

The ECOSOC Handbook

A practical guide
to the United Nations
Economic and Social
Council



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The ECOSOC Handbook: A practical guide to the
United Nations Economic and Social Council

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10 1 ECOSOC and sustainable development

13 2 Mandates and functions

- 14 2.1 Mandate under the Charter of the United Nations
 - 15 2.2 Relationship to the General Assembly and GA mandates
 - 19 2.3 Relationship to the Security Council
-

22 3 ECOSOC in the UN system

- 24 3.1 Subsidiary bodies
 - 31 3.2 Relationship to the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes
 - 35 3.3 Related bodies
 - 36 3.4 Civil society
 - 37 3.5 Research and training
-

38 4 Participation and credentials

- 39 4.1 Membership
 - 40 4.2 UN Member States and observer States
 - 40 4.3 Observers
 - 41 4.4 The specialized agencies and UN entities
 - 41 4.5 Civil society
-

49 5 Organizational structure

- 50 5.1 ECOSOC Bureau
 - 51 5.2 Secretariat support
-

53 6 ECOSOC at work

- 54 6.1 ECOSOC sessions
 - 54 6.2 ECOSOC agenda
 - 57 6.3 ECOSOC meetings
 - 60 6.4 Conduct of business
 - 68 6.5 ECOSOC resolutions and decisions
 - 76 6.6 Elections and appointments
-

80 7 Key ECOSOC events

- 82 7.1 ECOSOC cycle of work
 - 85 7.2 Management segment
 - 85 7.3 Partnership and coordination
 - 86 7.4 Forums and other mandated meetings
 - 90 7.5 Actions by the UN development system
 - 94 7.6 High-level segment
-

95 8 ECOSOC and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

- 97 8.1 High-level political forum on sustainable development
-

103 9 Communications





COVID-19 has once again demonstrated that the challenges we face as an international community today not only have global implications, but are, above all, multidimensional in their impact. It does not matter whether we are dealing with a health crisis or with the effects of climate change — today's challenges are characterized by high social and economic impacts. Consequently, they pose a real risk to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.

Identifying these challenges at an early stage and defining measures to address them is the strength and the task of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Switzerland is proud that it held the Vice-Presidency during the most recent ECOSOC cycle: a participation and commitment that is in line with Switzerland's strong ties to the United Nations (UN) in general. Switzerland is the only country to have joined the UN by popular vote. Since its accession in September 2002, Switzerland has been an active and innovative member of the Organization, advocating for various issues and taking on leading roles in different UN bodies. Switzerland is particularly motivated when it comes to promoting systemic approaches and supporting measures that enable the UN to function effectively and efficiently.

To achieve its goals, the UN must function resourcefully, and its members must master the complex procedures and interactions that are worthy of fine clockwork. In 2010, when Joseph Deiss, one of my predecessors in the Federal Council, presided over the UN General Assembly (GA), the Swiss Mission in New York published *The GA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, which was updated in 2017 and remains a reference to this day. The success of that first guide encouraged us to publish this ECOSOC Handbook. It is a practical guide that enables delegates to ECOSOC to familiarize themselves with the rules of operation of this UN body and its organs. Finally, yet importantly, it helps us to align ourselves as a global collective towards a common set of goals and thus to work together in the same direction. This united approach and sustainable partnerships are particularly important in dealing with the challenges we face today, and those awaiting us tomorrow. After all, we can only achieve sustainable development if we work together. I wish you an inspiring read!

Ignazio Cassis
Federal Councillor, Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs



La pandémie de COVID-19 a une nouvelle fois démontré que les problèmes auxquels est confrontée la communauté internationale ont des répercussions mondiales mais aussi et surtout, que l'incidence de cette crise présente de nombreuses dimensions. Que nous ayons à faire face à une crise sanitaire ou aux effets du changement climatique, les défis d'aujourd'hui ont ceci de spécifique qu'ils ont un impact social et économique élevé. Ils présentent par conséquent un risque important de compromettre la réalisation des Objectifs de développement durable (ODD) de l'Agenda 2030.

La mission consistant à identifier ces défis suffisamment tôt et à définir des mesures pour les relever revient au Conseil économique et social des Nations Unies (ECOSOC) qui a l'étoffe pour y parvenir. La Suisse est fière d'avoir assumé récemment la vice-présidence de cet organe onusien majeur. Sa participation et son engagement cadrent avec les liens forts qu'elle entretient avec l'Organisation des Nations Unies en général. La Suisse est le seul pays à avoir rejoint l'ONU par un suffrage populaire, en septembre 2002. Depuis son adhésion, elle est un membre actif et innovateur de l'organisation, monte au créneau sur différentes questions et endosse des rôles de premier plan au sein de différents organes de l'ONU. La Suisse est particulièrement motivée en ce qui a trait à la promotion d'approches systémiques et de mesures de soutien permettant à l'ONU de se montrer performante et efficace.

Pour atteindre ses objectifs, l'ONU doit faire preuve d'ingéniosité et ses États membres doivent maîtriser des procédures et interactions complexes dignes d'une mécanique bien huilée. En 2010, alors que l'ancien conseiller fédéral Joseph Deiss présidait l'Assemblée générale (AG) de l'ONU, la Mission permanente de la Suisse à New York a publié le GA Handbook. Ce guide pratique sur l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, mis à jour en 2017, demeure une référence. Le succès rencontré par la première version du GA Handbook nous a incités à publier le présent Guide ECOSOC. Il s'agit d'un guide pratique permettant aux délégués de l'ECOSOC de se familiariser avec les règles de fonctionnement de cette instance onusienne et de ses organes. Enfin, et c'est important, ce document nous aide à nous conformer en tant que membres d'une entité d'envergure mondiale à un ensemble d'objectifs commun et ainsi, à travailler ensemble dans la même direction. Pour relever les défis auxquels nous faisons face aujourd'hui ainsi que ceux qui ne manqueront pas de se présenter à l'avenir, il est important d'avoir cette approche unifiée combinée à des partenariats durables. Nous ne pouvons après tout faire du développement durable une réalité que si nous travaillons la main dans la main. Je vous souhaite une lecture inspirante.

Ignazio Cassis
Conseiller fédéral, Chef du Département des affaires étrangères

Reader's Guide

The United Nations Economic and Social Council operates under rules and procedures that have been changed, modified or quietly laid to rest since the founding of the Organization in 1945. The ECOSOC Handbook attempts to provide an update on the sometimes arcane workings of the Council

What the ECOSOC Handbook is and is not about

The ECOSOC Handbook is intended for delegates of Member States, organizations of the UN system and representatives of stakeholders working in and with ECOSOC and the numerous entities relating to it. It is a practical guide to the rules, procedures, customs, practices, schedules and protocols of the Council — but it is not about the substance of the Council's work. The ECOSOC Handbook is a publication of the Government of Switzerland. While the UN Secretariat has been an invaluable partner in researching and compiling the Handbook, the responsibility for what is presented herein lies with the Government of Switzerland alone.

The ECOSOC Handbook is not a legal document. The “Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council” ([E/5715/Rev.2](#)), the Charter of the United Nations and relevant General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions are the only definitive sources on how ECOSOC conducts its business. The ECOSOC Handbook does not reflect the official position of the UN Secretariat, nor does it claim to be comprehensive: outdated or excessively detailed information has been omitted.

How to use The ECOSOC Handbook

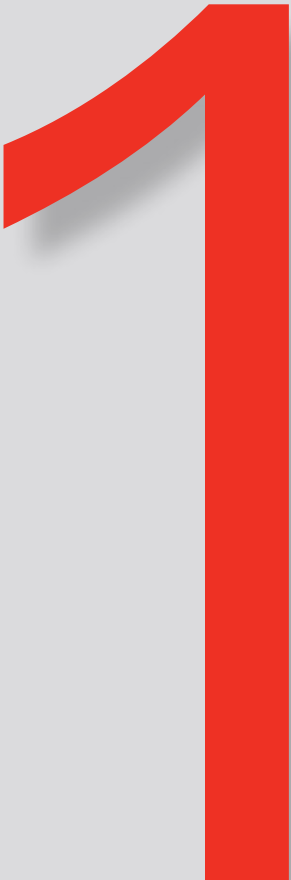
The ECOSOC Handbook is a publication of the Government of Switzerland: it is produced both in printed and online formats. The online version contains links to related passages and relevant UN documents used in the text.

The ECOSOC Handbook is divided into nine chapters, starting with an overview of the wide range of UN bodies and entities that are related to the Council and ending with a short overview on communications. In graphic design and structure, The ECOSOC Handbook follows the [GA Handbook](#) published by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. Some information is presented in tables, while topics of specific relevance are presented in shaded inserts. Notes in the margins alert the reader to facts of particular interest; five appendices provide information in a greater detail.

Language and acronyms: the writing follows UN spelling rules. Whenever suitable, acronyms have been used.

Sources: most of the sources for The ECOSOC Handbook are provided in General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions and/or decisions and in other online content published by the UN. Detailed information has been provided through interviews with UN staff from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and diplomatic staff of the Government of Switzerland.

ECOSOC and sustainable development



Among the organs established under the Charter of the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is unique: it is not a universal body, like the General Assembly (GA); it has no binding powers like the Security Council (SC); and has no authoritative legal voice like the International Court of Justice.

The mandate of ECOSOC is in contrast with the breadth of its scope of work. ECOSOC has a major role in coordinating and guiding the UN development system, which covers a wide array of UN activities in the economic, social and environmental fields. The Council is among the main platforms for following up on major decisions on sustainable development and the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). ECOSOC makes recommendations to GA, Member States and the specialized agencies.

ECOSOC membership is composed of 54 States Members of the UN, elected by the GA. In order to achieve fair and balanced (in UN terminology, “equitable”) geographical representation, seats on the Council are allocated to the five regional groups within the UN:

- African States: 14 seats
- Asia-Pacific States: 11 seats
- Eastern European States: 6 seats
- Latin American and Caribbean States: 10 seats
- Western European and other States: 13 seats

Annually, in June, 18 new Members of the Council are elected by the GA for overlapping three-year terms. Terms begin and end in the calendar year. If a Council Member steps down, a replacement is elected from among the Member States of the respective regional group to complete the term. By tradition, the five permanent Members of the Security Council are almost always Members of ECOSOC (the membership of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was interrupted in 2019 for one year). Member States with large economies, such as Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Germany, India, Japan and Pakistan, are almost always elected to membership in the Council.

ECOSOC meets in annual sessions ([see chap. 6](#)), running from July to July, which are divided into a cycle of recurrent elements ([see chap. 7](#)). The sessions take place at UN Headquarters in New York, with the exception of the humanitarian affairs segment, which is held, alternately, in Geneva and New York.

ECOSOC has its own subsidiary bodies (including regional commissions, functional commissions, expert bodies and working groups), which differ in scope, mandate, autonomy and procedural rules ([see chap. 7](#)).

A bit of history

Creating an economic and social environment that enables individuals across the globe to live free of existential want and to live to their full potential was the reason for the establishment of ECOSOC in 1945. At the time, most countries of the global South lacked the power to determine their own fate and the concept

Why Manhattan?

After the decision to locate the permanent Headquarters of the UN outside war-torn Europe, several American cities showed interest, among them San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York City, which offered the grounds of the 1939 World's Fair in the borough of Queens. In 1946, while the UN was considering locating in Philadelphia, Nelson Rockefeller, a politician, scion of the wealthy Rockefeller family, took the initiative to secure a site in the heart of the city, the central borough of Manhattan. His father, John D. Rockefeller Jr., agreed to write a check for \$8.5 million (worth \$113 million in 2017 dollars) for the UN to buy a parcel of land on the East River in an area known as "Turtle Bay" (where, as famously noted by Kurt Vonnegut, "there are no turtles and there is no bay"). That location has been UN Headquarters ever since.

of "sustainable development" had not entered into political discourse. In the following decades, decolonization brought the urgent need to include everyone in global economic progress, that is, "development", to the fore. Subsequently, man-made environmental changes raised the spectre of destroying the planet's natural foundations and the necessity of preserving them: both matters are addressed as issues under "sustainability" in the ECOSOC agenda. With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), followed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "sustainable development" became the universal beacon both for national and global political action in the economic, social and environmental fields at all levels. In coping with decolonization and global economic changes, ECOSOC was enlarged and reformed over time. Initially, ECOSOC had 18 Members: membership was increased to 27 Members in 1965 and to the current 54 Members in 1973.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The United Nations is the main agent for the promotion of the sustainable development agenda. It is the place where global goals and policies are debated, negotiated and followed up. In 2015, the States Members of the UN adopted resolution 70/1, containing the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are to be achieved by 2030. Progress is measured at the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) ([see chap. 8](#)).

The UN is a major actor in the field of sustainable development "on the ground", supporting the efforts of national Governments to achieve the SDGs. A host of agencies, commissions, groups and other entities form what is called the "UN development system". Contrary to what the name suggests, the system is not a coherent, clearly structured whole, but rather a maze of different governance goals, outlines, mandates, means and methods. Within the development system, there is overlap and competition for scarce resources. Efforts to make the system more efficient and effective have intensified in the twenty-first century. At the time of writing of the ECOSOC Handbook, the latest reform of the UN development system, as adopted by the General Assembly in its [resolution 72/279](#) in May 2018, is in the course of implementation.

Role of ECOSOC

ECOSOC has a role, although not an exclusive one, in overseeing and governing UN activities in the field of sustainable development. Together with the GA, the Council is the place where the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is reviewed, measured, discussed and coordinated ([see chap. 8](#)), and it contributes to oversight and guidance of relevant UN action in the field. The [GA characterizes](#) ECOSOC as the "principal organ for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development" and recognizes "the key role of the Council in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development".

Mandates and functions



As set out in the Charter of the United Nations, ECOSOC is one of the principal organs of the Organization. It is responsible for discharging the functions of the Organization “under the authority” of the General Assembly. The Charter stipulates that ECOSOC: “shall perform such functions as fall within its competence in connection with the carrying out of the recommendations of the General Assembly”; “may, with the approval of the General Assembly, perform services at the request of the Members of the United Nations and at the request of the specialized agencies”; and “shall perform such functions ... as may be assigned to it by the General Assembly”. The functioning of the Council thus involves complicated institutional arrangements, as well as a number of shared or overlapping responsibilities. In practice, ECOSOC has used restraint in applying its institutional powers. It generally defers to the specialized agencies within their fields of competence. Issues such as disputes between Member States, conflict and post-conflict management or the internal affairs of States have been considered to be outside the Council’s scope. However, given the evolving nexus of humanitarian relief, peace and development, the importance of the role of the Council in the vital area of sustainable development has come into sharp focus.

ECOSOC is concerned with an extraordinary array of UN areas of action. The Council is the policy organ that overviews the majority of UN global data production, follows up on international conferences and guides and reviews efforts in the social, economic and related fields. The Council issues policy recommendations to the entities of the UN system and to Member States, provides technical expertise and sets global standards. Last but not least, ECOSOC is the UN bridge to civil society and the world of business and finance (see chap. 4).

The mandates of ECOSOC originate from different sources, the most important of which are those set out in the UN Charter, the outcomes of UN summits, GA resolutions and requests from the Security Council. A steadily growing number of practices and precedents have been included within the ECOSOC area of responsibility.

2.1. Mandate under the Charter of the United Nations

The fundamental mandate of the ECOSOC is laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter, under Article 62 (functions and powers), grants the Council authority to: (a) make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters; (b) make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; (c) prepare draft conventions for submission to the GA; and (d) call, in accordance with the rules prescribed by the United Nations, international conferences on matters falling within its competence.

In addition, under [Article 63](#), the Council has responsibility for defining the terms on which the specialized agencies are brought into relationship with the UN system and is authorized to coordinate their activities. Furthermore, ECOSOC may set its own rules of procedure ([Article 72](#)), establish subsidiary bodies ([Article 68](#), “commissions”) and consult with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ([Article 71](#)).

International conferences

As stated above, under the UN Charter, ECOSOC may call international conferences and prepare draft conventions for the GA on matters within its scope, both of which are shared competences with the Assembly. Since the 1990s, in practice, international conferences have been called for by the GA.

ECOSOC is, however, assigned a role in the follow-up to all major UN conferences and summits within its scope. The annual reviews of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([see chap. 8](#)), in particular the financing for development process ([see chap. 7](#)), are conducted “under the auspices” of the Council. Various subsidiary bodies of the Council have been tasked with the follow-up on specific UN conferences: for example the Commission on Population and Development is responsible for the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development while the Commission on the Status of Women is responsible for reporting on the review process of the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) ([see chap. 3](#)).

2.2. Relationship to the General Assembly and GA mandates

2.2

Many of the roles and functions of ECOSOC are defined in resolutions of the GA. The GA can require ECOSOC to establish a body, and it asserts a right to make requests and give instructions to ECOSOC. Examples include GA resolutions on strengthening and reforming the Council, the latest of which are GA resolutions [75/290A](#) and [75/290B](#). At the end of each annual session, ECOSOC reports to the GA. The report of ECOSOC is contained in Supplement No. 3 of the *Official Records of the General Assembly* (the latest of which is [A/75/3](#)). The first chapter of the report contains proposals submitted for action by the GA.

There are grey zones in the areas of competence between the Council and the Assembly. In general terms, the GA is the policy-setting body and ECOSOC is responsible for implementation. There is overlap, however, between the agendas, particularly between ECOSOC and the Second, Third and Fourth Committees of the GA with regard, for example, to the least developed countries (LDCs), gender equality, the area of drugs and crime, decolonization and the question of Palestine. In some cases, ECOSOC recommends resolutions for adoption by the GA. One such case is the graduation of countries from the [list of LDCs](#). ECOSOC, on the basis of a recommendation from the Committee for Development Policy,

ECOSOC Chamber

The second floor of the Secretariat building houses the ECOSOC Chamber, the interior design and decoration of which were a gift from Sweden to the United Nation, following the design of Sven Markelius. The Chamber was renovated in 2013, along with the rest of the Secretariat.. As part of the renovation, a set of new curtains, named "Dialogos", designed by Ann Edholm, were added to the decoration of the Chamber. When not in use by the Council, the ECOSOC Chamber is a UN conference room like any other.

examines the case of each country and makes recommendations for a decision of the GA. In the area of drugs and crime, the Vienna-based Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotics Drugs recommend draft resolutions for adoption by ECOSOC, and subsequently for adoption by the GA, where they are considered in the Third Committee.

The Second Committee of the GA and ECOSOC hold annual joint meetings. Similar joint meetings between ECOSOC and the Third Committee of the GA are not held. The delineation of competences and responsibilities between the GA and ECOSOC is one reason for the recurring GA debate on the alignment of the agendas of the two organs. The GA annually adopts mandates requesting its President to address synergies and overlap between the agendas, specifically as they relate to the 2030 Agenda. In recent years, the President of the GA has appointed co-facilitators to hold informal consultations to identify "gaps, overlap and duplication". This process is ongoing, although no concrete progress has materialized thus far: views of what constitutes "overlap" differ widely among Member States.

Starting in 2019, the Presidents of the GA and ECOSOC have held joint briefings on their programmes of work and priorities in January each year. On organizational issues such as the date, time and location of meetings, the Presidents meet monthly. The outcome of their discussions is issued in a note by the President of the General Assembly.

In some areas, responsibilities or competences are shared. This concerns the processes of following up on the 2030 Agenda ([see chap. 8](#)), the guidance of the development system (the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) and parts of the budget. The ECOSOC role in the area of human rights is a special case. (see below).

Quadrennial comprehensive policy review process

The mechanism through which Member States control and guide UN development action is the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. QCPR is a prerogative of the General Assembly, although ECOSOC plays a role in the follow-up. Every four years, the GA adopts a QCPR resolution providing policy guidance. ECOSOC annually reviews the implementation of the resolution in its operational activities for development segment ([see chap. 7](#)) and assesses the accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN operational activities for development in the field.

ECOSOC and the budget

The UN budget covers only a small share of the UN action in the social, economic and environmental areas. The larger part is financed through voluntary contributions to the funds and programmes and the budgets of the specialized agencies. However, regarding the UN budget, ECOSOC has a say over the "programme budget" through the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).

The UN budget is decided by the GA at each annual session on the basis of proposals by the Secretary-General and their review by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions ([ACABQ](#)) and the Committee for Programme and Coordination ([CPC](#)) (see below). While under its rules of procedure the Council has a role in shaping budget proposals, in practice, its influence is limited as budgetary matters are negotiated by Member States within the Fifth Committee of the GA, which recommends resolutions on the budget for adoption by the full Assembly. The Council reviews areas of the budget that concern “activities in the social and human rights field” and makes recommendations that are incorporated into the proposals of the Secretary-General to the GA. Subsidiary bodies and the functional commissions of ECOSOC can also make budget proposals, stated in terms of objectives to be achieved. In cases of extreme urgency, ECOSOC can request the Secretariat to implement measures additional to the budget allocation, albeit subject to approval by the GA.

In cases where initiatives in draft resolutions/decisions of the Council introduce additional financial obligations under the budget, the Secretariat must submit a cost estimate of so-called “programme budget implications” (PBI). Before adoption of such a resolution, an oral statement (usually circulated in advance) on PBIs is read out at the plenary meeting of the Council. Following the closure of the Council’s session, a report of the Secretary-General, entitled “Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its (year) session” (most recently, [A/75/333](#)), is submitted for consideration by ACABQ and the Fifth Committee.

Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC)

The link between ECOSOC and the budget process in the GA is the Committee for Programme and Coordination ([CPC](#)). Established by ECOSOC, the CPC is a subsidiary body both of ECOSOC and the General Assembly. It has 34 Members, nominated by ECOSOC and elected by the General Assembly to three-year-terms according to geographical distribution (9 from African States, 7 from the Asia-Pacific States, 4 from Eastern European States, 7 from Latin American and Caribbean States and 7 from Western European and other States groups). The secretariat of CPC is the same as the secretariat of the Fifth Committee of the GA. The CPC reviews the programme plan of the Secretary-General and makes recommendations to ECOSOC and the GA in its sessional report, which is contained in Supplement No. 16 of the *Official Records of the General Assembly* (most recently, [A/76/16](#)). The CPC reviews programme performance reports, evaluation reports issued by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and relevant reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), as well as any additional requests for adjustments to the budget over the course of the year. Over the past 20 years, the reports of the CPC have not contained any recommendations directed to ECOSOC. The Council usually “takes note” of the report of the CPC. In the Fifth Committee, CPC recommendations (or lack thereof) are sometimes the subject of political debate.



“End poverty in all its forms everywhere”

**How many millions
will live on \$1.90
a day in 2030?**

2020 saw the first increase in global poverty since 1998

ECOSOC and human rights

Human rights are a central pillar of the UN at large. They are part of the agenda of the General Assembly under the Third Committee, which conducts most of the substantive work on the subject. However, the Charter also gives ECOSOC the competence to make recommendations for the promotion of “human rights and fundamental freedoms for all”. While there are no links between the human rights agendas of the GA and ECOSOC, in the main, delegates working in the Third Committee and on human rights issues in ECOSOC are the same.

In 2006, most of the instruments and mechanisms developed by ECOSOC in the human rights field were transferred to the newly created, Geneva-based [Human Rights Council](#). There are no formal ties (“reporting lines”) between the two bodies, although the Human Rights Council invites the President of ECOSOC to brief the Council on the outcome of the HLPF on a yearly basis.

