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Study Guide

ECOSOC
Economic and Social Council

Building Peace Through Fair and Sustainable Distribution of Water Resources

UNiMUN 2022
Security Politics and Climate Change

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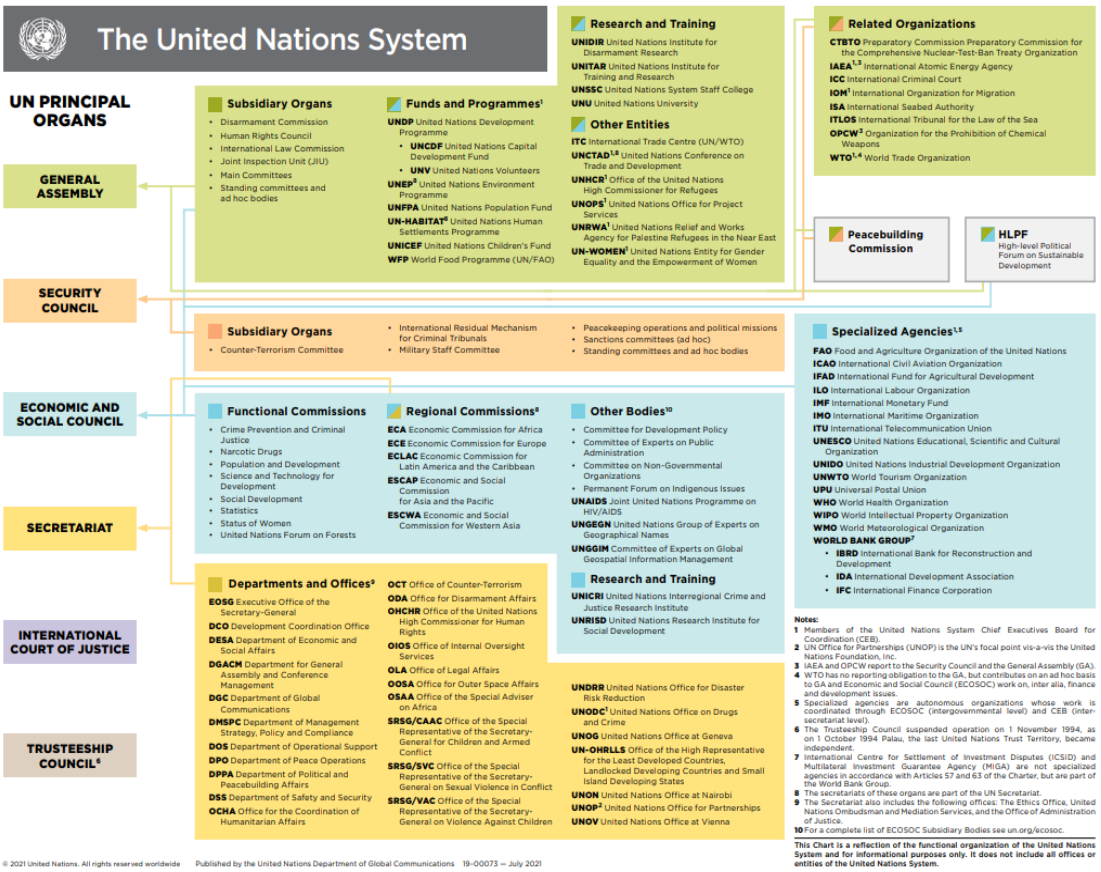
Table of Contents

Introduction: Committee Overview

To start the work within the Council, this part will give an introduction into the structure and working procedures.

The Economic and Social Council (following: ECOSOC) was founded as one of the United Nations (UN) main organs in 1945 with the signing of the Charter of the United Nations (UN-Charter). In this document the rules especially concerning ECOSOC can be found in Chapter X of the UN-Charter (Articles 61 to 72). However, for the purpose of the Council's work one must have a look into **Article 55** in Chapter IX of the Charter ("International and Social Cooperation"). According to this Article the goal of the United Nations' Economic and Social Cooperation is the "**creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations** …" which includes for example, **the promotion of: a higher standard of living (Art. 55 a.); international economic, health and social solutions (Art. 55 b); and universal moral values (Art.55 c**.). These basic values are linked to ECOSOC by the provisions in Art. 57 and Art. 60 of the Charter. First Art. 57 (1) links specialized agencies, which are established to work towards the aspirations formulated in Art. 55 to the UN and thus ECOSOC. Secondly **Art. 60** states that it is the GA´s and ("**under the authority of the General Assembly**") ECOSOC´s task to fulfill the ideals stated in Art.55 and that the powers and functions given to the Council are to serve that task.



So, let's have a look at what the Council's powers and functions are, how it is structured and how it works. Again, we start by having a look into the Charter.

