and prevent disasters.¹⁵ The UNDRR has since hosted multiple World Conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction, each of which produced progressive frameworks on disaster risk reduction (DRR).¹⁶ The 1994 *Yokohama Strategy* laid out basic principles, the 2005 *Hyogo Framework* built out priority actions, and the 2015 *Sendai Framework* established clear targets that aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The *Sendai Framework* is actionable, but many Member States lack the capacity or resources to fully implement it, necessitating international action.

¹⁰ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

¹¹ https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-03/ISID_Brochure_web_singlesided_12_03_0.pdf

¹² https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-04/Lima_Declaration_EN_web_0.pdf

¹³ <https://www.unido.org/inclusive-and-sustainable-industrial-development>

¹⁴ <https://www.undrr.org/about-undrr/our-work>

¹⁵ <https://www.undrr.org/about-undrr/history>

¹⁶ <https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sf>

General Assembly Third Committee

Topic A: The Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

The United Nations (UN) recognizes statelessness as a source of human insecurity and forced displacement, which in turn contribute to conflict, regional instability, and the violation of human rights.¹⁷ The office of the UN Secretary-General maintains a depository that contains all international treaties and law, inter alia, to provide access to comprehensive resources, and information.¹⁸ In 1954, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* to serve as a framework for the international protection of stateless persons, and still serves as the most comprehensive document that institutionalizes the rights of stateless persons at a global level.¹⁹ The *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* was adopted in 1961 as a complimentary framework to the *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*.²⁰ Whereas these conventions serve as frameworks for the rights of stateless persons, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other human rights laws complement them.²¹ There are many methods to incorporate these fundamental human rights into development such as their inclusion in national planning strategies and effective coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in enacting policy.

Topic B: Education for Justice and the Rule of Law in the Context of Sustainable Development

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* has Quality Education as Sustainable Development Goal 4.²² One of the targets of SDG 4 seeks to promote sustainable development by equipping, and empowering all persons with education for human rights, the gender equality, and a culture of non-violence.²³ The United Nations has enumerated three pillars for its inter-governmental work on the rule of law: Rule of Law and Peace and Security, Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Rule of Law and Development.²⁴ Underlying each pillar is the need for education, and global awareness. SDG 16 also aims to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions.²⁵ The relationship between the SDGS is deeply interlinked, and mutually reinforcing, and builds a pathway towards global implementation of the rule of law, and education for justice.²⁶

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/international-law-courts-tribunals/refugee-law/>

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/international-law-courts-tribunals/treaties-and-the-development-of-international-law/>

¹⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3bbb25729.pdf#zoom=95>

²⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3bbb286d8.pdf#zoom=95>

²¹ https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

²² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

²³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

²⁴ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/the-three-pillars/>

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/sdg-16/>

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/sdg-16/>

United Nations Environment Assembly

Topic A: Sustainable Waste Management for the Achievement of SDG 11

Development carries with it the natural increase in volume of output waste, whether as a result of consumer-based economic growth, expanded urban footprints, or increased resource usage through heightened productivity in industrialization.²⁷ Within the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, this applies in particular to human settlements, encouraging a specific lens based on urban waste and development.²⁸ The UN has repeatedly affirmed the importance of both improving efficient harvesting of resources and reducing the impact of hazardous waste. The United Nations has promoted the minimization of waste through entities such as the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, among others.²⁹ The UN has also instituted programmes such as the Global Partnership on Waste Management which seeks to facilitate capacity-building and technology transfer mechanisms in this regard.³⁰ While some international frameworks exist to address waste, including the *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes*, the topic remains difficult to address, especially for small island developing states.

Topic B: Combating Land Degradation

As climate change continues to accelerate and the physical effects of a more volatile climate become visible, the reduced viability of land has become of international concern. Especially in the form of increasing desertification and drought, land degradation is of concern to both developed and developing countries: consider the 2019-2020 wildfires in Australia and the ongoing drought in Southern Africa. In 2019, the countries party to the UN *Convention to Combat Desertification* adopted the *Delhi Declaration*, which set a goal of achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030.³¹ That conference also highlighted several tenets of ongoing efforts, including the importance of putting people first in land restoration and reclamation efforts.³² Land degradation is featured prominently in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. SDG 15 specifically references combating desertification and halting and reversing degradation.³³ The *Paris Agreement* drew attention to the higher threat posed to developing countries by adverse effects of climate change including land degradation.³⁴

²⁷ https://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/publications/trends/trends_Chemicals_mining_transport_waste/ch4_waste_management.pdf

²⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11>

²⁹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/ietc/>

³⁰ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7462>

³¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046332>

³² https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2019-09/130919%20UNCCD%20ES_COP%2014-Closing%20speech.pdf

