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United Nations Development Programme Background Guide 2024

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2024 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Ruth Spickermann (Session 1) and Director Johannes Schmidl (Session 2). Ruth is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, Sociology, and Law at the University of Erfurt, Germany. Johannes Schmidl studies English, political science, and philosophy in a teacher degree course at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich.

A portion of these materials was authored by Joshua Andersen, Director of Conference Management, and Kimberly Sánchez, Assistant Director of Conference Management. Joshua Andersen studied Political Economy at the College of Idaho and holds a broad interest in international politics and law. Kimberly Sánchez holds a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics and Language Science with a specialization in translation and currently works for one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in Italy. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Vikram Sakkia (Session 1) and Christopher Duggan (Session 2).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Improving Gender Equality to Promote Economic Development
2. Sustainable Energy for Development

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2023 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Ruth Spickermann, Director
Session 1

Johannes Schmidl, Director
Session 2



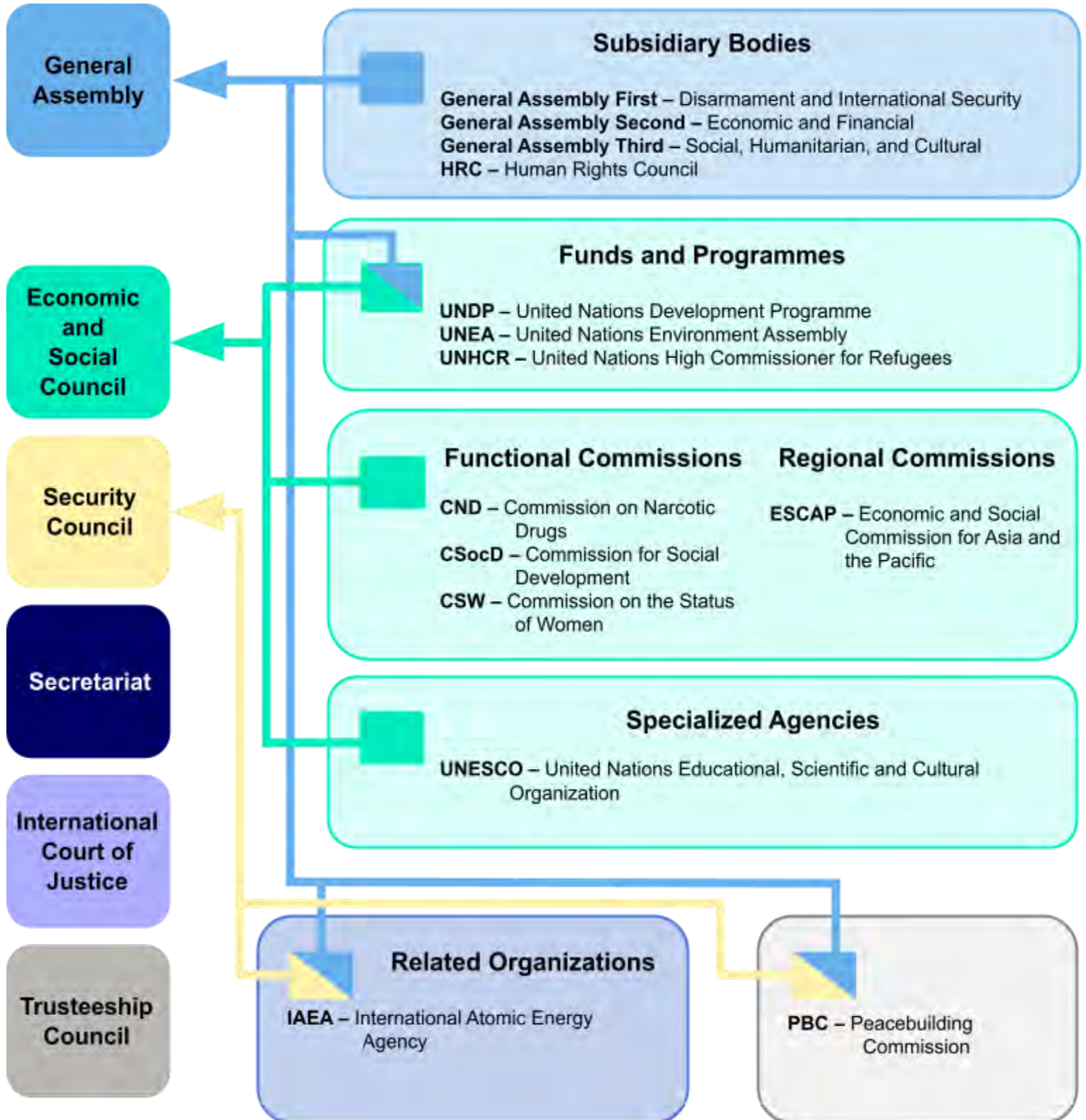
Table of Contents

United Nations System at NMUN·NY	4
Committee Overview	5
Introduction.....	5
Mandate, Functions, and Powers.....	5
Governance, Funding, and Structure.....	6
1. Improving Gender Equality to Promote Economic Development	9
Introduction.....	9
International and Regional Framework.....	10
Role of the International System.....	11
COVID-19 and Gender Equality in the Evolving World of Work.....	13
Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Rural Areas to Drive Economic Development.....	15
Conclusion.....	16
Further Research.....	17
2. Sustainable Energy for Development	23
Introduction.....	23
International and Regional Framework.....	24
Role of the International System.....	24
Energy Access through Sustainable Energy Transition: Obstacles and Opportunities.....	27
Fighting the Climate Crisis through Sustainable Energy.....	28
Conclusion.....	30
Further Research.....	30



United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) draws its purpose from Article 55 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), which outlines that the organization should promote “higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development.”¹ UNDP is the leading United Nations agency on sustainable development and assists Member States with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).²

NMUN simulates the **Executive Board** in terms of composition and size; however, delegates are not limited to the strict mandate of the Executive Board. For the purposes of NMUN·NY, the committee can make programmatic and policy decisions on issues within the mandate of UNDP in line with the overall function of the organization.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

As the lead United Nations agency on international development, UNDP’s core mandate is to “end poverty, build democratic governance, rule of law, and inclusive institutions.”³ As articulated in its *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* (2021), UNDP now structures its work through a “3 x 6 x 3” framework, comprised of three areas of focus, six signature solutions it can provide to partners, and three enablers to allow these solutions to be effective.⁴ The areas of focus are structural transformation, leaving no one behind, and resilience.⁵ Its signature solutions are poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy, and gender equality.⁶ These are predicated on three enablers, which are development financing, strategic innovation, and digitalization.⁷

While the following list is not exhaustive, UNDP’s mandate can be summarized as:

- **UNDP will generally:** support country-led efforts to achieve the SDGs with its projects and programs; work with governments to identify funding, investment, and partnership opportunities for programs focused on development; support Member States to develop their governance structures, institutional capacities, and legislative approaches; provide data and analysis to Member States; develop and foster partnerships between local, national, and international actors; make recommendations to and coordinate with Member States, regional bodies, and other international actors on the achievement of development goals.⁸
- **UNDP will not generally:** direct Member States, non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies, and stakeholders to carry out specific development activities or actions; create new development frameworks or policy that doesn’t align with those adopted by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council.⁹

¹ United Nations Development Programme. *About us*. 2023; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 55.

