



NEW YORK CITY, NY, USA
18 - 22 March (Conf. A) / 25 - 29 March (Conf. B)



GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE BACKGROUND GUIDE 2018

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NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



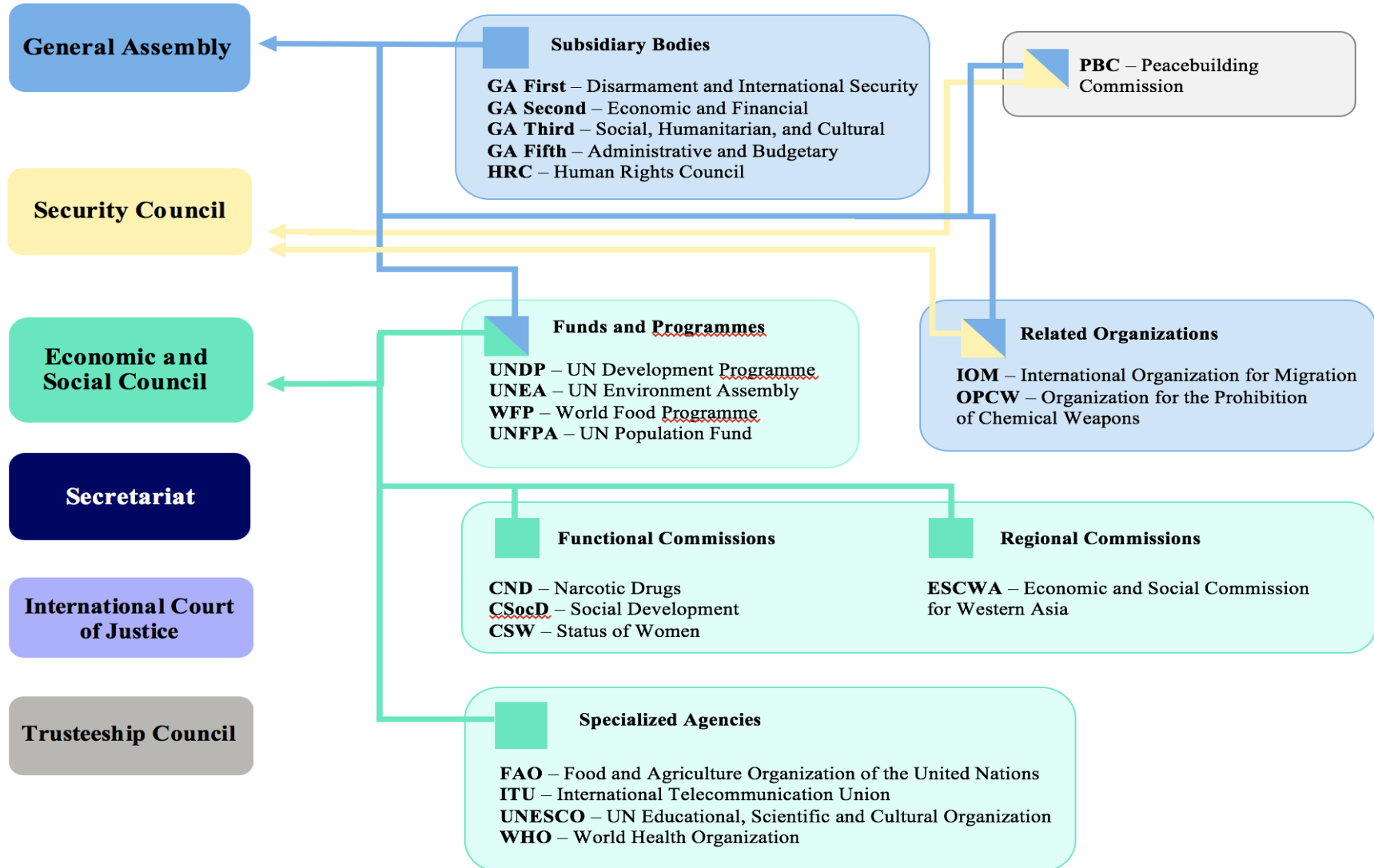
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.