³³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg15>

³⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/frameworks/parisagreement>

Economic and Social Council

Topic A: Integrating Marginalized Populations into National Development Plans

As the international community mobilized to begin addressing the objectives of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined therein, an increased interest in national development plans (NDPs) emerged.³⁵ With the number of national development plans doubling, some research has indicated that the groups most in need of access to development – such as women and minority groups – have a voice in designing and implementing those NDPs.³⁶ Efforts to prompt development that exclude minority groups undermine the overall efforts to achieve many of the most basic goals of development.³⁷ With inclusivity at the forefront of development concerns in SDG 16 United Nations Member States can take advantage of the resources available for designing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS).³⁸ Efforts to empower marginalized groups exist through bodies such as the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which helps “make the invisible visible.”³⁹

Topic B: Youth Engagement in Poverty Eradication

Poverty eradication is at the forefront of sustainable development. As the first goal of both the SDGs and their predecessors the Millennium Development Goals, the elimination of poverty is the primary objective of development.⁴⁰ A focus on poverty must include involvement at every level of society: for this reason, youth engagement in the process has been a perennial topic of the international community. Through the ECOSOC Youth Forum, held annually, youth voices have more access than ever to the institutions that are acting to eliminate poverty and promote sustainable development.⁴¹ Core concerns of the Youth Forum and its partners such as the UN Major Group for Children and youth include policy and advocacy, capacity building, knowledge and action to achieve effective outcomes at the international level.⁴² Youth engagement and empowerment was recognized in *A/RES/72/233*, in which the UN General Assembly declared the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.⁴³ In addition to these actions, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs releases a regular World Youth Report in which it identifies the importance of inclusive approaches to a variety of objectives, including youth engagement.⁴⁴

³⁵ <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0305750X19300713?token=907E1C3B62714B33A751C00A845B37A0A2AA8660F1B9829435A03CF70EAF1E154FC97864280AFCC735B1759D25B87FF>

³⁶ <http://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c14/E1-43-01-08.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UNDPmarginalisedMinorities.pdf>

³⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

³⁹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/08/1044981>

⁴⁰ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1>

⁴¹ <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/ecosoc-youth-forum>

⁴² <https://www.unmgcy.org/about>

⁴³ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/233>

⁴⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

Commission on the Status of Women

Topic A: Gender-Responsive Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

About 25% of all people do not have access to safe drinking water, and over 50% lack access to effective sanitation infrastructure.⁴⁵ These problems, though universal, are especially relevant to women and girls. As women are often responsible for management of their households in developing countries, it often falls to them to collect water. As women are responsible for water collection in about 80% of homes, that leads to a loss of almost 32 billion hours per year in Sub-Saharan Africa alone.⁴⁶ The need for sanitation that serves all genders equally is also crucial for improving opportunities for women and girls, especially to improve their engagement in school and economic life. A primary UN body to address these needs is UN Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). In 2019, UN WASH helped provide about 14 million people with clean water and 11 million with basic sanitation.⁴⁷ The role clean water and sanitation plays has been factored into the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* through Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.⁴⁸ In addition, the UN emphasizes the intersection of clean water access and climate change; the global poor, who are overwhelmingly female, are the most likely to be adversely affected.⁴⁹

Topic B: The Role of Women in the Achievement of SDG 16

Strong societies and effective institutions rely on inclusive cultures supporting them. The achievement of SDG 16 is predicated on a reduction of violence and inequality of access to justice systems.⁵⁰ This element of sustainability is so crucial it appears twice in the SDGs, both in SDG 16 and in SDG 5 as well. The role women play in the growth of accountable and inclusive societies has long been a factor in efforts by the UN to end conflict; in 2013 a joint report of several UN bodies titled *Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential* provided a roadmap for the inclusion of women in sustainable conflict reduction practices.⁵¹ Beyond that, however, is an even more crucial need for women's involvement in stable societies as well. Almost half of all women victims of intentional homicide in 2012 died at the hands of an intimate partner or family member.⁵² For justice to be maintained, and peaceful and inclusive societies to be sustainable, women must be engaged in all aspects of peace processes.

