

Committee Guide

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)



*Enhancing Cities and Communities in
Terms of Sustainability*



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.1 Personal Introduction	2
1.2 About the Usage of this Guide	4
1.3 Introduction of The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	4
2. Cities and Sustainability	5
2.1 General definition	5
2.2 Difficulties of sustainable cities	6
3. Past Accomplishments & Future Solutions	7
3.1 International Response	7
3.2 Possible Solutions	7
3.3 Guiding Questions	8
4. Conclusion	8
5. Useful sources for research	9



1. Introduction

Honourable delegates of ECOSOC, we gladly welcome you to this year's OLMUN!. During the few days we are going to have together, you will take on the role of a representative of a certain country in the UN. Debating, giving speeches and negotiating with fellow participants are all parts of such a conference, so we hope that you come ready for some fruitful discussions – most importantly though, ready to have some fun at working towards a solution for the issue that this year's ECOSOC is about.

Even though the OLMUN might be a beginner-friendlier conference, meaning that procedures can and most likely will be thoroughly explained, we advise you to read the "Rules of Procedure" which is located on the OLMUN website in "Downloads" -> "This year's conference". Adding to that, you also need to inform yourself about several factors that concern whichever country you are going to represent. Especially, the general topic of the committee, as well as your country's position to it. To help you with this task, the committee guides aims to help you with some information as a starting point, however additional research about your country is advised. Aspects such as history, geography, culture, economy, political structure and relationships with other countries.

Most importantly though, it certainly is important to remember that your country's position on the discussed issue does never fully represent what you might think about it, so try to speak solely from that point of view, even if you disagree with it. Nobody is going to condemn you as a person for what your country's stand to it is. Before the conference, you will therefore be asked to prepare a policy statement which is a short summary of what your country's position on the issue is.

1.1 Personal Introduction

Esteemed Delegates,

My name is Ivan Gudelj, I am 19 years old and most of all I am a real Berliner. Whilst you are reading this I am probably involved in studying for my TMS (an exam for Med School). If my mental strength is able to successfully overcome procrastination and watching Netflix, I would like to fulfill my dream of becoming a Doctor. In 2017, I decided to go to England for a year. It was a time filled with tea, lots of laughter and most importantly great people that really made that place become my second home. I would describe myself as quite a sporty lad. I love rowing, going to the gym or going for a relaxed run. In 2019, I ran the Berlin Marathon which was one of the biggest emotional rollercoasters of my life. I have attended 3 MUNs so far, two of them being at the UN Headquarters in Vienna and one in Oldenburg. It is my first time chairing, but no worries guys, Anya and I will do our very best in order for you to have a wonderful OLMUN experience.

See you soon online!

Dear delegates of ECOSOC,

I would like to welcome you to the OLMUN 2021 conference! I am Anya Deshpande, I am 18 years old and from The Netherlands. I am an International Business student at the University of Groningen! In my free time I enjoy watching Netflix or going to the gym just like Ivan, I play the flute, and I absolutely love traveling. I've participated in 3 MUN conferences; two in The Netherlands and one at OLMUN 2019. In 2020, I was part of the Inner Circle of ASMUN, which gave me experience and a clear insight of what goes on while organizing a conference. This year, I am delighted and looking forward to chairing this committee with Ivan! I hope you all enjoy your time at the conference. I am truly looking forward to the fruitful debates and to meeting you all soon (online)!

1.2 About the Usage of this Guide

Doing your own research is key to being fully prepared for this conference. This guide merely serves as a way to help getting into the general topic but will neither provide you with an extremely deep insight nor any information specific to a certain country. Information about your country, former resolutions on the topic or similar topics, reports about the topic or your country are all things you will need to research on your own, as we can only give you a broad overview of the topic. Furthermore, you will be writing a resolution together in which possible solutions will have to be listed. The following information in this committee guide will give some insights into ECOSOC and the topic of Enhancing Cities and Communities in terms of Sustainability.