“Human rights” are a distinct sub-item of the ECOSOC agenda item on “social and human rights question”, as well as the items on refugee issues and gender equality (“the advancement of women” and others). Two subsidiary bodies of the Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, deal with a wide scope of human rights issues. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) report to ECOSOC, either orally or through a Secretariat note. The UNHCR Executive Committee, which functions as a subsidiary organ of the GA, was established by ECOSOC, which retains a role in its composition. The GA decides on any enlargement of the Executive Committee on the basis of ECOSOC recommendations, pursuant to requests from interested Member States. ECOSOC elects new Member States to the Executive Committee at the request of the GA. The membership of the Committee has increased from 25 at the time of its creation in 1958 to 107 in 2021.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([CESCR](#)) is a human rights-related body established by the Council in 1985: its members are elected by ECOSOC, and it reports to ECOSOC (see chap.3.1). The Council also considers the report of two other treaty bodies, the [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and the [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#), which report through ECOSOC to the General Assembly.

North Delegates Lounge

One of the perks of working as a delegate to ECOSOC is that the ECOSOC Chamber is the meeting room closest to the North Delegates Lounge (the north-facing door of the Chamber is right next to the coffee bar). Of all the places at UN Headquarters in New York where delegates meet to discuss matters informally over coffee the North Delegates Lounge is probably the sunniest. This is a plus for the delegates, who during meetings must spend much of their time in windowless rooms.

2.3. Relationship to the Security Council

In matters of peace and security, ECOSOC has no authority to act on its own. However, the Security Council may request the assistance of ECOSOC, and agreements between ECOSOC and the specialized agencies contain relevant provisions in this regard. In addition, the Security Council may request ECOSOC to convene special sessions, and ECOSOC has the right to provide information to the Security Council.

Until the 1990s, these options were not pursued, with the exception of the period of the Korean war (1950–1953), when the Security Council requested the support of ECOSOC for the protection of civilians. In its response, ECOSOC called upon the specialized agencies to comply with that request. With the ever-growing recognition that economic, social and cultural dimensions are highly relevant in assuring lasting peace and preventing conflict (in UN parlance: the “peace and development nexus”, or “triple nexus” if the dimension of relief is included), the role of ECOSOC has expanded. Over the past decades, in providing a response to the problems faced by countries emerging from conflict, the Council created a number of “ad hoc” advisory groups. During the meeting on the transition from relief to development ([see chap. 7](#)), the Council will consider the question of “African countries emerging from conflict”, and a report on the situation in South Sudan and the Sahel.

As set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)16 of the 2030 Agenda, the nexus between peace, relief and development is built into the ECOSOC agenda. The President of ECOSOC is regularly invited to give oral presentations to the Security Council.

UN Peacebuilding Commission

The UN Peacebuilding Commission ([PBC](#)) is mandated jointly by the GA and the Security Council to “bring together all relevant actors” for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery. From its membership, ECOSOC elects 7 of the 31 PBC Organizational Committee Members. The [founding resolution of the PBC](#) authorizes ECOSOC to request that a country, with its consent, be placed on the agenda of the PBC. While there are no formal reporting lines between ECOSOC and the PBC, since 2009, the Chair of the PBC informally briefs ECOSOC every year under the agenda sub-item on “African countries emerging from conflict”. As of the 2022 session, the informal briefing will be held at the meeting on the transition from relief to development. In addition, annual joint meetings between ECOSOC and the PBC have become customary. Over the years, the two bodies have exchanged views on a broad array of topics related to durable peacebuilding and sustainable development. The 2016 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture stressed the importance of closer cooperation between ECOSOC and the PBC.

UN vocabulary

The UN system and its parts are referred to by various and sometimes interchangeable terms. The following terminology is based on practice; it is not a legal interpretation.

UN organs and UN bodies

“UN organs” is understood to be shorthand for “the principal organs of the UN”. The term “UN bodies” generally encompasses all UN intergovernmental bodies, for example, the principal organs of the UN as well as all their subsidiary bodies, such as executive boards, committees, commissions and working groups. If applied strictly, the term does not include the intergovernmental structures of the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

UN entities

“UN entities” is widely used and understood as a generic term for all institutional entities of the UN system, that is, all UN offices, departments, funds and programmes. A legal interpretation is likely to exclude the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, as they have been created through different intergovernmental processes.

UN system

“UN system” is an umbrella term encompassing the intergovernmental bodies and the different institutions of the UN: the principal organs, the funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and other bodies related to the UN.

Wider UN system

“The wider UN system” is used to underline the inclusion of the specialized agencies and the other related bodies in the UN system.

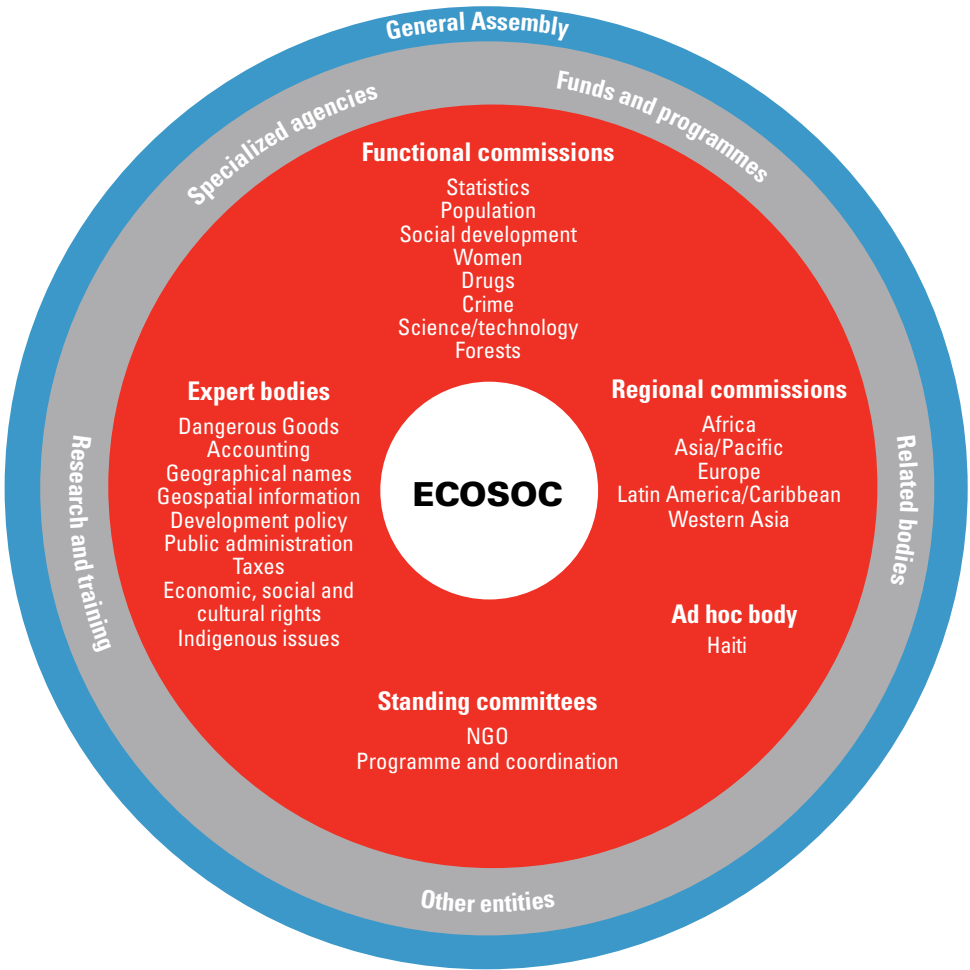
UN family

“UN family” is an informal term used interchangeably with “UN system” to convey the sense of a common cause.

ECOSOC in the UN system



ECOSOC conducts its work in segments, special meetings and forums (see chap. 7) and through 5 regional commissions, 8 functional commissions and 9 expert bodies, as well as standing committees and other related bodies. The Council is in formal relationship with 17 UN specialized agencies and receives reports from other UN entities working in the economic, social, health and related fields. The Council decides or co-decides on the composition of other entities. Numerous intergovernmental organizations with observer status and around 5,000 NGOs are in relationship with ECOSOC.



Subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC

Entities reporting to ECOSOC

ECOSOC acting "under the authority" of the General Assembly

3.1. Subsidiary bodies

The ECOSOC rules of procedure allow it to establish subsidiary organs, such as functional and regional commissions, sessional bodies and standing and ad hoc committees. The Council has done so where substantive matters are not fully covered by one of the specialized agencies. The most recently established subsidiary body is the Group of Experts on Geographical Names, established in 2018. In two cases (Committee for Programme and Coordination (1976) and Commission for Human Settlements (1977), ECOSOC subsidiary bodies were established by the General Assembly.

There are different types of subsidiary bodies. Their terms of reference are set by ECOSOC and are not uniform. They all elect their own officers, with the exception of the sessional bodies. Committees and sessional bodies apply the [ECOSOC rules of procedure](#). The functional commissions have their own set of rules, although all are adopted and revised by ECOSOC. The regional commissions set their own rules of procedure and establish subsidiary bodies autonomously. Terms of reference of subsidiary bodies are endorsed by ECOSOC.

Regional commissions

The UN regional commissions represent the United Nations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Western Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. The membership is composed of Member and observer States. The regional commissions are:

- Economic Commission for Africa ([ECA](#)): 54 Members, based in Addis Ababa, with 5 subregional offices.
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)): 53 Members, 9 associate Members, based in Bangkok, with 5 subregional offices.
- Economic Commission for Europe ([ECE](#)): 56 Members, based in Geneva.
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ([ECLAC](#)): 46 Members, 13 associate Members, based in Santiago, with 2 subregional headquarters, 5 country offices and 1 liaison office.
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ([ESCWA](#)): 18 Members, mostly from the Arab world (17 Member States and the State of Palestine), based in Beirut.

Regional commissions do extensive technical work. They promote regional economic integration and establish connections with regional intergovernmental bodies. They produce economic and statistical information, set norms and make direct policy recommendations to Governments in their respective regions. Examples are the [Aarhus Convention](#) (ECE) and the similar [Escazú Agreement](#) (ECLAC) on information rights and the [ECE Compendium of Legal Instruments, Norms and Standards](#).

Regional commissions have the greatest autonomy of all ECOSOC subsidiary bodies. They establish their own subsidiary committees and working groups. States that are not members of the UN may be Members and non-self governing territories may be associate Members. The regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies hold meetings throughout the year. ECA and ESCAP hold annual sessions, while ECE, ECLAC and ESCWA hold sessions biennially. Some meetings are webcast. The Commission sessions are official intergovernmental meetings and formal accreditation is required to attend. Regional commissions report to ECOSOC with an annual “summary of work”, which is considered together with the annual report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation.

Functional commissions

The ECOSOC functional commissions, headquartered in New York, Geneva and Vienna, carry out the technical work of the Council, providing guidance and advice in specific fields. They hold sessions regularly (the majority, annually), according to their mandates, at their respective headquarters locations. The Members are elected by ECOSOC, usually to four-year terms. In the case of the UN Forum on Forests, membership is universal. The functional commissions report to ECOSOC at the end of their sessions, indicating “issues requiring action” and, in some cases (for example, the Vienna-based functional commissions), making recommendations through ECOSOC to the General Assembly.

Functional commissions have their own set of rules, including for the conduct of business, called the rules of procedure of the functional commissions, as adopted by ECOSOC. The commissions elect their own officers, namely a Chairperson and usually a Vice-Chair, from the other four regional groups, one of whom acts as Rapporteur. The structure of the commissions is not homogeneous. They establish subsidiary organs (subcommissions) of their own, with the approval of ECOSOC, and working groups and committees in consultation with the Secretary-General. Such groups and committees can sit while the respective functional commission is not in session, provided that the Council and the Secretariat agree. Functional commissions set their own participation rules. While some are focused on specialized communities of technical experts, others attract large numbers of an interested global public. Their annual meetings are accompanied by many side events. Prominent examples include the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The functional commissions are:

- **Statistical Commission:** 24 Member States (5 African States, 4 Asia-Pacific States, 4 Eastern European States, 4 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 7 Western European and other States groups), elected to four-year terms, meeting annually for four days in New York, usually in February/March. The Commission is the decision-making body for international statistical activities, aiming at global coordination, developing norms and promoting the development and strengthening of national statistics. It oversees the work of the UN Statistics Division and has developed the framework of indicators for monitoring progress on the 2030

Switzerland joins

On 10 September 2002, after 54 years as an Observer State, Switzerland joined the UN as the 190th Member State. The then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, greeted Switzerland with the words: “The Swiss are here. We have been waiting for a long time.” Switzerland was the first country to put UN membership to a popular vote. Switzerland has been elected to ECOSOC three times (2011–2012, 2014–2016, 2020–2021). The country is a candidate for non-permanent membership in the Security Council for 2023–2024.

Agenda. Eight types of groups “under the auspices” of the Commission work on particular issues: city groups; friends of the Chair groups; task forces and working groups; partnerships; expert groups; committees (including high-level groups); inter-agency and expert groups; and networks. The secretariat is the UN Statistics Division (DESA). The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.

- **Commission on Population and Development (CPD):** 47 Member States (12 African States, 11 Asia-Pacific States, 5 Eastern European States, 9 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 10 Western European and other States groups), elected to four-year terms, meeting annually in New York, usually in April. CPD is the primary body to follow up on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development ([Cairo Conference](#)). The secretariat is the UN Population Division; the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM), provides the Commission Secretary.
- **Commission for Social Development (CSocD):** 46 Members (12 African States, 10 Asia-Pacific States, 5 Eastern European States, 9 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 10 Western European and other States groups), elected to four-year terms, meeting annually in New York. CSocD is the follow-up body to the 1995 [World Summit for Social Development](#) (Copenhagen Declaration for Social Development and Programme of Action). The secretariat is the Division for Inclusive Social Development (DESA). The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.
- **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):** 45 Members (13 African States, 11 Asia-Pacific States, 4 Eastern European States, 9 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 8 Western European and other States), elected to three-year terms, meeting annually in March for 10 days in New York on a priority theme. CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has the leading role in the follow-up to the 1995 [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#). It follows a multi-year work programme (the latest dating from 2020) and negotiates agreed conclusions, with recommendations on draft resolutions, to ECOSOC. At the request of the General Assembly, CSW drafted the 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the legally binding Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CSW sessions are extraordinarily large events, with a prominent ministerial segment, wide participation of civil society organizations and numerous side-events. The 2021 session, held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, included close to 100 ministerial-level and over 10,000 civil society participants. More than 700 side-events were held. The secretariat of CSW is UN-Women. The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.

One hundred per cent female participation

The Commission on the Status of Women held its first session at Lake Success, New York, in February 1947, soon after the founding of the United Nations. All 15 government representatives were women. Since the codification of the legal rights of women needed to be supported by data and analysis, the Commission embarked on a global assessment of the status of women. Extensive research produced a detailed, country-by-country picture of their political and legal standing, which, over time, became a basis for the drafting of a number of human rights instruments, most importantly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”

Will we really have 660 million undernourished people in 2030?

Hunger is on the rise

Gender

Gender parity within the UN system, at all levels, is a prominent concern of the UN Secretariat, as mandated for many years by the General Assembly. While the UN cannot mandate such a strategy regarding the representation of Member States, it is clear that women are also underrepresented in this regard. While women have been Presidents of ECOSOC and of the General Assembly, no woman has ever been Secretary-General. As of mid-2021, there were 21.7 per cent females among the Permanent Representatives in office in New York and 28.3 per cent in Geneva.

- **Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND):** 53 Members (11 African States, 11 Asia-Pacific States, 6 Eastern European States, 10 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 14 Western European and other States groups and 1 seat rotating between the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean groups), elected with “due regard” to countries that grow and manufacture drugs or suffer from heavy trafficking and abuse problems. CND is based in Vienna, meeting for an annual one-week session in the first half of the year, as well as at a reconvened UNODC budget session at the end of the year and intersessional meetings. Together with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, it is the governing body of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)). The CND decides on the scope of application of the three international drug control conventions and follows up on the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on implementing international drug policy commitments (10-year schedule). The secretariat is UNODC.
- **Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ):** 40 Members (12 African States, 9 Asia-Pacific States, 4 Eastern European States, 8 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 7 Western European and other States groups), elected to three-year terms, based in Vienna. Together with CND, it is the governing body of UNODC. It is the preparatory body for the United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which take place every 5 years, and it is the principal UN policymaking body in the field between the congresses. The secretariat is UNODC.
- **Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD):** 43 Members (11 African States, 9 Asia-Pacific States, 5 Eastern European States, 8 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 10 Western European and other States groups), elected to four-year terms, meeting in Geneva. CSTD is the “focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)” (UNCTAD website). It holds an annual discussion forum on “relevant science and technology issues”. The secretariat is UNCTAD.
- **United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF):** universal “all-States” membership, meeting annually for one week in New York. UNFF follows up on the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 (six global forest goals and 26 associated targets) and promotes sustainable forest management to halt deforestation. UNFF convenes ad hoc expert groups (subject to ECOSOC approval) and organizes meetings of non-state stakeholders (“Major Groups”, [see chap. 8](#)). The UNFF secretariat is DESA. The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.

Expert bodies

In “[areas that require international cooperation for the functioning of the global economy](#)”, ECOSOC establishes expert bodies for “technical work”. The experts are either representatives of Governments or are elected in their personal capacity.

Government expert bodies

- **Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals**: 40 Members, meeting biennially in Geneva. The Committee develops model regulations and makes recommendations to Governments, working through two subsidiary organs: the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, which manages the UN Orange Book list, and the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The secretariat is ECE.
- **Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR)**: 34 Members, elected to 3-year terms (9 African States, 7 Asia-Pacific States, 3 Eastern European States, 6 Latin America and the Caribbean States, and 9 Western European and other States groups), meeting annually in Geneva for a three-day session in October/November. ISAR focuses on emerging issues in international accounting and reporting and promotes best practices in corporate governance. ISAR reports to UNCTAD. The secretariat is the UNCTAD Division of Investment and Enterprise.
- **UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)**: universal membership, meets annually in New York, usually in August. The Committee was established in 2011. In 2018, its mandate was substantively revised. GGIM is a consultative mechanism on global geospatial information management, with a view to strengthening global interoperability and interchangeability of geospatial data (or geographic information) and services for the achievement of UN goals. It organizes regular high-level multi-stakeholder discussions and global forums. The secretariat is the UN Statistics Division (DESA). The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.
- **United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)**: universal membership, meets in a biennial session, usually in New York. UNGEGN is the follow-up body on the implementation of the programme adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN). It works in 24 geographical/linguistics divisions and in 9 working groups, which hold meetings in various locations across the world. The Members are governmental experts. Experts with specialized knowledge (including NGOs without consultative status) are invited to participate. The secretariat is the UN Statistics Division (DESA). The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.

Experts serving in their personal capacity

- **Committee for Development Policy (CDP)**: 24 Members, nominated by the Secretary-General and appointed by ECOSOC

to three-year terms, meeting annually in New York for five days in late winter or spring. CDP reviews the [list of countries in the least developed country \(LDC\) category](#) and recommends updates every three years. The secretariat is within the Economic Analysis and Policy Division (DESA).

- **Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA):** 24 Members, nominated by the Secretary-General and appointed by ECOSOC to four-year terms, meeting annually for one week in New York, generally in April. CEPA drafts ECOSOC resolutions on governance with regard to the implementation of the SDGs, and promotes the strategic use of information technologies in public administration. The secretariat is the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DESA).
- **Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (Tax Committee):** 25 Members, nominated by Governments and, after the notification of ECOSOC, appointed by the Secretary-General to four-year terms according to geographical balance and representation of “different tax systems”. The Tax Committee meets biennially, in spring in New York and in the fall in Geneva. It provides the UN framework for dialogue on international tax cooperation, and it reviews and updates the United Nations [Model Double Taxation Convention](#) between developed and developing countries and the Manual for the Negotiation of Bilateral Tax Treaties between developed and developing countries. Between meetings, it works through ad hoc subcommittees and working groups. The activities are financed through a Trust Fund. The secretariat is the DESA Financing for Sustainable Development Office.
- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR):** 18 Members nominated by States parties to the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and elected by ECOSOC to four-year terms (geographical representation according to a specific formula). CESCR is the treaty body monitoring the implementation of the Covenant by its States parties. It meets twice a year for a 3-week plenary and a one-week pre-sessional working group in Geneva. The secretariat is OHCHR.
- **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII):** 16 Members, 8 nominated by Governments and elected by ECOSOC, 8 appointed by the President of ECOSOC in consultation with the Bureau, and regional groups and indigenous groups representing seven sociocultural world regions, each for a three-year term. UNPFII meets annually for 10 days in April/May in New York with a large number of participants (over 1,500 persons attending). It makes recommendations on indigenous issues to ECOSOC and through ECOSOC to funds, programmes and entities of the UN. The Forum is one of three UN bodies mandated to deal specifically with indigenous issues. The secretariat is part of the Division of Inclusive Social Development (DESA). The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM) provides the Commission Secretary.

First session of ECOSOC

The first session of ECOSOC was convened in London from 23 January to 18 February 1946. The President was Sir Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, the delegate of India to the San Francisco Conference. At the time, the Council had only 18 members.

Standing committees

The two standing committees of ECOSOC are:

- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Committee) (see chap. 4).
- Committee for Programme and Coordination (budget matters) (see chap. 2).

Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti

A group of 18 Member States, mostly from the Western hemisphere, mandated to make recommendations on international assistance for the long-term development of Haiti. The group was established in 1999 and disbanded the same year; it was reactivated by ECOSOC in 2004. The members are appointed by the President of ECOSOC.

ECOSOC in the field

UN action touches the lives of peoples and individuals across the globe in many ways, from aid in humanitarian emergencies to supporting sustainable development in all aspects. Instances are fighting hunger, strengthening the human rights of women and children, ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and assisting countries in finding a way out of poverty. The wide variety of UN institutions and bodies active in this arena collectively form the “United Nations development system”. Most often, the UN is not the only actor in a given situation, but one element in a complicated puzzle, with the host State, other States, regional organizations, non-state actors and private institutions as additional parts. In every case, the host State is the decision-maker over actions taken on its territory. In UN parlance, the place where it all happens is “on the ground” or “in the field”, the place where UN statements, resolutions and decisions meet the reality test. ECOSOC, through its relationship with the specialized agencies, funds and programmes and other UN entities, has a role in politically reviewing, evaluating and guiding UN action in the field.

3.2. Relationship to the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes

A number of UN entities connected to ECOSOC are not subsidiary bodies but have their own governance structure, independent from the Council. They are the specialized agencies, the funds and programmes and the international financial institutions.

Specialized agencies

The specialized agencies are active in the field and set global norms and standards in their areas of competence. They have been established independently, many of them long before the United Nations was founded. As defined by the Charter, they were brought under the UN umbrella through ECOSOC by concluding “relationship agreements” with the Council. These agreements



“Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”

Is COVID-19 teaching us anything?