² United Nations Development Programme. *The SDGs in Action*. 2023; United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2023.

³ United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2023.

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Development Programme Annual Report 2022*. 2023.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*; Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. *UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 (DP/2021/28)*. 2021.

⁹ *Ibid.*



Governance, Funding, and Structure

UNDP reports annually to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹⁰ Its leadership is comprised of an Administrator and an Executive Board.¹¹ The Administrator leads a team of five Regional Bureaus and provides support to other Bureaus, such as the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy and the Crisis Bureau, to carry out UNDP's programs.¹²

The Executive Board oversees all of UNDP's projects, approves budgets, and ensures that projects adapt to changing situations and the unique needs of each Member State.¹³ The Executive Board consists of 36 rotating Member States from five geographic groups: eight from the group of African states, seven from the group of Asian and Pacific states, four from the group of Eastern European states, five from the group of Latin America and the Caribbean states, and 12 from the group of Western European and other States.¹⁴ Generally, Member States of the Executive Board are elected by ECOSOC each year for three-year terms.¹⁵ Only the group of Western European and other States decides on its rotation internally.¹⁶ The Executive Board holds three sessions each year: one annual session and two regular sessions, typically held in New York City.¹⁷

UNDP's work is carried out by its offices in different Member States, which are focused on helping governments develop policies, institutional abilities, leadership skills, and resilience to achieve poverty eradication and reduce inequalities.¹⁸ UNDP also administers and utilizes the United Nations Volunteers program and the United Nations Capital Development Fund.¹⁹ UNDP also works with prominent individuals as Goodwill Ambassadors and Advocates to raise awareness on important global development issues.²⁰

To achieve its mandate, UNDP relies entirely on voluntary contributions from Member States, multilateral organizations, the private sector, and other sources.²¹ In 2022, the total annual contributions to UNDP decreased by 7% to \$4.9 billion from \$5.3 billion the year before.²² The top contributors in 2022 were multilateral organizations and Member State governments.²³

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *Information Note About The Executive Board Of UNDP, UNFPA And UNOPS*. 2023.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² United Nations Development Programme. *Leadership*. 2023; United Nations Development Programme. *2023 Organizational Chart*. 2023.

¹³ United Nations Development Programme. *Information Note About The Executive Board Of UNDP, UNFPA And UNOPS*. 2023; United Nations Development Programme. *Executive Board*. 2023.

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Executive Board*. 2023; United Nations Development Programme. *Members of the Executive Board*. 2023.

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Executive Board*. 2023.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *Reports on Sessions*. 2023.

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2023.

¹⁹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2023-2024*. 2023.

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *Goodwill Ambassadors and Advocates*. 2023.

²¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Funding*. 2023.

²² United Nations Development Programme. *Funding Compendium 2022*. 2023.

²³ Ibid.



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1. Improving Gender Equality to Promote Economic Development

"But, humanity can only be at its best when gender equality becomes a reality for all, everywhere. We must and will make it happen."²⁴

Introduction

As of today, nearly 10% of the global population, 388 million women and 372 million men, live in extreme poverty.²⁵ The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.90 US Dollars per day.²⁶ While poverty and gender equality are global issues that require ongoing actions from each Member State, regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia represent the greatest portions of women and girls living in poverty.²⁷ As an entity within the United Nations system, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works alongside over 170 territories and Member States to eliminate poverty and lessen inequality with sustainable development as a central focus.²⁸ UNDP defines economic development of society as "a multidimensional process, covering economic growth, structural changes in the economy, improvement of conditions and quality of life."²⁹ As described by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), gender equality is "the concept that women and men, girls and boys, have equal conditions, treatment, and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development."³⁰ Working to create an effective metric to discuss gender inequality and development, UNDP introduced the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in the 2010 *Human Development Report*.³¹ The GII uses measures of health, empowerment, and the labor market to assess gender inequality within Member States.³² While progress in these areas has been made, there are still significant gaps in women's economic independence and security.³³

In recent years, the GII has indicated an upward trend toward greater equality.³⁴ However, regionally disaggregated data shows greater gender inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Arab states.³⁵ Gender inequalities were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as women increasingly worked in unpaid care and domestic work as well as other forms of labor in the informal economy.³⁶ According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the informal economy includes any forms of labor or activity that would be considered of market value and would be tax-eligible or contribute to overall gross domestic product (GDP) if they were documented.³⁷ Recognizing that women often working in agricultural

²⁴ International Labour Organization. *ILO Director-General: "Let us invest in women as part of a human-centred recovery."* 2021.

²⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Poverty deepens for women and girls, according to latest projections.* 2022.

²⁶ World Bank Group. *Ending Extreme Poverty.* 2016.

²⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Poverty deepens for women and girls, according to latest projections.* 2022.

²⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *About us.* 2023.

²⁹ United Nations Development Programme et al. *English-Uzbek-Russian glossary on Human Development.* 2013. p. 31.

³⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts.* 2017. p. 4.

³¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Development Index.* N.d; United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2010: The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development.* 2010.

³² United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Inequality Index (GII).* 2023.

³³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2020/3).* 2019. p. 15.

³⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Inequality Index (GII).* 2023.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil.* 2022. p. 14-16.

³⁷ Deléchat et al. International Monetary Fund. *What is the Informal Economy?* 2020.



production and domestic care work face higher levels of inequality, UNDP maintains a primary focus on opportunities and solutions for these women.³⁸ Moving forward, UNDP continues its commitment to counteracting inequality and empowering women by addressing the challenges of economic, social, and environmental conditions for sustainable development.³⁹

International and Regional Framework

One of the most comprehensive frameworks and blueprints for action at the international scale, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995) provides guidance for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls internationally.⁴⁰ It addresses 12 areas of concern with strategic objectives and actions to be taken by relevant stakeholders to empower women.⁴¹ These objectives include promoting women's economic rights, facilitating equal access to resources, and strengthening women's networks.⁴² The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979) is a comprehensive and legally binding document that calls on States parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in economic fields and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the field of employment.⁴³ Article 14 highlights the problems faced by women in rural areas and calls on Member States to ensure the economic rights of rural women.⁴⁴

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and contains the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call upon Member States to take action toward sustainable development, to promote peace and prosperity for people and the planet by 2030.⁴⁵ SDG 1 (no poverty) aims to end extreme poverty and includes targets for ensuring equal access to economic resources and creating gender-sensitive development strategies.⁴⁶ SDG 5 (gender equality) aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and to empower women economically.⁴⁷ This is connected to several other goals, as empowering women helps economic growth and development.⁴⁸ SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), for example, aims to sustain economic growth, achieve full employment, and provide safe working environments for all.⁴⁹ As the United Nations' lead agency on international development, the 2030 Agenda guides the UNDP and defines its goals, and the UNDP supports Member States to achieve the SDGs.⁵⁰

³⁸ Ervin. United Nations Development Programme. *Celebrating Rural Women's Roles in Transforming Food Systems*. 2023.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome*. 2014. p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The Fourth World Conference on Women. *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. 1995. pp. 68, 70, 72.

⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979. p. 3-4.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 4.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The 17 Goals*. N.d.

⁴⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere*. N.d.

⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 18.

⁴⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Goal 5: Gender Equality*. 2023.

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. pp. 19-20.

⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *About us*. 2023; United Nations, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. *UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 (DP/2021/28)*. 2021. p. 4.



The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) was adopted in 1948 and was the first document to define human rights at the global level.⁵¹ Article 2 secures the equal rights of all people, regardless of sex, while Articles 22 and 23 protect the economic rights of people, including the rights to work and equal pay for equal work.⁵² While the UDHR is not legally binding, it has served as a foundation for a great number of human rights treaties and declarations.⁵³ Building on the UDHR, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) contains several significant international provisions for economic, social, and cultural rights.⁵⁴ The ICESCR aims to ensure gender equality, the right to work, and the right to equal pay and equal opportunities.⁵⁵ This international treaty developed several of the rights mentioned in the UDHR and made them legally binding for States parties.⁵⁶

At the regional level, the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003) is a significant legal instrument that provides a framework for comprehensive human rights to women in Africa, a region where 70% of women are not independently financially empowered.⁵⁷ The Protocol covers civil and political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights.⁵⁸ This protocol further calls on Member States to guarantee equal economic opportunities to women and lists actions to ensure these opportunities.⁵⁹ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the *Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region* in 1988, in which Member States committed to promote the participation of women in all areas of society, mentioning economic life as one of these areas.⁶⁰ Additionally, the European Union (EU) established *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan* in 2021, which includes the goal to close gender gaps in employment rate and pay levels, fight gender-based violence, and empower women to take on leadership roles within corporations.⁶¹

Role of the International System

UNDP supports Member States in working towards the SDGs with poverty eradication being at the core of its work.⁶² In the *UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, UNDP addresses the multidimensionality of poverty and commits to an approach that empowers marginalized and excluded populations to escape poverty.⁶³ UNDP works to promote the creation of jobs and social protection with a focus on women, as an especially vulnerable group.⁶⁴ As gender equality is central to the work of UNDP, the *Gender Equality*

⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ United Nations Department of Global Communications. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The Foundation of International Human Rights Law*. N.d.

⁵⁴ United Nations, World Conference on Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁵⁶ United Nations Department of Global Communications. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The Foundation of International Human Rights Law*. N.d.

⁵⁷ AU Echo. 2016: *African Year of Human Rights with a focus on the Rights of Women*. 2016. p. 4; Global Partnership for Education. *One of the greatest threats to Africa's future: gender inequality*. 2019.

⁵⁸ AU Echo. 2016: *African Year of Human Rights with a focus on the Rights of Women*. 2016. p. 4.

⁵⁹ African Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. 2003. p. 14.

⁶⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region Bangkok, Thailand, 5 July 1988*. 2012.

⁶¹ European Commission. *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*. 2021. p. 19.

⁶² United Nations, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. *UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 (DP/2021/28)*. 2021. p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid.



Strategy 2022-2025 was developed to complement the *UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025*.⁶⁵ Within these strategies, UNDP is committed to furthering women's economic empowerment by providing innovative business development services for workers in the informal sector.⁶⁶ In addition, UNDP advocates for female leadership in social and financial services and the reduction of structural barriers that keep women from reaching their full potential.⁶⁷ UNDP has also acknowledged the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing crises and is working to identify to find new methods for achieving gender equality and opportunities for new social contracts.⁶⁸

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is the primary entity within the United Nations for gender equality and the empowerment of women.⁶⁹ UN Women establishes programs that support women in securing decent jobs, accumulating assets, and influencing public policies on growth and development.⁷⁰ UN Women advocates for including unpaid care work in economic measurements and aims to enable people to combine care work with paid employment.⁷¹ UNDP has collaborated with UN Women has worked on projects such as the Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus Programme.⁷² This largely successful collaboration between the two organizations works to enable women to enter the formal labor sector, support the implementation of legislative and policy frameworks, and help the government and public institutions to develop gender-responsive programs, services, and strategies.⁷³

From a development perspective, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) supports developing countries to equally and effectively access the benefits of a globalized economy.⁷⁴ UNCTAD promotes the dialogue on the trade and gender nexus by publishing policy briefs and thematic papers, which draw attention to the role trade has in achieving inclusive development.⁷⁵ Further, UNCTAD conducts studies and projects around the globe to empower women through trade.⁷⁶ Between 2010 and 2014, UNCTAD conducted several case studies to identify how trade can be used as a tool for inclusive development, including women's economic empowerment.⁷⁷ The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which is mandated to promote, dynamize, and accelerate industrial development, recognizes gender equality as an essential part of accelerating industrial and economic development.⁷⁸ UNIDO therefore implements projects like the Rabeha programme in Egypt together with UN Women and regional actors, which supports women running micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises through training and business coaching.⁷⁹

⁶⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 5; United Nations Development Programme. *Goal 5: Gender Equality*. 2023.

⁶⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 19.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 9.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 13; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *About UN Women*. N.d.

⁷⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Economic empowerment*. N.d.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies, and partnerships*. 2023. p. 33.

⁷³ United Nations Development Programme. *Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus*. 2023.

⁷⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *About UNCTAD*. N.d.

⁷⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Global Debate on Gender*. N.d.

⁷⁶ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Trade Policy through a Gender Lens*. N.d.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *Gender equality and women's economic empowerment*. 2023; United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *Our mandate, our vision, our work*. 2023.

⁷⁹ United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *Women entrepreneurs empowered through the Rabeha joint programme*. 2023.



The World Bank Group constitutes one of the largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries around the world and considers women's economic empowerment as crucial for overall economic growth and development.⁸⁰ The World Bank Group has increased its number of operations that are connected to closing gender gaps from 50% in 2017 to 92% in 2022.⁸¹ Additionally, regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank or the Council of Europe Development Bank promote gender equality within their institutions and their projects.⁸² In 2022, the European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank mobilized €500 million for investments in social projects.⁸³ The projects supported by this investment include objectives like gender equality and inclusion of vulnerable groups.⁸⁴ The EU is working towards a gender-equal economy and has several programs to address different aspects of gender inequality within the EU.⁸⁵ Additionally, the EU takes action to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through their external relations and trade policies and works to further women's entrepreneurship and labor market participation in partner countries utilizing programs like the External Investment Plan.⁸⁶ The African Union (AU) has named economic empowerment and financial inclusion as one of the outcomes in its *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*.⁸⁷ The strategy aims to close the employment and pay gap as well as support women to work in agriculture, which is an essential part of African economies.⁸⁸

COVID-19 and Gender Equality in the Evolving World of Work

Women across the globe are unequally represented in the workforce, meaning that a higher percentage of men than women are employed in recognized, taxable occupations.⁸⁹ Referred to as labor force participation rate, this measurement is one of the contributing factors of a Member State's GII value.⁹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic exaggerated the labor force participation divide between men and women.⁹¹ The industries that were most impacted by the pandemic included service sector occupations that often employ a significant number of women, such as tourism and hospitality.⁹² At the onset of the pandemic, women accounted for less than 40% of global employment but represented 54% of all job losses during the pandemic.⁹³ Research also indicates that mothers lost significantly more jobs as compared to fathers or women without children.⁹⁴ With more children at home due to school and childcare facility closures, women increasingly engaged in unpaid care work and informal economic activities.⁹⁵ Under normal circumstances, women perform over three times as much domestic and care work than men, and this number increased significantly during the height of the pandemic.⁹⁶ While not usually accounted for in

⁸⁰ World Bank Group. *Who We Are*. 2023.