1.3 Introduction of The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Charter of the United Nations established six principal organs, one of which is the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Therefore, the ECOSOC has been an essential part of the UN since 1945. As the name already suggests, the ECOSOC focuses on dealing with economic and social topics. Due to the fact that the two aforementioned topics include many different subtopics, the ECOSOC has a complex structure. It includes 15 specialised agencies, eight active functional commissions, five regional commissions and several expert bodies, standing commissions, etc.. In contrast to the complexity of its structure, the ECOSOC's aim can be expressed quite simply as sustainability. Sustainability is usually associated with the environment, however sustainability in terms of the ECOSOC is rather to be defined as development. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for each segment of the ECOSOC to find long-term solutions and make sure to take regional conditions into consideration, which shall ultimately lead to harmony and co-existence.

The sustainable development goals (SDG) are central to the ECOSOC.

Overall, there are 17 sustainable development goals and all member states of the UN adopted this agenda in 2015. The agenda aims to realise those goals until 2030.

The presidency of the ECOSOC is being selected on an annual basis. As of March 2021, Munir Akram from Pakistan is allocated to this position.

2. Cities and Sustainability

2.1 General definition

Firstly, what is sustainability? Sustainability entails meeting needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It mainly consists of four distinct areas or the four pillars, namely human, social, economic and environmental factors. At ECOSOC, concerning our topic, we will primarily focus on the social, economic and environmental aspects. When looking at the sustainability of cities, it is always useful to analyse the city by using the sustainability triangle.

Therefore, economic, social and environmental aspects are being included into one's opinion. Furthermore, when cities are planning future projects, the sustainability triangle is key for their planning-process, as considering these various aspects will increase the likelihood of the project being a long-term success and/or solution.

Below you will find a Sustainable Cities Index (Arcadis, 2016).



2.2 Difficulties of sustainable cities

However, it is difficult to put the sustainability theory into practice. Especially cities located in developing countries struggle to take all three factors into account due to a lack of financial resources. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to take a look at the geology, location and other scientific factors of a particular city. Every city faces different challenges. Las Vegas and Dubai face major problems concerning water, cities such as Hong Kong or Singapore face big obstacles concerning the cost of everyday life (especially rent) and New Delhi is almost succumbing to its air pollution. Therefore, each city needs to have its own approach to sustainability.

Today, over four billion people around the world, more than 50% of the global population, live in cities. This number is only expected to grow. This rapid growth leads to unprecedented challenges.

Thus, urban environments specifically experience main tangible problems, e.g. increased air pollution, intensively polluted natural resources, relying on unsustainable energy sources, poverty, unemployment and political obstacles are just a few examples. Cities are the centre point of consumption due to its large populations, intertwined by complex supply chains to resource centers worldwide.

The fact that cities often prosper, develop economic movements, enable global economic functions and provide better life opportunities for citizens does not invalidate the challenges they pose for sustainable progression. Firstly, concerning the social pillar, cities tend to play a role in intra-urban social inequalities. This can be exhibited by social exclusion of particular groups, poverty or crime. Due to the rapid increase of urbanisation in developing countries, many cities have to deal with informal housing/settlements. Informal settlements lack infrastructure and have inadequate access to safe water. Secondly, regarding the economic side of sustainability, many cities face issues concerning sustainable economic growth. For instance, due to globalization, many cities have restructured economically because of cultural, technological, and other societal changes. Some cities lack the right (financial) resources and policies regarding economic development. Lastly, on the environmental front, as briefly mentioned above, cities play a tremendous role too. As you may have noticed, there is global concern regarding the emission of greenhouse gases, and how they affect the world climate. Large cities contribute significantly to the release of these gases; according to UN-Habitat, cities play a part in 75% of world resource consumption and emit 80% of CO₂ levels.

