Earlier this year, the United Nations (UN) declared that 20 million people are experiencing famine around the world, mostly concentrated in the countries of South Sudan, Nigeria, Yemen, and Somalia. The UN's World Food Program (WFP) defines famine as conditions meeting three specific conditions: one in five households face extreme food shortages; more than 30 percent of the population is acutely malnourished; and at least two people for every 10,000 die each day. Contrary to what many conceive, significant growth in agricultural productivity over recent decades makes it possible to grow food in places previously thought infertile. For the most part, there is enough food produced to feed all of those alive, and most occurrences of famine today result from manmade factors affecting how food gets to its final destination, not a lack of food. What are these factors then? First, conflict and political instability often lead to famine, since farm fields are ruined, making it difficult to grow food locally, and damaged infrastructure means that those who are able grow crops are not able to access markets. In addition to the adverse physical conditions of conflict, warring parties often use violence to block aid workers from delivering relief to those who support the other side. Finally, and most pertinent to this committee, disbursing famine relief requires significant amounts of money. There has been a recent upsurge in distrust of the UN and other international bodies, with many developed countries preferring to look inward following the widespread rise of nationalist populism, leading to the decline of funding for lifesaving efforts. Unfortunately, this comes at a time when more people than ever are displaced, and remain away from home for longer than ever.

The UN has an extensive history of providing food aid to populations facing famine conditions. The WFP, first established by the UN General Assembly (GA) in 1963 and extended on a continuing basis in 1965, is the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) emergency aid wing. The WFP has four official objectives: save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies; support food security and nutrition and rebuild livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies; reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs; and reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger. Today, the WFP provides food assistance to 80 million people in 80 countries every year, but this comes at a cost. While the agency can provide rations for just US$0.31 per person, this adds up over time, and in 2016 total contributions to the WFP were close to US$6 million. It should be noted that increasing the budget of the WFP is not the only way to address famine. For example, over-bureaucratic policies that govern the distribution of food aid at the international and national level makes getting food where it needs to get take longer than necessary.

Additionally, the promotion of agricultural productivity measures like fertilizer, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and sustainable irrigation is important to ensure food availability for regions with naturally poor growing conditions. Ultimately, preventing future famines is one of the cheapest ways to avoid expensive emergency aid, so while it is notoriously difficult, strengthening state capabilities and government institutions in unstable regions is crucial to ensuring the long term sustainability of the international food aid infrastructure.

While it would be easy to simply advocate for spending as much money as is necessary to solve the problem, since there is such a strong moral case in favor of doing so, like any issue, countries might have a variety of views on how to address food aid. For example, the government of one
of the countries currently experiencing famine might oppose intervention by the international community that involves giving aid to citizens who support opposition parties. Further, while the United States and European Commission are the first and second largest contributors to the FAO respectively, in many prominent western nations, citizens are growing skeptical of donations to help those abroad when increasingly many are experiencing economic trouble at home, reflecting itself in the election of far-right political leaders. Despite this, though, many countries would indeed support bolstering support to the WFP. The WFP is one of the sources of what is termed Official Development Assistance (ODA), and in a 1970 resolution, the UN suggested that developed countries contribute 0.7% of their gross national product (GNP) to ODA. Today only six countries meet that goal, the only significant one of those being the United Kingdom. It is not a stretch to say that international humanitarian organs are underfunded compared to the needs at hand, and indeed compared to the potential contributions.

**Topics for Consideration:**

How can your country adjust its national food aid policies (if it has any) to improve the efficiency of distribution? Why might your country hold these policies? How might they affect what your country might support in a resolution?

Does your country have any domestic policies surrounding agriculture (think: GMOs, food transportation, irrigation, etc.) that might color its views on international agreements on the issue? Does it do anything well that you think could provide a model for other countries to adopt as well?

Should the UN advocate for increasing the budget of the WFP? Why might your country support or oppose increasing spending on food aid?