The pandemic has halted or reversed progress in health and shortened life expectancy worldwide

define how a specialized agency is made a part of the UN system. The following specialized agencies have concluded relationship agreements with ECOSOC:

- [FAO](#) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), based in Rome.
- [ICAO](#) (International Civil Aviation Organization), based in Montreal, Canada.
- [IFAD](#) (International Fund for Agricultural Development), based in Rome.
- [ILO](#) (International Labour Organization), based in Geneva.
- [IMF](#) (International Monetary Fund), based in Washington, D.C.
- [IMO](#) (International Maritime Organization), based in London.
- [ITU](#) (International Telecommunication Union), based in Geneva.
- [UNESCO](#) (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), based in Paris.
- [UNIDO](#) (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), based in Vienna.
- [UNWTO](#) (World Tourism Organization), based in Madrid.
- [UPU](#) (Universal Postal Union), based in Bern.
- [WHO](#) (World Health Organization), based in Geneva.
- [WIPO](#) (World Intellectual Property Organization), based in Geneva.
- [WMO](#) (World Meteorological Organization), based in Geneva.
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development ([IBRD](#)), International Development Association ([IDA](#)), International Finance Corporation ([IFC](#)), all part of the World Bank Group, based in Washington, D.C. The World Bank Group and its other parts (International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) are not specialized agencies in the sense of the Charter.

The first relationship agreements, which served as a model, were with ILO, FAO and UNESCO. Under these agreements, the specialized agencies have the right to be represented at ECOSOC meetings, to participate in deliberations, to submit proposals and to consult on agenda items, but they do not have voting rights. They do not send formal reports to ECOSOC, but the Council can request reports on specific issues on its agenda. The specialized agencies have their own governance structure. They follow their own rules and make their own decisions, guided by their own institutions. Put in layman's terms, the specialized agencies do not take direction from the UN Secretariat nor from the General Assembly. However, the UN Charter mandates the coordination of their "policies and activities" and assigns ECOSOC a role therein. Given the autonomy of the specialized agencies, such coordination is limited. On the Secretariat level, it takes place in the Development Coordination Office in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which oversees the implementation of the United Nations development system reform (see [chap. 1](#)) and the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. On the intergovernmental level, coordination and coherence of UN entities in the field is at the heart of the QCPR (see [chap. 2](#)) which is reviewed at the operational activities for development segment of ECOSOC (see [chap. 7](#)). The specialized agencies are invited to the ECOSOC coordination segment, where

coherence around the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other thematic issues is discussed.

Funds and programmes

The funds and programmes of the United Nations are guided by their executive boards which meet annually, mostly in New York. ECOSOC elects the Members of the boards (in the case of the World Food Programme, half of the Members are elected by FAO). These governing bodies decide on the programme and budget of the respective funds and programmes. However, the General Assembly assigned ECOSOC a role to provide “evidence-based” political guidance and “overall coordination” in line with its policies and the 2030 Agenda ([see chap. 8](#)). The Executive Boards of UNDP/ UNFPA/ UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP report to ECOSOC and through the Council to the General Assembly. Their reports are considered at the operational activities for development segment of the Council ([see chap. 7](#)) of ECOSOC, which “*takes note*” of the reports, without specifically reviewing them. Regular exchanges with funds and programmes are also a part of the humanitarian affairs segment.

International financial institutions, UNWTO and UNCTAD

The international financial institutions (IFIs) based in Washington, D.C., called the “Bretton Woods institutions”, are specialized agencies and part of the UN system (with the exception of ICSD and MIGA), but they operate with a high degree of autonomy. In 2018, the Secretary-General and the World Bank Group agreed on a Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda. ECOSOC is not mentioned in this text. However, since the late 1990s, the Council provides the forum for exchange between the UN and international finance and trade institutions. A special high-level ECOSOC meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD is an integral part of the forum on financing for development follow-up “under the auspices” of ECOSOC (FfD forum: [see chap. 7](#)). One part of the meeting is a dialogue between representative bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions, UNCTAD and WTO with ECOSOC. Prior to that meeting, the ECOSOC Bureau visits Washington, D.C. for an exchange with the Executive Board of the IMF/World Bank Group. Regional development banks participate in the FfD Forum.

The IFIs and WTO are regular participants in the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) ([see chap. 8](#)). Upon invitation by the President of ECOSOC, they provide inputs to the Forum, which are included in the report of the HLPF entitled “Synthesis of voluntary contributions from functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums” (most recent: E/HLPF/2021/4). IFIs and WTO participate in HLPF meetings in the same manner as other organizations of the UN system. The Executive Heads and experts of IFIs and the WTO are sometimes invited to participate as panelists in HLPF thematic reviews.

3.3. Related bodies

The following UN bodies have a reporting or other relationship with ECOSOC.

- **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):** 26 Members, 13 elected by ECOSOC, 10 nominated by Governments and 3 by WHO for five-year terms, meeting three times a year in Vienna. INCB is the “quasi-judicial” monitoring body for the implementation of the three UN international drug control conventions, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs. It supports the efforts of Governments in controlling precursor substances for illicit drugs while securing the free flow of such substances for medical and scientific purposes through the International Import and Export Authorization System for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. INCB reports to the CCPCJ and ECOSOC usually takes note of the INCB report on the recommendation of CCPCJ.
- **Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):** 38 Members, 22 Member States elected by ECOSOC and 5 NGOs selected by the NGO community to three-year-terms, and 11 founding (“co-sponsoring”) UN agencies with full participation rights, meeting in Geneva. The Board establishes policies and priorities and approves the plan of action and the budget for UNAIDS. UNAIDS (based in Geneva) was established by ECOSOC and reports the Council through the Secretary-General. The work of UNAIDS is considered biennially by ECOSOC, which adopts a resolution negotiated in Geneva.
- **Committee for the United Nations Population Award:** established by the General Assembly with the mandate to choose the recipient of the annual UN Population Award: 10 Member States are elected by ECOSOC.
- **UN-Nutrition:** the UN system coordination and collaboration mechanism for nutrition and malnutrition issues at the global and country level. UN-Nutrition was created through the merger of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, an ECOSOC-mandated body reporting to the Council, and the UN Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, an inter-agency mechanism for country-level coordination.

The reports of a number of other entities or bodies in the UN system are on the ECOSOC agenda, including:

- **High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation,** a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, reports to the GA (through the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board) as well as to ECOSOC, which considers its report at the operational activities for development segment.



“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”

Will everyone be able to read and write in 2030?

Due to COVID-19, it is estimated that over 50% of children and adolescents worldwide will not meet minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics in 2030

- **UN-Habitat Assembly**, which meets every four years, reports to the General Assembly through ECOSOC.
- **United Nations Environment Assembly** (the governing body of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), reports to the General Assembly through ECOSOC.
- The annual report of the **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, the human rights treaty body monitoring the implementation of the CRPD Convention, is considered by ECOSOC.

3.4. Civil society

3.4

ECOSOC is the only open door for non-state actors and organizations (UN parlance: “civil society”) to have a formal relationship with the United Nations. Formal relations are reserved for NGOs, which are granted “consultative status” by the Council. Over the last three decades, the scope of interaction between the UN and different categories of non-state actors (“stakeholders”) has widened. With the advent of globally active businesses and large, highly influential private actors interested in stability and sustainability, non-state participation in the activities of the UN has reached a new dimension. In ECOSOC, non-state stakeholders ([see chap. 4](#)) are invited, to varying degrees, to participate in panels, round tables and events. On the ground and in the field many forms of cooperation are explored. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, the interaction with a wider range of civil society is formalized in the “Major Groups and other stakeholders” category ([see chap. 8](#)).

3.5. Research and training

3.5

ECOSOC has a role in the oversight and the selection of the leadership of United Nations research and training facilities. The UN System Staff College ([UNSSC](#)), United Nations University ([UNU](#)) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research ([UNITAR](#)), report biennially to the Council. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute ([UNICRI](#)) reports through CCPCJ and the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) reports through CSocD.

Participation and credentials

4

While only the 54 Member States have voting rights and deciding powers within the Council, all Member States and observer States, intergovernmental organizations with observer status with the General Assembly and ECOSOC, UN entities and accredited civil society organizations can contribute to the work of ECOSOC as non-voting participants. The criteria for participation vary. Where participation is open to all Member States and observer States, it is called “universal participation”.

4.1. Membership

To be eligible for membership and participate in ECOSOC, a State must be a member of the UN and obtain accreditation for its delegation. Each Member of ECOSOC is represented by one accredited representative and as many alternates and advisers as needed. The ECOSOC delegation of a Member State is separate from the delegation to the GA, but there is usually an overlap between the two (see [The GA Handbook: A practical guide the United Nations General Assembly](#)). In most cases, the Permanent Representative of a Member State is the ECOSOC representative. Some Member States designate another representative as their “ECOSOC ambassador”.

In practice, ECOSOC delegations are not submitted to a separate credentialing process from that required for the GA. For each ECOSOC session, the Secretariat prepares a list of participants based on information requested of and provided by the Member States.

Access

No one can access the premises of UN Headquarters in New York without a UN grounds-pass (“badge”), a special day pass or by being escorted by a UN official or staff member. Delegates, UN staff, accredited representatives of civil society and the media all need to have UN grounds-passes. Visiting Government representatives from Member States are registered online (e-deleGATE, [see appendix II](#)) with the Protocol and Liaison Service, at the request of their Permanent Mission. For meetings with large numbers of participants (for example, the opening of the HLPF), it can happen that the available meeting space cannot accommodate all grounds-pass holders. In such cases, ad hoc arrangements are coordinated between the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division and the Protocol and Liaison Service (DGACM), DESA and the Department of Safety and Security. Usually, a limited number of special events tickets are issued per delegation to gain access to the conference rooms. Visitors attending an ECOSOC meeting who do not have a UN grounds-pass can access the premises with a special permit valid for the day of the event. For special guests (example: panelists or speakers), DESA, or the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the case of the humanitarian affairs segment, request access, and the Department of Safety and Security issues special events tickets.

The “All-State” formula

Not all States are members of the United Nations. This is at times taken into consideration in organizing events. UN conferences or ECOSOC forums often use the “all-State formula”, which includes the Holy See, the State of Palestine, the Cook Islands and Niue as full participants.

Diplomatic status

When accredited, delegations and staff of a Permanent Mission of a Member State to the UN in New York (the equivalent of an embassy to another country) obtain diplomatic status. Decisions regarding accreditation are governed by the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the UN between the UN and the United States (1947) and involve the Member State, the UN Secretariat and the United States Government as host country. The focal point for accreditation issues in the UN Secretariat is the [Protocol and Liaison Service](#) (DGACM).

4.2

4.2. UN Member States and observer States

All Member States and observer States of the UN are invited to participate in ECOSOC deliberations of “any matter of particular concern” to them. They can submit proposals, co-sponsor them and take part in deliberations (i.e., speak). This applies to committees, sessional bodies and subsidiary organs. Invitations to participate as panellists/invited speakers are normally issued by the President of ECOSOC or the chair of the subsidiary body through the Secretariat. Functional commissions decide autonomously on invitations.

Although all Member States can participate, only Council Members can vote in ECOSOC. A proposal submitted by a non-member of ECOSOC is not automatically considered by the Council. A request from an ECOSOC Member should be received in order to proceed with action.

Regional commissions recommend expansion of their membership, subject to approval by ECOSOC. They can accept non-members of the United Nations (observer States, non-self-governing territories) as Members or associate members.

4.3

4.3. Observers

States that are not members of the UN and international organizations may be invited to participate as observers or permanent observers. The granting of observer status is not addressed in the Charter but has developed through practice. The first country to be recognized as an observer was Switzerland, in 1946.

Regarding States that are not members of the United Nations, ECOSOC follows the practice of the GA and applies the “all-State formula”. In contested cases, it defers to the opinion of the GA. Two non-Member States, the Holy See and the State of Palestine, have Permanent Observer Missions to the UN and special Permanent Observer status. They participate like States that are not Members of the Council in all aspects of its work, without the right to vote or to table resolutions.

Intergovernmental organizations and other entities

ECOSOC decides on the participation of “intergovernmental organizations” on a permanent or an ad hoc basis on the recommendation of its Bureau. Participation of these observers is more restricted than the participation of States. The list of observers is contained in an annex to the annual report of ECOSOC to the GA (most recent, [A/76/3](#)). There are currently 92 organizations listed, most of which also have permanent observer status with the GA, which in all cases is extended to ECOSOC. A number of organizations are designated by ECOSOC as permanent or ad hoc observers.

It should be noted that the special procedural rights assigned to the European Union by the GA do not apply to ECOSOC events governed by the ECOSOC rules of procedure. However, in some forums “under the auspices” of ECOSOC (like the HLPF or the FfD Forum) the EU has enhanced observer status.

4.4. The specialized agencies and UN entities

4.4

The participation of the specialized agencies, UN organs and entities in the deliberations of ECOSOC has different aspects. There are obligations to support and mandates to report to the Council on the one hand and rights to make proposals and contribute to its decision-making on the other.

The Secretary-General and his/her representatives participate in all deliberations of ECOSOC.

Representatives of the specialized agencies and UN entities may both attend and speak during ECOSOC meetings. Those that report to ECOSOC have the opportunity to introduce their reports under the relevant agenda item. The specialized agencies have the right to be consulted by the Secretary-General on the best “coordinated use of resources” and on “new activities” of the UN system. They can submit proposals and propose items to the agenda. UN funds and programmes and other entities do not have that option. The specialized agencies take the floor during each session of the Council, but the submission of proposals is rare and has not occurred recently.

4.5. Civil society

4.5

ECOSOC is the entrance portal for civil society to take part in the work of the United Nations. Note that the term “civil society” does not reflect all elements of society outside of Government. UN parlance distinguishes between “civil society”, which, for practical purposes, means the realm of NGOs, and the “private sector”, which basically means businesses, academia and a variety of other groups or categories interested in a particular subject. In

processes of cooperation or determining common ground, the term “stakeholder” is used, referring to interests which make themselves heard and have a “stake” in a certain issue. The bandwidth of stakeholder participation in the UN varies widely. In closed meetings of the Council, civil society and stakeholders are not present. In informal meetings of the Council, the President can decide to invite stakeholders to participate. ECOSOC forums follow more inclusive participation rules. Some are set by modalities resolutions of the GA, some by the chair of the forum (or, in cases of negotiation, a facilitator). Invitations to participate can be issued on an ad hoc basis, often in consultation with the Secretariat. In recent years, ECOSOC and the GA have widened the inclusion of stakeholders in some areas. One example was the civil society hearing with “all relevant stakeholders” on the reform of the UN development system in 2015. The GA assigns the ECOSOC “an important role as a platform for multi-stakeholder participation”. A category of “Major Groups” and other stakeholders are regularly invited to participate in the HLPF ([see chap. 8](#)), and the GA requests ECOSOC to apply similar modalities to other parts of its agenda.

While the UN Charter is silent about civil society participation in the GA, it provides for formal interaction between NGOs and ECOSOC. ECOSOC is the only open door for civil society organizations to relate formally to the United Nations (see below). Organizations without formal ECOSOC status can only participate in Council events upon invitation and gain access with an ad hoc events pass. The specialized agencies can develop partnerships with civil society organizations outside the framework set by ECOSOC.

Non-governmental organizations

The formal relationship of NGOs with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies is called “consultative status”. In this context, “consultation” is not the same as the “participation”. It does not, per se, include the right to participate in debates and deliberations of the Council. Consultative status with ECOSOC is the only way a non-governmental stakeholder organization can obtain a formalized relationship with the UN at large (there are formalized relations between organizations and the specialized agencies).

NGOs at international, regional and national levels have the right to ask for consultative status with ECOSOC. It is granted by ECOSOC, based on a recommendation of the Committee on NGOs. To date, more than 5,000 NGOs have obtained such status (see [E/2019/INF/5](#)).

Rights and obligations derived from consultative status and the process of obtaining it are laid down in ECOSOC [resolution 1996/31](#). NGOs are eligible for consultative status with ECOSOC if they pursue the goals and principles set out in the UN Charter, support the work of the UN and are working in the fields of competence of ECOSOC. Applications for consultative status are submitted to the [NGO Branch of DESA](#) and reviewed by the ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Committee) (see below). The decision rests with the ECOSOC, upon recommendation of the NGO Committee. In most — although not all — cases, the Council

Missed a meeting?

The press releases of the Department of Global Communications can be lifesavers for delegates who could not attend a meeting. They are posted shortly after the closure of ECOSOC meetings. Press releases are not formal records but they provide an excellent meeting summary. In addition, some meetings are webcast and can be viewed on demand at UN WebTV.

follows these recommendations, but in highly politicized areas these decisions can be strongly contested.

Applicants are required to meet a number of criteria. They must demonstrate “recognized standing” in their “particular field of action”, have an established headquarters with an executive officer, a democratically-adopted constitution and a policy organ representative of and controlled by their membership. Funding must be “mainly” by contributions, and all sources of funding must be transparent. Applicants cannot be established by a Government or by an intergovernmental agreement, but governmental authorities can be Members as long as there is no governmental interference with the “free expression of views of the NGO”. Affiliates of international organizations are eligible if they can demonstrate “direct relevance” of their work. National organizations are eligible after consultation with the Member State concerned.

Applicants active in the human rights field “should” work “in accordance” with the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

There are three categories of consultative status:

- General consultative status: large, “broadly representative” NGOs that make “substantive and substantial contributions” to ECOSOC and are “closely involved with the economic and social life of people of areas they represent”. As of 2021, there were 137 organizations in this category.
- Special consultative status: NGOs with “special competence” in a field of ECOSOC activity. As of 2021, there were 4,488 organizations in this category.
- Roster category: NGOs that “can make occasional and useful” contributions. They are put on a list (“roster”) and are consulted when asked. Organizations are placed on the roster either through a decision of ECOSOC, action of the Secretary-General or by virtue of their consultative status with the specialized agencies and other UN bodies. As of 2021, there were 969 organizations in this category.

NGOs that have attained consultative status enter into an arrangement with ECOSOC that defines their rights and obligations. The arrangement extends to ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. Functional commissions apply their own rules of procedure. Upon registration (www.indico.un.org), NGOs in consultative status can attend and participate, with limited numbers of representatives, in meetings and events of the Council and its subsidiary bodies as well as in events held by the Human Rights Council. Each NGO in consultative status can designate representatives to obtain annual passes granting them access to UN premises. Up to 7 such passes can be requested for New York (also 7 for Geneva and 7 for Vienna). Rights to participation differ according to status (see table on the rights of NGOs), and arrangements are different for every meeting. Participating NGOs must be in consultative status with ECOSOC and their representatives must have a valid grounds pass. The rules of procedure allow NGOs in general consultative status to

propose the inclusion of items of special interest to them on the Council agenda, but the provision has not been put into practice. They can also propose agenda items to the functional commissions, which decide with a two-thirds majority on the proposal. NGOs in consultative status do not have any diplomatic status or UN privileges such as tax exemptions, diplomatic passports or travel privileges. They are not authorized to enter into business arrangements on behalf of the UN or to misuse the Organization's name or logo for endorsement of their activities in any way.

Rights of NGOs			
	NGOs in general consultative status	NGOs in special consultative status	NGOs on the Roster
Receives agenda and other official documents from Secretariat	Yes	Yes	Yes
Representatives can enter UN premises	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can organize a side event	Yes, if co-sponsored by a Permanent Mission, a permanent observer mission, or a UN entity.	Yes, if co-sponsored by a Permanent Mission, a permanent observer mission, or a UN entity.	Yes, if co-sponsored by a Permanent Mission, a permanent observer mission, or a UN entity.
Can propose agenda item	Yes, but provision not put in practice. Functional commissions decide with 2/3 majority on agenda items proposed by NGO.	No	No
Can attend open informal ECOSOC meetings	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can attend public ECOSOC meetings	Yes	Yes	Yes, when matters within their field of competence are being discussed.
Can speak in formal ECOSOC meetings	Yes, provided that the NGO Committee has made a recommendation.	Yes, provided that the NGO Committee has made a recommendation.	Only if invited by the Council to speak.
Can submit written statement to ECOSOC	Yes — max. 2,000 words and subject to overall documentation limits.	Yes — max. 500 words (subsidiary bodies: 1,500 words) .	At the discretion of the president/Chair.

Source: *“Working with ECOSOC: an NGOs Guide to Consultative Status”* (DESA). Rules 80-84 of the ECOSOC rules of procedure apply.

The purpose of the relationship between an NGO and ECOSOC is to assist the Council and its subsidiary bodies in their work. An NGO can make complaints against a Member State, which are considered and circulated if within the competence of ECOSOC. Politically motivated abuse of the relationship is explicitly prohibited ([ECOSOC resolution 1975/1919](#)).

NGOs in general and special consultative status can be invited to GA meetings on economic and social matters by the Secretary-General. For international UN conferences, NGOs in consultative status are accredited “as a rule”. The conditions under which NGOs without consultative status can be invited are usually spelled out in a “modalities” resolution.

The consultative status of an NGO is periodically reviewed by the NGO Committee of ECOSOC (see below). NGOs in general and special consultative status must submit a “brief report of their activities” every four years. Consultative status can be revoked or suspended for up to 3 years for acts contrary to the principles and purposes of the Charter, for criminal activities and for lack of “positive or effective contribution” to the work of the UN. A suspended or terminated NGO must wait 3 years before it can reapply for consultative status.

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Committee), a standing committee of ECOSOC, is the gatekeeper for the granting of consultative status to an NGO. It reviews the applications and makes recommendations about granting and revoking consultative status to ECOSOC. It is mandated to ensure NGO participation from all regions. It makes recommendations on the granting of consultative status for the decision of ECOSOC. The NGO Committee is composed of 19 Member States, elected by ECOSOC for 4-year terms according to geographical representation (5 African States, 4 Asia-Pacific States, 2 Eastern European States, 4 Latin American and Caribbean States, 4 Western European and other States groups). Committee members do not have to be Members of ECOSOC. The Committee meets twice a year, in January/February for a main session and usually in May for a resumed session.

The NGO Committee is the clearinghouse for communications between accredited NGOs and ECOSOC. It is charged with the “regular monitoring” of the “evolving relationship” between NGOs and the UN. It reviews the reports submitted by accredited NGOs and consults NGOs in general and special consultative status on the agenda and on issues where ECOSOC or a subsidiary organ requests consultation with an NGO. It recommends which NGO should be heard on which issues and it consults with the Secretariat on “consultative arrangements” with NGOs.

The secretariat of the NGO Committee is the [NGO Branch \(DESA\)](#).



“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”

Will all of us have clean water in 2030?

Two billion people worldwide do not have access to safely managed drinking water

Admission process

NGOs do not have a right to be heard at the United Nations. Consultative status with ECOSOC has to be applied for and decided upon by the Council. The duration between the submission of an NGO application for consultative status and the granting of it can be extraordinarily long. In some cases, it takes many years. The deadline for submitting an application to DESA is 1 June of the year before consideration of consultative status by the NGO Committee. Applicants have to submit “sufficient data” no later than six weeks before the scheduled consideration. They must attest to having been in existence for at least two years at the time of the submission of their application. An NGO can be present when the NGO Committee considers its application, and can respond orally to questions. If a Committee Member deems that a question has not been answered satisfactorily, the Committee defers the decision to its next meeting.

Badges

The colour-coded letter on the UN grounds-pass (badge) identifies role and rank. Together with the “Blue Book” (the directory of the Permanent Missions to the UN) and the UN Telephone Directory, these badges are key to the “who is who” at the UN ([see appendix II](#)).