The **Xth Chapter of the UN-Charter** is dedicated to the Economic and Social Council. In Chapter X the **Articles 62-66** are headlined as "function and powers". As the purpose of the UN´s international and social cooperation is very broad, so is the array of tasks the ECOSOC deals with. Within the scope of its activities are for example**: making or initiating of reports (Art.62 (1)), making recommendations to the GA and specialized agencies (Art.62(1)), preparation of draft resolutions within its competence (Art.62 (3)), coordination of activities of specialized agencies (Art.63 (2)) and other functions may be assigned by the GA ((Art. 66 (3))**. These example provisions show that the Council mostly works as a **connecting organ between the United Nations development ambitions and the specialized agencies**. While doing so it is subject to orders of the GA (see Art.60) and is **not equipped with the ability to impose rules on the Member States like the Security Council**. That means that resolutions by ECOSOC are **not binding** on the Member States. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the organ is unimportant. Since it takes the **leading role in coordinating the UN´s development efforts** and the **implementation of projects** as well as the **coordination with specialized agencies** in all kinds of fields one could say The ECOSOC forms the torso of which the General Assembly is the head. This highlighted position also gets clear when taking a look at the organigram of the UN and its specialized agencies (see above).

Having now assessed the functions and powers it is vital now to have a look at the structure of the Council. According to Art. 61 (1), (2) the ECOSOC consists of **54 United Nations member states elected by the General Assembly** for **overlapping terms of three years** with **each member having one representative** (Art.61 (4)). Overlapping means that each year for some members their three-year term ends and new members get elected. However, member states can also **try to get reelected**. This way the economically more powerful nations like India, the USA, Germany, or China are almost constantly represented in ECOSOC. The election itself is based on geographic/regional groups to make sure that many regions are represented. The regional distribution is:

- Africa: 14

- Asia-Pacific: 11
- Eastern Europe: 6
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 10
- Western Europe and other groups: 13

(A list of the current Member States can be found in the Annex)

According to Rule 1 of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) the Member States are to meet two times a year for managing sessions. Once for an **organizational and once for a substantive session**. In practice these organizational meetings became a short briefing at the beginning of the substantive annual sessions which are convened in mid-July. The **organizational session mainly deals with different administrative aspects** like the election of the Bureau or the setting of the agenda. The **substantive session is then about the agenda topics**. This will also be the kind of session held in this Model UN. In rare cases the Council can meet for Special Sessions (Rule 4 RoP). To this end the Council must have decided upon it (Rule 4 a.) or the majority of Members concur with the request (Rule 4 b.). Furthermore, the Security Council and the General Assembly can request a session (Rule 4 c.). Apart from these sessions from the Member States there are also various subsidiary bodies holding sessions during the year (cycle). You can find a detailed list in the ECOSOC System Chart above. However, the Model United Nations will cover a governmental substantive session which means that this introduction stays limited to the governmental part. But it can be very helpful to also expand research also on these organs since all of them are part of ECOSOC. On the topic of governmental bodies, the Regional Commissions must be mentioned. The Regional Commissions are composed of Member States from the respective area (for example: Africa) or those who have a "territorial responsibilities" in the region (for example: in the 1950s European colonial powers) and are tasked to act as link between the regions and ECOSOC. That means that they, for example, assist the Council in "discharging its functions" in the region or "initiate and participate" in measures towards the development of the region or benefitting projects. The commissional regions are the same as the representational ones, so there are five in total.

Additionally to the various types of bodies the ECOSOC system consists of, there is also the **administrative body called the Bureau**, which is in charge of **proposing the agenda, drawing up a programme of work, organizing the sessions and the day-to-day management**. The members of the bureau are elected by the Council with consideration of **each regional group (see above) being represented**. Headed is the Bureau in line with the UN-Charter Art. 72 (1) by the President. The **powers of the president are very broad** in its range reaching from opening and closing of meetings to being a connection to the other UN organs and bodies. The presidency rotates between the regional groups. Supported is the president by the Vice-Presidents of which each hold special responsibilities (2022/200A; for last adoption). While the President chairs the main forums (like the HLPF), the vice-chairs mostly chair the different ECOSOC segments. The Bureau also receives help from the UN Secretariat, which mainly helps with transfer of information between ECOSOC and Member States as well as with the drawing up a draft programme of work. Procedural and technical support is offered through the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) and substantive support through the Department of Economic and social Affairs (DESA).

For reference you can find two example resolutions as well as a link to the ECOSOC Handbook published by the Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland in the annex.