⁸¹ World Bank Group. *The World Bank In Gender*. 2023.

⁸² Asian Development Bank. *Gender Equality and Development*. 2023; Council of Europe Development Bank. *Strategic Framework 2023-2027*. 2023. p. 17.

⁸³ Council of Europe Development Bank. *InvestEU: European Commission and Council of Europe Development Bank sign agreement to mobilise €500 million in financing for social investments*. 2022.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ European Commission. *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. 2020. pp. 7-12.

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 17-18.

⁸⁷ African Union. *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*. 2018. p. 27.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp. 27-28.

⁸⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Inequality Index (GII)*. 2023.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 8.

⁹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil*. 2022. p. 15.

⁹³ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 8.

⁹⁴ Sorgner. United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *The COVID-19 crisis and digital transformation: what impacts on gender equality?* 2021.

⁹⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil*. 2022. pp. 14-16.

⁹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *COVID-19 and The Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-Responsive Recovery*. 2020.



GDP calculations, the value of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women is estimated to be \$1.48 trillion, or 2.35% of global GDP as of 2020.⁹⁷

While the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the landscape of work, causing job loss for many, it also increased transitions to working remotely for several others, which created new opportunities to work in the digital economy.⁹⁸ Driven by the demands of COVID-19 distancing protocols, digitization increased at rates higher than previously anticipated in both the service and manufacturing industries.⁹⁹ Critical infrastructure expansions in access to electricity and internet networks now make digital entrepreneurship and internet-based employment an increasingly viable option for women around the globe.¹⁰⁰ The *UNDP Digital Strategy 2022-2025* outlines goals that work toward ensuring active participation of women and girls in the digital economy as Member States work towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰¹ It notes access to smartphones and internet, financial services, and online safety as key factors reducing the digital gender divide.¹⁰²

While access to opportunities for digital inclusion for many of the world's poorest has increased, a set of challenges remains for new internet users and those without internet access.¹⁰³ Challenges include safe and affordable internet access; limited digital literacy, particularly regarding internet safety and digital finance; and barriers to awareness of relevant online content such as sparse information in many local languages and limited culturally relevant content.¹⁰⁴ To ensure gender inclusion in an increasingly digital and internet-based world, UNDP supports innovative programs and initiatives bringing together citizens and cybersecurity professionals with the goal of promoting internet safety.¹⁰⁵ Promising examples include a chatbot called Mildet in Kyrgyzstan which assists women in identifying online psychological and financial abuse, as well as a campaign in Kosovo called "Careful on the Internet!"¹⁰⁶

Even in light of technological expansions, women in many low-income Member States access the internet less often than men and are 20% less likely to own a smartphone.¹⁰⁷ Reliable access to technologies like smartphones increases opportunities for finding employment in the new digital markets responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁸ Regional associations like ASEAN have taken on the challenge of preparing their populations for participation in digital economies by focusing on up-skilling and reskilling in an effort to increase women's inclusion.¹⁰⁹ As defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), reskilling teaches new skills for professional or occupational opportunities, whereas upskilling includes short-term trainings intending to build upon and update existing knowledge, skills, and competencies an individual already possesses.¹¹⁰ In looking forward to a world and workplace

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Sorgner. United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *The COVID-19 crisis and digital transformation: what impacts on gender equality?* 2021.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Digital Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 26.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ United Nations Development Programme. *Toward an equitable digital future: women and girls as active agents of change in digitalisation*. 2021.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Leveraging Digital Technologies for Social Inclusion*. 2021.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Toward an equitable digital future: women and girls as active agents of change in digitalisation*. 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *As Commission on Status of Women Begins Annual Session, Speakers Stress Gender Digital Divide Must Be Closed, Safe Internet Environment Ensured*. 2023.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization: International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. *Upskilling*. 2023.



of ever-increasing digital cooperation, UNDP remains committed to guiding Member States and ensuring the active participation of women in all sectors of labor and society.¹¹¹

Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Rural Areas to Drive Economic Development

According to UN Women, as of 2022, over 388 million women globally are living in extreme poverty.¹¹² An estimated 79% of those living in extreme poverty reside in rural areas.¹¹³ The three primary factors influencing rural poverty are economic, social, and environmental conditions.¹¹⁴ Investing in efforts to counteract these barriers to accessing education provides many women and girls not only individual empowerment but also enhances the overall economic growth of their region.¹¹⁵ According to UN Women, the largest rural populations living in extreme poverty reside in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹⁶ In the broader context of development in this region, the *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028* addresses dualistic causes for concern and opportunities for future social and economic promotion.¹¹⁷ According to the AU, a more balanced labor participation rate has the potential to increase regional GDP by 12%, which is equivalent to roughly \$300 billion US Dollars.¹¹⁸

UNDP remains committed to making the experiences and struggles of rural women known at a global scale and promotes the empowerment of women through addressing the challenges of economic, social, and environmental conditions.¹¹⁹ Recognizing the significant role that many rural women play in agricultural production, connecting women with effective markets for their goods, and working to ensure equal access to credit and financial services stand out among the continued opportunities for empowering rural women.¹²⁰ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) notes that if gender gaps in agriculture are reduced, increased agricultural yields of 20 to 30% would result in a 12 to 17% reduction in hunger due to the significant but currently unrealized opportunities for women in the agriculture sector.¹²¹

Education also plays a significant role in the achievement of gender equality and promoting economic development.¹²² Each year a man continues through an educational curriculum, projected wage increases by 11%, whereas each additional year of school completed by a woman provides a 14% increase in earnings.¹²³ According to the World Bank, women are often unable to progress in school due to social or familial pressures, economic pressures, adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, or domestic work.¹²⁴

¹¹¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Digital Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

¹¹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Poverty deepens for women and girls, according to latest projections*. 2022.

¹¹³ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *Overview: Rural Poverty in Developing Countries: Issues, Policies and Challenges*. 2020.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Brixi et al. World Bank Blogs. *Unleashing women and girls' human capital: a game changer for Africa*. 2022.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Poverty deepens for women and girls, according to latest projections*. 2022.

¹¹⁷ African Union. *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*. 2018. pp. 25-27.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ervin. United Nations Development Programme. *Celebrating Rural Women's Roles in Transforming Food Systems*. 2023.

¹²⁰ Dayal. United Nations Development Programme. *Spotlight rural women: How UNDP is supporting them rise with pride*. 2023.

¹²¹ African Union. *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*. 2018. pp. 25-27.

¹²² Brixi et al. World Bank Blogs. *Unleashing women and girls' human capital: a game changer for Africa*. 2022.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.



Regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) recognize the value of investing in women, particularly rural women, for the long-term prosperity of their region.¹²⁵ SADC has implemented policy frameworks to address technological changes and opportunities for growth in the region through the *Protocol on Science Technology and Innovation* and by enacting the SDAC Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organization in 2017.¹²⁶ In 2023, SADC members reviewed a report on regional technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and progress made toward the establishment of the SADC University of Transformation, an educational institution focused on promoting entrepreneurship and achieving the SADC industrialization agenda.¹²⁷ Understanding also that many rural women remain unaware of government social protections and other beneficial programs, ensuring the distribution of applicable information is another step in helping them reach their full potential for economic and social participation.¹²⁸

The UNDP engages in many different regional- and country-specific development programs to help bolster rural women's economic participation.¹²⁹ While many aspects of these programs are coordinated by regional and local governments, UNDP contributes specifically by ensuring the input of women and youth is accounted for and by providing engineering services and assisting in developing plans for infrastructure projects.¹³⁰ For example, UNDP partners with the Mauritian Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Public Sector Modernization to help strengthen health, education, and economic development in Mauritius, a country with a majority rural population.¹³¹ In Central Asia, UNDP works in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction of Uzbekistan to support communities and local authorities in addressing green and energy-efficient solutions for the architectural, transportation, infrastructure, and digital technology needs of specific rural regions in Uzbekistan.¹³² The primary focus areas of this partnership include those regions most affected by the drying of the Aral Sea.¹³³

Conclusion

Gender inequality has a significant impact on economic development in all areas.¹³⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an economic crisis, while also negatively impacting gender equality.¹³⁵ However, these effects can be reversed by measures like promoting education for women and girls or supporting the participation of women in the labor market more directly.¹³⁶ Technical innovations and digitalization offer new opportunities to empower women in the economy and are areas where a lot of work can be

¹²⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *As Commission on Status of Women Begins Annual Session, Speakers Stress Gender Digital Divide Must Be Closed, Safe Internet Environment Ensured*. 2023.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Southern African Development Community. *Ministers responsible for Education, Training, Science, Technology and Innovation in SADC to Meet to discuss Implementation of Programmes in these Sectors*. 2023.

¹²⁸ Dayal. United Nations Development Programme. *Spotlight rural women: How UNDP is supporting them rise with pride*. 2023.

¹²⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Project Document [Uzbekistan]*. 2022.

¹³⁰ Ibid. pp. 1-11.

¹³¹ Ibid; Trading Economics. *Mauritius - Urban Population (% of total)*. 2023.

¹³² United Nations Development Programme. *Project Document [Uzbekistan]*. 2022. pp. 1-11.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ World Bank Group. *The World Bank In Gender*. 2023.

¹³⁵ Sorgner. United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *The COVID-19 crisis and digital transformation: what impacts on gender equality?* 2021; World Bank Group. *World Development Report 2022: Finance for an Equitable Recovery*. 2022. p. 50.

¹³⁶ Brixi et al. World Bank Blogs. *Unleashing women and girls' human capital: a game changer for Africa*. 2022; European Commission. *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. 2020. p. 18.



done to increase gender equality.¹³⁷ Women in rural areas face disadvantages such as the access to the internet and to education, which hinders economic development in these areas.¹³⁸ UNDP has been working with different actors to further the economic empowerment of women and has been working closely with UN Women towards gender equality.¹³⁹

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How are gender equality and economic development linked? What can UNDP do to promote gender equality and economic development? How can UNDP support Member States and other stakeholders in addressing this issue? What can UNDP do to support women in rural areas to promote economic development? How can UNDP leverage increased digitization to empower women and increase women's participation in formal and taxable income opportunities? How can UNDP and Member States utilize digitization to empower women's education in rural areas? What new opportunities exist to participate in the economy and how can these opportunities benefit women?

¹³⁷ Sorgner. United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *The COVID-19 crisis and digital transformation: what impacts on gender equality?* 2021; United Nations Development Programme. *Digital Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 26.

¹³⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *As Commission on Status of Women Begins Annual Session, Speakers Stress Gender Digital Divide Must Be Closed, Safe Internet Environment Ensured*. 2023.

¹³⁹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *About UNCTAD*. N.d.; United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 13.



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2. Sustainable Energy for Development

“Energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, increased social equity, and a healthy environment. Sustainable development is not possible without sustainable energy.”¹⁴⁰

Introduction

Globally, 675 million people lack access to electricity, with 80% of that population living in Africa and Asia.¹⁴¹ Not having access to energy affects various aspects of the sustainable development sphere, including health, livelihoods, education, and food security, among others.¹⁴² Despite efforts to achieve universal energy access, current projections indicate that 679 million people will remain without energy by 2030.¹⁴³ The issue of access is exacerbated by continual increases in energy use, with global energy consumption growing to 178,899 terawatt hours (TWh) in 2022, up from 158,097 TWh in 2012.¹⁴⁴ Improving access to stable energy would require the level of growth of production of primary energy to outpace the increasing rate of consumption.¹⁴⁵

Primary energy includes all potential sources of energy: biomass, coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, hydropower, wind, solar, and other minor renewable sources.¹⁴⁶ The international community has prioritized the development of some sources over others as increased use of fossil fuels in the energy system has adverse effects on the output of greenhouse gas emissions and the climate.¹⁴⁷ There is, however, a gap between the ability of Member States to scale up clean energy production and the increased demand and need for access to electricity, especially as fossil fuel sources are often less expensive to develop.¹⁴⁸

International energy debates often focus on “sustainability” and “renewability.”¹⁴⁹ Renewable sources of energy, like bioenergy, are generated from sources such as crops that can be regrown to produce biofuel but can theoretically be exhausted and require replenishment.¹⁵⁰ Sustainable energy sources do not require replenishment since their sources of energy, such as the sun or wind, are not exhaustible.¹⁵¹ While the sources of sustainable energy are not exhaustible themselves, their production effectiveness can be affected by climate change over time.¹⁵² Renewable energy and sustainable energy are seen as low-carbon sources of energy, alongside nuclear power, and made up around 18% of the world’s primary energy consumption in 2022.¹⁵³ The United Nations has recognized and regularly addresses the partially conflicting goals of increasing economic development and energy access while also working towards limiting climate change.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁰ Sustainable Energy for All et al. *UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All launched to business community; private sector engagement seen as crucial to meet objectives*. 2014.

¹⁴¹ International Energy Agency et al. *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2023*. 2023. pp. 7-14.

¹⁴² World Bank. *Energy*. N.d.

¹⁴³ Ellerbeck. MarshMcLennan. *How Much Progress Is Being Made on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals? 2022*.

¹⁴⁴ Ritchie et al. Oxford University. *Energy Production and Consumption*. 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report*. 2023. p. 42.

¹⁴⁸ Roser. Oxford University. *The world’s energy problem*. 2022.

¹⁴⁹ Routledge. *What is Sustainable Energy and Why Do We Need It? 2022*.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What is renewable energy?* N.d.

¹⁵¹ Routledge. *What is Sustainable Energy and Why Do We Need It? 2022*.

¹⁵² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate information relevant for the Energy Sector*. 2021. p. 2.

¹⁵³ Ritchie et al. Oxford University. *Energy mix*. 2022.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 19.