Function	Letter on the badge
<p>Permanent Missions</p> <p>VIP Permanent Representative Deputy Permanent Representative Minister Counsellor Counsellor, First Secretary, Second Secretary, Third Secretary, Adviser, Attaché Support Staff</p>	<p>White badge with or without photo Gold D Silver D Yellow D Red D White D</p>
<p>Observers</p> <p>Head of Observer delegation Observer delegates</p>	<p>Gold O Red O</p>
<p>UN entities</p> <p>SG/Deputy SG UNDP Administrator Under-Secretary-General (USG) Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Directors D1 and D2 Professional Staff P1-P5 General Service Staff G1-G8</p>	<p>No badge (escorted) Yellow S Yellow S Yellow S White S White S</p>
<p>Civil society</p> <p>Accredited NGOs Affiliated NGOs</p>	<p>Brown N Brown A</p>
<p>Media</p> <p>Accredited press Affiliated press</p>	<p>White P Green P</p>

Organizational structure



The ECOSOC Bureau consists of a President (Chair) and four Vice-Presidents. The Bureau is supported by the Secretariat in areas pertaining to organizational, protocol, records, archival and substantial matters (see below). The President has a suite of offices at UN Headquarters in New York, but does not have a dedicated staff nor any funding from the UN budget. Bureau Members are elected ad personam, that is to say, they rely on the support of the Permanent Missions of their respective countries.

5.1. ECOSOC Bureau

The Bureau is the day-to-day manager of ECOSOC affairs and the clearinghouse for technical, operational and organizational details of the work of the Council. It makes substantial inputs to the ECOSOC programme of work.

The Bureau Members are elected by the Council in their personal capacity. Each regional group is represented in the Bureau, with geographical rotation for the presidency. The designated representative of each Member State to ECOSOC is eligible for election. The Bureau is elected for a given session at the first meeting of that session. The terms of ECOSOC membership of a Member State (calendar year) and of Bureau membership (cycle) are not synchronous.

President of ECOSOC

The function of President of ECOSOC is established by the UN Charter. She/he is elected on the basis of geographical rotation. The President is the consensus builder in the Bureau. According to the [rules of procedure](#), she/he wields “complete control” over the proceedings of the ECOSOC; opens and closes plenary meetings; directs discussions; accords the right to speak; rules on points of order; and announces decisions. The President is the interlocutor with other organs and bodies.

However, the President in her/his personal capacity does not participate in the actual decision-making process of ECOSOC. Presidents can delegate their vote to the delegation of their Member State.

The President:

- Is consulted or decides on certain appointments of subsidiary bodies and designates the Members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti.
- Is the recipient of information submitted to the Council by UN organs and bodies and is responsible for reporting thereon.
- Convenes informal meetings “on emerging issues” (GA resolutions 68/1 and 72/305 and 75/290A) and summarizes the outcome in a non-negotiated Presidential statement.
- Organizes informal ECOSOC meetings, such as the Youth Forum. In recent years, ECOSOC Presidents have also held joint meetings with other UN bodies, for example with the Peacebuilding Commission.
- Represents ECOSOC before other UN organs and bodies (Security Council, Human Rights Council and others) and is

often invited to address subsidiary bodies and to speak at other meetings and events.

- Meets regularly with the President of the GA and, as needed, with the heads of the specialized agencies.

The President can delegate the chairmanship of a meeting to a Vice-President. If the President is no longer assigned to be a representative of her/his country or cannot hold office for any other reason, the Bureau designates one of the Vice-Presidents as Acting President until the election of a successor.

Vice-Presidents

Vice-Presidents each have special responsibilities, assigned to them through a Council decision entitled “Special responsibilities of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council”, which is usually adopted in October (most recent, decision 2022/200A). They chair the meetings of the different ECOSOC segments (see chap. 7). Customarily, the President of ECOSOC manages the high-level forums, such as the HLPF, the forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD) and others. The Vice-President from the region that is to provide the President of the next session customarily chairs the management segment.

As acting Presidents of ECOSOC, Vice-Presidents have the same powers and responsibilities as the President.

5.2. Secretariat support

5.2

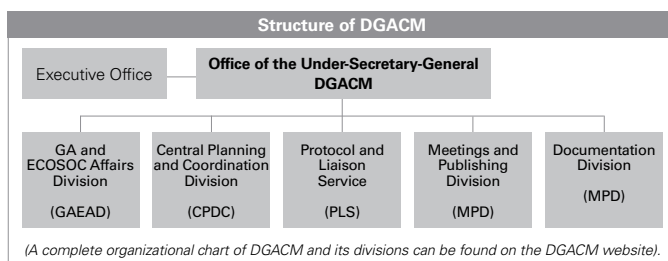
The UN Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General, produces the draft programme of work for each session, provides the necessary services for all ECOSOC meetings, serves as the information hub between ECOSOC and the Member States, produces and keeps records and acts as counsel to the President and the Bureau. Given the frequent rotation of delegates and presiding officers, the Secretariat functions as the “institutional memory” of the Council. The Secretariat differentiates between procedural and substantial support. Procedural and technical support is the domain of the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division (DGACM), while substantive support rests mostly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

For the majority of subsidiary bodies based in New York, DGACM and DESA provide the technical and substantive secretariats. Exceptions are the Commission on the Status of Women and the Vienna- and Geneva-based functional commissions (see chap. 3).

Procedural support

DGACM provides procedural, organizational and technical support to the President and Bureau. Conference services include interpretation and translation of speeches and documents, scheduling meetings, preparing documents and keeping records. DGACM officials are present at ECOSOC meetings. If requested,

they provide clarification on procedural questions and on administrative matters.



Within DGACM, the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division ([GAEAD](#)) is in charge. It drafts the agenda and the programme of work of ECOSOC, discusses scheduling with the Bureau and prepares the “script” for each meeting — a detailed sequence of the proceedings and suggested remarks — to the President of ECOSOC. During meetings, a GAEAD official supports the Chair with advice on the application of the ECOSOC rules of procedure. GAEAD is also responsible for maintaining the list of speakers.

Corrections

Within one week of their publication, delegations have the right to submit corrections to the summary records of official meetings. Disputes are resolved by the Chair after consulting audio recordings of the meetings. Corrections are published in the form of a single corrigendum issued after the closure of the annual session.

In addition to GAEAD, the following offices within DGACM make important contributions to the functioning of the ECOSOC:

- Meeting Management Section, Central Planning and Coordination Division: conference services, such as the allocation of conference rooms and interpretation services. The Division includes the Journal Unit, which publishes the [Journal of the United Nations](#).
- Meetings and Publishing Division: seating arrangements, technical support and simultaneous interpretation of all statements and speeches in the 6 official languages of the UN. The Division finalizes all official UN documents and provides publication services.
- Documentation Division: translation of all official UN documents (into the 6 official languages of the UN), editing of official UN documents and publications. The Division prepares the summary records of meetings.
- [Protocol and Liaison Service](#): liaison with the Permanent Missions (Member States and observers) and the host country, assistance with the preparation of official visits to Headquarters by Heads of State, Heads of Government or other dignitaries and provision of advice on the practice and norms of UN protocol. The Service also publishes the “[Blue Book](#)” and maintains a very useful website (see appendix II).

Substantive support

Substantive support is provided by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in particular through the [Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development](#). For the humanitarian affairs segment, substantive support is provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The relevant entities prepare reports of the Secretary-General and background documentation for meetings and guide the President and the Bureau in identifying speakers and shaping the outcomes of meetings.

ECOSOC at work



During its substantive session, ECOSOC considers all items on its agenda. “Considering” an agenda item includes the holding of general debates and other forms of deliberation (panel discussions, round tables and dialogues) and the adoption of resolutions and/or decisions. Considering an agenda item can take a few minutes or up to several hours, depending on circumstances. Debates on an agenda item are informed by reports submitted by the Secretary-General, a subsidiary body of ECOSOC or another body ([see chap. 3](#)). Some ECOSOC resolutions are “recommended for action” (adoption) to the General Assembly. The documents relating to Council sessions can be found on the [ECOSOC website](#).

6.1

Session vs. meeting

The word “session” is sometimes used incorrectly to refer to a “meeting”, e.g. “during the afternoon session”. The correct term is the “ECOSOC afternoon meeting”.

6.1. ECOSOC sessions

Technically speaking, according to the ECOSOC rules of procedure, the Council holds two sessions per year, one organizational and one substantive. In practice, the organizational session has been reduced to a brief meeting at the beginning of each annual session in July and the term “session” or “ECOSOC session” is used to cover both. The ECOSOC annual session begins in July of one year and ends in July of the next (for example, the 2022 session runs from 23 July 2021 to 22 July 2022). The cycle of work ([see chap. 7](#)) is divided into several elements. The dates of an ECOSOC session, segment or meeting can be changed by a decision of the Council. Most of the functional commissions meet in annual sessions or, in some cases, more frequently ([see chap. 3](#)).

Special sessions

In order to address a specific issue, ECOSOC can call for a special session, either by its own decision or at the request of the GA or the Security Council. The decision of the Council to hold a special session is made by the plenary or by the President of ECOSOC in consultation with the Bureau (after consultation with the membership) or at the request of a majority of the Members. In addition, any Member State or specialized agency can request the Council to convene a special session. In such cases, ECOSOC can agree with the request within 4 days by a decision of the President and Bureau or, if disputed, by agreement of the Members within 8 days. Special sessions are held within 6 weeks after a decision is taken. Notification by the President of ECOSOC must be provided 12 days before the beginning of a special session mandated by the Council, and 8 days before the beginning of a special session mandated by the GA or the Security Council. The agenda of a special session is usually short: only a handful of special sessions have been held in the history of ECOSOC, the last in 1994.

6.2

6.2. ECOSOC agenda

The work of the annual session of ECOSOC begins with the election of the Bureau at the organizational session, after which the establishment and adoption of the agenda is the first order of

business. Subsequent to the adoption of the agenda, a resolution on working arrangements (“basic programme of work”) is adopted, fixing the schedule of the elements of the cycle ([see chap. 7](#)). The draft agenda is prepared by the Secretariat (DGACM).

According to the rules of procedure, the provisional agenda is to be submitted three weeks before the beginning of the organizational session. DGACM shares the provisional agenda with the outgoing Bureau in July. At the beginning of the calendar year, the annotated agenda is issued, incorporating relevant provisions of the newly adopted GA resolutions. While the rules regarding notification and submission of the agenda are very precise, in practice these steps are taken in a more flexible way. The agenda of ECOSOC comprises about 20 items and over the past years it has remained largely stable. Recent changes were made either as a result of GA resolutions on the strengthening of ECOSOC or provisions of Council resolutions/decisions. Some agenda items cover a broad range of subjects (for example, “Economic and environmental questions” or “Social and human rights questions”) and are divided into sub-items. Some sub-items concern a specific situation, such as Haiti or the Sahel. Most items are considered on an annual basis, while a few are considered biennially.

In the case of the functional commissions, the Secretariat draws up a draft agenda in consultation with the Chair and the Bureau. Agenda items proposed by a functional commission at a previous session are included. Subcommissions, chairpersons and category I NGOs can propose agenda items. The dates and agendas of subsidiary bodies are approved by ECOSOC. The Council also approves a biennial calendar of meetings of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields ([see appendix I](#) for the symbols of documents related to the ECOSOC agenda).

How the work of ECOSOC is organized

A large part of the work of ECOSOC is carried out by expert members of delegations, who contribute to Council deliberations and negotiate the texts of specific resolutions to be decided upon at particular segments and forums of the annual cycle ([see chap. 7](#)). Each segment or forum consists of a number of meetings. Participation is open to all Member States and observer States.

Opening and closing the ECOSOC agenda

The adoption of the ECOSOC agenda opens all items for consideration. ECOSOC does not take a decision to close the consideration of items. However, the President/Vice-President chairing the session announces the conclusion of the consideration of an agenda item. Consideration of an item can be reopened by the President in the absence of any objection. No formal decision is required. Instances to reopen a closed agenda item are rare.



“Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all”

How many of us will live without electricity in 2030?

At the current rate of progress, around 660 million people will not have access to electrical power in 2030

6.3. ECOSOC meetings

The work of ECOSOC is conducted at meetings. A set number of days is approved through the resolution on working arrangements at the beginning of each session and is included in the official calendar of meetings. ECOSOC is entitled to convene additional meetings, subject to availability of conference services.

As a rule, ECOSOC plenary meetings are held in the ECOSOC Chamber. They can also be held in conference rooms and the General Assembly Hall, depending on the number of participants (see [appendix III](#)). A standard ECOSOC meeting lasts three hours. Two plenary meetings can be scheduled per day. Morning meetings take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and afternoon meetings from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. With the exceptions of the high-level segment of ECOSOC and the HLPF (see [chap. 7](#)), no parallel formal meetings are held. Although ECOSOC is entitled to call additional meetings beyond those specified in the resolution on working arrangements, their timing and number depends on the availability of conference rooms and interpretation services. Scheduled meeting dates are usually adhered to.

Meeting constraints

Meetings are held in two three-hour blocks during regular working hours, one in the morning, the other in the afternoon. Although ECOSOC is entitled to convene meetings in addition to those approved (and funded) by the working arrangements at the beginning of a session, there are practical constraints:

- Availability of interpretation (see below)
- Availability of rooms (see [appendix III](#))
- Cost (“existing resources”): according to the 2021 report of the General Committee of the GA, an additional three-hour meeting costs between \$11,000 and \$12,000 (on weekends), plus the costs for substantive Secretariat support, webcast services and overtime.

The number of special or ad hoc meetings of ECOSOC held in a given year is usually quite low. Such meetings are organized based on a request by the ECOSOC President/Bureau in consultation with DGACM. Changes to the adopted working arrangements require a decision of ECOSOC. Given the tight timetables for reporting and issuing documents, it is very difficult to move a scheduled meeting to an earlier date — postponing is easier.

Formal and informal meetings

There are two types of ECOSOC meetings, formal and informal. At formal ECOSOC meetings only items on the ECOSOC agenda are considered. Debates, the adoption of resolutions/decisions and elections always take place at formal meetings. Leaving aside the forums held “under the auspices” of ECOSOC, which are governed by their own modalities, all formal ECOSOC meetings are governed

Suspension of voting rights

The Charter of the UN provides for the suspension of the voting rights in the General Assembly of any Member State in arrears with its financial contributions to the Organization. It should be noted that suspension only applies to voting rights of a Member State in the General Assembly, not in ECOSOC.

by the ECOSOC rules of procedure. Informal ECOSOC meetings are held for a variety of purposes, such as briefings, interactions with civil society, consultations or for some forums (for example, the Youth Forum). Informal meetings are not governed by the ECOSOC rules of procedure but are often guided by them. No decisions can be taken at informal meetings.

Who convenes meetings?

ECOSOC meetings, both formal and informal, are convened by the President of ECOSOC. By adopting the agenda, the ECOSOC mandates the President to convene all formal plenary meetings required for the consideration of all items on the agenda. The President can convene additional formal plenary meetings under an existing agenda item, as well as informal meetings if warranted, subject to the availability of services. The programmes of work for such meetings are usually discussed by the ECOSOC Bureau. On occasion, the GA and ECOSOC adopt resolutions mandating the convening of an ECOSOC meeting, which may be organized as formal or informal meetings.

Subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC are allocated a number of meeting days in the budget (“meeting entitlements”). Their chairs can convene formal meetings within the meeting entitlement of that body.

Rules concerning the formal meetings of ECOSOC

Quorum	To open a formal ECOSOC meeting, one third of the members shall be present. In order to adopt a decision, a majority of members (28) need for the quorum to be present. The Secretariat usually checks for the quorum at the beginning of the meeting.
Point of order	Points of order can be raised by a representative at any point in the meeting.
Suspension/adjournment of a meeting	A meeting can be suspended or adjourned upon the request of a representative at any point in the meeting. The motion is immediately voted on without discussion.
No action motion	The term “no action motion” is often used to refer to a motion to adjourn the debate, often to block action on a draft resolution/decision or amendment for the remainder of the session.

Rules 41–67 and 71 of the [ECOSOC rules of procedure](#) apply.

Emerging issues

The President of ECOSOC has the authority to call meetings “on emerging issues”, subject to available conference services. The President usually discusses the convening of special meetings and their programmes in the Bureau. Special meetings can be formal or informal. They can be organized in cooperation with other UN bodies (the Office of the President of the General Assembly or

the Peacebuilding Commission). Recent examples are ad hoc meetings on climate-related or health-related emergencies. Meetings on emerging issues are usually one-day events. They often include keynote speakers and panel discussions followed by interventions from the floor. They are an instrument for the President of ECOSOC to create opportunities to hear the views of experts, discuss new topics and address controversial issues outside the constraints of the formal agenda and without the pressure of a negotiated outcome. The outcome is a summary by the President of ECOSOC. It is not negotiated and is considered to express the views of the President alone.

Open and closed meetings

Formal and informal meetings of the Council are held in two formats: open meetings (“public meetings”) and closed meetings (“private meetings”). ECOSOC meetings are usually open, unless decided otherwise. In recent years, formal meetings have always been open. Open meetings are open to Member States and observer States, UN entities and civil society representatives, Members of the general public, and the media. Attendance can be constrained by security measures and seating availability. Closed meetings are attended by Member States, observers and invited participants.

The *Journal of the United Nations* indicates which meetings are open and which are closed. However, a decision to close an open meeting can be taken during the meeting.

High-level meetings

A high-level meeting is an event held on a specific issue or topic with the participation of Heads of State, Heads of Government or Government Ministers. High-level meetings consist of formal plenary meetings (general debates, panels, round tables or dialogues that are part of the formal proceedings) and/or informal meetings and can last from one to several days. There are two recurring high-level meetings during the annual ECOSOC cycle: the forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD) and the HLPF (see chap. 8). Both are mandated by GA resolutions and follow modalities different from the ECOSOC rules of procedure. They are chaired by the President and Vice-Presidents of ECOSOC. Other ECOSOC meetings at which ministerial participation is encouraged are the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs and the Youth Forum.

Meeting records

All formal ECOSOC meetings held during the annual session are consecutively numbered. The dates and the numbers of meetings are the key to finding records.

Many ECOSOC meetings are webcast and available on demand ([UN WebTV](#)). All open formal ECOSOC meetings and formal meetings of ECOSOC forums are webcast and sound recordings are available in all six official languages upon request from the [Meetings and Publishing Division](#) (DGACM). Webcasts of other

Seating

The seating order follows the English alphabetical order of country names, starting with the name which was drawn by lot at the beginning of the ECOSOC session. The order remains valid for the entire session. The specialized agencies of the United Nations have reserved seating in the ECOSOC Chamber “horseshoe” area (in the centre of the room). Other UN entities may request a seat in the rows to the rear, which is granted on a first-come first-served basis.

meetings are provided, for a charge, subject to ad hoc negotiation within the Secretariat and between the Bureau and DGACM. The Department of Global Communications (DGC) prepares press releases on all formal ECOSOC meetings and meetings of ECOSOC forums. Depending on available resources, press releases are also produced for some informal meetings. Press releases are available online within one to two hours of a meeting's conclusion. The *Journal of the United Nations* (see below) contains procedural summaries, which are added to the entry announcing the meeting.

The official records of ECOSOC formal plenary meetings, called "summary records" (see appendix I), contain a synopsis of proceedings and statements made during the meeting, as well as voting records. There are no verbatim records of ECOSOC meetings. The summary records are available on the United Nations Official Document System (ODS), usually some months after the meeting. An excellent source of information on past meetings is the "Index to Proceedings of the Economic and Social Council", published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. It is organized by session and indexed by subject, country and speaker.

In general, ECOSOC forums and subsidiary bodies do not have summary records. Press releases and background press releases issued ahead of their meetings provide insight into their work.

Journal of the United Nations

The daily *Journal of the United Nations* contains the most up-to-date information on meetings, both formal and informal, scheduled at UN Headquarters in New York. It is published in all six official languages and available online (@Journal-UN-ONU). The *Journal* includes links to the documents considered in formal meetings and procedural summaries of meetings. Entries are submitted by the Secretariat. Member States booking a room through gMeets (see appendix III) can request publication of their meetings in the *Journal*. They can also request the publication of events held outside UN Headquarters or held virtually using their own platforms.

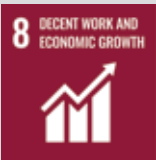
6.4

6.4. Conduct of business

The proceedings of all formal ECOSOC meetings are governed by the rules set out in the "Conduct of business" section in the ECOSOC rules of procedure. The President of ECOSOC, with the support and advice of the Secretariat, ensures compliance with these rules. Note that the explanations given herein are offered as guidance.

The conduct of business rules apply to subsidiary organs "unless provided otherwise".

During a meeting, Members can challenge the proceedings. They can request the application of a specific rule or can make a



“Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all”

Is economic growth sustainable?

One out of five young people are not in employment, education or training

complaint if they deem that a rule is not being complied with. This is called a “point of order”.

24-hour rule

The “24-hour rule” requires that the text of a draft resolution be circulated among the representatives of all Member States on the calendar day preceding the meeting scheduled for its adoption. This rule can be waived by an oral decision.

Addressing a point of order

At any point during a meeting, a Member State can raise a point of order. The delegate doing so should address the procedural matter against which she/he is objecting and should not speak to substance of the debate. Following such an intervention, the proceedings are interrupted, and the point of order is addressed as follows:

- The President makes a decision immediately.
- Her/his decision may be challenged.
- The Secretariat (representatives of GAEAD present in the room) may be requested to provide clarification of the ECOSOC rules of procedure.
- Any appeal is put to an immediate vote, decided upon by a majority of Members present and voting.
- A representative making a point of order cannot speak to the substance of the meeting. There is no debate on the point of order and there are no explanations of vote.
- The meeting continues.

Votes on points of order are rare. Points of order can also concern complaints about meeting services, such as the temperature in the room, interpretation, documentation and the functioning of microphones. Such points of order do not require a ruling by the presiding officer.

Debating ECOSOC agenda items

The consideration of an agenda item starts with a debate in a formal meeting. Round tables, panel discussions and dialogues can also be formal parts of the deliberative phase of the consideration of an item. Only one debate is scheduled for each agenda item. The length of consideration varies from less than one full meeting to meetings held over several days.

No delegation makes more than one statement during the same debate, with the exception of explanations of vote and the right of reply. The President of ECOSOC and the Vice-Presidents do not engage in a debate, but it is customary for them to make introductory or closing statements.

The debate on an agenda item is informed by all documents and reports mandated, requested and submitted under the agenda item. For any given agenda item, several reports may be submitted. At each session, on average, ECOSOC considers 70 to 80 reports of subsidiary and other bodies, the Secretary-General and other entities. All reports are listed in the annotated agenda of the session ([see appendix I](#)). Some bodies have dual reporting mandates and report to both ECOSOC and the GA.

Proposals and reports are generally accessible in electronic form. A limited number of hard copies are made available in the conference room during plenary meetings.

Reports are normally introduced by a representative of the author department in an oral presentation made at the beginning of the debate on the relevant agenda item.

Tight schedule

Most mandated reports are produced on a tight schedule. The basic steps in the writing of a report of the Secretary-General are as follows:

- Depending on the scope of the report and its mandate, author departments consult with Member States, with other offices of the Secretariat and with other UN entities.
- Drafts are cleared by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.
- The “ten-week rule”: ten weeks before the ECOSOC considers the related agenda item, drafts are submitted to DGACM.
- The “six-week rule”: all official documents must be available in the six official languages at least six weeks before a meeting. This gives DGACM four weeks to edit, translate and circulate reports.

Due to the tight scheduling of subsidiary body sessions and ECOSOC meetings, mostly concentrated between January and July ([see chap. 7](#)), it is not always possible to meet the deadline set in the “six-week rule” for the issuance of reports. This timeline makes it almost impossible to move an ECOSOC meeting to a date earlier than scheduled or to change the established timing of sessions of subsidiary bodies.