Topic Overview

Water is at the core for every sustainable development and the problems surrounding water are complex. For several years, the **UN has advocated for the global right for water and sanitation.** Since July 2010 the access to water and sanitation (about 50 to 100 liters of water per person per day) is **considered a human right** by the General Assembly (A/RES/64/292) and its importance was emphasized once again in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared vision for global peace and prosperity. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries for global partnership.[1] Especially SDG 6 ("Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all") emphasizes the ambitions of equal and fair access to water. Over various decades and conferences such as the United Nations Water Conference (1977), the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990), the Earth Summit (1992), the Water for Life International Decade for Action 2005-2015 and most recently the developments in light of the 2030 Agenda, the UN put a strong focus on the question how to guarantee fair and equal access to water for everyone.[2] Sustainable development is composed of several different but interdependent aspects and in order to achieve the high goals set in the 2030 Agenda, these goals must be addressed in a consolidated and interdisciplinary manner. Accordingly, our ECOSOC debate aims to **combine questions around the nexus of sustainable freshwater management and global peace while also considering the impacts and management of climate change (SDGs 6, 13, 16).**

Historically, a great amount of conflicts can be traced back to the **struggle over natural resources,** including water. Since water is the basis of all life, it is not surprising that most of the world's population has settled along coasts, rivers, lakes or other bodies of water. Although the earth is called the blue planet, its natural resources are scarce and so are freshwater resources. Especially due to the effects of climate change, we are experiencing a critical intensification of local and regional water shortages worldwide. A shortage of fresh water can lead not only to conflicts between regional communities but also to major escalation between states. Not only for the sake of the dignity and the right to water of each individual, but also for the long-term preservation of peace and prevention of conflicts, a sustainable and above all fair management of freshwater resources is therefore an indispensable factor in the context of the Agenda 2030.

The **Water Convention (1992) and Watercourses Convention (1997) are the two United Nations global conventions** that consolidate the principles and rules that underpin contemporary

[1] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Goals | History". Accessed June 07, 2022. https://sdgs.un.org/goals

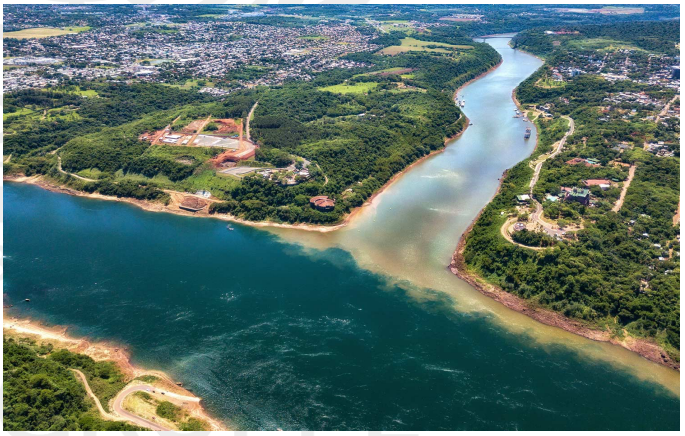
[2] UN. "Global Issues | Water". Accessed May 05, 2022. https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water

international water laws. Both conventions do not replace specific bi- or multilateral agreements on transboundary water, however, they support the establishment and implementation of such agreements and thus call for a reasonable and fair management of such waters, prevention of causing harm and cooperation between states.[3] Addressing the complex issue of sustainable management of freshwater resources and developing global guidelines on that matter while keeping in mind underlying drivers of conflict and catalyst effects of climate change will be the main challenge during this session of the Economic and Social Council Plenary.

Challenges Influencing the Fair and Sustainable Distribution of Water

The following part will explain some factors that have a strong external impact and can cause pressure on regions and communities, thus working against an equal and fair distribution of water. The effects and mechanisms described below are of very different nature. A direct lack of water can be a possible source of conflict, or disagreement over the sustainable and equitable management of existing water resources in connection with its economic use.

Water Scarcity and Transboundary Waters



Tríplice Fronteira, where the three borders of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil converge, separated by the Iguazú and Paraná Rivers. Image by Jan Schneckenhaus

Transboundary waters are aquifers, lake and river basins shared by two or more countries and support the lives and livelihoods of vast numbers of people across the world. In an era of increasing water stress, managing these resources is vital to promoting peaceful cooperation and sustainable development. Depleted and degraded transboundary water supplies have the potential to cause social unrest and spark conflict within and between countries. To deal with the impacts of climate change combined with the demands of increasing populations and economic growth requires a supranational, integrated approach to transboundary water resource management based on legal and institutional frameworks and shared benefits and costs.[4]

[3] UN WATER. "The United Nations global water conventions: Fostering sustainable development and peace", 2020. Accessed May 05, 2022. https://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2021/01/UN-Water_Policy_Brief_United_Nations_Global_Water_Conventions.pdf

[4] UN-Water. "Transboundary Waters." *UN-Water* (blog). Accessed April 12, 2022. https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/transboundary-waters/.

The 263 transboundary lake and river basins cover almost half the Earth's surface. 145 states have territory in these basins, and 30 countries lie entirely within them. Cooperation is essential, especially in areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and where water is already scarce.

On the other side, overexploitation of lakes, rivers and aquifers can jeopardize these ecosystem services and have dire consequences for the reliability and sustainability of water supplies, which can cause international tension if those impacts are felt more keenly on the other side of a border.

However, even an ostensibly positive action can have a negative reaction. For instance, a unilateral move by one country to adapt to climate change by building a dam could drastically reduce a river's flow downstream in another country.