What interventions by other UN agencies might help prevent the underlying causes of famine, rather than increasing the budget of the WFP?

How can the UN balance the national interests of developed countries experiencing demands for spending at home, with the need for spending on emergency food aid abroad?

**Bibliography:**


Cryptocurrencies are forms of digital currencies which use cryptography, defined as secure communication, for viable, mutually-beneficial transactions between users. The most well-known cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, was introduced 2009 and has since skyrocketed in popularity alongside other forms of the digital currency. These currencies are not centrally controlled by a government, where the central bank may control the supply of money. They are regulated, instead, by users making a transaction request, the computer software validating the request and storing the information in a database. This storage is key, without it, the transaction cannot be confirmed – and once in the database, it cannot be undone. These transactions are verified by “miners” who confirm the transactions as valid, adding them to the database. Miners become elevated to their elite status by solving incredibly tough cryptologic puzzles, allocating them a small number of bitcoins. With these bitcoins, they are now invested and have a stake in the financial systems and thus, want to ensure its legitimacy. Cryptocurrencies are software that is fast and available to all. They are making fast headway since their inception and will continue to grow into mainstream governments and businesses.

Since its new birth, cryptocurrencies are not legal in all countries and the laws are constantly changing. Indeed, this new technology is not without deep concern; criminals may use them for malicious purposes, such as tax evasion and money laundering. Although the cryptography measures are secure, they are not immune to hackers, as illustrated by multiple instances of online theft, often for millions of dollars. On the issue of illegal trade, cryptocurrencies have been used in online black markets, the most prominent example being a website named Silk Road – where individuals could buy and sell drugs, hire professional hackers and contract killers– until the United States government shut the website down in 2013. Others who are skeptical of the new technology claim they are pyramid schemes and economic bubbles, waiting to pop. Indeed, in such unchartered water with new technology, both benefits and potential catastrophes loom within the world of cryptocurrency.

The United Nations – under its World Food Program – has transferred cryptocurrencies to individuals in lesser developed countries to buy food, water and basic living supplies. But besides several courses for its staff and investigations, the United Nations has not taken much action on cryptocurrencies. As such, the delegates of this committee will have the unique honor of drafting some of the very first resolutions on the subject.

Topics for Consideration:

How can member states better prevent terrorists and criminals from using cryptocurrencies to advance their goals?

What role, if any, should the United Nations and member states play in regulating these currencies? How will they do this?

Should member states encourage the use of cryptocurrencies within their countries for business and political purposes? If so, how?
What if *member states* use cryptocurrencies for state sponsorship of terrorism? Should the United Nations have a role in intervening? If so, how?

As this will be some of the very first international law written on the subject, what factors within cryptocurrencies – and technology as a whole – should this body focus on to set a precedence?

**Bibliography:**


2nd Main Committee (Economic and Financial)
2.3 Role of Urbanization in Sustainable Development

As of 2015, nearly 4 billion, or 54% of the world’s population, live in urbanized areas. That number is expected to grow to 5 billion by 2030. Almost a billion of these urban dwellers live in urban slums, which according to the UN-Habitat, means that these individuals lack permanent and secure housing, access to sanitary drinking water, and adequate sanitation. Many of these people are entrenched in poverty and moved to the city for economic opportunity, but city planners in local governments have had difficulty with maintaining urban development consistent with the rate of urban growth. The people living in urban slums are at a much greater risk of contracting waterborne illness, maintaining their current economic status, and being fatally injured in natural disasters.

The United Nations has prioritized these urban dwellers in the eleventh of the Sustainable Development Goals: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Member States met in Quito, Ecuador for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in October of 2016 to both discuss and adopt the New Urban Agenda (NUA), a twenty-year plan of global development guidelines. The NUA focuses on integrating every individual into inclusive infrastructures, strong urban governance, and optimizing urban space in order to promote long-term stability. Additionally, the NUA supports the creation of “smart cities,” which uses information from data sensors to determine proper resource allocation. Currently, this agenda is set to be financed through international development banks, where countries privately support emerging markets in developing countries, and public funds from profits garnered through economic gains from urbanization.