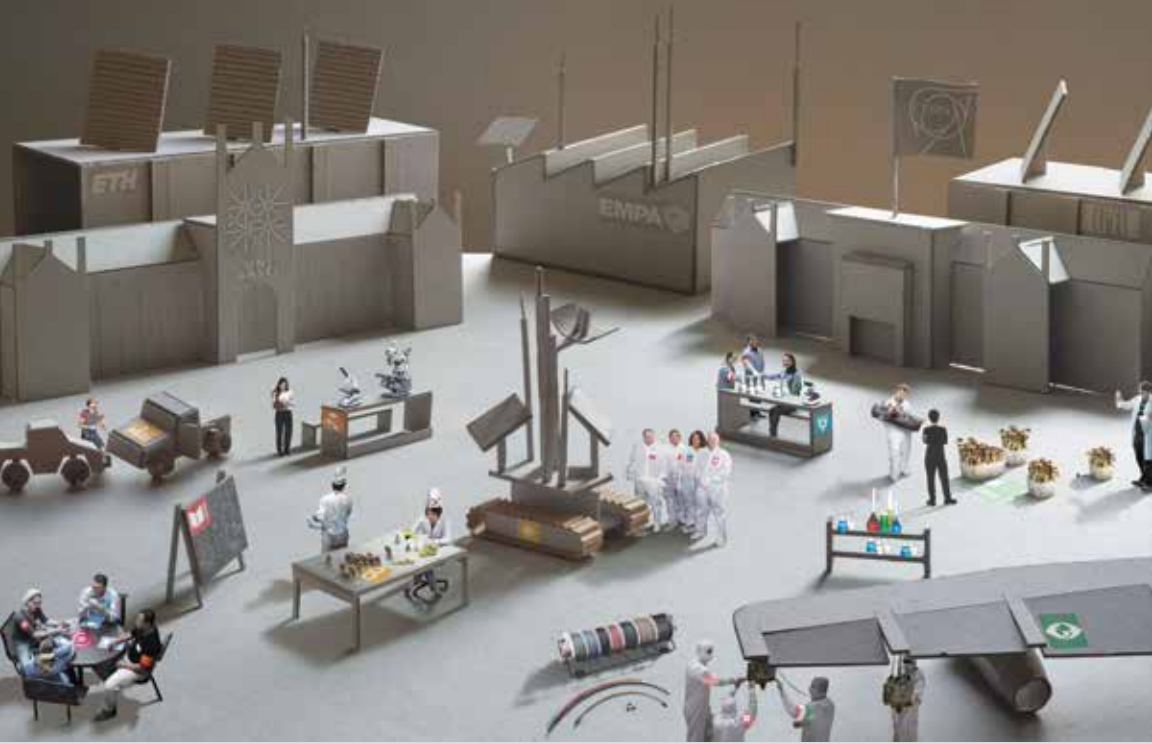
Statements and speeches

Speakers in a debate are listed on a speakers’ list, managed by the Secretariat. The President/Chair announces the speakers’ list. Delegate may not speak without permission of the President. The President/Chair closes the speakers’ list, with the consent of the Council.

Before the debate takes place, Member States and observer States register for the speakers’ list by inscription through the eSpeakers function in e-deleGATE ([see appendix II](#)). During the debate, representatives of Member States add their names to the speakers’ list by enrolling their names with the officer of GAEAD sitting next to the podium. The speaking order is “groups first”. According to established practice, groups speak first in an ECOSOC debate, followed by the representatives of Member States, with no distinction between Members and non-members of the Council. Speakers at the ministerial level and above have priority over other representatives. Observers speak after Member States. During the general debate of the high-level segment/HLPF ([see chaps. 7 and](#)

Requesting the floor

To request the floor, members of delegations press the green button on their desk console. The name of the Member State will appear on an electronic list viewed by the President and/or the Chair and members of the ECOSOC Bureau in attendance. To cancel a request, the button may be pressed again. Before the introduction of the electronic list, delegates held up signs with the name of their country to request the floor. During an interactive discussion, delegations can press their microphone buttons to request to speak.



“Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”

Is the Internet bringing us together?

About 50% of the global population is offline

8), after the groups speak, delegations speak according to the rank of their speakers. Within each level, representatives speak in order of inscription. In the forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD), the modalities for UN conferences apply, which means that the list of speakers is organized by rank. At each level, statements of groups are delivered first.

Delegations speaking at the same level can agree to switch speaking slots. The GAEAD officer in the room needs to be notified.

Length of speeches

The speaking time can be limited by the Council. Time limits are set for each forum/segment by the President/responsible Vice-President based on the available meeting time and anticipated number of statements. Speaking time normally varies from 7 to 5 minutes for groups and 5 to 3 minutes for statements by individual delegations. If a speaker goes over the allotted time, a red light next to the microphone starts to flash and, according to the rules of procedure, the presiding officer calls her/him to order "without delay". Another method of timekeeping is the projection of a countdown clock on the monitors in the meeting room. Even more stringent measures, such as microphone cut-offs, have been implemented, for example during the FfD forum, the HLPF or in the annual session of the CSW. Interventions on procedural matters are usually limited to 5 minutes. Time limits can also be set for statements in explanation of vote/position.

Distribution of speeches

All speeches in formal meetings of the plenary are webcast. Statements of delegations are circulated electronically through e-statements, accessible via e-deleGATE ([see appendix II](#)). Delegations are requested to send statements to estatements@un.org, for uploading by the Secretariat for provision to interpretation and other services.

Language and interpretation

All meetings approved in the resolutions on working arrangements at the beginning of a session are entitled to interpretation to and from the six official languages of the UN (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). Other meetings, for example, meetings on emerging issues, are not. Meetings need to be scheduled at a time when interpretation services are available, within existing resources. Informal negotiations on draft resolutions are almost always without interpretation. Functional commissions each are entitled to their own meeting days with interpretation provided.

Making a speech available to interpreters in advance greatly helps them do their work and ensures accurate interpretation. If a speaker wishes to deliver her/his statement in a language other than an official language of the Organization, the delegation must provide either its own interpreter or a written translation of the text in one of the six official languages. In the latter case, the simultaneous interpretation into the other five languages will be based on that written text.

Check against delivery

Paper copies of statements often bear the disclaimer "check against delivery" to allow for last minute adjustments and changes.

Lost in translation

There are over 7,000 languages spoken in the world, hundreds of which are officially recognized as national languages. The United Nations has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish: English and French are the working languages of the UN Secretariat. It is recognized that interpretation and translation from one language to another is not an exact science. For example, in English, Article 65 of the Charter of the UN states that the ECOSOC "shall assist the Security Council upon its request"; the French text says "peut fournir des informations au Conseil de sécurité et l'assister si celui-ci le demande".

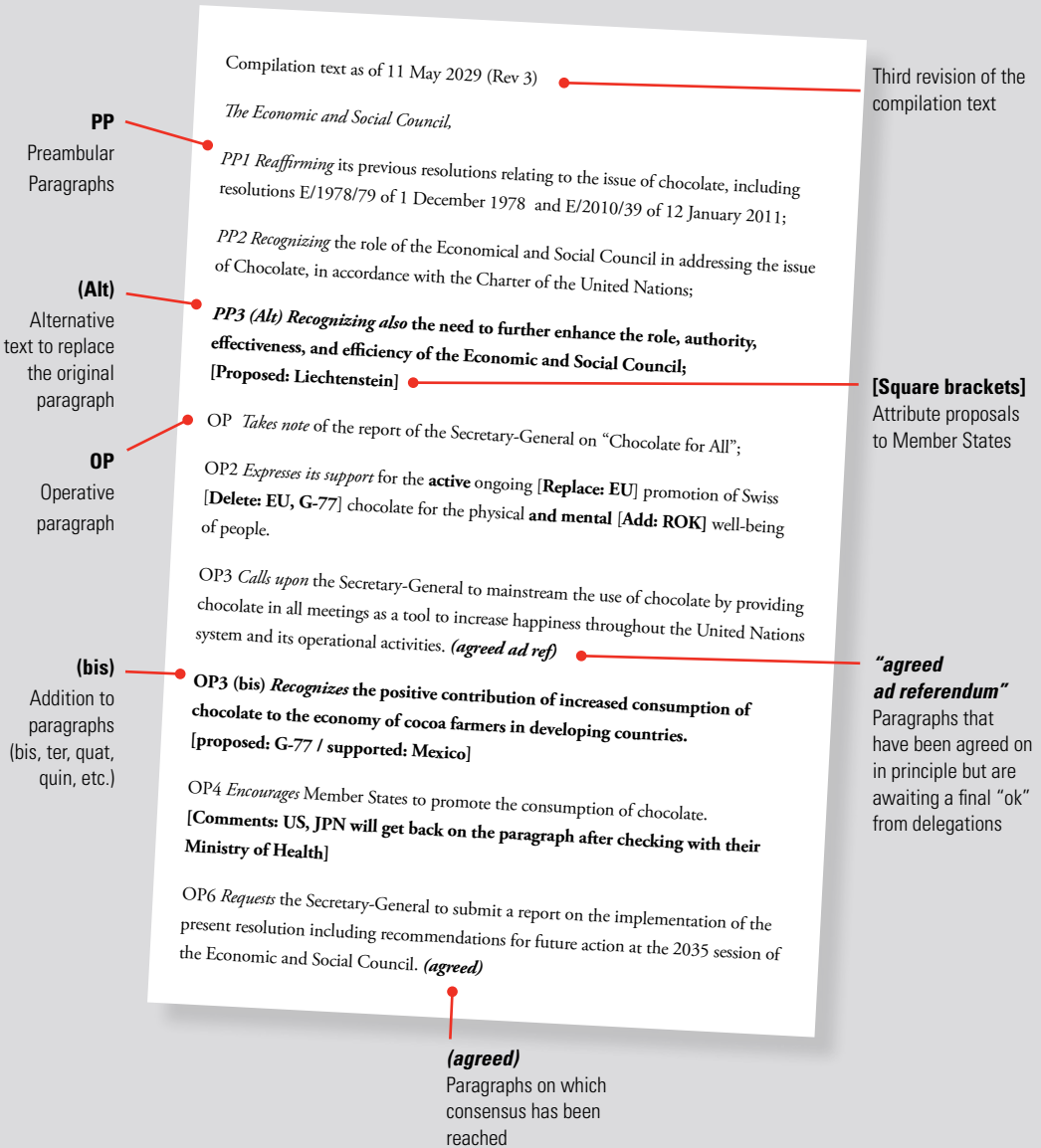
Rules concerning ECOSOC debates	
Speeches	No speaker may address the Council without having previously obtained the permission of the President. Speaking time and the number of times the representative of each member may speak on any question may be limited by the Council, based on a proposal by the President.
Substance	The President may call a speaker to order if she/he is not speaking on the item in question during a debate.
Right of reply	The right of reply is accorded by the President to any Member State (both members and non-members of the Council) who requests it. A Member State can reply to a statement of another Member State (including statements made under the right of reply or an explanation of vote). A delegation cannot request the right of reply more than twice on the same agenda item on a given day.
Closure of the list of speakers	The President declares the speaker's list closed if no Member State objects. After the closure, the floor is given only to the remaining speakers and to members requesting the right of reply.
Adjournment of debate	Any representative may at any time move to adjourn an item under discussion. Up to two representatives favouring and up to two opposing the adjournment may be permitted to speak on the motion, which should immediately be followed by a vote on the motion.
Closure of debate	The debate is declared closed by President after the last speaker has spoken. A representative may at any time move to close the debate on the item under discussion. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded only to two representatives opposing the motion. The motion should be put to the vote immediately.

Rules 41–67 and 71 of the [ECOSOC rules of procedure](#) apply.

Compilation texts

During consultations, the facilitator or sponsor of a draft resolution can circulate “compilation texts” that reflect the evolution of the negotiations and the different positions of Member States in detail. After each round of negotiations, revisions of the text are compiled.

This illustration shows the standard elements for compilation texts. Please note that the example given here is completely fictional.



6.5. ECOSOC resolutions and decisions

The debate of an agenda item is usually followed by the adoption of resolutions/decisions. The ECOSOC rules of procedure refer to draft resolutions as “proposals”. The process leading to the adoption of a resolution or decision involves the drafting of a text, the submission of a proposal for action (“tabling”) and a decision on the proposed text (“taking action”). Negotiations and consultations are aimed at reaching consensus or getting as close to consensus as possible. Before adoption of the decision/resolution, its potential effect on the UN programme budget is addressed. If there is no such effect, the presiding officer informs the body before action that the proposal has no “programme budget implications” (PBIs). If the decision/resolution has programme budget implications, the Secretariat makes a statement thereon.

“Takes note” of

When ECOSOC “takes note” of a report in a resolution, it is simply acknowledging that it has received the report: it is a neutral term and indicates neither approval nor disapproval of the content or recommendations contained in the report.

Resolutions and decisions

ECOSOC resolutions and decisions have equal legal status.

ECOSOC resolutions are not binding on Member States. Council resolutions provide policy recommendations to the Member States, the UN development system and other stakeholders and assign mandates to subsidiary organs and to the Secretariat. Some resolutions, often adopted by one of the Council functional commissions (for example, CCPCJ and CND, see chap. 3) are recommended for adoption by the GA. The implementation of the policy recommendations contained in Council resolutions is the responsibility of each Member State. Most resolutions are recurrent, that is, they are adopted every year or in a multi-year pattern under the same agenda item.

ECOSOC decisions concern procedural matters and are generally short. They are binding. In some instances, “taking note” of the report of a subsidiary organ is an ECOSOC decision. On simple procedural matters “oral decisions”, proposed by the President and acted on immediately, can be taken.

Elections are decisions.

Drafting a resolution text

Draft resolutions (“proposals”) of ECOSOC come mainly from three sources:

- Drafts submitted by the President/Vice-President as a result of a negotiation process.
- Recommendations from subsidiary bodies: such recommended draft resolutions/decisions appear in the first chapter of the report of the subsidiary body (“Matters calling for action by ECOSOC or brought to its attention”).
- “Self-standing” drafts submitted by Member States (sponsors and co-sponsors): examples are the resolution on non-communicable diseases, usually submitted by the Russian Federation, or the resolution on support to non-self-governing territories by the

specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations, usually submitted by the Members of the GA Special Committee on Decolonization (“Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”). The Member State initiating and drafting a resolution text is called the “sponsor” of the resolution, or the “main sponsor” if there are co-sponsors. Upon request, the Secretariat may assist Member States in the drafting process.

Since recurrent resolutions contain only few changes from year to year, sponsors are requested to start with the text of the preceding resolution and to use track changes to highlight the parts that are different.

Co-sponsoring

Upon invitation of the main sponsor, all Member States — both Members and non-members of ECOSOC — can formally express their support for a draft resolution by “co-sponsoring” it. Co-sponsoring is done electronically, through the ECOSOC e-deleGATE portal (see appendix II) or in the room before adoption. The draft, or “L document”, (see below) lists only the delegations that have co-sponsored the draft before its submission to the Secretariat for processing. Their names are read out by the Secretary before the adoption of the resolution. The list is closed once the resolution is adopted. All co-sponsors are included in the summary record of the meeting at which the text is adopted. However, the list of co-sponsors is not part of the final published version of the resolution. There are no co-sponsors of ECOSOC decisions and draft resolutions/decisions tabled by the President of ECOSOC since it is understood that such texts are submitted after informal consultations and represent the views of the membership,

What is a PBI?

PBI is the in-house acronym for “programme budget implications”. A PBI is a statement prepared by the UN Secretariat detailing the administrative, financial and programmatic implications of the adoption of a draft resolution. The expression “this draft resolution has a PBI” means that the implementation of the resolution would involve expenditures not yet included in the programme budget. Draft resolutions sometimes use the phrase “within available resources” in order to avoid PBIs. However, this does not oblige the Secretariat to refrain from issuing a statement on PBIs, as there are limits to what can be absorbed within the UN budget. All draft resolutions with PBIs must be submitted for the consideration and recommendations of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and adopted by the GA Plenary.

Tabling the draft resolution

“Tabling” is a technical term for the formal submission of the text of a draft resolution. While non-member States can submit proposals, only Members of the Council or the President and/or Vice-President of ECOSOC can table draft resolutions for action. When the State of Palestine, an observer State, was the Chair of Group of 77 (G-77) in 2019, an exception to the rule was made by the GA in [resolution 73/5](#) of 2018. When a group of Member States tables a resolution, it is usually done by the Chair of the group on its behalf.

A draft resolution must be tabled under a specific agenda item. This is possible from the moment the ECOSOC agenda is adopted until consideration of the item is closed. No draft resolution can be tabled after the agenda item is closed unless the Council decides to reopen it. In the management segment (see [chap. 7](#)), there is flexibility to keep an item open in order to allow a proposal to be considered later in the session than planned.



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



“Reduce inequality within and among countries”

Will sustainable development create equality?

About 50% of the global population is offline

To be tabled, the draft text needs to be submitted to DGACM. This can be done electronically through e-submission in the [e-deleGATE portal](#). Draft texts can also be submitted by e-mail to [GAEAD](#) (DGACM). The text must indicate the agenda item under which the draft resolution is being tabled. Before submission, main sponsors must initiate the text for e-sponsorship in the e-deleGATE portal if they want the names of co-sponsors to appear on the title page of the L document.

Once tabled, the text is prepared as an official ECOSOC document, called an “L document”. This process includes editing (putting the text in conformity with UN language, done in consultation with the author), translation into all six official languages and circulation to all Member States. The “24-hour rule” requires that the L document be circulated to all Member States on the calendar day preceding the meeting scheduled for its consideration for adoption. This rule can be waived by the Council. The Secretariat requires up to four business days (96 hours) to process a draft resolution.

Draft resolutions/decisions can be amended. An amendment is a “proposal that adds, deletes or revises part of a proposal”. Amendments to a tabled draft resolution/decision are either formally submitted and issued as L documents before the scheduled action, or proposed orally from the floor, although, in the interest of transparency, Member States are encouraged to submit amendments in advance. If adopted, amendments are incorporated into the final version of the resolution.

Consideration and action on a draft resolution/decision

Once issued as an “L” document, a draft resolution/decision can be considered by the Council. This means that the L document is introduced and a decision on its adoption is taken. The latter is called “taking action”.

DGACM consults with the sponsor(s) to decide on the date of the formal plenary meeting at which the draft text will be considered. If more than one resolution has been introduced under the same agenda item, the resolutions are scheduled for action in the order in which they were tabled.

Formal introduction of the draft text of resolutions/decisions

At the formal meeting considering the L document, the sponsor(s) of the draft resolution/decision introduce the draft text, summarizing its content and purpose and, if necessary, making any technical corrections. Member States who are not sponsors of the text can make statements (“explanation of position” or “explanation of vote”) before or after action on the draft resolution/decision. A Council Member can question whether the proposal is within the scope of the ECOSOC. This is called a “motion of competence” and is voted on before taking action on the proposal itself. Taking action can also be deferred if further consultations and negotiations are warranted. Usually there is no action on resolutions/decisions before the debate on the agenda item has been concluded.

Why the “L” in the L document?

The “L” in L documents stands for “limited distribution”. Before the advent of e-mail, hard-copies of L documents were distributed to the Permanent Missions of Member States but were not sent to the national capitals.

Consensus vs. unanimity

A decision made by consensus does not require a vote. A unanimous decision is a decision on which all Member States present vote in the same way.

Taking action

A draft resolution/decision can be adopted if at least half of the Members are present. Decisions in the ECOSOC are taken by a simple majority of Members present and voting. The majority of resolutions/decisions are adopted by consensus. A vote is taken if a Member State requests it. If a vote on a proposal/motion is tied, the proposal/motion is rejected. Three draft resolutions are regularly adopted by a recorded vote, namely "Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations", "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan" and "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women". Sometimes proposals on the granting consultative status to NGOs are also voted on. In recent years, votes have also been requested

Rules concerning the adoption of ECOSOC resolutions/decisions	
Motion of competence	A member requests a decision on whether or not the ECOSOC has the competence to adopt a draft resolution/decision. The motion is voted on before the vote on the proposal.
Deferring action	A representative may request to defer the vote on a proposal under rule 50 "adjournment of the debate" or rule 51 (closure of debate), indefinitely or for a specific period of time. This is voted on before the vote on the proposal. Up to two representatives favouring and two opposing the adjournment may speak before the vote.
Voting on resolutions	A vote must be requested by a Member. The majority of draft proposals are adopted without a vote. The President is customarily informed of a vote beforehand.
Voting on parts of a proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none">• paragraph vote• division of proposal• separate vote	A Member can request that parts of a proposal are voted on separately. This happens before the Council takes action on the proposal as a whole. In accordance with the established practice, the adoption of parts of a proposal by recorded vote does not necessitate adoption of the whole draft proposal by recorded vote, unless there is a request for a vote on the whole. If all operative parts of a proposal/amendment were rejected, the whole proposal/amendment would be considered rejected.
Voting on amendments	Amendments are voted on before the Council takes action on the proposal with respect to which the amendments have been proposed.
Explanation of vote	Before and after action is taken, members can explain their vote (or position, if adoption is by consensus). In accordance with the established practice, non-members may make general statements before or after adoption of draft proposals.
Reconsideration	A member can move to reconsider an adopted resolution/decision in the same ECOSOC session. The motion is voted on immediately after up to two speakers opposing it have spoken.

Rules 49-67 and 71 of the [ECOSOC rules of procedure](#) apply.

on individual paragraphs or on the entire ministerial declaration of the HLPF. Adopted resolutions are numbered consecutively per session ([see appendix V](#)).

The making of an ECOSOC resolution

All ECOSOC resolutions relate to an ECOSOC agenda item, have a title and contain a number of preambular paragraphs (informally called “PPs”), followed by a number of operative paragraphs (informally called “OPs”). The two illustrations presented in this chapter show how a text evolves during negotiations and how it looks as an ECOSOC resolution after adoption.

Negotiating and consulting

According to standard practice, a ministerial declaration, ECOSOC resolution or decision is consulted on and negotiated before formal adoption. These negotiations (“informal consultations”) are open to the participation of all Member States and observer States, regardless of whether or not they are Members of ECOSOC. Non-members of ECOSOC can be facilitators. Informal consultations on draft resolutions or outcome documents are usually organized as closed meetings. For certain processes, representatives of stakeholders participate, with the agreement of the co-facilitators and the membership.

Negotiations (in UN parlance “informal consultations”) can be extensive, contentious and time-consuming. While there are common practices, there are no set rules on how they are conducted. It is up to the chair/facilitator to find the right approach. For the forums under the responsibility of the ECOSOC President (HLPF and FfD), she/he usually appoints two co-facilitators, normally one from a developed and one from a developing country (Group of 77 and China). For segments under the responsibility of a Vice-President (humanitarian affairs segment and the operational activities segment in years when a resolution is adopted), she/he may appoint a facilitator or co-facilitators or her/his delegation may lead informal consultations. For draft resolutions submitted by a sponsor or group of sponsors (“self-standing” proposals), it is the practice for them to hold informal consultations to finalize the draft. Negotiations begin with the submission of a “zero draft” text, followed by consultations on it and concluding with a text as close as possible to consensus. Two models can be distinguished:

- Negotiations before tabling: the Chair consults with Member States and holds informal negotiations on the draft text before tabling the “best version possible”. Examples are the humanitarian affairs segment resolution or the ministerial declaration of the HLPF or FfD.
- Negotiations after tabling: the main sponsor/group (example: G-77 and China) tables a draft without prior consultations. After the introduction of the draft text, informal negotiations take place, aiming at consensus on a new text. The initial draft is subsequently withdrawn and the agreed text is submitted with a new L document symbol as a draft of the President/Vice-President.