Abbreviations

2030 Agenda	<i>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>
AAAA	<i>Addis Ababa Action Agenda</i>
AU	African Union
BMZ	Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
COP21	21 st Conference of the Parties
CPA	Country programmable aid
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	United Kingdom's Department for International Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
Habitat III	United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
HELI	Health and Environment Linkages Initiative
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
KOTAKU	Indonesia's National Slum Upgrading Program
LDC	Least developed country
LLDC	Landlocked developing country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MNC	Multinational enterprise
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SARS	Severe acute respiratory syndrome
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
STD	UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprise
SSC	South-South cooperation
ST-EP	Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDG	UN Development Group
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFCCC	<i>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</i>
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNGC	UN Global Compact
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNISDR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WTO	World Trade Organization



Habitat III

United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

Committee Overview

“We must provide ideas for the redesign of policies to strengthen the impact on poverty and in employment, and on the promotion of structural change for a more sustainable future for all.”¹

Introduction

The General Assembly Second Committee is one of the six Main Committees of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.² Established as one of six principal organs during the foundation of the UN, the General Assembly remains a vital element of the organization.³ This Committee Overview will briefly outline the history of the Second Committee, and provide a synopsis of its structure, governance, mandate, functions, and its work in recent and future sessions.

The General Assembly Second Committee (Second Committee) is one of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly. A report is issued to the General Assembly Plenary for each item allocated to a Main Committee.

Following the Second World War, the UN was formed to prevent the outbreak of future wars by fostering peace and security among states and resolving pressing global issues including securing fundamental human rights.⁴ Each of the General Assembly’s Main Committees and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) were tasked with focusing on specific issues to fulfill the UN’s objectives, as outlined under Articles 55 to 60 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).⁵ While differing in their areas of focus, the Main Committees share similar arrangements in structure, governance, membership, functions, and powers.⁶

With a focus on economic and financial issues of both the international system and Member States, the Second Committee specifically addresses the promotion of development and economic growth, the reduction of global poverty levels, and the improvement of social conditions and living standards.⁷ The Committee is instrumental in addressing the root causes of global economic instability and works with key actors, such as ECOSOC, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) of the World Bank Group to reduce structural problems in developing states and restore economic stability.⁸

With the rise of economic crises and financial issues across the international system in the past, the Second Committee has delegated some of its work to other key international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁹ With these devolved powers, the Committee has restructured its work by aligning its agenda with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) first, and with the new targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to ensure progress is made in achieving the goals and strengthening stability in the international system.¹⁰ The Second Committee focuses on the causes and effects of crucial events, as well as their triggering factors, to prevent similar occurrences and to promote economic growth and development.¹¹ This ensures that the

¹ UN DESA, *The UN General Assembly’s Second Committee – economic and financial issues*, 2013.

² UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 55-60.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ UN General Assembly, *About the General Assembly*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 55-60.

⁸ UN DPI, *Proposal for Sovereign Debt Restructuring Framework among 6 Draft Texts Approved by Committee (GA/EF/3417)*, 2014; UN General Assembly & UN ECOSOC, *Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the special high-level meeting of the Council with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (New York, 14 and 15 April 2014) (A/69/83-E/2014/71)*, 2014.

⁹ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

¹⁰ UN DPI, *Regulation of Financial Institutions Critical to Avoiding Spread of Global Risk, Speaker Says as Second Committee Debates Economic Crisis (GA/EF/3386)*, 2013; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*, 2000; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

Committee fulfills its role in maintaining economic stability, while offering a unique platform for Member States to generate new, innovative ideas while resolving existing issues.¹²

Governance, Structure, and Membership

Although its area of focus is different from other Main Committees, the Second Committee follows a similar structure with a plenary composition of 193 Member States, as well as a number of Observer States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹³ With the exception of Observer States and NGOs, each Member State in the General Assembly has one vote.¹⁴ In recent years, the General Assembly has sought to move toward a model of achieving resolution by consensus rather than a formal vote to emphasize the importance of collaboration and cooperation among Member States.¹⁵