Examples of Transboundary Waters:

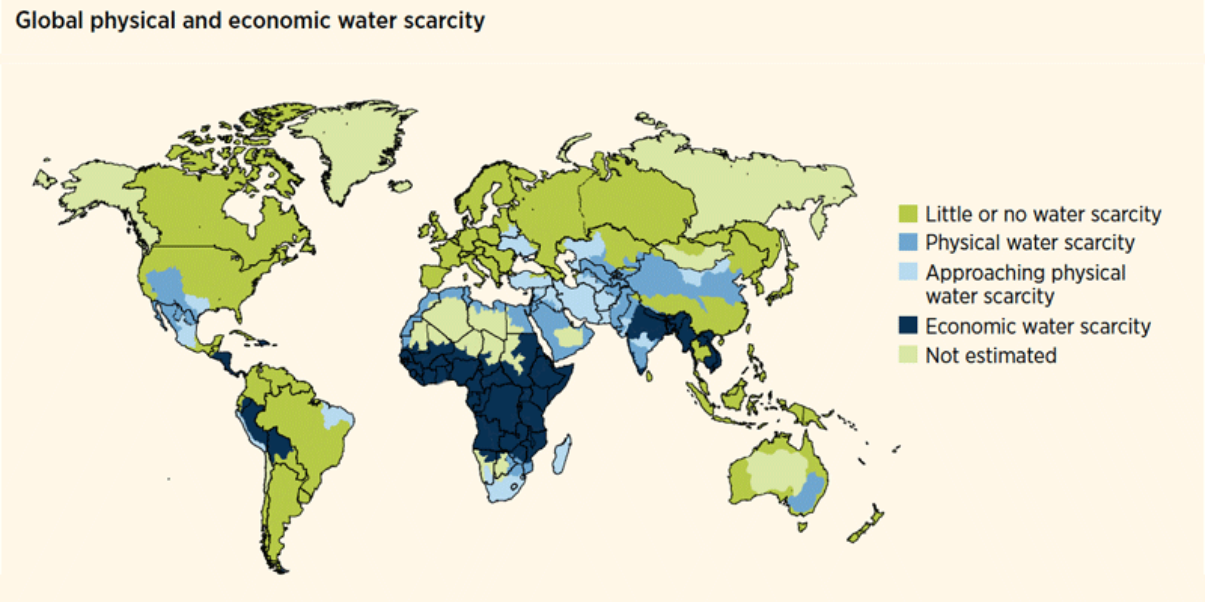
- Greek-Albanian Waters
- Bulgaria-Greece
- Kazakhstan-Russia
- Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran
- India-China
- Nigeria-Mali-Niger
- Bolivia-Chile-Peru
- Israel-Palestine-Jordan
- Algeria-Libya-Tunisia
- Mexico-USA

File photo of Three Gorges Dam in China's Hubei, world's biggest hydropower project (Photo Credits: AP)

Water scarcity can be caused by physical shortage, or scarcity in access due to the failure of institutions to ensure a regular supply or due to a lack of adequate infrastructure.[5] Water scarcity is both a natural and a human-made phenomenon. There is enough freshwater on the planet for seven billion people but it is **distributed unevenly** and too much of it is wasted, polluted and unsustainably managed, i.e. through agriculture or unsustainable waste management.[6]

It has various causes, most of which are capable of being remedied or alleviated. However, scarcity often has its roots in water shortage, and it is in the regions affected by droughts and wide climate variability, combined with population growth and economic development, that the problems of water scarcity are most acute.

[5] UN-Water. "Scarcity." *UN-Water* (blog). Accessed April 12, 2022. https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/scarcity/.
[6] "International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015. Focus Areas: Water Scarcity." Accessed April 12, 2022. https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.shtml.



World Water Development Report 4. World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), March 2012.

Most countries in the Near East and North Africa suffer from acute water scarcity, as do countries such as Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, and large parts of China and India. Irrigated agriculture, which represents the bulk of the demand for water in these countries, is also usually the first sector affected by water shortage and increased scarcity, resulting in a decreased capacity to maintain per capita food production while meeting water needs for domestic, industrial and environmental purposes. In order to sustain their needs, these countries need to focus on the efficient use of all water sources (groundwater, surface water and rainfall) and on water allocation strategies that maximize the economic and social returns to limited water resources, and at the same time enhance the water productivity of all sectors. In this endeavor, there needs to be a special focus on issues relating to equity in access to water and on the social impacts of water allocation policies.

In most countries, the **agriculture sector** is the predominant consumer of water. Historically, large-scale water development projects have played a major role in alleviating poverty by providing food security, protection from flooding and drought, and expanded opportunities for employment. However, at the same time, poor communities have tended to suffer the greatest **health burden** from inadequate water supplies and, as result of poor health, have been unable to escape from the cycle of poverty and disease. Thus, growing scarcity and competition for water stand as a major threat to future advances in poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas. In some regions, increasing numbers of the rural poor are coming to see access to water for food production, livestock and domestic purposes as more critical than access to primary health care and education. It is important to mention that those inequalities can be observed between countries, but also between different communities of the same country. Especially indigenous populations are oftentimes not considered in policy making, but carry the consequences disproportionally. [7]

[7] UN-Water Thematic Initiatives. “Coping with Water Scarcity,” 2006. https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/2006_unwater_coping_with_water_scarcity_eng.pdf.