To plan for future urban growth and to address the urban slum situation, cities need to install infrastructures with inclusive and clean transportation networks, proper waste management and removal processes, and adequate and permanent housing options. More than 80% of economic growth occurs in city centers, and by creating more efficient cities, Member States, particularly developing nations, can maximize their gross domestic products. Member States should also consider the issue of sovereignty when discussing this committee’s topic. The New Urban Agenda needs to be implemented at the local stage, and currently the international community is responsible for its oversight and financing. Each delegation should strongly consider solutions to a sustainable urban world and how such policies can be implemented on the international stage.

Topics for Consideration:

How can Member States resolve the issue of urban slums?

Can sanitation efforts be improved through non-governmental organizations?

How can this committee limit the effects of climate change through urban development?

How can this body ensure participation from all members?
To what degree can the global economy benefit from proper financing in sustainable development in emerging economies?

**Bibliography:**


2nd Main Committee (Economic and Financial)
2.4 Sustainable Tourism for Poverty Eradication

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. As sustainable tourism grows in scope and popularity it gains potential to eradicate poverty on a national scale. The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” Proponents tout sustainable tourism’s abilities as a poverty eradication tool. According to the World Tourism Organization, rural areas are increasingly attractive to tourists. These areas, often more impoverished may reap the economic benefits of tourism. Furthermore, jobs in tourism usually do not require specialized skills so they are accessible to the poor. Tourism can also help local communities connect to a broader market, and interactions between tourists and local communities can have further cultural awareness and lead to investment in infrastructure.

The United Nations and its related agencies have been active in promoting sustainable tourism as a means of poverty eradication and development. Target 8.9 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on member states to sponsor tourism for job creation and cultural awareness. To help reach this goal, the UN World Tourism Organization has implemented the ST-EP Initiative (Sustainable Tourism -- Eliminating Poverty). In addition, the United Nations has adopted several resolutions recognizing the importance of sustainable tourism and encouraging member states to develop their own programs. UNGA resolution 65/173, adopted in 2010, set the stage for later resolutions by recognizing the role of tourism in fighting poverty and requested a collaborative report from the UNWTO and other UN agencies on their recommendations for using tourism to facilitate poverty reduction. UNGA resolution 67/223, adopted in 2012, and UNGA resolution 69/233, adopted in 2014, expanded on the ideas in resolution 65/173 and provided member states with recommendations for effectively implementing their own programs. The most recent development, UNGA resolution 71/240, adopted in 2016, is more comprehensive than its predecessors and provides an updated picture of policies and practices worldwide.

Amidst the purported benefits of sustainable tourism, serious concerns have been raised. While sustainable tourism is aimed at protecting the environment, lack of uniform legal standards and regulations can lead to a degradation of fragile local ecosystems and cultural landmarks. As a tool for poverty eradication, there are concerns that the majority of the income generated from tourism never reaches the most impoverished communities and instead is received by international tourism agencies. Additionally, local communities may be forced to participate in tourism projects and tourism efforts may disrupt the practices and lifestyles of the community. Furthermore, tourism may provide competition for life-supporting resources including water, land, food, and energy sources. The body’s discussion will likely focus on identifying and mitigating the negative impacts of sustainable tourism and developing practices that will effectively alleviate poverty in local populations.

Topics for Consideration:

How can the UNWTO’s definition of “sustainable tourism” be interpreted in practical terms?
What steps can this body take to prevent the exploitation of local populations in the tourism industry?

Is there a need for a comprehensive set of rules and regulations on sustainable tourism? If so, what should they be?

What steps can this body take to ensure the protection of fragile ecosystems and cultural landmarks?

What can this body do to ensure that income generated by tourism reaches impoverished local populations?

Bibliography:


