

Background Guide

United Nations Economic and Social Council



Letter from the Executive Board

Distinguished Delegates, We are delighted to welcome you to the Sancta Maria International School Model United Nations - 2026, especially, to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It is an honor and privilege to be a part of this year's UN ECOSOC and we are looking forward to our communication, interaction and cooperation during the proceedings of our Committee. This agenda for this conference will be "Addressing Global Water Scarcity through Sustainable Water Resource Management & Equitable Access" - a topic that is considered crucial for achieving sustainable economic and social development on a global scale. The agenda is important to the committee as a whole as freshwater insecurity directly undermines the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Water sits at the intersection of economic growth, public health, agricultural stability, and climate resilience. Systemic water deficits severely amplify poverty, exacerbate gender inequality, and trigger geopolitical tensions across transboundary basins. With nearly half the world's population experiencing severe water scarcity for at least part of the year and progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6 lagging far behind targets, this committee serves as the essential intergovernmental platform to mobilize development finance, standardize Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) frameworks, and incentivize equitable technology transfers to ensure universal access to clean water as a fundamental human right. In preparation for the conference, we kindly request that you familiarize yourselves thoroughly with the provided background guide, which outlines the context, subtopics, and key questions for consideration. Your well-informed insights and creative policy proposals are integral to the success of our committee's deliberations. During the conference, we encourage you to actively engage in constructive debate, negotiation, and collaboration with your fellow delegates. Remember that diplomacy is not just about advocating for your nation's interests, but also about finding common ground and building consensus towards effective solutions. We have no doubt that your commitment to diplomacy and international cooperation will contribute to a fulfilling and enriching MUN experience. The Executive Board will be available throughout the conference to guide and support you in any way possible. Do not hesitate to approach us with your queries, concerns, or suggestions. We are here to facilitate your engagement and ensure a productive and enjoyable experience for all. Lastly, we look forward to witnessing the outcomes of your

deliberations and the resolutions you will collectively craft. Your dedication towards uplifting the economic and social concerns of the world is truly inspiring, and we are confident that your efforts will leave a lasting impact on the conference and beyond. Once again, welcome to the United Nations Economic and Social Council of Sancta Maria International School Model United Nations conference. Let us work together to uphold the principles of diplomacy, cooperation, and peace that the United Nations represents. Regards,

Chairperson : Abhishek Arul

Rapporteurs: Yashwanth Addala & Rithvik Pathi

Points to remember

A few aspects that delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

- 1. Procedure:** The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organized and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding the procedure.
- 2. Foreign Policy:** Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.
- 3. Role of the Executive Board:** The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of the debate. The delegates are the

ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stances on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points in time to further debate and test participants.

4. Nature of Source/Evidence: This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during the formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

a. United Nations: Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body is held as credible proof to support a claim or argument. Multilateral

Organizations: Documents from international organizations like OIC, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, the International Criminal Court, etc. may also be presented as credible sources of information.

b. Government Reports: These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies' reports can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country.

c. News Sources:

1. Reuters: Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in the council.

2. State-operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any

country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country

in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novosti (Russian Federation),

Xinhua News Agency (People's Republic of China), etc.

Introduction to the Model United Nations :

PROCEDURE:

It is important for the committee to have proper rules of procedure enforced to ensure a conducive flow of debate. The committee will be following the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) Rules of Procedure. The delegates are expected to adhere to the rules at all times and maintain the decorum of the committee.

FOREIGN POLICY:

Foreign policy is mostly unique to each country and delegates are expected to thoroughly research as well as adhere to the foreign policy of the nation they are representing. Violations of foreign policy will be taken note of by the Executive Board.

LOBBYING:

Lobbying involves the art of negotiating and convincing the other members working alongside you in the committee. This may be considered as the most crucial part of a Model UN conference and in tradition, is what sets it apart from general competitive debate. The art of lobbying is an important skill that delegates should put to use in the committee.

DECORUM:

Decorum refers to the etiquette that is to be maintained in the committee. In a Model UN committee, you represent the interests of a nation in the capacity of a diplomat and are thereby supposed to behave in a manner that is strictly professional at all times during the committee sessions. No delegate shall cause disturbance or flout any rules of procedure

Mandate of the UN ECOSOC

The Economic and Social Council (hereinafter ECOSOC) of the United Nations was established in 1945 and since then has been one of the six main bodies of the Organization. Its mandate (functions and powers) is described in Chapter X of the UN Charter. Amongst others, it may make or initiate studies and reports, recommendations, resolutions and prepare draft conventions always in accordance with the matters falling within its competence, which are the international economic, social, cultural, educational and health ones. ECOSOC is inextricably linked with the purposes of Article 1 par. 3 of the UN Charter and, thus, is considered as the principle body towards the achievement of them. In order for this to be achieved, ECOSOC is in continuous interaction with civil society. It is a global forum for productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth and 3,200+ registered nongovernmental organizations. ECOSOC currently aims at advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. The Members of ECOSOC shall be fifty-four (54), with the possibility of reelection and with only one representative per member state. Each member state has the right to one vote and the decisions in the Economic and Social Council are made based on the majority of the members present and voting (Article 67).

Important points to remember with regard to the functioning of the ECOSOC:

- **Recommendatory Powers Only:** Under Chapter X of the UN Charter, ECOSOC cannot draft binding legislation, alter national sovereignty, deploy peacekeeping troops, or mandate economic sanctions. These enforcement mechanisms are strictly reserved for the Security Council.
- **Operational Directives:** ECOSOC can issue direct policy requests to its subagencies and funds, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- **Financing Recommendations:** The committee can design and propose financial architectures, resource allocation frameworks, and technological transfer pathways to be executed by international financial institutions like the World Bank Group and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Introduction to the Agenda

Water scarcity is no longer a localized humanitarian concern; it has escalated into what the United Nations recognizes as a state of global water bankruptcy. As human-water systems exceed their hydrological limits, structural water insecurity has become the norm rather than the exception. According to the UN World Water Development Report, approximately 72% of the global population (5.52 billion people) live in water-insecure settings, with an additional 8% facing critical water insecurity. This crisis is compounded by the rapid expansion of water-intensive industries— including agricultural irrigation, urban expansion, and modern technological infrastructure like AI data centers, which require vast amounts of cooling water. Water scarcity is deeply intertwined with systemic socioeconomic inequality. Over 2.2 million deaths occur annually due to waterborne pathogens linked directly to inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure. Furthermore, the physical burden of water collection falls disproportionately on vulnerable populations, specifically women and girls in rural developing economies. Collectively, women and girls spend an estimated 200 million hours every day fetching water from remote sources. This structural time tax takes away from formal education, paid employment, and civic participation, directly cementing intergenerational cycles of poverty. To address this crisis, the international community must pivot from reactive, emergencybased responses toward long-term resource management strategies and explicit legal frameworks ensuring equitable access.

Related Frameworks-

1977 – The Mar del Plata Action Plan: The first global diplomatic conference dedicated exclusively to water. It produced the first formal international recognition that all people have a right to access drinking water in quantities and qualities equal to their basic needs. 1992 – The Dublin Principles & Rio Earth Summit: The International Conference on Water and the Environment produced the Dublin Statements, establishing that water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be managed via Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). 2000 – The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Target 7.C explicitly aimed to halve the proportion of the global population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. While the water target was met globally, deep regional disparities remained unresolved. 2010 – UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292: A watershed moment in international law, where the UN GA explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation, acknowledging that clean drinking water is legally essential to

the full realization of all human rights and life. 2015 – Adoption of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs): Member states established SDG 6, elevating water into a standalone goal. SDG 6 expanded targets beyond basic access to encompass water quality, ambient wastewater treatment, transboundary water management, and ecosystems protection. 2018–2028 – International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development": Launched to catalyze international cooperation, scientific exchange, and policy alignment to address the growing implementation gap in SDG 6 targets. 2026 – UN Global Water Synthesis Report: Recent international evaluations confirm that despite localized progress, the world remains severely off-track to meet its 2030 goals. The report underscores that meeting safely managed drinking water targets by 2030 requires an immediate sixfold increase in global infrastructure implementation rates.

Discussion of the Topic

The topics listed below, should provide you with a pretty substantial understanding on the agenda and situation at hand. But please note that this list is the bare minimum, and that we expect all delegates to dive deeper into the agenda and discuss further upon certain topics.

- Addressing the World Water Agenda created by the 2023 UN Water Conference and it's implication to promote voluntary commitments and pledges my member states, governments, and NGOs, promoting water equality and environmental sustainability.
- Discussing the effectiveness of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP), and the FAO's AQUASTAT as global datasets for water availability, resources, and sanitation.
- Evaluating global water conventions like the 1966 Helsinki Rules, the 2004 Berlin Rules, and the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention which all aim for equitable and resourceful water utilization across various bodies of water.

- Addressing the disproportionate impact of water scarcity on women and girls. While also identifying gender-inclusive solutions and equitable policies.
- Discussing economically feasible and equitable solutions to water sanitation, water accessibility, and environmental sustainability with a special emphasis on Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs).
- Discussing the effectiveness and shortcomings of existing frameworks and support systems to counter water scarcity.
- Addressing the challenges to water scarcity and availability to clean water in conflict affected regions.
- Suggesting sustainable practices to improve the efficiency of water resource management systems in climate and geographically challenged regions.
- Deliberating the effectiveness of legal systems that facilitate the building of infrastructure on transboundary water sources with special emphasis on their upkeep of equitable access.
- Evaluating the role of technology transfer and capacity building in expanding non - traditional water sources for water scarce states.

Important Links

[United Nations World Water Development Report 2026](#)

[World enters era of 'global water bankruptcy'](#)

<https://www.sdg6data.org/en%20https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>

<https://www.unwater.org/publications> - Please refer to Water for Prosperity and Peace, Partnerships and Cooperation for Water, Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible

<https://hlpf.un.org>

https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/8_3_1997.pdf

Important ECOSOC Resolutions

Please note that the following resolutions are not in any way related to the agenda at hand. They are merely being included so as to provide an example as to the kind of resolutions formulated and passed by ECOSOC. The purpose of this is to provide an aid in understanding the direction in which discussions should progress and the powers of the ECOSOC. Please do not get sidetracked and delve into the below resolutions for the purpose of the MUN. A cursory glance is more than sufficient.

ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 — Arrangements for Consultation with NonGovernmental Organizations

ECOSOC Resolution 11(II) (1946) — Establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

ECOSOC Resolution 5(I) & 9(II) (1946) — The Creation of the Commission on Human Rights

ECOSOC Resolution 2013/18 — High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