⁴⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/issue-brief-gender-responsive-water-and-sanitation-systems>

⁴⁶ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/resource-guide-on-gender-and-climate-change.html>

⁴⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/wash/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.unwater.org/publications/climate-change-adaptation-pivotal-role-water/>

⁵⁰ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

⁵¹ https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/women_and_nrm_report.pdf

⁵² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-16-peace-justice-strong-institutions>

United Nations Development Programme

Topic A: Building Resilient Infrastructure to Achieve SDG 9

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 emphasizes economic growth and responsible industrialization through new and upgraded transportation, energy, and information and communication technology infrastructure.⁵³ Expanded construction of roads, improved access to energy, and enhanced telecommunications infrastructure connects communities to global markets, enabling not only industrialization, but also investing in and creation of small- and medium-sized enterprises.⁵⁴ A significant factor in construction of new infrastructure is the awareness of and preparation for climate change and climate-related disasters, outlined in *Paving the Way for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure*, a 2011 UNDP publication.⁵⁵ As with many climate-related concerns, low-development countries face the greatest risks and have the least capacity to mitigate damage and threats, including to infrastructure. The UNDP Climate Change Adaptation programme features several “Signature Programmes” that are relevant, especially Signatures Programme 6 which promotes climate resilient infrastructure and local infrastructure initiatives.⁵⁶ UNDP also provides technical and direct support on other crucial infrastructure, including energy & utilities and telecommunications.

Topic B: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Sustainable Development

The massive scale of sustainable development and the nuance required sometimes eclipse the ability of the international community to deal with on a top-down level. For this reason, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are almost always included in the United Nations processes are considered vital to achieving the SDGs. NGOs often act as the implementers of UN and bilateral initiatives and are responsible for a huge number of development projects globally. An element of what makes NGOs such important partners is their credibility and access to grass-roots movements and local communities above and beyond the broader umbrella that governments must use.⁵⁷ A cornerstone of UN commitment to inclusion of NGOs is *A/RES/66/288, The future we want*, which acknowledged the role of civil society partners and recognized how information and communication technology enables dialogue between governments and the public.⁵⁸ NGO involvement and engagement on the SDGs is often coordinated by the NGO Major Group, and recognized NGOs regularly interact with the UN under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.⁵⁹

⁵³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/infrastructure-industrialization/>

⁵⁴ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/21431/WorldBank_SDGAtlas_09_industry_innovation_infrastructure.pdf?sequence=1&%3BisAllowed=

⁵⁵ <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/Climate%20Strategies/paving-the-way.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/promoting-climate-resilient-infrastructure>

⁵⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/ngos.html>

⁵⁸ https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E

⁵⁹ <http://www.ngomg.org/>

Security Council

Topic A: Combating the Weaponization of Misinformation

In recent years, the world has increasingly found its attention drawn to the dangers posed by misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Research indicates that misinformation and disinformation impede good governance, whether in politics or media.⁶⁰ Several monitors of freedom of expression issued a Joint Declaration in 2017 addressing “so-called fake news, disinformation, and propaganda.”⁶¹ The next year, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published the handbook *Journalism, ‘Fake News’ & Disinformation* to provide guidance on the importance of truth in reporting and the ongoing “information disorder” that has set in.⁶² UNESCO also works through its International Programme for the Development of Communication to promote free and fair media through avenues such as development of community media and training of media professionals.⁶³ The threat of disinformation also threatens public health. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres identified misinformation about COVID-19 as a growing obstacle to effectively mitigating the spread of the virus and violence and hate crimes associated with it.⁶⁴ The Security Council has yet to issue a resolution itself on this issue, leaving a wide field for action.

Topic B: Resource Scarcity and its Relation to Conflict

The intersection of resource scarcity and conflict has long been a subject of concern at the United Nations. Lack of access to essentials like food and water as well as precious resources such as oil and mineral deposits exacerbates extant problems. *Renewable Resources and Conflict*, a toolbook on this topic published in 2012 by the United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, outlines the importance of sustainable land management to fight the spread of violence, especially in developing countries.⁶⁵ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* includes resource management among its goals, especially Sustainable Development Goal 12.⁶⁶ The Security Council has held several Arria-Formula meetings on natural resources. These meetings allow the Security Council to engage in less formal discussion and hear from a wide variety of experts.⁶⁷ Organizations such as the World Resources Institute argue that water risks are security risks; this extends to other resources as well.⁶⁸ That intersection places resource scarcity under the purview of the Security Council.

⁶⁰ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608864/IPOL_STU\(2019\)608864_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608864/IPOL_STU(2019)608864_EN.pdf)

⁶¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21287&LangID=E>

⁶² https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/journalism_fake_news_disinformation_print_friendly_0.pdf

⁶³ <https://en.unesco.org/programme/ipdc>

⁶⁴ <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/treaty-bodies/watch/opening-statements-on-the-un%E2%80%99s-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/6145328567001/>

⁶⁵ https://www.un.org/en/events/environmentconflictday/pdf/GN_Renewable_Consultation.pdf

⁶⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12>

⁶⁷ <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/energy-climate-and-natural-resources/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/11/un-security-council-examines-connection-between-water-risk-and-political-conflict>