

**Committee:** ECOSOC

**Topic:** Development of Green Cities/Urban Agriculture

**Background of Committee:**

As a principal organ of the United Nations, ECOSOC coordinates the activities of 14 specialized agencies, 13 regional and functional commissions, and over 3,900 civil society actors by commissioning studies and reports, monitoring the implementation of activities and initiatives, and encouraging cooperation and coherence among policy actions. In addition, ECOSOC coordinates funding mechanism and takes the lead role in formulating policy goals and frameworks for short and long-term programs, with particular emphasis on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. To accurately simulate the committee, it will be important to focus on ECOSOC's coordination and policy guidance role, as opposed to the activities carried out by ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies.<sup>6</sup>

**Goals of Committee:**

The topic of this committee is the development of green cities and the promotion of urban agriculture, and so the main focus of debate will be to create solutions to these issues that consider the political, social, and economic effects of different methods of development and sustainability. The objective of this committee is to present resolutions that take the economic condition of underdeveloped regions into consideration but also address the dangers of aging infrastructure and cracking systems in first world countries. Both long term and short term solutions are welcome, and we remind all delegates that above all else, we value diplomacy and cooperation in debate.

**Background:**

One cannot both enjoy the benefits of industrialization and completely avoid the damages of it. We have abused and exploited our natural resources for far too long and need to make steps in the right direction to improve the state of environment. The only way we can protect our planet from the dangers that this problem poses, is by first putting a stop to the things that ruined our planet's health in the first place.

In most cities, over half of all energy is produced from fossil fuels and environmentally detrimental methods of electricity production.<sup>1</sup> These resources that we so heavily depend on are not infinite, and the world is now reaching a breaking point where we will have used up all our natural resources completely, leaving all of our current energy systems and established lifestyle in danger. Over the decades, we have constantly been making an effort to remove ourselves from energy systems based on fossil fuels, however the effort hasn't been universal and has had little success as large oil and coal companies continue to push their business to the forefront of the energy production industry. Another major problem we have been facing is deforestation, and

the degradation of our soil and farm land. Our dependence on fossil fuels has led to issues like contaminated runoff, strained soil, and changes in climate and global temperature, and these problems threaten our agricultural stability.

Who, then, can we render responsible for establishing new energy systems and improving the unstable conditions of our farming and agricultural industries? Leaving the responsibility up to national governments removes the individual burden off the shoulders of citizens, and encourages them to mentally detach themselves from the problem. Instead, we must promote the idea that improving our planet's health starts, not at a national level, but a local one, and that each individual has a responsibility to contribute to that effort. Restructuring our cities and constructing systems of clean renewable energy and food production is what we need to together work towards.

In the past few decades, the shape and form of our financial and private sectors around the world have changed drastically as technology has advanced to a point where machines are putting humans out of work. Where economists previously believed that multinational corporations were the only source of job creation, today it has become clear that large companies are actually downsizing and replacing employees with machines and automations at an alarming rate.<sup>1</sup> Today, the new source of jobs is primarily entrepreneurship, starting one's own business based on a unique innovation or idea. Though entrepreneurship has taken off in most developed countries, it's progress has been staggered in developing parts of the world, where it's needed the most. Currently, large corporations such as PetroChina and ExxonMobil have created a monopoly over natural resources such as fossil fuels, timber, and even farmland.<sup>2</sup> This leaves entrepreneurs unable to use natural resources, leaving them to find other methods and ways to fuel and start their business. This situation is actually beneficial to the environment, as many entrepreneurs turn to creating businesses based on renewable energy, sustainability and conservation. Answering the call for sustainable development around the world, entrepreneurs from nearly every country have started projects ranging from planting trees, to building homes for the homeless, to creating recycling plants, to promoting renewable energy.<sup>3</sup>

Our planet is changing. And as it changes, we must change ourselves as well. In order to conserve and protect our planet we need to implement solutions that change the energy and development industry at a local, national, and then global level.