“Formal informals” and “informal informals”

Negotiations and consultations on draft resolutions/decisions take place in informal meetings. “Formal informals” are informal ECOSOC meetings, usually held without interpretation. “Informal informals” are convened ad hoc by a Chair, a facilitator or a main sponsor. “Informal informals” are not official ECOSOC meetings: there are no meeting records or interpretation services.

The changes in the negotiated texts are circulated electronically by means of the ECOSOC platform in [e-deleGATE](#) (see [appendix II](#)). Sometimes, a dedicated e-mail list of participants in a particular negotiation, prepared by the Secretariat, is used for the circulation of texts.

Silence procedure

At the end of negotiations on a draft resolution, when a tentative agreement has been reached, delegations may need to get final approval from their Governments. The draft resolution is declared to be “in silence procedure” for a specified time. If no Member State puts forward an objection by the given deadline, the draft text is considered informally “agreed.” If a Member State objects before the deadline, the silence is “broken” and negotiations resume.

Adopted ECOSOC resolutions and decisions

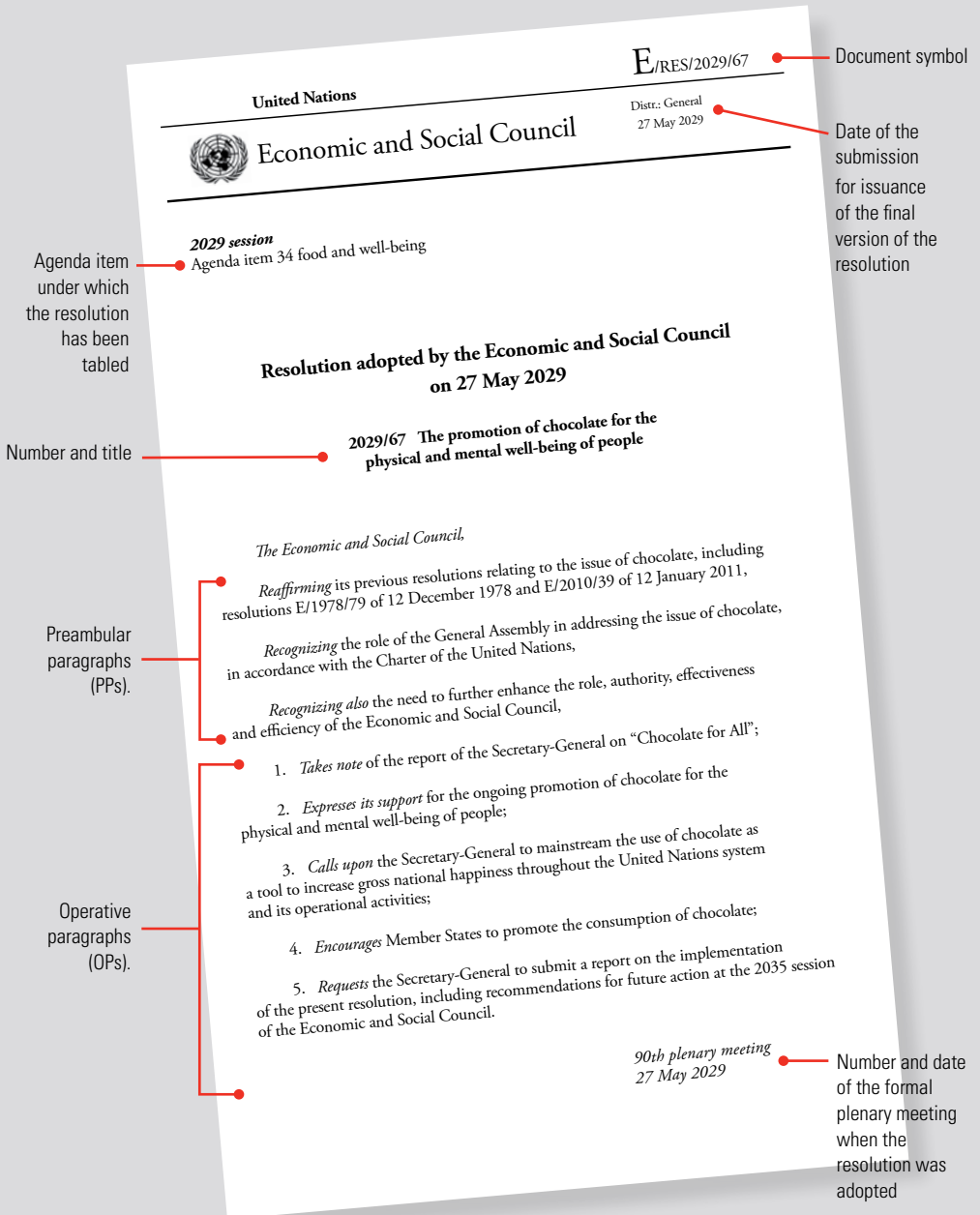
Once adopted, resolutions are issued as ECOSOC documents in all six languages, numbered and published under “documents” on the [ECOSOC website](#) and under ECOSOC “Resolutions and decisions” on the [e-deleGATE](#) platform.

The definitive reference for all resolutions and decisions adopted during a session is issued as Supplement No. 1 to the *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*. They can be found online through the United Nations [Official Documents System \(ODS\)](#) and the UN Digital Library (for ECOSOC document symbols, see [appendix V](#)).

ECOSOC resolutions

All ECOSOC resolutions relate to an agenda item, have a title and contain a number of preambular paragraphs (PPs) followed by a number of operative paragraphs (OPs). PPs list related resolutions and make reference to the larger context. The present or past participle of a verb is generally used. PPs are not numbered. OPs deal mainly with the substance. They are numbered. OPs can “request” action by the SG or subsidiary bodies and “invite”, “urge” or “encourage” action by Member States.

This illustration shows the different elements of an ECOSOC resolution. Please note that the example given here is completely fictional.



6.6. Elections and appointments

Each year, during dedicated management meetings, ECOSOC elects Member States or individuals to offices of its subsidiary bodies and other UN bodies ([see chap. 3](#)). Each Member State of the Council has one vote. Elections, which are held as needed, tend to be scheduled in December and in April/May. Terms of office are not the same for all offices, varying from 3 to 5 years. Many begin with the calendar year on 1 January while others are aligned with the ECOSOC cycle ([see chap. 7](#)). Membership terms for the functional commissions tend to begin on the first day of their new session. The terms of office for some expert bodies generally start on 1 July or 1 August.

Secretariat vs. secretariat

Do not confuse the UN Secretariat (capital “S”), headed by the Secretary-General, with the secretariats (small “s”), which refer to organizing bodies for UN conferences or processes. Any Department or Office of the UN can be designated by Member States, generally through a resolution of the General Assembly or ECOSOC, as a secretariat for purposes of providing support for intergovernmental processes. When using “Secretariat”, it must be clear that it is the main body of the UN that is being identified.

The General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division ([GAEAD/DGACM](#)) supports all elections and maintains a restricted (password-protected) website called “Candiweb”, which consolidates information on candidatures and elections. Candiweb is accessible under the elections module in e-deleGATE ([see appendix II](#)).

Regional groups and geographical representation

The distribution of seats among Member States is based on the principle of equitable geographical representation. In order to facilitate balanced distribution, Member States are informally divided into five regional groups ([see appendix IV](#)). For most bodies, a specific number of seats is allocated to each regional group. The chair of each regional group maintains “election charts” containing all candidacies from that group.

Elections are often intensely contested among Member States. In many cases, such contests are confined within the regional groups. In general, the regional groups agree on the same number of candidates as there are seats allocated to them. This is called a “clean slate”. A regional group may choose to follow an internal rotation system for certain seats. Within the Western European and other States group, contests are sometimes resolved by informal agreements to divide a mandate between two Member States, whereby the first would step down before the term is up and the second would be elected for the remainder.

Elections by acclamation or secret ballot

According to standard practice, ECOSOC elections are held by acclamation, unless the number of candidates is greater than the number of vacancies or a Council Member requests a vote by ballot. In such a case, the election is “contested” and takes place by secret paper ballot. If elections are based on a formal nomination process, ballot papers contain the names of the nominees. If not, ballot papers have blank lines equivalent to the number of vacancies per regional group.

Candidates are elected by a majority of Members “present and voting”. Abstentions and invalid ballots are not counted as “voting”. There is one ballot per regional group. A ballot is invalid if it contains



“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”

Communes instead of cities?

More than 1 billion people live in slums

Mistakes in the final version

Any substantive errors found in the final versions of adopted resolutions, decisions or official reports must be brought to the attention of the ECOSOC Affairs Branch of the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management. Depending on the nature of the mistake, resolutions, decisions or reports may be “reissued for technical reasons”.

COVID-19 pandemic

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on United Nations activities during the biennium 2020–2021. Delegations and staff were required to work mainly from home for several months, travel was limited, meetings were mostly held remotely on virtual platforms and a number of events during the 2020 session of ECOSOC were cancelled or postponed. The inability to convene in-person meetings between March and August 2020 made it difficult for the Council to conduct business and take decisions. Working methods, particularly those pertaining to decision-making, were adapted in order to make meetings in virtual settings possible. Meeting modalities were changed: the holding of virtual informal meetings was allowed; and it was made possible to submit statements during debates in writing, virtually (live) or through pre-recorded videos during in-person meetings.

With respect to decision-making, following the adoption of a similar decision by the GA in April 2020, the Council established a formal “silence procedure” for the adoption of draft resolutions/decisions. The President of ECOSOC, after consultation with the Bureau, circulated draft resolutions/decisions electronically to Members, with copies to all other Member States, setting a deadline of 72 hours. If the “silence” was not broken during that time period, i.e., no objection was registered, the draft text was adopted. Delegations had the opportunity to provide statements in explanation of position or general statements in connection with the proposals circulated by the President. The same procedure was implemented for ECOSOC elections during the 2020 session that had “clean slates” (see section 6.6, Elections and appointments). In September 2020, at its first in-person plenary meeting allowed, the Council formally endorsed (“took note”) of the resolutions/decisions adopted under the silence procedure. The silence procedure format for taking action was put in place until August 2020. As of September 2020, ECOSOC resumed the convening of in-person meetings, while implementing strict COVID-19 mitigation measures, allowing for the resumption of decision-making at formal ECOSOC meetings. For subsidiary bodies, decision-making according to the silence procedure was extended until August 2021, allowing those subsidiary bodies that opted to hold their sessions scheduled for the second quarter of 2021 fully virtually to adopt decisions using the silence procedure.

It remains to be seen whether some of the meeting modalities applied during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular the holding of meetings on virtual platforms or hybrid meetings (combining both in-person and participation on a virtual platform), will continue to be part of ECOSOC working methods in the future.

more names than the number of seats assigned to the regional group in question. If a name is not from the regional group in question, it is not counted. If all names are from another regional group, the ballot is considered invalid.

Ballot papers are distributed to ECOSOC Members present in the room. Once the ballots have been collected, they are counted by the “tellers” — delegates called upon and supported by the Secretariat. The President of ECOSOC suspends the meeting during the counting and resumes it to announce the results. As necessary, a second round of balloting may be held.

General rules concerning elections in ECOSOC	
Election by acclamation	Where an election is undisputed, the Council usually dispenses of the secret ballot and votes by acclamation.
One seat to be filled	The candidate who obtained the majority required and the largest number of votes in the first ballot is considered elected. If no one obtains the required majority, a second ballot is taken, confined to the two candidates having obtained the largest number of votes. If the second ballot is inconclusive, the Council holds additional ballots, confined to the two candidates mentioned above until one candidate is elected.
Several seats to be filled	The candidates who obtain the required majority and the largest number of votes are considered elected. If only one seat remains to be filled after the first ballot, a second ballot will be held confined to the two candidates with the largest number of votes, and the candidate who obtains the required majority and the largest number of votes is considered elected. If more than one seat remains to be filled, the second ballot is restricted to the unsuccessful candidates a) having obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, but b) not exceeding twice the number of seats remaining to be filled. If there is a tie, the procedure for ties (see below) applies. (rule of procedure 70.2)
Tie-breaking	If due to a tie between some candidates, there are more eligible candidates than the number permitted to proceed to a restricted ballot, a “special ballot” should be held to reduce the eligible candidates to the required number.

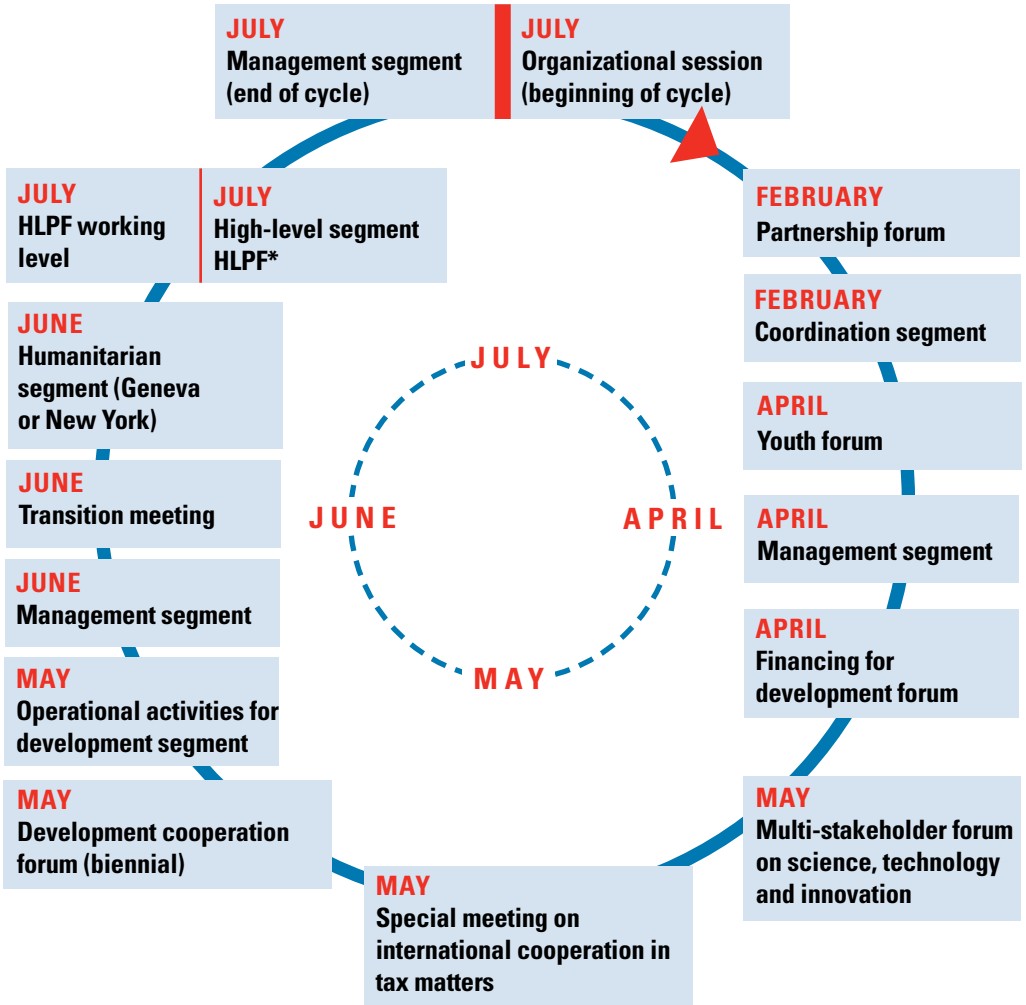
Rules 68–70 of the [ECOSOC rules of procedure](#) apply.

Key ECOSOC events



During the course of its annual session, the work of ECOSOC is carried out in a cycle of events, the sequence of which is shown in the illustration below.

ECOSOC cycle of work



*The high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals Summit) is held every four years in September.

The guiding principles of the ECOSOC cycle of work are laid out in resolutions adopted by the GA, most recently in resolution [75/290 A](#). The Assembly recognizes the Council “as the principal organ for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development”. It assigns the Council a particular role with regard to the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), and coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to the work carried out under the cycle, ECOSOC can convene special sessions and ad hoc meetings to address urgent developments in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, including on specific humanitarian emergencies. The GA commits ECOSOC to “the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and flexibility” and called for the active participation of all stakeholders.

Each ECOSOC session has a theme set out in a resolution of the GA. The theme of the session and the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC are the same, and the themes of ECOSOC segments focus on a particular aspect of the main theme. Themes decided on by the respective subsidiary bodies are also aligned with the main theme.

7.1. ECOSOC cycle of work

The annual sessions of ECOSOC run in a cycle of work from July to July. The work of the Council is grouped into four parts: (a) issues of general coordination and concerning the work of the Council itself; (b) ECOSOC forums; (c) actions by the UN development system; and (d) implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

Closing of one cycle and beginning the next

The transition from one cycle to the next takes place in the second half of July, after the closure of the high-level segment of the session. The cycle concludes with the last management segment, which can take up to two days of meetings, followed the very next day by the organizational session of the new session.

At its management segment in July, ECOSOC wraps up any issues remaining on its agenda. It conducts elections for outstanding vacancies and deals with other pending agenda items. The Vice-President responsible for the management segment declares the session closed. The following day, the organizational session of the next session takes place to elect its President and Bureau. The outgoing President makes a statement taking stock of the session just concluded and presides over the election of the new President. After her/his election, the new President takes over the proceedings of the meeting and makes a statement addressing her/his priorities for the session ahead. The Council elects its Vice-Presidents and adopts the agenda and the working arrangements for the session.



“Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”

How much is enough?

In 2019, over 7 kilograms of e-waste was generated per person — only 1.7 kilograms of such waste was recycled



“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”

How hot can we stand it?

The global temperature is already 1.2 degrees Celsius above the levels first measured in 1850–1900

7.2. Management segment

At its management segment, which is spread out over the ECOSOC annual cycle of work, the Council receives reports of its subsidiary, expert and ad hoc bodies and adopts resolutions/decisions recommended by them, and any ad hoc proposals. It considers system-wide coordination issues and specific development issues (for example, non-communicable diseases, food security and nutrition), as well as the follow-up to and implementation of major UN conferences (for example, the World Summit on Social Development and the World Summit on the Information Society). The report of the [UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination](#) (CEB) is presented during the management segment in June and there is a discussion on integrating the key messages from the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system for input into the HLPF. The Council adopts the bulk of its resolutions and decisions at its management segment. Reports of subsidiary organs or other bodies are “taken note of” by the Council in a decision if they do not contain recommendations for action by the Council. If they do, the Council considers only the recommendation(s).

As noted above, the meeting schedule of the management segment is spread out over the ECOSOC cycle of work. “In principle” the segment consists of two days of meetings twice per session, normally held in June and July. Elections for subsidiary and related bodies are usually scheduled for dedicated management meetings at separate dates, mostly in December and May/June.

7.3. Partnership and coordination

Two events convened in February are dedicated to feeding stakeholder expectations and ideas into the work of the Council and strengthening its coordination function within the UN system.

Partnership Forum

The [ECOSOC Partnership Forum](#) is an annual one-day event held in early February back-to-back with the coordination segment. Participants are Member States, entities of the UN system (including international financial institutions), international organizations, parliamentarians, NGOs, civil society, scientists, academia, youth and “other stakeholders”. The focus of the Forum is on exchanging new ideas, expectations and priorities for work relating to the main theme of the annual session of the Council. The discussions are interactive. The Forum also discusses measures for different groups to work together towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The outcome is presented in a summary by the President of ECOSOC.

Coordination segment

The coordination segment is held for two days in early February before the beginning of the sessions of the subsidiary bodies. Its function is to formulate “action-oriented policy guidance” for

the subsidiary bodies as well as the specialized agencies and the entities of the UN development system as a whole. The basis of the discussions is a note by the Secretary-General containing issues, lessons learned and recommendations taken from the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and proposals related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Existing coordination-related mandated agenda items are discussed at the segment. Which ones is not specified in GA resolution 75/290 A. They may comprise items such as “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system” and “Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases”. Participants include the heads of UN system entities, the Chairs of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions. NGOs in consultative status “should” and private sector and other stakeholders “may” participate in the coordination segment. The outcome is presented in a summary by the President of ECOSOC.

7.4. Forums and other mandated meetings

ECOSOC forums are meetings convened by or “under the auspices” of the Council and are governed by their own modalities.

Forum on financing for development follow-up

The ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD) is an annual high-level event held in April for up to five (usually four) days. The forum is convened and chaired by the President of ECOSOC according to modalities set out in the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) and in a [GA resolution](#). The forum is the intergovernmental process mandated to review the implementation of the Action Agenda and other financing for development outcomes. It is open to universal participation and typically brings together a large number of Government ministers, high-level officials in the areas of finance and sustainable development and senior representatives from the UN system, institutional stakeholders and international organizations. The private sector and civil society organizations both have robust representation at the forum. The FfD is the main global platform for debate on the wide gap between the goal of achieving sustainable development and the means to realize it. It addresses the “action areas” of the Action Agenda (public resources; private business; development cooperation; trade; debt; “systemic issues”; science, technology and innovation; and capacity-building). The foundation for the discussions held at the forum is the annual Financing for Sustainable Development Report, prepared by the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, led by the [Financing for Sustainable Development Office \(DESA\)](#).

The FfD consists of formal meetings, multi-stakeholder round tables chaired by Ministers and moderated by the heads of relevant institutions, panel discussions and side-events. One meeting is dedicated to a special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD, sometimes taking the format of an interactive dialogue. Every fourth year, a high-level dialogue on

financing for development of the GA (“SDG Summit”) is held back-to-back with the HLPF of ECOSOC ([see chap. 8](#)).

The outcome of the Ffd is a report containing intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed conclusions and recommendations, which is transmitted by the Council to the HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC. Negotiations on the conclusions and recommendations are facilitated, typically by two co-facilitators. The outcome document contains policy recommendations and political commitments (not to be understood as pledges) on how to finance the implementation of the SDGs. They are a formal input to the overall review of the 2030 Agenda in the HLPF ([see chap. 8](#)) and form an integral part of its deliberations. The President of ECOSOC provides a summary of the Ffd.

Financing for development issues are also addressed by the GA. The GA addresses specific financing issues, as well as the Ffd follow-up process, in individual resolutions negotiated in the Second Committee.

Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

The multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals is a two-day event held in May at UN Headquarters in New York. It is convened by the President of ECOSOC under modalities set in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and co-chaired by two Member States appointed by her/him. The theme is the same as the annual theme for the HLPF. The forum consists of a number of informal meetings. The forum is part of the [Technology Facilitation Mechanism](#), which was established under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda to support the achievement of the SDGs.

The [UN inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation](#) for the Sustainable Development Goals and the “[10-member group](#)” of high-level representatives from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community appointed by the Secretary-General coordinate the organization of the meetings of the forum. Logistical support is provided by DESA, DGACM and UNCTAD. The forum draws on information provided in the quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report.

The outcome is a summary elaborated by the co-chairs and issued as a note by the Secretariat. The document is a mandated input to the HLPF.