International and Regional Framework

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (Rio Declaration), *Agenda 21*, and the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC).¹⁵⁵ The Rio Declaration focuses on environmental protection to achieve sustainable development as a shared international responsibility.¹⁵⁶ *Agenda 21* laid out a comprehensive strategy to achieve development goals in the 21st century at a global, national, and local level.¹⁵⁷ *Agenda 21* also advocated for a shift to environment-friendly and cost-effective energy resources while also acknowledging that countries whose income highly depends on fossil fuel production or consumption face serious difficulties in switching to alternatives.¹⁵⁸ The UNFCCC recognized the susceptibility of the world to the negative impacts of climate change and called on countries to join efforts to mitigate its effects and adapt and prepare for its consequences, especially in developing countries.¹⁵⁹ One of the main goals of the UNFCCC is to control greenhouse gas emissions and improve the efficient use of energy to achieve societal progress.¹⁶⁰

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development adopted the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, which reaffirmed the United Nations's commitment to implement *Agenda 21* and connected poverty eradication to access to affordable and sustainable energy.¹⁶¹ In 2012, the General Assembly adopted *The Future We Want* at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), calling for increased production capacity and the use of sustainable and affordable energy to eradicate poverty, improve health, and foster social inclusion and gender equality.¹⁶² In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), which established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at improving human well-being, economic development, and environmental protection.¹⁶³ That same year, the *Paris Agreement* was adopted at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) of the UNFCCC, which encouraged Member States to use environmentally friendly sources of energy to cover basic needs, especially in developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).¹⁶⁴ That same year, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development adopted the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, the main focus of which is financing for the SDGs through public and private investment, including improving access to sustainable energy.¹⁶⁵

Role of the International System

The United Nations system historically did not feature an institution responsible for all energy-related matters.¹⁶⁶ Since its establishment in 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has worked to assess the scientific state of knowledge of climate change as well as its social and economic impacts and provide recommendations for potential response strategies that can be implemented within

¹⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (A/CONF. 151/26 (Vol. I)). 1992.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *Agenda 21*. 1992.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 77-79.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ United Nations, World Summit on Sustainable Development. *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* (A/CONF. 199/20). 2002.

¹⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *The Future We Want* (A/RES/66/288). 2012.

¹⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015; International Energy Agency. *Meeting Climate Change Goals Through Energy Efficiency*. 2017.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313). 2015. pp. 24-25.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Energy. *UN-Energy Plan of Action: Towards 2025*. 2022. pp. 2-3.



the United Nations system or individual Member States.¹⁶⁷ In 2004, UN-Energy was established as a coordinating mechanism for inter-agency collaboration among United Nations institutions.¹⁶⁸ UN-Energy is engaged in informing policy-making, knowledge-sharing, and utilizing partnerships between agencies and, with 27 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies as members, has played a significant role in the areas of sustainable energy, implementation of the *Paris Agreement*, and progress on the achievement of SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy).¹⁶⁹ Energy policy is often informed by the work of the General Assembly, which has adopted different resolutions that address access to sustainable energy.¹⁷⁰ In 2012, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/215, “Promotion of New and Renewable Sources of Energy,” proclaiming the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All from 2014 to 2024 and promoting energy efficiency as well as the usage of renewable energy around the world.¹⁷¹

As a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aligns with the high-level goals set out by the General Assembly as part of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷² UNDP is actively engaged in the ongoing global process of changing energy systems and developed its own *Strategy Note on Sustainable Energy 2017-2021* (2016), following the adoption of the *Paris Agreement*.¹⁷³ This Strategy Note shaped the agency’s work on energy, especially in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and laid out how UNDP should work to build partnerships and provide policy support for sustainable energy development.¹⁷⁴ UNDP does not view the field of energy as an issue to be solved but rather as a part of its set of solutions.¹⁷⁵ The UNDP’s *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* sees access to sustainable energy as a part of the strategic context of its work, with energy as a whole being one of the six signature solutions, which UNDP actively incorporated into its work, particularly on the African continent.¹⁷⁶ In 2021, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE), convened by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly, provided a forum for discussion on energy access and energy transition worldwide and the achievement of net-zero emissions targets.¹⁷⁷ The summit produced the 2021 *Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action*, a plan that sets milestones for 2025 and 2030 to implement universal access to electricity, clean cooking solutions, steep increases in renewable power capacity, energy efficiency, and investments in the renewable energy sector.¹⁷⁸ Following the commitments made as part of the summit, UNDP set up the United Nations Development Programme Sustainable Energy Hub to foster cooperation, knowledge sharing, innovation, and financing to work towards stable access to energy for 500 million additional people.¹⁷⁹ The Sustainable Energy Hub seeks to advance the SDGs by enabling energy system transformation through partnership and the stimulation

¹⁶⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *History of the IPCC*. 2023.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Energy. *About UN-Energy*. 2023.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations Energy. *UN-Energy Plan of Action: Towards 2025*. 2022. pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Promotion of New Renewable Sources of Energy (A/RES/67/215)*. 2012.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 19.

¹⁷³ United Nations Development Programme. *Delivering Sustainable Energy in a Changing Climate: Strategy Note on Sustainable Energy 2017-2021*. 2016. p.5; United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Sustainable Energy Hub What we do*. 2023.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Development Programme Strategic Plan 2022-2025*. 2021. pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁷ Sustainable Energy for all. *Governance and Accountability*. N.d.; United Nations, High-level Dialogue on Energy. *Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action in Support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change*. 2021; United Nations, High-level Dialogue on Energy. *Leadership*. 2021.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, High-level Dialogue on Energy. *Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action In Support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change*. 2021. p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP calls for increased investment to support swift energy transition providing access for all*. 2022.



of action at a systemic level.¹⁸⁰ This approach is also implemented in UNDP's Alliance for Just Energy Transformation, which connects stakeholders from civil society groups and organizations, the private sector, and policymakers to develop and advance its eight core principles of a just energy transformation.¹⁸¹ The principles reaffirm goals set out by previous international agreements to work towards limiting climate change as well as respecting principles of justice among nations while also keeping in mind the goal of overcoming existing inequalities.¹⁸² The UNDP's practical work in building and leveraging partnerships is utilized in its Climate Promise, UNDP's overarching commitment and offer of support to countries in their efforts to implement the *Paris Agreement*.¹⁸³ Under the Climate Promise, UNDP aids countries in 12 technical areas such as working towards net-zero emissions, climate and energy finance, and it encourages countries to increase their nationally determined contributions (NDC), which are used to translate goals into measures.¹⁸⁴

Under the umbrella of UN-Energy, UNDP cooperates with intergovernmental organizations like the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).¹⁸⁵ IRENA provides knowledge on policy, technology, resources, and financing surrounding the transition to renewable energy.¹⁸⁶ UN-Energy partner Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), an initiative kicked off by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, works in partnership with United Nations institutions on achieving SDG 7.¹⁸⁷ SEforALL focuses its advocacy, research, and projects on expanding access in lower-income countries and regions affected by energy poverty.¹⁸⁸

Building a sustainable energy structure is a recognized goal for regional organizations like the European Union, African Union, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).¹⁸⁹ Both the European Union and the African Union promote transitioning and investment into sustainable energy sources within their Member States.¹⁹⁰ The European Union also provides funding for the renewable energy sector and resource efficiency as part of its European Fund for Sustainable Development, while the African Union highlights the need for energy access, supports "just transition" programs for its Member States, and outlines a 6-step action plan for renewable energy as part of implementing SDG 7.¹⁹¹ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is composed of African Union Members in West Africa, is working towards more cooperation in the electric energy sector and power grid infrastructure through the West African Power Pool (WAPP).¹⁹² ASEAN seeks to build partnerships for the goal of carbon neutrality through sharing solutions and displaying technology at the ASEAN Sustainable Energy Week Expo 2023, which aims to connect with the private sector and international partners.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Sustainable Energy Hub What we do*. 2023.