Water Privatization

The provision of water and sanitation services has been a responsibility primarily undertaken by governments and the public entities under the government's control. However, since the 1980s, privatization has started to expand, actively promoted by international financial institutions. Water privatization refers to all ways public authorities delegate service provision to private companies.

https://file.ejatlas.org/img/Conflict/528/ghanawater.jpg

The delegation of public services has been justified through arguments, such as the **superior performance** of the private sector and the failure of the public sector to provide adequate services due to a combination of **inefficiency, corruption and weak accountability**. Conversely, and ironically, periodic crises challenging the social stability of economies have called the state back to provide services and protect those in the most vulnerable situations. The COVID-19 pandemic, which kicked-off in the beginning of 2020, has been an emblematic situation, showing the need for state intervention in the water sector to alleviate the burden on vulnerable populations and securing their right to water by suspending payments of water bills, temporarily prohibiting disconnections and reconnecting people to services in order to ensure sufficient water for handwashing.

In many States, the pendulum of service provision swung back into public hands. Between 2000 and 2019, at least 311 cases of de-privatization occurred worldwide, despite major opposition by the companies. A prominent remunicipalisation case occurred in Paris, where city authorities chose not to renew contracts with Veolia and Suez owing to concerns about rising tariffs and a lack of transparency and accountability. Private companies tend to implement a policy of disconnecting users who are unable to pay their bills, as in France. Similarly, the Mexican provider Aguas de Saltillo dramatically increased the number of disconnections and introduced a reconnection fee. In the United States, public providers are generally less strict about cutting off water, oftentimes not applying regulations that allow disconnections, even if they could.

Power asymmetry between corporations and local authorities might result in a conflict of interest and open the door for the excessive influence of corporate lobbying in the regulation of what should be a social and cultural good rather than an economic good. Evidence suggests that privatization is not a panacea for the improvement and expansion of services. Tensions between the economic interests of companies and the social outcomes of the services often favor the former.

In Cochabamba, Plurinational State of Bolivia, shortly after privatization, prices increased on average by 43 per cent. In addition, some findings indicating that, in countries where private service provision

prevails, such as France, there is no price difference regardless of the management scheme, must be cautiously interpreted.[8]

Energy through Water

Challenges and possibilities

Even though water and energy scarcity are a reality for millions of people worldwide, it is estimated by the EIA (2010) that the global energy demands will have risen by 50% from 2007 to 2035*. It is therefore of utmost importance that there are global and national efforts to implement ways of producing renewable energy. Water and energy are connected and interdependent. Energy is necessary to make water resources available for human use for example through pumping, transportation, treatment, and desalination. However, water is also indispensable to produce energy. The extraction of raw materials, cooling thermal processes, cleaning processes, cultivation of crops for biofuels, and powering turbines are all dependent on water. Considering this and the fact that global warming affects both the water and the energy sectors by "disrupting weather patterns, leading to extreme weather events, unpredictable water availability, exacerbating water scarcity and contaminating water supplies"[9] it is relevant to address the challenges of **guaranteeing access to water** and of **creating energy sustainably** with coordinated efforts.

Despite the urgency of the issue, nations should implement **long term solutions** to address the growing energy demand and to guarantee access to water. Those solutions rely upon a sustainable mix of both water and energy resources and are a condition for the construction of a sustainable future. When it comes to strategies to deal with this challenge, nations need to take into consideration environmental and social aspects. The first challenge is the increasing water and energy demand worldwide. The competition for water leads to a rise in energy demand for pumping more water, which is often done in a less sustainable way. Other challenges are guaranteeing good quality water, making both water and energy accessible in a sustainable way and dealing with the impacts of global warming.

Despite the obstacles to guarantee access to water and energy on a global scale there are useful tools for improving the current situation[10]. In the area of **public policy and governance** improvements can be made, for example, by creating and promoting public awareness or by making improvements in governance through transparency and accountability. **Economic and financial instruments** such as the promotion of public and private partnerships or improvements of water and energy regulatory bodies are other helpful tools to address the issue. And at last, a**ssessment tools**

[8] OHCHR. "OHCHR | Privatization and the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation: Report." Accessed April 12, 2022. https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2020/privatization-and-human-rights-water-and-sanitation-report.

[9] Unicef "Water and the global climate crisis: 10 things you should know", 2022 Accessed June 8,2022 https://www.unicef.org/stories/water-and-climate-change-10-things-you-should-know

[10] UN Water for Life Decade | "Water and Energy: Information brief" Accessed June 8 2022 https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/01_2014_water_and_energy.pdf

and decision support systems are also considered as important strategies to ensure sufficient and sustainable access to water and energy.