Youth Forum

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is an annual two-day event on the role of youth in achieving the SDGs, scheduled in April. It consists of a number of informal meetings. Plenary meetings of the Youth Forum are chaired by the President or a Vice-President of ECOSOC. Participation is by invitation of the President of ECOSOC. Participants are selected by national youth councils and other youth organizations. The outcome is a summary by the President.

Finding ECOSOC documents

All official UN documents are available online in all six official languages of the Organization: there are several ways to access UN documentation. The [Official Document System \(ODS\)](#) provides access to all documents of the Charter Organs and their subsidiary bodies, as well as administrative issuances and documents of the Secretariat. Documents pertaining to specific meetings are linked in the [Journal of the United Nations](#). The ECOSOC website provides access to the Council agenda, its programme of work, resolutions, decisions and reports, including documentation from all past sessions. Through the [UN Digital Library](#), users can research documents, votes, speeches, publications in the public domain and more. Delegates have access to speeches and drafts through e-delegate ([see appendix II](#)). A limited number of paper copies of pertinent documents are made available in the ECOSOC Chamber and in conference rooms during plenary meetings.

Development Cooperation Forum

The Development Cooperation Forum is a high-level two-day event convened by the President of ECOSOC, usually in May, at UN Headquarters. It takes place every two years. The meetings of the Forum are formal plenary meetings of ECOSOC; the modalities have been set by the GA. The Forum predates both the 2030 Agenda and the reform of the UN development system. The Forum was established by the 2005 World Summit Outcome resolution of the GA, with the mandate to promote coherence among the activities of different development partners, identify gaps and obstacles and provide guidance and policy recommendations on international development cooperation. HLPF ([see chap. 8](#)) and FfD both take the work of the Forum into account.

The Development Cooperation Forum brings together ministers and senior experts from national Governments, Members of Parliament, regional and local authorities, philanthropic foundations, international organizations, development banks, the private sector, academia, NGOs and civil society organizations. The meetings are convened as formal plenary meetings of the Council. Participation is open to NGOs with consultative status. An extensive preparatory process, led by DESA, is supported by the Advisory Group on the Development Cooperation Forum of the Under-Secretary-General of DESA. The analytical work produced for the Forum is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on “Trends and progress in international development cooperation” (most recent, [E/2020/10](#)).

There are no negotiations or consultations at the Forum. The outcome is an official summary of key findings, prepared by the President of ECOSOC and transmitted to the HLPF in a note by the Secretariat.

Special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters

The special meeting is a one-day event convened by ECOSOC in the second quarter of the year. It takes place back-to-back with the session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters ([see chap. 3](#)). The meeting consists of two formal plenary meetings of the Council. All Member States and observer States are invited to participate, along with their national tax authorities. The concept of the meeting is to provide a forum for discussing tax policy and tax administration in the context of sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There is no formal outcome, but the President of ECOSOC issues an informal summary, whose findings feed into the Financing for Sustainable Development Report issued by the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development.

The substantive secretariat of the special meeting is the Financing for Development Office (DESA), which frequently organizes expert group meetings on current topics of particular importance to developing countries in the area of international tax cooperation. The Office has developed a capacity-development programme in international tax cooperation, which is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the ministries of finance and national tax authorities in developing countries to develop more effective and efficient tax



“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”

More fish anybody?

Human activity is harming marine ecosystems

systems. The secretariat reports to the Council annually on progress in implementation of the programme.

7.5. Actions by the UN development system

Three segments address actions by the UN development system and other actors to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Operational activities for development segment

The operational activities for development segment of ECOSOC takes place during three days in May, according to the GA mandate “close” to the annual sessions of the Executive Boards of UN funds and programmes. It consists of formal plenary meetings of ECOSOC. The format is a series of thematic panels, including interactive discussions, accompanied by a general debate.

The operational activities for development segment is dedicated to the overview of the UN development system at the country level. It focuses on the guidance and overall coordination of the UN development system, in particular with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Two key GA resolutions frame the work of the segment. One is the resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) (see chap. 2), which guides the work of the UN development system. The other is the resolution on the reform of the development system (see chap. 1), which aims at improving and repositioning the work of the development system in the field. The Council reviews progress in both areas during the segment. Relevant reports of the Secretariat and of the funds and programmes form the basis of the deliberations. The Executive Boards of UNDP/UNPF/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP submit reports. The Secretariat submits the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the QCPR, and the report of the Deputy Secretary-General on the Development Coordination Office (DCO), which serves as the secretariat of the UN Sustainable Development Group (36 funds and programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices) and oversees the work of resident coordinators in the field.

The debate is normally an interactive dialogue with representatives of the entities concerned.

The outcome of the operational activities for development segment is presented in an annual summary by the Chair and a negotiated resolution on progress in the implementation of the QCPR in years when the GA does not produce a QCPR resolution. The Vice-President responsible for the segment decides on the organization of negotiations. Sometimes, her/his delegation leads the process, and at other times she/he appoints facilitators. The Chair’s summary is prepared by the responsible Vice-President and is distributed by the President of ECOSOC. It is not an official document.

No extras for the EU

In May 2011 the GA In 2011, the General Assembly adjusted the observer status of the European Union by upgrading its speaking rights in debates, providing a limited right of reply and permission to orally present draft resolutions and amendments on behalf of EU Member States. This “enhanced” status does not apply to ECOSOC plenary meetings. General statements by the EU are treated like other group statements and are included among group statements when delivered by the Presidency of the EU. In some forums with their own modalities, such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development or the Financing for Development Forum, the EU is granted the same rights as in the General Assembly.

Resolutions of ECOSOC on the status of implementation of the QCPR can contain recommendations for the GA. There is no formal interaction between organizers of the segment and the Second Committee of the GA regarding operational activities for development. In most cases, however, the delegations and experts working on these issues are the same in both organs.

Humanitarian affairs segment

The humanitarian affairs segment of ECOSOC takes place for three days in June, alternating between UN Headquarters in New York and the UN Office at Geneva. The meetings of the humanitarian affairs segment are convened as formal plenary meetings of the Council. The segment is not only the main platform for coordinating the humanitarian response of the UN worldwide, but also the major networking focal point of the global humanitarian community, the place where Member States, entities of the UN system, development actors, the private sector and other humanitarian partners discuss emerging and pressing humanitarian issues. The segment has its own theme, set by a Council decision and aligned with the main theme of ECOSOC.

The humanitarian affairs segment is chaired by one of the ECOSOC Vice-Presidents. A general debate is held during the session and the Vice-President responsible for the session, in consultation with Member States and the Secretariat, selects thematic panel discussions, which are mostly interactive. Numerous side-events are held during the segment.

Substantive secretariat support of the humanitarian affairs segment is provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA publishes the annual [Global Humanitarian Overview](#), which is regularly updated on its website.

The main outcome of the humanitarian affairs segment is the negotiated resolution of the Council entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”. The negotiations usually start in May. They are led by two facilitators appointed by the Vice-President responsible for the segment, usually one from a developing country and one from a developed country. The Vice-President provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations that emerged during the segment.

The content of the ECOSOC resolution is usually referred to in the annual GA resolution bearing the same name, “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” (called the “omnibus” resolution), which is adopted together with a series of other GA resolutions on humanitarian issues. Both resolutions are negotiated in October/November and adopted in December. While the humanitarian affairs segment is expected to focus on operational issues, the “omnibus” resolution considers a broader thematic range.



“Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”

Do we need so much variety of life on earth?

37,400 species are threatened with extinction

Meeting on the transition from relief to development

Immediately preceding the humanitarian affairs segment, ECOSOC holds an annual meeting on the transition from relief to development. The meeting is scheduled for one day as a formal meeting of ECOSOC and is held, along with the humanitarian affairs segment, in Geneva and New York, in alternating years. The conveners are the Vice-Presidents responsible for the organizational activities for development and humanitarian affairs segments. The meeting addresses the linkages between humanitarian and development assistance, including peacebuilding (“promoting peaceful and inclusive societies” and “access to justice for all”). The meeting focuses on countries in conflict or post-conflict situations. ECOSOC agenda items concerning the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, the situation in South Sudan, the Sahel region and African countries emerging from conflict are addressed in the meeting. Participation is open to all relevant stakeholders.

International Geneva

Geneva is the global hub for multilateral diplomacy and international cooperation where humanitarian aid for victims of natural disasters and conflicts is conceived, efforts for global health and the fight against deadly diseases are coordinated and responses to climate challenges designed. Geneva offers victims of abuse, torture and violence forums to be heard and seek redress. Governments come to Geneva to negotiate agreements in the fields of trade, disarmament and peace. Regulatory frameworks for telecommunications and the protection of data or innovations are developed in Geneva.

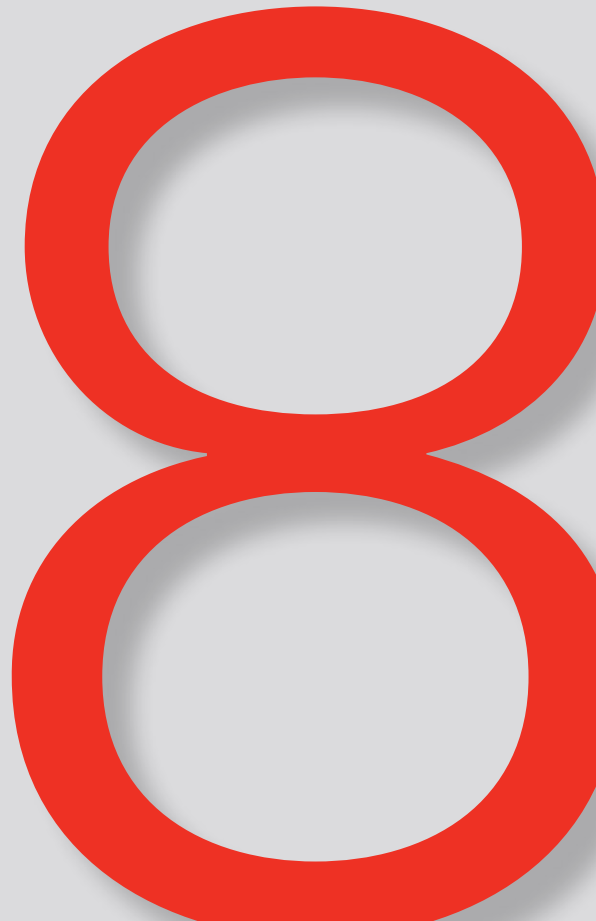
Starting with the foundation of the Red Cross in 1863, Geneva has a long tradition of hosting international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives of the scientific and academic community, civil society and the private sector. Today, it hosts 42 international organizations, the permanent representations of 177 Member States and about 750 NGOs. As home to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), the city plays a pivotal role in dialogue and cooperation between the members of the international community. Some 20 specialized crosscutting platforms are active in Geneva, encouraging discussions and helping to create broad stakeholder networks. International Geneva is the most active centre of global governance. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the city hosted over 3,400 meetings annually, bringing together approximately 182,000 delegates from all over the world. Over 4,700 prominent figures, including Heads of State and Government, ministers and other dignitaries travelled to Geneva each year.

7.6. High-level segment

The high-level segment is convened over a four-day period in July convened in plenary meetings of the Council. The days for the ministerial meetings overlap with the last 3 days of the HLPF, which is convened under its own modalities, i.e., “under the auspices” of ECOSOC ([see chap. 8](#)). Together with the Financing for Development Forum and the Youth Forum, the segment is one of the main occasions for high-level participation in ECOSOC. The last day of the segment focuses on the theme, “Future trends and scenarios related to the Council”.

The main outcome of the high-level segment is the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the HLPF, usually adopted by the Council on the last day of the annual session, the day after the HLPF has adopted the same document on its closing day.

ECOSOC and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals



The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are the overarching guidelines for all UN action in the economic, social and environmental fields. Across the UN system, all UN entities have aligned themselves with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Most UN entities publish specific information on their websites about which SDGs are relevant to them and which actions they are taking to address them.

While the SDGs are not legally binding on UN Member States, the broad preparation and follow-up process and the universal endorsement by the GA make them a powerful instrument of global policy. Member States, civil society and the private sector have been called upon to mobilize the resources necessary and to establish the policies necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Until 2020, the global effort was on an upward trend towards some — not all — of the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing global economic recession have created serious setbacks across the board.

“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

With the adoption of [General Assembly resolution 70/1](#), “Transforming our World — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, Member States agreed to work towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Goals are further detailed in 169 targets. The framework for financing the SDGs is laid out in the associated GA resolution 69/313, containing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, also adopted by the GA in 2015.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 No poverty. | 10 Reduced inequalities. |
| 2 Zero hunger. | 11 Sustainable cities and communities. |
| 3 Good health and well-being. | 12 Responsible consumption and production. |
| 4 Quality education. | 13 Climate action. |
| 5 Gender equality. | 14 Life below water. |
| 6 Clean water and sanitation. | 15 Life on land. |
| 7 Affordable and clean energy. | 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions. |
| 8 Decent work and economic growth. | 17 Partnerships for the Goals. |
| 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure. | |

The political guidance of the implementation process is multitiered. The central role in overseeing, following up and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda rests with the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), a sui generis structure under the shared responsibility between the GA and ECOSOC. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the outcomes of the forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD) “under the auspices” of ECOSOC are integral to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

8.1. High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

8.1

The high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) meets annually in July “under the auspices” of ECOSOC, convened by the President of the Council and chaired by her/him or one of the Vice-Presidents of ECOSOC. Every four years, the HLPF also meets under the auspices of the GA at the level of Heads of State and Government. This meeting, also called the “Sustainable Development Goals Summit” (SDG Summit), takes place in September at the beginning of the GA session. The first SDG Summit since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, held in 2019, resulted in a Political Declaration ([GA resolution 74/4](#)), in which the Member States declared the “decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” with “accelerated action”, focusing on 10 areas. In years when no SDG Summit is held, the Secretary-General hosts an “SDG moment” at the beginning of the GA session.

Under the auspices of ECOSOC, the meetings of the HLPF extend over 8 days in July. The first 5 days are held at the working level, followed by 3 days at the ministerial level, which are jointly convened with the high-level segment of ECOSOC. The modalities of HLPF meetings are defined by GA resolutions. The meetings of the HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC operate under the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, except as otherwise provided in relevant GA resolutions. The high-level segment meetings including the opening of the ministerial part follow the ECOSOC rules of procedure. The outcome is a ministerial declaration, usually adopted at the closing of both the HLPF and the high-level segment of ECOSOC.

Theme and agenda

The HLPF has an annual theme, identical with the theme of the annual ECOSOC session, which is set out in a GA resolution or decision. The themes for the years until 2023 all relate to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Each year, the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, conducts an “in-depth” review of a set of SDGs. The decision on the themes and the SDGs to be reviewed in the four-year cycle between SDG Summits is made by the GA, normally on a multi-year schedule.

Mobilizing the resources for implementation and “Partnerships for the Goals” ([SDG 17](#)) is reviewed annually.

States are encouraged to present voluntary national reviews (see below) of their actions in implementation of the SDGs at the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC.

Schedule

Over its first five days, the HLPF conducts a “thematic review” of the 2030 Agenda in light of the annual theme, the scheduled “in-depth” reviews of certain SDGs and the interlinkages between them and other SDGs. The HLPF also takes stock of financing and the availability of resources (SDG 17) on an annual basis. During the three ministerial days, the majority of the voluntary national review presentations take place. Due to the high number of presentations, some countries present their reviews on the fifth day of the working-level HLPF. When the HLPF is convened in in-person meetings, the general debate of the HLPF and the ECOSOC high-level segment ([see chap. 7](#)) take place in parallel with the HLPF ministerial days and sometimes continue during the fourth day of the ECOSOC high-level segment.

The flag

Every weekday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the flags of all 193 Member States are flown at UN Headquarters in New York and at the UN Office in Geneva. On weekends, only the UN flag is flown. The flags are organized in English alphabetical order.

Fun fact: Only two flags do not have a rectangular form: the flag of Nepal has a triangular format and the flag of Switzerland is square.

Basis of deliberations

The meetings of the HLPF are informed by an annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the SDGs, based on the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda and data produced by national statistical systems. The framework consists of more than 200 indicators agreed upon by the UN Statistical Commission and endorsed by the GA. An unedited version of the report is made available in April. The HLPF can also consider inputs from intergovernmental bodies and forums and findings from the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other entities of the UN system as well as from experts and scientific sources. Every four years, a group of scientists appointed by the Secretary-General produces the Global Sustainable Development Report, which is made available in the same year as the SDG Summit.

Voluntary national reviews

The 2030 Agenda encourages Member States to conduct their own regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels. These are called “[voluntary national reviews](#)”, which are country-led and country-driven. The goal of the reviews is to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned, to strengthen policies of Governments and their institutions and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs. While voluntary, countries are encouraged to conduct a review at least once during a four-year circle between SDG summits.

Countries are encouraged to use the guidelines and preparatory tools provided by the Secretariat. DESA supports a structured process as detailed in the [Handbook for the preparation of voluntary national reviews](#). The process starts with a country communicating its intention to conduct a review to the President of ECOSOC,



“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”

Is there any virtue in war?

In 2020, worldwide, 5 civilians per 100,000 were killed in armed conflicts — 1 in 7 of those killed were women or children



17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



“Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”

Who foots the bill?

Two thirds of low-income and lower middle-income countries need additional financing for the collection of data and statistics

usually through a letter from the Permanent Representative of the Member State. A template for the communication is provided in the above-mentioned Handbook. DESA supports the preparatory process with workshops based on the previous experiences of countries participating in the review process. The Department organizes global webinars for participating countries. For the submission of the results of the review, two deadlines need to be met. First, a document not exceeding 700 words on the main message is to be submitted in May, and second, the final review report is to be submitted in electronic form by mid-June. Final reviews are posted online. Voluntary national reviews are not translated by the Secretariat and are posted on the voluntary national reviews database of DESA in the UN language(s) in which they are submitted. Summaries of the main messages are contained in an official document translated in all official languages of the UN.

Member States present the results of their reviews at the annual HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC. Presentation time is limited. Established practice allows 15 minutes (including the presentation for audio-visual material) for countries presenting a review for the first time, followed by a similar amount of time for questions. Delegations may coordinate who asks which question and to whom. Countries presenting a review for the second time are allotted a total of 20 minutes each in a panel format, divided equally between presentation and questions. Countries can provide written responses if time is too short for appropriately detailed answers in the meeting. These replies are posted on the webpage of the country in the [voluntary national reviews database](#).

DESA prepares annual synthesis reports on the voluntary national reviews. By 2021, a total of 177 countries had presented their voluntary national reviews at the HLPF, 57 of which had presented reports more than once.

Participation

Implementing the 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved by Governments alone. It requires an effort of all members of the global community and all elements of society impacted by decisions — or the absence thereof — on the SDGs at all levels, from global to local. In UN parlance, they are called “stakeholders” (see [chap. 4](#)). Accordingly, the HLPF is a multi-stakeholder platform reaching beyond Member States and the UN system. The GA encourages “a diverse and inclusive range of major groups and other relevant stakeholders” to participate at all levels. Participants include Member States according to the all-State formula (see [chap. 4](#)), entities of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, civil society, NGOs, business (“the private sector”), private philanthropic organizations and academic and educational institutions. Many are connected as “[Major Groups and Other Stakeholders](#)”, a self-organized network. The nine major groups are:

- Women
- Children and youth
- Indigenous peoples
- Non-governmental organizations

Side events

Side events are unofficial events taking place at the UN that are organized and convened by Member States or UN entities. Civil society organizations can hold side events at the UN, but only in collaboration with a Member State or a UN entity. Most side events take place on the margins of an official UN event. ECOSOC events such as the annual session of CSW or the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues are often accompanied by numerous side events, with thousands of people in attendance.

- Local authorities
- Workers and trade unions
- Business and industry
- Scientific and technological community
- Farmers

The “Major Groups and Other Stakeholders” category includes local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Each group is coordinated by “organizing partners” at national, regional and global levels that collaborate with DESA.

Representatives of “Major Groups and Other Stakeholders” have the right to access all official information, attend official meetings, speak during interactive discussions, make recommendations and organize side events as partners of a Member State or the Secretariat. The President of ECOSOC ensures that members of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders speak as lead discussants and organize meetings around the theme of the ECOSOC session from the perspective of the group at the HLPF and are able to provide comments and ask questions during voluntary national review presentations. Co-facilitators of negotiations may invite the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders to provide comments and inputs to the draft ministerial declaration of the HLPF.

In order to ensure participation of the least developed countries, the travel expenses of one representative of each is covered by the regular UN budget.

Outcome of the HLPF

The HLPF adopts an outcome document in the form of an intergovernmentally negotiated ministerial declaration. The declaration is adopted twice, the first time by all Member States at the closing of the HLPF, and a second time, subsequently, by the Member States of ECOSOC at the high-level segment of the Council. Prior to the HLPF, the President of ECOSOC appoints the Permanent Representatives of two Member States as co-facilitators to consult and lead negotiations with other representatives on the text of the ministerial declaration. Negotiations usually start in May. In years where there are two HLPFs, one in July “under the auspices” of ECOSOC and one in September “under the auspices” of the GA (known as the “Sustainable Development Goals Summit”), only one declaration, encompassing the four-year HLPF cycle, is adopted at the Summit. It is called the Political Declaration.

DGACM produces a procedural HLPF report covering: factual information on the proceedings, including the opening and closing meetings, the thematic review, the SDG reviews, the voluntary national reviews and the general debate; information on the number of side events, the number of participants and documentation associated with the HLPF; and the actions taken during the HLPF. The President of the Economic and Social Council produces a summary of the key issues of concern and possible solutions.

Communications



Information about ECOSOC activities and the communication of its objectives are the domain of the Secretariat, mainly the Departments concerned with supporting the work of the Council (Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management (DGACM), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and Department of Global Communications (DGC). The President of ECOSOC has a Twitter account (@UNECOSOC) and a [newsletter](#), both operated with the support of DESA.

Information for Member States

The ECOSOC rules of procedure require the Secretariat to inform the Member States, the President of the Security Council, the specialized agencies and NGOs and other organizations with observer and consultative status of all matters regarding the agenda of ECOSOC. The President of ECOSOC communicates changes regarding the agenda through the Secretariat. Such information is communicated electronically, through the ECOSOC platform on the password-protected e-deleGATE portal ([see appendix II](#)).

Public information

The [ECOSOC website](#) contains all official documents issued by the Council and its subsidiary bodies. The site also features an [ECOSOC news](#) site, with information specifically dedicated to the Council and its substantive areas of interest. Media coverage of all formal and a limited number of informal meetings is provided by [UN News](#). The “meetings coverage” website contains “[press releases](#)” (short summaries) of all formal and some informal meetings. In the field of humanitarian issues, OCHA operates an online site called [ReliefWeb](#).

Social media outlets ([see appendix II](#)) aim to reach out to an audience beyond the professional and diplomatic circles directly involved in the Council. DESA considers the outlets to be a “primary communication tool”, but only a small share of resources is dedicated to its work in this sphere.

Information on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Making the importance of the SDGs widely understood is crucial to ensuring their implementation by 2030. The Secretariat has declared “a new era in communications”, a strengthening of “communications and advocacy” and a “more unified voice” for the UN development system. The reorganized UN country teams include experts from DGC. Two dedicated websites offer information about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: [one, run by the UN Sustainable Development Group](#), focuses on UN action in the field; [the other, run by DESA](#), focuses on the status of implementation, political processes and partnerships on a global level. The UN system as a whole is mandated to focus its global communication efforts on the achievement of the SDGs.