¹⁸¹ United Nations Development Programme. *The Alliance for a Just Energy Transformation*. 2022.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP's Climate Promise*. 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p.2.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Energy. *UN-Energy Plan fo Action: Towards 2025*. 2022. p.12.

¹⁸⁶ International Renewable Energy Agency. *IRENA Statute*. 2009. pp. 5-6.

¹⁸⁷ Sustainable Energy for All. *Our work - Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7)*. 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ African Union Union Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy. *African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027*. 2021. pp. 13-15; Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Sustainable Energy Week Expo 2023*. 2023; European Union. *Energy - Investing in a sustainable energy future for Europe*. 2021.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² West African Power Pool. *Creation of the WAPP*. 2023.

¹⁹³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Sustainable Energy Week Expo 2023*. 2023.



Energy Access through Sustainable Energy Transition: Obstacles and Opportunities

Despite improvements in global access to energy in the last decades, providing reliable electricity, in particular for those affected by poverty, remains an issue.¹⁹⁴ Alongside its announcement of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All from 2014 to 2024, the General Assembly stressed that increased use of renewable energy resources is an important contributor to achieving sustainable, universal access to modern energy services.¹⁹⁵ Establishing stable access to electricity intersects with several developmental goals, such as safe access to clean water, cooking food, access to education and health facilities, and enabling economic activity.¹⁹⁶ The IPCC estimates that policies designed to take technological, economic, and societal conditions of the respective country into account can serve multiple goals by advancing sustainable energy transformation.¹⁹⁷

Providing access to energy that is both sustainable and affordable is seen as an opportunity for recovery in conflict-affected regions.¹⁹⁸ Decentralized energy solutions such as community-owned mini-grids are a measure supported by UNDP as a best practice for building resilience in conflict-prone areas.¹⁹⁹ Sustainable and renewable energy sources are especially well suited to these solutions, as they do not require large-scale infrastructure networks after their implementation.²⁰⁰

Implementing policies for climate change adaptation and emission reduction often requires large-scale financial investments.²⁰¹ In 2009, developed countries committed to providing \$100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020, an amount that is considered to be less than what is needed to combat climate change but has also not been met.²⁰² The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has estimated that the cost of merely adapting to climate in developing countries will cost between \$140 billion to \$300 billion USD per year by 2030 and rise to \$280 billion to \$500 billion USD per year in 2050.²⁰³ Climate finance describes funding for climate-related measures on a local, national, or international level, which can be drawn from public, private, or alternative financial sources.²⁰⁴ According to UNEP, the two main sources of climate financing, private and governmental funding, require separate approaches, with financial institutions and private sector investors being best supported by the creation of environments that enable commercial opportunities and create pathways to align their portfolios with the goals of mitigating climate-related risks and emission reduction.²⁰⁵ UNDP has published a guidance note for policymakers on overcoming these climate budgeting challenges that highlighted examples of international cooperation and the utilization of pre-existing models to build their catalogs of energy technology data.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Delivering Sustainable Energy in a Changing Climate: Strategy Note on Sustainable Energy 2017-2021*. 2016. p.30.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Promotion of New Renewable Sources of Energy (A/RES/67/215)*. 2012. p.3.

¹⁹⁶ Korchunov et al. United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Global Policy Network Brief Sustainable Energy Access for Crisis Recovery*. 2022. p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*. 2022. p. 700.

¹⁹⁸ Korchunov et al. United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Global Policy Network Brief Sustainable Energy Access for Crisis Recovery*. 2022. p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *The trillion dollar climate finance challenge (and opportunity)*. 2021.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *Changing the Finance, Financing the Change*. 2020.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Budgeting for Climate Change: A Guidance Note for Governments to Integrate Climate Change into Budgeting*. 2021. pp. 24-25.



According to the IPCC, in the transition to low-carbon energy sources the importance of electricity as a secondary energy and the importance of regional electricity grids will grow.²⁰⁷ Regional electricity grids contribute to overcoming storage issues, reducing costs resulting from measures to manage peak energy demands, and improving resilience against extreme events.²⁰⁸ The IPCC has highlighted regional integration of energy systems as a pivotal opportunity to lower the cost of low-emission technologies and lower risks to power supply.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, a globally integrated market for low-emissions energy can include market structures in which developing countries in Latin America and Africa become energy exporters to Europe, North America, and East Asia.²¹⁰

Challenges in building more integrated infrastructure, including cross-border transmission lines, can be affected by geopolitical realities, including economic interests related to international trade and the distribution of resources.²¹¹ These obstacles can disrupt supply chains, including flows of energy and natural resources such as minerals that are necessary for the practical transition into low-carbon systems.²¹² Even where regional or multilateral institutions are calling for integration or cooperation, there is often a lack of political will for action and socio-cultural barriers.²¹³ Member States whose populations have a strong international identity may be more willing to adopt a shared vision on infrastructural issues than those with more nationalistic identities.²¹⁴

One regional effort is the WAPP, which was created by ECOWAS in 1999 and since 2006 has taken continual steps towards integrating the grids and energy systems of the West African sub-region.²¹⁵ The WAPP works to coordinate power exchanges between the participating states and promotes the expansion of infrastructure.²¹⁶ The WAPP contributes to the optimal use of existing energy resources, including hydroelectric power that had previously been underused due to challenges in the distribution of energy supply to areas further away from the main centers of energy production.²¹⁷ The interconnection of regional energy grids in West Africa opens up the possibility for some countries, like Ghana, to export energy to regional neighbors, thus reducing the price of electricity and lessening the strained energy systems of importing countries, such as Burkina Faso, as well as countries connected to the energy systems of the importing countries such as Mali and Niger.²¹⁸ As a result, overall economic activity, especially among women, has increased alongside access to power.²¹⁹

Fighting the Climate Crisis through Sustainable Energy

The United Nations and its various bodies play a significant role in assisting countries in meeting their energy goals while protecting the environment.²²⁰ Through the promotion of SDGs, knowledge sharing, capacity building, climate action, financing, technology transfer, policy advocacy, and data collection, the United Nations has created a comprehensive framework for countries to switch to clean energy resources and mitigate negative climate impacts.²²¹ Over the next four years, the UNDP Sustainable Energy Hub will work with partners to offer access to clean energy to 500 million people.²²² The Sustainable Energy Hub

²⁰⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*. 2022. p. 684.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 684-685.

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 684.

²¹² Ibid. p. 637.

²¹³ Ibid. p. 187.

