



Arizona Model United Nations 65

The Economic and Social Council

Short Research Guide

Introduction

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established by the UN Charter in 1945 and held its first meeting in 1946. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and serves as an essential body for discussion on international economic, social, and development issues. Its work connects the UN system's development, economic, social, and environmental efforts and includes follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Council also hosts forums on financing for development, migration, and other issues relevant to international development. ECOSOC traditionally coordinates, discusses, and makes recommendations rather than imposing binding measures. However, for Arizona Model United Nations purposes, delegates will still write resolutions with solutions to each topic as is typical of United Nations bodies. Resolutions should therefore focus on realistic international cooperation, financing, policy coordination, and recommendations to governments and international institutions.

Topic I: Sovereign Debt Crisis in Developing States

Sovereign debt is money borrowed by a national government. Developing states can face debt crises when debt obligations become difficult to meet, leaving governments with fewer resources for health, education, infrastructure, and more. The issue has historical roots, including the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative launched by the IMF and World Bank in 1996. In recent times, COVID-19 has harmed many developing economies. The UN has also called for improvements to the global sovereign debt architecture and more effective debt restructuring.

Questions to consider:

1. What should creditors and developing countries do when a country can no longer afford to repay its debt?
2. Should international organizations create faster and stronger systems for countries to restructure their debt? If so, what should those systems look like?
3. How can debt relief help developing countries continue working toward the SDGs while still encouraging responsible borrowing?

Topic II: Brain Drain and Labor Migration

Labor migration can create new opportunities for workers while also benefiting their home countries through remittances, new skills, and investments. However, when highly educated or skilled workers leave countries that already have shortages, it can create a problem known as “brain drain.” This can be especially harmful in fields like medicine, education, engineering, and technology. Countries need to find ways to reduce the negative effects of brain drain without restricting people's freedom to migrate. This could include improving wages and job opportunities at home, encouraging workers to return, and making better use of diaspora networks and remittances.

Questions to consider:

1. How can countries reduce the negative effects of skilled workers leaving without limiting people's freedom to migrate?
2. What responsibility should destination countries have when they recruit skilled workers from countries that already have shortages?
3. How can remittances, temporary migration, diaspora communities, and workers returning home help countries benefit more from labor migration?

Topic III: IMF and World Bank Reform

The IMF and World Bank play major roles in providing financial support and development funding to countries around the world. However, developing countries have raised concerns about how much influence they have within these organizations and whether their growing populations and economies are properly represented. There are also concerns about the conditions attached to loans and whether these requirements always consider the needs of borrowing countries. Reforming these institutions could give developing countries a greater voice, improve access to affordable funding, and make financial support more effective while still maintaining global financial stability.

Questions to consider:

1. Should developing countries have more voting power and representation in the IMF and World Bank? If so, how could this be achieved?
2. How should the IMF and World Bank balance financial stability and loan repayment with the social and development needs of borrowing countries?
3. What changes to lending, loan conditions, debt relief, and development funding could make these institutions more fair and effective?