The General Assembly meets annually, beginning with the General Debate in the third week of September.¹⁶ The agenda lays out the main areas for discussion by the Main Committees.¹⁷ The allocation of items on the agenda to each of the Main Committees, including the Second Committee, is the responsibility of the General Committee.¹⁸ The General Committee is formed by the President of the General Assembly and 22 Vice-Presidents from different regional blocs.¹⁹ From January to September, the General Committee focuses on thematic debates, consultations, and meetings through organized working groups.²⁰ During these Committee sessions, Member States can discuss and address solutions to specific topics.²¹

As a part of the UN reporting structure, there are five primary types of organizations that report to the General Assembly and its six Main Committees: subsidiary bodies, funds and programs, research and training institutes, related organizations, and other entities.²² The General Assembly receives and considers reports on ongoing topics and may take action on any of the items reported by these bodies, including ordering further study and investigation, creating a working group, or including it in documentation or resolutions drafted by the committee.²³ At the end of each year, the Second Committee submits a report to the General Assembly Plenary on each agenda item allocated to it, and the Plenary then considers each report and votes on the adoption of the included draft resolutions.²⁴ The General Assembly also considers reports from ECOSOC.²⁵ Importantly, while the General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy organ of the UN, its decisions are not legally binding upon Member States.²⁶

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is an arm of the UN Secretariat that focuses on development.²⁷ Working closely with the Second Committee, it supports initiatives and resolutions related to the organization's future development goals.²⁸ Along with this, the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination provides the main operational and policy support for ECOSOC and the Second Committee on development issues.²⁹ It also prepares and advises the General Assembly on the periodic review of funding operational development

¹² UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

¹³ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 12.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 17.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (A/72/251)*, 2017.

¹⁸ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UN General Assembly, *Past Sessions*.

²¹ Ibid.

²² UN DPI, *The United Nations System*, 2015.

²³ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017, p. 12; UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Documentation: General Assembly*, 2017.

²⁴ UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *UN Documentation: General Assembly*, 2017.

²⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Reports of ECOSOC to the General Assembly*.

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *Functions and powers of the General Assembly*.

²⁷ UN DESA, *About UN DESA*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination*.

activities.³⁰ The Fifth Committee specifically works with the General Assembly and its Main Committees on budgetary allocations, especially where resolutions that require expenditures are passed.³¹

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

Articles 55 to 60 of the *Charter of the United Nations* outline the Committee's mandate, which includes addressing macroeconomic policy issues, such as international trade, external debt sustainability, and financing for development.³² In line with this, the Second Committee plays a key role in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, by addressing sustainable development, globalization and interdependence, and poverty eradication.³³ Additionally, the Committee provides direction on special situations including least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and on the "permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources."³⁴

As a normative body, the Second Committee works to develop norms and standards for the UN and helps implement these standards within Member States by supporting national legislation and policy.³⁵ The work of the Committee is chiefly substantive, with the exception of its mission on the revitalization of the General Assembly, where it aims to streamline the overall program of work including the possibility of biennial and thematic groups of agenda items, updating working methods, and reducing the number and length of draft resolutions.³⁶

The Second Committee completes its work primarily through draft proposals and submissions of reports to the General Assembly as outlined in the committee's Organization of Work.³⁷ The Committee has the ability to convene relevant conferences and summits on the global development agenda, and usually comes to a consensus on votes.³⁸ Along with this, the Second Committee can request the Secretary-General to submit reports on significant issues and can host side events.³⁹ This is useful in fulfilling the Committee's role of encouraging, strengthening, and improving the implementation of Member States' commitments in relation to development targets and SDGs in particular.⁴⁰ Moreover, this power allows the Second Committee to take on more of an effective role and concentrate on resolving numerous issues through these devolved powers.⁴¹

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Over recent years, the Second Committee has addressed many crucial international documents, such as the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)* (AAAA), adopted at the end of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015), which introduces a new approach to financing systems to support sustainable development.⁴² In particular, at its 70th session in 2015, the Second Committee reaffirmed this document's commitments in draft resolution A/C.2/70/L.69, titled "International trade and development."⁴³ The Committee adopted another crucial draft resolution expressing profound alarm over global climate change, in accordance with the statements contained in the outcome document of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), which is known as the *Paris Agreement*.⁴⁴

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UN General Assembly, *Administrative & Budgetary (Fifth Committee). About the Fifth Committee*.

³² UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ UNEG, *UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System*, 2014.

³⁶ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Second Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.2/71/L.1)*, 2016.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-18*, 2017.

⁴⁰ UN General Assembly, *Organization of work of the Second Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.2/71/L.1)*, 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² UN Third International Conference on Financing for Development, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, 2015.

⁴³ UN DPI, *Concluding Its Session, Second Committee Unanimously Approves 18 Resolutions (GA/EF/3444)*, 2015.

⁴⁴ UN DPI, *Draft Resolution Expressing 'Profound Alarm' over Global Rise in Greenhouse Gas Emissions among 14 Texts Approved by Second Committee*, 2015.

During its 71st session, the Second Committee discussed upon other topics, most of which are strictly related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.⁴⁵ At the end of the session, the Committee approved eight draft resolutions.⁴⁶ Among these, the General Assembly approved resolution 71/464, on the “Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).”⁴⁷ With this document, the body recognized the crucial role of sustainable urbanization in development and requested the Secretary-General to provide the General Assembly with a report on Habitat III’s *New Urban Agenda* every four years, starting from 2018.⁴⁸

Another draft resolution during the 71st session focused on the positive effects of sustainable tourism for development, titled “Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection.”⁴⁹ The draft, adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 71/240, highlights the multiple benefits originating from a different approach to tourism: from women empowerment to maintaining cultural diversity, the body emphasized the impact of sustainable tourism on development and poverty eradication.⁵⁰ Along these lines, the Second Committee approved a draft resolution on management of water resources and declared 2018-2028 the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development,” then adopted as General Assembly resolution 71/222.⁵¹ Furthermore, the body approved other draft resolutions addressing topics including biological diversity, food security, and climate change.⁵²

Overall, during the most recent sessions the Second Committee focused its attention on the implementation of SDGs.⁵³ The Committee has just begun the discussion on this year’s agenda, but several topics have already come to Member States’ attention, like the crucial role of the implementation of financial commitments in the eradication of poverty.⁵⁴ Indeed, considering the agenda approved for the General Assembly 72nd session and the provisional agenda for the years to come, the Committee will still approach the debate on development addressing together economic, environmental, and social aspects, promoting economic growth combined with among others matters related to ensuring modern energy for all, women empowerment, and food security.⁵⁵

Conclusion

As an essential component to the functioning of the UN, the role and work of the Second Committee is critical to addressing fundamental priorities such as the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.⁵⁶ The Second Committee

⁴⁵ UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 6 Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Debt Sustainability, Food Security, as It Concludes Session (GA/EF/3469)*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Administrative & Budgetary (Fifth Committee). Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2017-2018*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., UN General Assembly, *Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/71/464)*, 2016.

⁴⁸ UN General Assembly, *Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/71/464)*, 2016.

⁴⁹ UN General Assembly, *Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection (A/RES/71/240)*, 2016.

⁵⁰ Ibid., UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves Three Draft Resolutions on Benefits of Sustainable Tourism, Gastronomy, Development Support for Small Island State (GA/ EF/3466)*, 2016.

⁵¹ UN General Assembly, *International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 (A/RES/71/222)*, 2016.

⁵² UN General Assembly, *Second Committee: Reports to the Plenary*, 2016.

⁵³ UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 6 Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Debt Sustainability, Food Security, as It Concludes Session (GA/EF/3469)*, 2016.

⁵⁴ UN DPI, *Second Committee Must Focus on Overarching Objective of Tackling Poverty, Structural Needs, Delegates Say as General Debate Begins*, 2017.