Appendix I

ECOSOC agenda documents

E/YEAR/1: Provisional agenda for the annual session. This document, usually adopted at the first (organizational) meeting of the Council for a given session, contains the list of items to be considered.

E/YEAR/L.1: Working arrangements for the annual session. This document (in the form of a draft resolution submitted by the President) contains the dates for ECOSOC meetings/segments and forums, as well as the date of the organizational meeting for the following session.

Any changes or additions to the working arrangements are presented in a revised version of the document (E/YEAR/L.1/Rev._).

The “final” adopted working arrangements are contained in a resolution (E/RES/YEAR/1).

E/YEAR/INF/4: Note by the Secretariat on the sessions of the subsidiary and related bodies of ECOSOC reporting to the Council, which lists the dates of the sessions of the subsidiary and related bodies whose reports will be considered by the Council at the meetings of its management segment.

E/YEAR/100: Annotated agenda for the annual session, which contains the agenda for the session as adopted by the Council, a brief history of each item on the agenda and a list of documents that will be before the Council under each item. The document is usually issued in January.

The annex to the annotated agenda contains the basic programme of work for the annual session of the Council, identifying the items to be considered during each session/meeting/forum. Prior to 2020, the basic programme of work was issued separately as E/YEAR/2.

E/YEAR/100/Add.1: Addendum to the annotated agenda, which presents the actions to be taken by the Council with regard to elections, nominations, confirmations and appointments of members to subsidiary and related bodies of ECOSOC during the dedicated “election” management segment meetings of the Council is usually issued in February.

E/YEAR/INF/2: Note by the Secretariat on action taken by ECOSOC, which lists the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council during its annual session. Advance unedited versions of the decisions are available on the [e-deleGATE portal](#) (before 2020 those versions were included in the INF/2 document). The general public has no access to e-deleGATE but has access to the texts of the decisions in the *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council* (see below, E/YEAR/99) as well as the summary records of the relevant meetings (E/YEAR/SR.[meeting number]).

E/YEAR/99: *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*, which contains the final text of the resolutions and decisions adopted during the annual session.

A/[GA session number]/3 (Supplement No.3): Report of ECOSOC to the General Assembly (*Official Records of the General Assembly*), which includes matters brought to the attention of or calling for action by the General Assembly, as well as a procedural overview of the discussions and outcomes of the session. It is the most detailed overview of the work of the annual session. Its annexes contain a list of NGOs granted observer status by ECOSOC as well as the composition of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Appendix II

Where to look it up

The following list contains useful sources of information for anyone working at, for or with ECOSOC.

Delegate

(www.un.org/delegate)

Delegate, the site previously known as deleGATE (www.un.int), contains news, stories and announcements from iSeek (the UN Intranet), as well as practical resources for representatives of Member States at the main United Nations duty stations: United Nations Headquarters in New York (UNHQ); United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG); United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV); United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON); Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok; Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago; and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut.

Available links include:

- UN contact directory (both “Yellow” and “White” pages), available under “Resources”, which includes phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- gMeets (online meetings scheduling and conference room booking system of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM): <https://conferences.unite.un.org/gmeets>)
- Journal of the United Nations (electronic access to meeting programmes, agendas, documentation, etc.).

e-deleGATE

(www.edelegate.un.int)

The “secured content” e-delegate (www.edelegate.un.int) is the restricted-access portal for delegates. There, ECOSOC-related information is contained in the relevant ECOSOC pages including ECOSOCPlace. Announcements regarding the ECOSOC programme or other circulations are done through e-deleGATE.

Modules include:

- e-accreditation
- e-Correspondence (correspondence between the Secretariat and the Permanent Missions to the UN)
- e-Sponsorship
- e-Speakers
- e-submission
- e-decisions
- e-List of participants
- e-Subscription (to unofficial documents)
- ECOSOC resolutions and decisions page
- Candiweb (accessible via the elections module of the GA or ECOSOC).

ECOSOC website

(<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/>)

The website provides general information about ECOSOC (including the [2021 ECOSOC brochure](#)), membership and bureau and the calendar of ECOSOC events. The “documents” section contains the agenda, programme of work, reports (including advanced, unedited versions), resolutions, decisions and ministerial declarations of the current session, as well as access to the archive of resolutions and decisions dating back to 1946.

Social media

Social media outlets include:

- Twitter: @UNECOSOC
- The Twitter handle of the President of ECOSOC: Twitter: @UNECOSOC
- Instagram: @UN_ECOSOC
- ECOSOC Facebook account: <http://www.facebook.com/UNECOSOC>
- ECOSOC YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/UNECOSOC.

Website of the UN Protocol and Liaison Service

The website contains the following information:

- Protocol Manual
- List of Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of all Member States (with correct spellings and titles)
- List of Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers of Member States
- List of senior officials of the UN
- List of communications sent to Permanent Missions by the Protocol and Liaison Service
- Blue Book (see below).

“Blue Book” (Permanent Missions to the United Nations)

The “Blue Book” is available online and is updated in real time as e-Blue Book (<https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/protocol/blue-book>). A hard copy is published several times during the year and is available on demand from the United Nations Publications Division. The publication contains the directories of the Permanent Missions, Observer Missions and Liaison Offices of Member States (including the name, rank and phone number of UN delegates, but not their e-mail addresses).

Note: contacts at the Permanent Missions of Member States at UNOG are available at: www.ungeneva.org/practical-information.

Journal of the United Nations
(journal.un.org; and @Journal_UN_ONE)

The *Journal of the United Nations*, which is published daily online, includes:

- Up-to-date information on all intergovernmental meetings scheduled at UNHQ in New York
- Links to documents considered in formal meetings
- Daily list of documents
- General information on the list of current chairs of the Regional Groups
- Statements delivered during the meeting as submitted to e-statements.

The Journal is issued daily in all six official languages during the main part of the annual session of the GA, and in English and French during the resumed session. Delegations can subscribe to receive the Journal of the UN by e-mail.

Delegates' Handbook

Published annually by DGACM before the beginning of each regular session of the GA in September, the Delegates Handbook contains updated information regarding the session, including: contact details for the Chief of the ECOSOC Affairs Branch, Committee Secretaries and officers; meeting services; facilities for delegates; and myriad practical pieces of information about how best to find one's way around the UN bureaucracy. Available via [Delegate](#) (see above).

United Nations Handbook
("New Zealand Handbook")

The New Zealand Handbook is available as an app (#UNHandbookApp) and PDF (www.mfat.ovt.nz). Hard copies can be obtained at the UN Bookshop and at the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the UN. The Handbook is published annually by the Government of New Zealand as a reference guide to all UN bodies.

UN "How To" app @UN-Howto

The "How To" app was developed by UNITAR with sponsorship from the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN. The information provided ranges from basic administrative forms to a wealth of UN research tools and documentation. It is intended particularly as a service for representatives of the least developed countries, small island developing States and members of the Forum of Small States.

@PermrApp
(password-protected)

@PermrApp provides photos and biographies of Permanent Representatives of the Member States. The app was developed by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, which provides passwords for the site (www.netherlandsmission.org).

Appendix III

Conference Rooms

ECOSOC meetings usually take place in the ECOSOC Chamber, however they may also be held in the GA Hall and in conference rooms. Conference rooms vary in size, number of seats and levels of available technical equipment. Conference rooms need to be booked in advance.

How to book a conference room:

All ECOSOC meetings are automatically booked www.by DGACM.

Member States wishing to book a conference room should submit a request to the Meetings Management Section (MMS) of DGACM through gMeets ([see appendix II](#), e-deleGATE). There are, however, restrictions on the use of UN conference rooms for non-UN meetings (see [ST/AI/2019/4](#)).

Requests to reserve a conference room for an informal meeting are not automatically guaranteed and must first be reviewed by MMS. The provision of interpretation services is prioritized for mandated meetings that have interpretation entitlements.

Seating arrangements in conference rooms:

There are three types of seating arrangements for Member States:

- **Free seating:** the Secretariat programs delegation names electronically ad hoc. In some cases, Member States pick up their name plates at the door.
- **A–Z seating:** seats are assigned to Member States in English alphabetical order.
- **Protocol seating: For example, GA or ECOSOC seating:** seats are assigned in the same way as in the formal arrangements for a given session of the organ concerned.

If seating is assigned, generally the Holy See is seated after Member States, the State of Palestine is seated after the Holy See, the European Union is seated after the State of Palestine, followed by other Permanent Observers.

Good to know

- The total capacity of the GA Hall, including the two balconies, is 1,873 seats.
- The total capacity of the ECOSOC Chamber is 572.
- “Adviser” seats are behind the “Delegate” seats and do not have microphones.
- The ECOSOC Chamber has two adviser seats for each of the 54 members of the Council. The remaining seats at desk do not have adviser seats.
- “Observers” refers to anyone who is not entitled to sit in to sit in a delegate/adviser seat, e.g., UN staff, members of civil society or invited guests.
- There is no formally designated podium in conference rooms 8, A, B, C, D, E and F.
- All conference rooms, with the exception of rooms A, B, C, D, E and F, have interpretation booths.

Conference room capacities

Notes on the table (figures accurate as of August 2020; includes social distancing capacities).

	Delegate	Adviser	Podium	Podium (rear)	Secretariat	Observers	Guests and Gallery	Total	Social distancing
GA Hall	646	646	3		26	214	338	1873	300
ECOSOC Chamber	202	161	7	8	14		180	572	109
Trusteeship Council Chamber	200	200	7	14	14	48	192	675	97
CR 1	248	200	9	14	20		78	569	82
CR 2	245	201	9	14	20		78	567	82
CR 3	248	200	9	14	16		93	580	83
CR 4	200	200	9	20	20	54	276	779	136
CR 5	60		5	15		29		109	34
CR 6	68		5	14		26		113	37
CR 7	60		5	14		26		105	33
CR 8	33				7	56		96	27
CR 9	21		3		1	22		47	17
CR 10	33				1			34	12
CR 11	72		5	20		40		137	35
CR 12	72		5	20		40		137	35

CR=Conference Room.

Appendix IV

Groups of Member States

States Members of the UN are organized in formal and informal groups with a variety of different purposes and memberships. The list below is not comprehensive and focuses on the types of groups relevant to and active within ECOSOC in New York..

Regional groups

The following regional groups were formed to facilitate the equitable geographical distribution of seats among Member States in different UN bodies:

- Group of African States (54 Member States)
- Group of Asia-Pacific States (54 Member States)
- Group of Eastern European States (23 Member States)
- Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) (33 Member States)
- Western European and other States (WEOG) (28 Member States plus the United States)

The United States is not an official member of any group: it participates as an observer in the meetings of the Group of Western European and other States and is considered to be a member of that Group for electoral purposes.

Turkey is a member of both the Asia-Pacific Group and the Group of Western European and other States: for electoral purposes Turkey is considered as a member of the Group of Western European and other States only. Kiribati is not a member of any group. The Holy See participates in the meetings of the Group of Western European and other States as an observer.

While the regional groups formally exist for electoral and ceremonial purposes, some also choose to coordinate on substantive issues and/or to use the group structure to share information.

The Chairs of the regional groups rotate on a monthly basis. Their names can be found in the Journal of the UN. The Chairs are invited to speak on behalf of the group on ceremonial occasions (such as GA commemorative meetings).

Main political groups

The list below includes only groups that regularly make joint statements at formal ECOSOC meetings. The information provided is based on the websites of the groups. Groups which focus only on one specific agenda item are not listed.

Group of 77 and China (G77 and China)

G77 and China is an organization of developing countries designed to promote the collective economic interests of its member States and to create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity at the United Nations. For negotiations on certain draft resolutions, G77 submits the initial draft proposal, which forms the basis for further negotiations. The

group currently has 134 members. The Chair rotates annually starting in January of each year (<http://www.g77.org/>).

European Union (EU)

The EU is an integrated economic and political partnership between 27 European countries. It has its own diplomatic service. It has enhanced observer status with the General Assembly and some ECOSOC events like the ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD) and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF). The EU presidency rotates every six months (www.europa.eu).

African Union (AU)

The [African Union](#) has 55 members and has observer status at the UN. The AU and the Group of African States work closely together on ECOSOC issues. The AU delegation in New York provides conference facilities for the Group of African States. It is usually the Group of African States that speaks in ECOSOC meetings and not the African Union.

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

[AOSIS](#) is an alliance of 39 small island States and low-lying coastal countries. It has 38 members and 5 observers. Its Chair rotates every three years.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

[ASEAN](#) has 10 members: the Chair of the Association rotates annually (<https://asean.org/>).

Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

On certain issues Canada, Australia and New Zealand coordinate their positions and may authorize one representative among them to speak or negotiate on behalf of all three.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

[CARICOM](#) is an organization of 20 Caribbean nations and dependencies, comprising 15 member States and 5 associate members. Its Chair rotates on a quarterly basis among its members. CARICOM has Observer status and maintains a permanent office in New York.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

GCC is a group of six countries, with an office for its Permanent Observer in New York (<http://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/Pages/default.aspx>).

League of Arab States (LAS)

The [League of Arab States](#) (also known as the "Arab League") is a regional organization in the Arab world

(western Asia and northern, western and eastern Africa). It has 22 members (Syria being suspended since 2011). Each has one vote. The goal is to strengthen the economic, cultural, social and political cooperation between the members. Decisions are only binding for those states that voted for them.

Least developed countries (LDCs)

LDCs are a group of countries whose membership is based on a set of criteria defined by the GA. There are currently 46 LDCs. The Chair of the group rotates every three years.

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)

There are 32 LLDCs. The special situation of LLDCs is recognized by the GA. The Chair rotates every two years.

Appendix V

ECOSOC documents

All UN official documents carry a unique document symbol composed of numbers and letters. The different components of the document symbol identify which principal organ and which subsidiary body the document is associated with and indicate the nature of the document. Some recurring documents always carry the same document number ([see appendix I](#)). All language versions of a document carry the same

symbol. The following tables explain the components of ECOSOC document symbols and give an example for each document type. Note that the year in the document number indicates not the calendar year, but the year of the beginning of a session. ECOSOC sessions are held from July of one year until July of the next.

Decoding ECOSOC document symbols

Which body?	Which symbol?
ECOSOC	E/Year
ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up	E/FFDF/YEAR
High-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of ECOSOC	E/HLPF/YEAR
Functional commissions	E/CN.X (functional commission)/YEAR The functional commissions of ECOSOC are: Statistical Commission (E/CN.3); Commission on Population and Development (E/CN.9); Commission for Social Development (E/CN.5); Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6); Commission on Narcotic Drugs (E/CN.7); Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (E/CN.15); Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/CN.16); and United Nations Forum on Forests (E/CN.18).
Expert bodies	E/C.X (expert body)/YEAR
Regional commissions	E/ECA/_; E/ECE/_; E/ESCAP/_; E/ESCWA/_; LC_ (for ECLAC)

Examples

Reports	E/YEAR/(number)
Resolutions	E/RES/YEAR/(number)
Reports	E/YEAR/(number)
Resolutions	E/RES/YEAR/(number)
Reports	E/YEAR/(number)
Resolutions	E/RES/YEAR/(number)

Index

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 12, 82, 96–104

A

Acclamation 76
Accreditation 25, 39, 40, 106
Accounting, Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting 29
Action (taking action) 68, 71–78
Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti 31, 50, 93
Adoption, resolutions/decisions 71, 72
African States group 11, 110
African Union (AU) 110
Agenda 54, 55
Agenda documents 105
Agreed language 67
Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) 110
All-State formula 39
Amendments 58, 71, 72
Appointments 50, 76
Asia-Pacific States group 110
Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) 110

B

Badge 39, 48
Budget 16–17

C

Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ) 110
Caribbean Community (CARICOM) 110
Check against delivery 65
Charter, UN Charter 14, 15, 19, 31
Civil society participation 37, 41, 43
Clean slate 76
Closed meetings 43, 59
Commission for Social Development 26
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 28
Commission on Narcotic Drugs 28
Commission on Science and Technology for Development 28
Commission on the Status of Women 15, 26, 51
Committee for Development Policy 15, 29
Committee for Programme and Coordination 17, 24, 31
Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management 30
Committee of Experts on Public Administration 29

Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters 30
Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals 29
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 19, 30
Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations 31, 46, 48
Communications 60, 103
Competence, decision on 71, 72
Compilation texts 67
Conduct of business 60
Conference rooms 108
Conference services 51, 52
Consensus 68, 71–73
Consideration of agenda items 62, 71
Consultative status 37, 43–45
Contact directory 106
Coordination 12, 17, 33, 82, 85
Coordination segment 85, 86
Co-sponsoring 69
Cost of meetings 57
COVID-19 measures 78
Credentials 39
Crime 15, 16, 28

D

Dag Hammarskjöld Library 60
Dangerous goods 29
Debate 54, 57, 62–66
Deferring action 73
Delegate's Handbook 107
Delegation 39, 40
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) 51, 52
Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management (DGACM) 51, 52, 55, 57, 60, 71
Department of Safety and Security (DSS) 39
Development policy 15, 29, 90
Diplomatic status 40
Division of proposal 72
Documents, numbering and symbols 112
Draft resolutions 68–75
Drugs 15, 27

E

Eastern European States group 110
Economic Commission for Africa 24
Economic Commission for Europe 24

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 24

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 24

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 24

Economic, social and cultural rights 20, 30

e-deleGATE 69, 71, 74, 76, 87, 104, 105, 106

Elections 57, 68, 76–79

Environment, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) 37

European Union (EU) 90

Explanation of vote 71, 72

F

Formal meetings 57, 58

Forests — see UN Forum on Forests 26

Forum on financing for development

follow-up 59, 65, 86, 87

Funds and programmes 21, 31, 33, 90

Functional commissions 26, 40, 44, 45, 54, 55, 65, 76

G

GA — General Assembly 14, 15–19, 39, 97

Geneva 19, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 91, 93

Gender 15, 19, 26, 28, 42, 86

Geographical names 29

Geographical representation 76

Geospatial information 29

Group of Experts on Geographical Names 29

Group of 77 and China 73, 110

Groups of Member States 110

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) 110

H

High-level meetings 59, 86

High-level political forum on sustainable development 34, 39, 65, 73, 87, 94, 97–102

High-level segment 65, 94

Human rights 14, 17, 19, 31, 37, 44, 50

Human Rights Council 19, 44, 50

Humanitarian affairs segment 39, 52, 73, 91, 93

I

Indigenous issues 25, 30, 101

Informal informals 73

Informal meetings 43, 50, 57, 58, 59, 60, 73, 78, 104, 109

Intergovernmental organizations 21, 39

Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting 29

International financial institutions 34, 85

International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) 35

Interpretation 51, 52, 57, 65, 108

J

Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 35

Journal of the UN 52, 59, 60, 87, 106

L

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) 111

L documents 71

Latin American and Caribbean States group (GRULAC) 110

League of Arab States 110

Length of speech 65

Least developed countries (LDCs) 15, 30

M

Major groups 43, 101, 102

Majority 45, 58, 62, 72, 76, 79

Management segment 51, 69, 82, 85

Mandates 13, 14–21, 33, 54, 58, 62

Media 39, 59, 104, 106, 104

Meetings 57–60

Meetings, high-level 59, 86

Meeting on the transition from relief to development 93

Meeting records 15, 17, 43, 51, 52, 59–60, 74, 105

Membership of ECOSOC 11–12

Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals 87

N

Negotiations 43, 60, 65, 67, 68, 73–74, 87, 88, 90, 91, 102, 110

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) 43–45, 93, 102

O

Observers 39, 40–41, 55, 59, 63, 65, 69, 73, 90, 104

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 52, 91, 104

Official Document System (ODS) 60, 74, 87

OP — operative paragraphs 67, 73, 75

Operational activities for development segment 16, 90–91

P

Palestine — State of Palestine 15, 24, 39, 40, 69, 108
Paragraphs, operative and preambular 67, 73, 75
Partnership Forum 85
Peacebuilding Commission 20
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) 30
Point of order 62
Political groups 110–111
Population 26
PP — preambular paragraphs 67, 73, 75
President of ECOSOC 50–51
Press releases 43, 60, 104
Programme budget implications (PBI) 17, 69
Programme of work 51, 55, 105, 106
Protocol and Liaison Service 39, 40, 52, 106
Public administration — Committee of Experts on Public Administration 30

Q

Quorum 58

R

Reconsideration of resolution 72
Records — see meeting records
Regional commissions 24
Relief 14, 93, 104
Reports 62, 63, 112
Research and training 37
Right of reply 66
Rooms — see conference rooms 108
Rotation, regional 50, 76
Rules of procedure 24, 25, 44, 45, 50, 58, 60, 66, 72, 79, 97

S

Science, technology and innovation 87
Seating arrangements 59, 108
Secretariat 51–52, 76
Secretary-General 51–52, 63, 97
Security Council 19
Segments 81
Silence procedure 74, 78
Social development 12, 26, 82
Social media 106
South-South cooperation 35
Speakers list 63, 65, 66
Speaking order 65
Specialized agencies 14, 15, 21, 31, 33, 41, 43, 44
Special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters 88
Special session 54
Speeches 63–66

Sponsor 69–71
Statements — see speeches
State of Palestine — see Palestine
Statistical Commission 25
Subsidiary bodies 24–31
Summary records 52, 60, 69, 105
Summit 15, 85, 87, 97, 102
Suspension of meeting 58
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 18, 27, 32, 36, 42, 47, 56, 61, 64, 70, 77, 83, 84, 89, 92, 96, 97, 99, 100
Switzerland 25
Symbols — document symbols 112

T

Tabling draft resolution 69
“Takes note of” 68
Taking action 71, 72, 78
Taxes 30, 88
Theme (of session) 82
Tie-breaker provision 79
Transition from relief to development 93
Twitter 104, 106

U

UN development system 11, 12, 31, 86, 90
UN-Nutrition 35
UN vocabulary 21
UN bodies; UN entities; UN family 21
UN conferences 15, 46, 55, 76
UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) 28
UN Headquarters 40, 50, 98
UN Journal — see Journal of the UN
UN system 21
UN WebTV 43, 59
UN, related bodies 21, 35, 105

V

Vice-President(s) 51
Voluntary national review 98, 101, 102
Voting 58, 60, 72, 76
Voting by ballot 76, 79

W

Western European and other States group (WEOG) 11, 76, 110
Women 19, 26, 28, 42, 99, 101
Working groups 25

Y

Youth Forum 87

Photo credits

Front cover

First session of ECOSOC, 23 January 1946. Sir Gladwyn Jebb (right), Executive Secretary of the UN, congratulating Sir Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar of India upon his election as President of the first session of the Council. UN Photo.

Inside covers

Representatives of the 193 Member States of the United Nations speaking at the GA general debates in 2018, 2019 and 2021. Members of ECOSOC in 2021 are marked red. UN Photo.

Pages 7/8

Portrait of Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis: Markus Jegerlehner.

Pages 18, 27, 32, 36, 42, 47, 56, 61, 64, 70, 77, 83, 84, 89, 92, 99, 100

Visual interpretation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: Dario Lanfranconi.

Page 6

ECOSOC Chamber at UN Headquarters in New York: John Harris.

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Sources on the Sustainable Development Goals

The sources of the text accompanying the illustrations of the SDGs are:

The Sustainable Development Goals Report, DESA (2021).

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