3. Past Accomplishments & Future Solutions

3.1 International Response

Many steps have certainly been taken by the UN regarding city sustainability and many cities are definitely working on improvement. In 2014, the UN started an integration segment with ECOSOC, UNEP, UNESCO and other non-profits, primarily focused on Urban Sustainability. According to the UN, it is the first-ever Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council focused on this topic. It exhibits how urbanization can be an effective tool for the combination of economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

Many countries and cities are moving in the right direction for eradicating poverty, ensuring clean water, sustainable energy, achieving sustainable development goals, and enhancing economic growth.

Cities in countries such as Denmark, France, Costa Rica, Iceland, Sweden and Switzerland are on the right track by focusing on renewable energy, reducing air pollution, recycling of waste and industrial development.

Moreover, “UN-Habitat's Cities and Climate Change Initiative is currently supporting cities in 20 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to develop and implement climate action plans.”

3.2 Possible Solutions

The basis to any solution in terms of sustainability is communication. Municipalities depend on their citizens. Locals spend a lot of time in their city and can be considered experts. Their opinion and ideas can be fruitful, therefore interaction with locals is essential. Furthermore, all implemented ideas will directly impact their everyday life.

Additionally, one needs to evaluate what area needs to be improved upon the most. The areas are included in the theory of “basic function of existence” by Franz Schaffer und Karl Ruppert in 1968. The areas include: living, work, supply, disposal, education, recreation/activities, community, communication and transportation. A city needs to invest in all of those areas in order to create an environment that is worthwhile to live in. Furthermore, the factors are intertwined, therefore an improvement made in one area will have an impact on another one. E.g. transportation. London allocates approximately 25% of its land area to roads and supporting infrastructure. Motorists are desperately looking for a parking slot.

Additionally, commuters who are using a car as their form of transportation spend several days of their life per year stuck in a traffic congestion. Moreover, there are more sustainable forms of transportation in comparison to a car. If municipalities invest in public transportation and make it more appealing to people compared to alternative transportation, then obviously there would be an increase in commuters using public transport. This could lead to roads and supporting infrastructure being increasingly dismantled. Therefore, it would create new space that is precious (due to that fact land area in cities can be extremely scarce) and could use it for other purposes. Cities could improve bicycle infrastructure, turn car parks into new buildings and accommodate the ever increasing urge of living space within a city or could create new recreational facilities. Commuters would spend less time commuting and could use that extra time for a more worthwhile purpose.

Therefore, whenever you are trying to make a change in an area, you always need to anticipate what effect it could possibly have on another part of urban life.

3.3 Guiding Questions

This segment is for questions that might help you with what you need to research in order to find proper results for writing your resolution/policy statement:

1. Is the enhancement of cities and communities in terms of sustainability a domestic or an international operation?
2. What is your country's view on urban sustainability? Is it for, or does it not emphasize this?
3. What do cities in your country do to achieve sustainability?
4. In what way can a lack of sustainability in cities affect your nation and its citizens?
5. How far is your country in terms of research and development regarding urban sustainability, and what are its future plans?

4. Conclusion

Hereby we would like to conclude this ECOSOC committee guide. Hopefully the guide has provided you with some insights regarding our committee/the topic and helps you when preparing your country's position paper and resolutions. Some key takeaways regarding the conference: do your own research, be prepared, speak up, debate, hopefully meet new people online and most importantly, enjoy!

On the next page we included some useful links to do some research, but of course feel free to research elsewhere too for more country-specific information!

5. Useful sources for research

Sustainable Urbanization, UN

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/node/53025>

Sustainable cities and communities, UN

<https://academicimpact.un.org/content/sustainable-cities-and-communities>

Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities, UNDP

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-11-sustainable-cities-and-communities.html> (take a look at the “Goals in action” and see whether any of the projects would suit a resolution proposed by your country)

3 Big ideas to achieve sustainable cities and communities, Worldbank

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2018/01/31/3-big-ideas-to-achieve-sustainable-cities-and-communities>

7 principles for building better cities | Peter Calthorpe, TED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFjD3NMv6Kw>