⁵⁵ UN General Assembly, *Agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (A/72/251)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Second Committee: List of draft proposals*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items to the Second Committee (A/C.2/72/1)*, 2017.

⁵⁶ UN DPI, *Regulation of Financial Institutions Critical to Avoiding Spread of Global Risk, Speaker Says as Second Committee Debates Economic Crisis (GA/EF/3386)*, 2013; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*

continues to consolidate its objectives and streamline its work with the overarching goal of stabilizing the international financial system and making progress toward development.⁵⁷ In line with the recently adopted SDGs, the Committee has sought to foster innovative ideas by attempting to combine sustainable growth with meeting development targets.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Second Committee must utilize emerging trends, patterns, and innovative ideas to discover new and effective solutions to ongoing challenges of sustainability.⁵⁹ Many challenges remain for the Second Committee, with the need to emphasize economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits of sustainable urbanization and tourism among them.⁶⁰ Yet, as this vision is developed and deployed across the organization, the Second Committee will continue to play a pivotal role in securing a more integrated and accountable approach in achieving these objectives.

Annotated Bibliography

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This handbook provides a comprehensive look at the UN and its principal organs and committees. Delegates can find a detailed explanation of the structure, processes, and procedures of the Main Committees of the General Assembly in this source. The breakdown of the structure, membership, and functionality of these committees can be a useful point for delegates to begin their research and gain an overall understanding of where the committee falls within the UN framework.

Switzerland, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. (2011). *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: http://www.unitar.org/ny/sites/unitar.org/ny/files/UN_PGA_Handbook.pdf

This guide is a practical introduction to the General Assembly, its different committees, and their relationship with each other and different UN system actors. It should provide delegates with a solid, comprehensive, and insightful way to leverage the UN system and staff to its full potential in finding solutions to the issues on the committee's agenda. Its straightforward and practical language provides useful technical information.

United Nations, General Assembly. (n.d.). *Administrative & Budgetary (Fifth Committee). Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2017-2018* [Website]. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: https://www.un.org/en/ga/fifth/70/Prop_strat_framework_2018-2019.html

This source provides a proposal of the strategic framework for 2017-2018. That includes detail on programs such as Economic and Social Council Affairs, Human Settlements, plus Trade and Development, among others. This is useful to delegates by making them more aware of current trends and goals of the UN in the coming years. Moreover, the individual proposals of each topic allow delegates to gather what direction the UN is taking and consider this while drafting solutions to global issues. Delegates can thus approach the topics with more of a realistic scope and improve the quality of their work.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-second session. (2017). *Allocation of agenda items to the Second Committee: Note by the Secretariat (A/C.2/72/1)*. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/C.2/72/1>

This resource provides delegates with the General Assembly Second Committee agenda and schedule for the 72nd session. This agenda allows delegates to have an immediate overview of the

(A/RES/55/2), 2000; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), 2015.

⁵⁷ Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Art. 55-60; UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017.

⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *Economic and Financial*, 2017; UN DPI, *Second Committee Approves 6 Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Debt Sustainability, Food Security, as It Concludes Session (GA/EF/3469)*, 2016.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)* (A/71/464), 2016; UN General Assembly, *Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection (A/RES/71/240)*, 2016.

topics which are going to be discussed by the Committee in the next months. By studying the schedule of the next meeting of the Second Committee, delegates will be able to understand the objectives and goals of this Committee. At the same time, it will be possible to appreciate the continuous attention to certain topics, and other topics under discussion, as well. Furthermore, delegates will also realize the current relevance of the topics that will be discussed at NMUN in 2018.

United Nations, General Assembly. (2017). *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)* [Website]. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/index.shtml>

This source is the official website of the Second Committee. It represents the main platform used by the Committee to give information about its role, functions and mandate, other than publish its activities and initiatives. Exploring this resource delegates might deepen their knowledge on the previous sessions of this body, and stay updated on the new draft resolutions which are going to be approved by the end of the year.

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United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2015). *The United Nations System* [Informative Chart]. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/pdfs/UN_System_Chart_30June2015.pdf

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