### **UN Involvement:**

Released in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals were established as a set of goals that the UN wanted to achieve in order to improve the conditions of our world.<sup>5</sup> So far, our progress has been shaky but we have actually already completed a few of the milestones, including reducing poverty by 50%, something many people were skeptical of when the development goals were first released.<sup>5</sup> In 2015, the UN met and finalized the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a list of sustainable dreams that they hope to transform into reality soon.<sup>4</sup>

These goals range from eradicating poverty completely, to cleaning and recycling waste, to increasing the standard of living worldwide, to establishing gender equality. Many people today have the same attitude that people had 17 years ago and believe that the goals set out by the UN are overly ambitious and optimistic. But the UN Environmental Program and UN Development Program have been working across seas with multiple NGOs, and have actually reduced poverty by 50% within just less than two decades. When the people didn't believe in the UN's vision and methods, they proved them wrong and achieved their goals. Similarly, when entrepreneurs are doubted and not encouraged, the UN wants to provide them with the support they seek to achieve their goals. And for those reasons, the UN fully supports entrepreneurship as a means to achieve sustainability. Entrepreneurship starts at the local city level, and to support its innovation and implementation the UN create the Global Entrepreneurs Council in 2011.<sup>4</sup> This Council is focused on bringing together entrepreneurs from around the world to share their innovations and ideas with each other and collectively work to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Bloc Positions:**

- **European Bloc:** Europe is currently at the forefront of renewable energy based cities and agriculture, leading the world in some of the finest examples of completely green and clean cities. Most European countries have taken positive and successful steps in the direction of developing green cities and their government actively support small businesses and NGOs who promote renewable energy and sustainable living. Another major distinction of European cities from others, is that the quality and quantity of public transportation available to citizens to use in place of individual vehicles. Green trains, metros, and buses have led many European cities away from a pollution problem by providing a viable alternative to using vehicles that consume fuel and release carbon emissions.
- **North American Bloc:** In the past, North American countries' efforts to develop more sustainably were moving a fairly fast pace, almost catching up with the development of European countries, however they now lag far behind with the United States federal government renouncing the need for to replace fossil fuel energy with clean fuel and actively defunding programs set in place to promote sustainable growth. Other countries in this block, such as Canada, Mexico, and Greenland have been able to reduce their carbon emissions by embracing alternate forms of energy production.
- **South American Bloc:** Countries in South America are open to the idea of building sustainably green cities and are have the additional idea of creating cities that are prepared for the several natural disasters that countries in this world are particularly vulnerable such as hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes. In order to do so, countries need to reinforce construction regulations,

- promote awareness of natural disasters and how to protect yourself, and then work towards endorsing renewable energy.
- Asian Bloc: Many Asian countries are heavily polluted and suffer from a dependence on fossil fuels and natural gas for energy, and Asian governments have recognized this problem and have taken many steps to improve their city systems. By implementing new construction regulations, promoting individual citizen responsibility of fuel and water waste, and establishing renewable energy facilities, Asia today is home to some of the world's most green areas such as Singapore, Tokyo, and Seoul. Today, some of the world's most prominent and large solar and wind companies are based in Asia, and as the United States steps down from the responsibility of protecting our environment, Asian and European countries are teaming up to lead the rest of the world in the right direction.
- African Bloc: Most African countries are at varying stages of development and depending on that their levels of sustainability and their support of it varies. But since some most countries are still developing, there is a great potential for establishing a perfect system of renewable energy, transportation, and agriculture if citizens are supported in doing so. Unlike highly developed countries, these ones will be establishing a set system for the first time and so they have a chance to base it all on green energy, or to revert to fossil fuels like the rest of the world. Many African countries have already began the process of developing sustainably and taken it upon themselves to build these systems.
- Middle Eastern Bloc: This area of the world is home to the largest oil and fossil fuel companies in the world; one the reasons why moving towards green cities in the Middle East is particularly difficult because the majority of national revenue each year comes from their fossil fuel business. In order to implement the development of sustainable green cities in the Middle East, there first needs to be a shift from depending on the fossil fuel industry for national income, for until the countries are earning money through fossil fuels, there is no incentive to turn away from that business and promote another.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can national governments promote and encourage small businesses and innovators to implement their sustainable development programs and ideas to cities that need it? What innovations or new development have you seen in your city, and who was responsible for its implementation?
2. What specific steps can we take to share new information and innovations from one country to another, and how can we do so efficiently?

3. What are the sectors in the city that need the most focus and funding to start contributing to the sustainable development goals? What cultural aspects of a city need to be taken into consideration when introducing new innovations and devices?

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