Water as an energy source

The flow of water for itself is able to produce energy and therefore **hydropower**[11]. It is an important source of energy worldwide that can be considered as a renewable energy form. This, however, is controversial, since to maximize the energy production, hydropower often relies on **impoundment dams**, which are water reservoirs that guarantee the production of energy. In that way hydropower, at least in its traditional form, is more dependable than solar or wind energy. However, there are some environmental issues with impoundment dams. Firstly for their construction a large area needs to be flooded. The consequences are social, when people have to be displaced because the geography of the region is fully changed and the vegetation rottens due to the water, causing large amounts of methane emissions. Secondly, impoundment dams change a whole ecosystem, restricting for example the migration of fish.

On the one hand, those issues made hydropower less and less attractive as an alternative form of r**enewable energy** and the United States, for example, have even deactivated and destroyed some of their impoundment dams. On the other hand, those dams have emissions comparable to natural occurring lakes after their construction and are paramount for the energy production of continental sized countries such as China and Brazil. In addition to that it is important to point out that reservoirs with lower temperatures and higher oxygen levels produce less methane, which means that every dam has a different ecological impact. Another form of hydropower is the **"run of the river"** form of producing energy, in which there is no dam, and the energy is produced by the natural flow of the river. The downside is that rivers are dependent on rainfall, making this form of hydropower a seasonal and not dependable power source. At last there is the **"pumped- storage"** form of hydropower, in which water is pumped depending on the power demands. It is not as efficient because it is energy intensive and is therefore best combined with other forms of renewable energy sources.

Hydropower is, however, not applicable everywhere in the world because of water availability, but is still a controversial solution nowadays even where it is an implementable solution. Political actors debate if it is an option for a more sustainable future or if its negative environmental impacts are too pronounced for hydropower to be considered as a green alternative. In addition to that, independent and uncoordinated initiatives on such a sensitive issue bear a great potential for conflict. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Ehtiopia is a prominent example of how the use of water as a source of energy can trigger tensions between states and lay the roots for potential larger conflicts if such disagreements are not jointly resolved[12].

[11]International Hydropower Association | " Facts about hydropower" Accessed June 8 2022 https://www.hydropower.org/iha/discover-facts-about-hydropower

[12] GIGA Focus Africa "The Political Deadlock on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam", 2021 Accessed June 8 2022 https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/the-political-deadlock-on-the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam

Small Island Developing States and Freshwater Resilience

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are **highly affected by climate change**. The changes induced by climate change do not only lead to the potential threat for the island masses themselves but also can SIDS face short-term problems in fresh water supply. 71% of SIDS face a **risk of water shortage** and for those SIDS with the lowest altitude the number goes up to 91%. The 2014 SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway already focused attention on future SIDS issues, including the effects of climate change and access to fresh water and sanitation. During the last High Level Mid-Term Review of the Samoa Guidelines in 2019 the importance of the issue was emphasized by a high-level meeting solely focusing on the specific needs and challenges of SIDS regarding water quality and water availability.[13]

Islanders in Tuvalu on the daily trek to get water. Credit: Tuvalu High Commissioner in Suva, H.E. Aunese Makoi Simati
https://www.unocha.org/story/pacific-islands-emergency-response-water-crisis

The development and management of freshwater resources on SIDS is highly complicated. **Groundwater occurrences are very limited** and highly dependent on regular recharge events.[14] Yet, rainfall is highly irregular in space and time in almost all SIDS. The scarce freshwater resources are further endangered by an increase of natural disasters. More frequent floods lead to **increased saltwater intrusions** of the limited reservoirs and the growing intensity and regularity of droughts cause an **increasing risk of salinization** of groundwater. It can be positively noted that since 2000, almost all SIDS have had access to improved drinking water and sanitation. Nevertheless, as of 2019, about 30% of SIDS had only access to improved sanitation that separates human waste from human contact. Further amplifying the already existing challenges, almost all SIDS have experienced an increase in population (84%) and have an additional increase in consumption due to the ever-growing tourism.[15]

In 2019 only 76% of urban and 18% of rural households on the Solomon Islands had access to basic sanitation. In addition, the country is affected by inadequate drainage systems and therefore exposed to severe pollution of freshwater resources. A project initiated by the World Bank in 2019, the Solomon Islands Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project, was designed to support appropriate water management systems in the Solomons Islands.[16] Also Mauritius, a country with a