²¹⁴ West African Power Pool. Economic Community of West African States. *Creation of the WAPP*. 2023.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ World Bank. *Trading Energy in West Africa to Benefit the Entire Region*. 2021.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ United Nations Statistical Division. *Sustainable Development Goals Indicators*. 2021.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² United Nations Development Programme. *About us*. 2023.



will create a stream of analysis that can provide off-grid electricity solutions, such as solar mini-grids or solar home systems, especially for people in rural areas.²²³ Analytical data such as the estimated location of communities without access to electricity, their profiles, and the status of existing mini-grids will contribute to national planning and open up opportunities for the advancement of society.²²⁴ In addition, UNDP's initiative Climate Promise promotes net-zero emissions and urges countries to extend their NDCs.²²⁵ The pledge highlights sustainable energy as a core component of making progress on mitigating climate change.²²⁶ As of July 2022, 100 Climate Promise countries had presented revised and improved NDCs to the UNFCCC, corresponding to 22% of world emissions and 84% of developing countries.²²⁷

The UNDP *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* places sustainable energy at the center of a joint corporate mission and reaffirms the importance of continuing to work through its six signature solutions, which include environmental and energy scope.²²⁸ Based on the synergies with the energy solution, UNDP is determined to work with partners such as IRENA and the private sector through investment to mitigate the lack of energy in different countries.²²⁹ In addition, UNDP is committed to mobilizing partners and catalyzing actions to offer universal access to clean energy, including the support of programs such as the Africa Mini-Grid Programme, which helps to improve the financial viability of renewable energy mini-grids by calling upon private investment, reducing tariffs, and expanding service.²³⁰ Furthermore, UNDP advocates for accelerating the transition to renewable energy through system changes that support inclusive and green economies, particularly in countries with low levels of renewable energy generation or low rates of energy efficiency improvement.²³¹

The United Nations and SEforALL have been working to accelerate universal energy access and contribute to the world's fight against the climate crisis.²³² Their main mission in working together is to assist countries in designing and implementing energy transitions that meet energy access targets as part of a net-zero emissions goal.²³³ Nigeria has directly benefited from this collaborative partnership.²³⁴ In 2021, it became the first African country to elaborate a detailed energy transition plan, which included achieving net zero emissions by 2060 while providing low-carbon energy systems in the electricity, cooking, transportation, industry, and oil and gas sectors.²³⁵

More broadly, public and private actors alike are on the path to accelerate energy transition solutions to mitigate climate change.²³⁶ For example, the Africa Just and Affordable Energy Transition Initiative, announced by the Egypt COP27 Presidency, provides technical and policy guidance to access affordable energy in Africa, secures access to technologies and clean cooking, and increases the share of

²²³ United Nations Development Programme. *Our work areas: Energy Access*. 2023.

²²⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Our work areas: Energy Transition*. 2023.

²²⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP's Climate Promise*. 2022.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Climate Promise Global Progress Report 2022*. 2022. p. 5.

²²⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Development Programme Strategic Plan 2022-2025*. 2021. p. 7.

²²⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP and IRENA Join Forces to Advance Low-Carbon Energy Transition*. 2019.

²³⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *Our Flagship Initiatives: The Africa Mini-grids Program*. 2023.

²³¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Our work areas: Energy Transition*. 2023.

²³² Sustainable Energy for all. *Energy Transition and Investment Plans*. N.d.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Government of Nigeria. *Implementation*. 2022.

²³⁵ Government of Nigeria. *Nigeria's Pathway to Achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2060*. 2022.

²³⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Sustainable Renewable Energy Key to Unlocking Developing Countries' Potential, Achieving Global Goals, Speakers Tell High-Level Political Forum*. 2023.



renewable energy generation by 25%.²³⁷ COP27 also launched the Planning for Climate Change Commission, which aims to expedite the planning and authorization required for the large-scale development of renewable energy and green hydrogen to address climate and energy crises.²³⁸ Outside the UNFCCC framework, the International Energy Agency recently launched the Digital Demand-Driven Electricity Networks initiative, through which different organizations, including the Clean Energy Ministerial, will be able to collaborate to foster dialogue and share experiences to speed up progress on power system innovation and the effective use of energy resources.²³⁹

Despite international efforts to accelerate switching to clean energy, the world is not on track to meet its SDG 7 energy goals or its SDG 13 (climate action) environmental goals.²⁴⁰ Progress has been affected by Member States' income levels, geographic locations, and reliance on fossil fuels, each of which have a significant impact on access to energy and climate change vulnerability.²⁴¹ The international community continues to promote clean energy solutions to mitigate the climate crisis and encourages Member States to fully implement energy development strategies and action plans that guide them in the transition to sustainable energy while protecting the environment.²⁴²

Conclusion

In the 2015 *Paris Agreement* and 2030 Agenda, the international community set goals for climate protection and energy transition, which it wants to reach on international, regional, and national scales.²⁴³ Goals relating to the energy sector include milestones that are part of the mandate of UNDP, such as improving access to infrastructure and basic needs in developing states.²⁴⁴ UNDP maintains and works towards the goal that all people in developed and developing countries, including SIDS, should have access to electricity.²⁴⁵ Most energy challenges are interconnected with the region's specific economic, environmental, and political aspects.²⁴⁶ UNDP continues to support efforts to shift to modern power systems.²⁴⁷ The international community continues to cooperate on energy issues, including under the auspices of UN-Energy, and much progress remains to be made.²⁴⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider the following: How can UNDP assist efforts to ensure access to energy while protecting the environment? What innovative solutions can be implemented to meet energy goals? Which conditions enable expanding sustainable energy capacities in Member States? What are the obstacles to developing sustainable energy capacities that can be addressed internationally? Which new financial measures, such as carbon financing, can be explored to achieve sustainability goals in the energy sector? Which partnerships can UNDP create or use to complete the development objectives set for 2030 and 2050?

²³⁷ Sustainable Energy for All. *Energy Transition Plans and other initiatives to unlock finance for African countries*. N.d.

²³⁸ Green Hydrogen Organisation. *Planning for Climate Commission*. N.d.

²³⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Digitalization & Energy*. N.d.

²⁴⁰ International Energy Agency et al. *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2023*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid; United Nations Development Programme. *Our focus: Environment*. 2023; World Bank. *Energy - Overview: Strategy*. 2022.

²⁴³ Ibid; Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015

²⁴⁴ United Nations, High-level Dialogue on Energy. *Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action In Support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change*. 2021. pp. 2-3.

²⁴⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Climate and Disaster Resilience: Sustainable Energy*. 2023.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ United Nations Energy. *UN-Energy Plan of Action: Towards 2025*. 2022. pp. 2-3.



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- Government of Nigeria. *Implementation*. 2022. Retrieved 8 September 2023 from: <https://www.energytransition.gov.ng/implementation/>
- Government of Nigeria. *Nigeria's Pathway to Achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2060*. 2022. Retrieved 8 September 2023 from: <https://energytransition.gov.ng/>
- Green Hydrogen Organisation. *Planning for Climate Commission*. N.d. Retrieved 8 September 2023 from: <https://gh2.org/planning-climate>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate information relevant for the Energy Sector*. 2021. Retrieved 29 July 2023 from: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/factsheets/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Sectoral_Fact_Sheet_Energy.pdf
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