[13] UNESCO. "Small islands: meeting the challenges of freshwater resilience." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://en.unesco.org/news/small-islands-meeting-challenges-freshwater-resilience
[14] UN-IGRAC. "Small Island Developing States (SIDS)." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://www.un-igrac.org/areas-expertise/small-island-developing-states-sids
[15] Gheuens, J.; Nagabhatla, N.; Perera, E.D.P. "Disaster-Risk, Water Security Challenges and Strategies in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)." Water 2019, 11, 637. Accessed April 20, 2022. https://inweh.unu.edu/disaster-risk-water-security-challenges-and-strategies-in-small-island-developing-states-sids/
[16] World Bank. "Press Release | Safer, Cleaner Water and Sanitation for Solomon Islanders." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/05/16/safer-cleaner-water-and-sanitation-for-solomon-islanders

relatively high standard of living, is facing problems in water management: 20% of the population is exposed to the suffering of recurrent intermittent water supply. During the dry season this number can rise up to 75%. In 2016 the World Bank agreed on supporting water reform measures combining technical and financial assistance in order to oppose water scarcity in light of climate change.[17] The challenges SIDS are facing have already been recognized and addressed by the UN. Nevertheless, SIDS are **far from holding a secure freshwater supply** for the future and must not be forgotten in the development of future strategies on global water management. In this debate, Member States must be aware that inadequate freshwater access for peripheral states, including SIDS, can lead to increased migration and thus potential for conflict and tensions between communities.

Emergence of International Conflicts over Water - Challenges of Interstate Conflict Management

The effects of water scarcity described in the previous sections can fuel different conflict dynamics. The following part refers to the challenges of interstate conflict management in regard to the management of transboundary freshwater cooperation.

Transboundary freshwater cooperation is an indispensable factor for both sustainable development as well as long lasting peace and stability. They create **social economic, environmental and political interdependencies** that require close cooperation in order to counter the emergence of interstate tensions and conflicts.[18] Interstate conflicts describe in general terms a conflict between two or more states of the international system, who use their respective national forces and resources in the conflict.[19] The underlying factors of tensions between states are diverse and can include for instance water scarcity, the construction of dams, abstraction of water, chronic or accidental pollution as well as the neglect or non-acceptance of existing treaties.[20]

The term conflict in this regard refers not exclusively to violent disputes, but also to the general instability and deterioration of political relations between states. In almost all regions of the world, one can witness **political tensions related to water**. Mexico and the United States of America have a long history in transboundary water cooperation. Although both governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2000 emphasizing a joint approach addressing transboundary

[17] World Bank. "World Bank, Government of Mauritius Sign Advisory Agreement to Support Water Sector Reforms." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/02/29/world-bank-government-of-mauritius-sign-advisory-agreement-to-support-water-sector-reforms

[18] UNESCO. " Clean Water and Sanitation: Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation. Global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2 2018." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265516

[19] Uppsala Conflict Data Program. "UCDP Definitions". Accessed June 07, 2022. https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#tocjump_21710266650284282_10

[20] UN Water. "Transboundary Waters: Sharing Benefits, Sharing Responsibilities." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2017/05/UNW_TRANSBOUNDARY.pdf

water problems,[21] political tensions have been rising and are expected to continue in light of increasing intensity of droughts and other effects of climate change.[22] In Asia, the water flows of the Himalayas are an indispensable resource for China and India. The possible construction of dams threatens stability in the border region due to feared water scarcity, still there is no water-sharing agreement or joint commission in place managing the shared resources. While water alone rarely is the sole cause of conflict, however, it can be a catalyst for greater escalation.[23] The two cases mentioned are only exemplary among a multitude of other confrontations worldwide with potential for continued or even increased conflict. Those can serve as examples in the discussion if they are mentioned appropriately and neutrally, but they must not be part of guidelines or a framework to be discussed and created. It is imperative to **perpetuate a holistic view** that applies to all countries.

The 9th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) in September 2021 emphasized the necessity of close cooperation in regard to transboundary waters to **cultivate peace and trust** (emphasized by the SDGs under target 6.5: Water resources management). To this end it is crucial to address the root causes of conflict related to water at an early stage. Insufficient water cooperation can result in significant risks of tensions, however, a close cooperation can be a chance to establish good neighborly relations and lasting peace. The Water Convention from 1992 is an **already established framework** that provides principles of cooperation and can serve as a legal vehicle to promote peace. It was established as a pan-European framework that enjoys international recognition and validity since 2016. Yet, only 24 out of 153 countries sharing transboundary water have operational agreements. Secretary General António Guterres emphasized that the Water Convention would be a powerful tool to advance cooperation, prevent conflicts and build resilience. Guterres consequently urges for "greater commitment, courage and solidarity to move forward together" [24]

The above examples are only illustrative of the political tensions that can arise over the issue of equal and fair management of transnational freshwater reserves. Further, the external factors described in the first part of the Study Guide (climate change, drought, economic reasons) must be always considered in a broader context as additional catalysts that create an extended potential for conflict.

Guidelines for the Outcome Document

[21] UN. "Transboundary cooperation between Mexico and the United States." Accessed April 23, 2022. https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/water_cooperation_2013/mexico_usa_case.shtml
[22] Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Not dried up: US-Mexico water cooperation." Accessed April 25, 2022.https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/10/26/not-dried-up-us-mexico-water-cooperation/
[23] Ho, Dr. Selina. "The China-India Water Dispute - The Potential for Escalation." in Indo-Pacific Perspectives. Accessed April 23, 2022. https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JIPA/IndoPacificPerspectives/June%202021/06%20Ho.pdf
[24] UNECE. "Press Release | Water cooperation in transboundary basins is a major means of achieving peace." Accessed April 20, 2022. https://unece.org/climate-change/press/water-cooperation-transboundary-basins-major-means-achieving-peace

Fair and equal access to water is a global and fundamental issue with impacts on various dimensions, especially in regard to the dynamic developments of climate change and in light of geopolitical interests. ECOSOC has repeatedly taken on a regulatory role in recent decades in order to set fair standards for the distribution of water. However, the not declining relevance calls for further regulatory measures. At the micro level, the primary concern is respect for human dignity and the indispensable human right of access to clean water and sanitation. At the macro level, the geopolitical particularities and importance must be taken into account. Access to water has always been a potential source of tensions and will most likely continue to be a fundamental driver of conflict in the future. External factors such as the effects of climate change or the industrial use of water (see for instance privatization and water as a source of energy) can have an additional catalytic effect, making conflicts over limited freshwater resources more likely in an ever-growing world. The challenge for ECOSOC is to find a holistic approach that will attempt to call upon the Member States of the United Nations to work together to minimize the potential for future conflict around water while considering the impacts of climate change. Enhanced cooperation between Member States in equal and fair freshwater management, especially focussing on transboundary waters, will be the key for the successful development and implementation of global guidelines. In doing so, it is imperative to consider the aforementioned catalysts with their potential impacts on the geopolitical aspects of global peace and security in a comprehensive picture.

In considering what actions can be taken by the international community and Member States to ensure universal access to water, delegates should consider the following questions:

- To what extent have past frameworks been implemented, and what challenges remain?
- Which bodies and programs in the UN system can be best utilized to increase transboundary cooperation on water?
- To what extent has your Member State and region ensured equal and fair access to water and how does that influence the stability of your Member State and region?
- What are the main obstacles for your Member State and region in achieving equal and fair access to water? How do those insecurities in water access might trigger or drive tensions and conflicts in the future?
- What practices have been successful in transboundary water cooperation?
- How can the different impacts of the catalysts such as climate change and the economical reasons mentioned be anticipated to prevent the emergence of conflicts?

When writing the position papers, each delegate should take the role of their country to be represented during the session and clarify the individual position of the country. In the position paper the country- and region-specific problems and challenges should be made clear and elaborated. Further, initial approaches to solutions should be discussed, which can serve as a basis for the debate during the conference. The position papers are a special aspect of every MUN conference, which should help the delegates to quickly get an impression of the positions of the different participating countries.

When writing the resolution during the session, you should pay attention to the following formalities: The resolution consists of two parts. In the first part, you should refer to the general political context of the debate by means of so-called preambular clauses. It is recommended to refer

to existing UN resolutions and international guidelines that have a regulatory character. In the second part of the resolution, the so-called operative clauses should formulate your concrete proposals for solutions. It is advisable to build on existing solutions and to expand them in a targeted manner. For a better understanding of the structure of resolutions, it helps to take a look at some UN resolutions as examples.

Annex

1. List of current ECOSOC Member States:

COUNTRY	END OF TERM
Afghanistan	2024
Argentina	2023
Austria	2023
Bangladesh	2022
Belgium	2024
Belize	2024
Benin	2022
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (Vice-President)	2023
Botswana (President)	2022
Bulgaria (Vice-President)	2023
Canada	2024
Chile	2024
China	2022
Colombia	2022

Congo	2022
Côte d'Ivoire	2024
Croatia	2024
Czechia	2024
Denmark	2022
Eswatini	2024
Finland (Vice-President)	2022
France	2023
Gabon	2022
Greece	2022
Guatemala	2023
India	2024
Indonesia	2023
Israel	2023
Italy	2024
Japan	2023
Kazakhstan	2024
Latvia	2022
Liberia	2023
Libya	2023
Madagascar	2023
Mauritius	2024
Mexico	2023

Montenegro	2022
New Zealand	2022
Nicaragua	2022
Nigeria	2023
Oman	2024
Panama	2022
Peru	2024
Portugal	2023
Republic of Korea	2022
Russian Federation	2022
Solomon Islands	2023
Thailand (Vice-President)	2022
Tunisia	2024
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2023
United Republic of Tanzania	2024
United States of America	2024
Zimbabwe	2023

2. The ECOSOC Handbook:
   https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2022doc/ecosoc-handbook.pdf

3. Example Resolutions:
   https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2022/1
   (Working arrangements for the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council)
   https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2021/4

(Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan)

other Resolutions can be found at: https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/documents/resolutions

4. Further Reading on “United Nations global water conventions: Fostering sustainable development and peace”: https://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2021/01/UN-Water_Policy_Brief_United_Nations_Global_Water_Conventions.pdf