

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Question: Establishing a technology bank for Least Developed Countries

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Position: Chair



PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Joanna Sakkadas and I am delighted to be serving as your President in the upcoming Campion School Model United Nations in the Economic and Social Council. I am 16 years old and a student at St Lawrence College in year 12. I started MUN three years ago and it has been my passion ever since, having attended eight conferences. MUN has given me many unforgettable memories and experiences, along with some friends that I value deeply, and because of this I am honoured to be a part of it.

This year's topic of establishing a technology bank for Least Developed Countries is of great importance because it will help in the development of these countries and therefore aid in closing the development gap.

Kind regards,

Joanna Sakkadas.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

At the moment, global wealth inequality manifests itself in a variety of ways. One of these is the inequality and discrepancy in development between More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). This discrepancy can be assessed as being the result of a variety of causes, including the economic and geopolitical effects of colonisation, the lack of access to a variety of resources, and the lack of political democracy and economic liberalism in various nations of the global South, in which most LDCs are located.

An additional reason for the stagnation of economic development of LDCs is a global divide in access to innovation in the form of scientific and technological advancements. This is a divide which threatens the economic growth and political stability of member states, and especially those in areas menaced otherwise by conflict or instability.

One of the ways in which deep structural disparities in LDCs can be combated is encouraging the access of these nations to technological advancements, with the aim of strengthening their science, innovation and technology (STI) capacities, encouraging sustainable innovation and development, and accelerating their integration into the knowledge-based economy.

This access, in this topic, would come in the form of a Technology Bank (TB) for LDCs, the definition of which will be discussed later. However, to establish a TB, an exceptional level of International Cooperation will be necessary, so as to ensure that this will benefit not only LDCs, but also the member states providing their scientific and technological knowledge. Additionally, intellectual property rights will have to be respected internationally.

For the purposes of this topic, delegates will create a resolution which describes, in detail, the establishment of a Technology Bank.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Currently consisting of 47 countries, LDCs are low income countries that are most vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks as well as having low levels of human assets.

More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs)

These are the more developed and industrialized countries with greater economic wealth as well as better education and healthcare.

Technology Bank (TB)

A global organization dedicated to enhancing the contribution of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in the world's least developed countries.¹

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

These were set up by all United Nations members in 2015 as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure people can enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Out of the 17 SDGs, number 8 and 9 affect the issue of setting up a technology bank for LDCs since their aims are towards economic growth, innovation and industry.

Intellectual Property Rights

The assignment of property rights through the use of patents, copyrights and trademarks. These allow the holder to exercise a monopoly on the use of an item for a set time.²

¹ <https://www.un.org/technologybank/content/who-we-are>

² <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3236>

Economic Vulnerability Index (EDI)

A composite index of structural vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks used as an identification criteria for LDCs by the UN.³ This index, currently, includes:

- Population
- Remoteness
- Merchandise export concentration
- Share of agriculture, forestry and fishing in GDP
- Share of population in low elevated coastal zones
- Instability of exports of goods and services
- Victims of natural disasters
- Instability of agricultural production⁴

Human Assets Index (HAI)

A composite index of education and health used as an identification criteria for LDCs by the UN.⁵ This index, currently, includes:

- Under-five mortality rate
- Percentage of population undernourished
- Maternal mortality ratio
- Gross secondary school enrolment ratio
- Adult literacy rate⁶

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The total value of goods produced and services provided in a country per year. It functions as a way of monitoring a country's economic health.

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-criteria.html>

⁴

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/creation-of-the-ldc-category-and-timeline-of-changes-to-ldc-membership-and-criteria.html>

⁵ <https://ferdi.fr/en/indicators/human-assets-index-hai>

⁶

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/creation-of-the-ldc-category-and-timeline-of-changes-to-ldc-membership-and-criteria.html>

Gross National Income (GNI)

“The sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad.”⁷

TIMELINE

Date	Event
1971	First list of LDCs created, with LDCs defined by three criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. GDP per capita2. Adult Literacy Rate3. Share of Manufacturing in the GDP.
2002	The three criteria for an LDC change to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. GNI per capita2. HAI3. EDI
2011	Definition of an LDC changes, with LDCs now defined as low-income countries suffering from the most severe structural impediments to sustainable development
2011	The Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries is adopted at the 4th UN Conference on LDCs, calling for the creation of a Technology Bank for LDCs.
Sept. 2015	More than 150 world leaders attend the UN Sustainable Development Summit, which sets the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2016	The UN General Assembly(GA) adopts a resolution on the establishment of a Technology Bank as an organ of the GA.
2016	The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda are set. The establishment of a Technology Bank for LDCs will become Target 17.8.
2017	The Turkish and Norwegian government provide funding for such an institution, to be established in Gebze, Turkey.

⁷ https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/stats_popup7.html

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Reasons for the economic problems of Least Developed Countries

One of the main reasons why LDCs face economic problems is their population growth. This is often the case why a country remains poor because they cannot meet the demands of their people, such as finding employment and housing. Governments often cannot cope with the lack of resources which leads to a detrimental effect on social welfare, causing a cascading effect on the economy. Poor infrastructure also contribute to the economic problems of a county. This is a struggle for LDCs because they simply do not have the funding to improve their infrastructure, yet they cannot develop without it.

Additionally, most LDCs are in areas in the Southern Hemisphere which have been decolonised in the past century. Colonisation has caused a great deal of economic and political instability, and LDCs are still heavily dependent on investment and financial aid from MEDCs.

Most LDCs depend heavily on primary commodities which leaves them vulnerable to commodity prices. Hence, there is an economical instability as well as an imbalance of payments. Regional conflicts further have an effect on economic development and growth. For example, despite Africa having natural resources, conflicts between countries has stunted their development as it shifts focus away from it. The same thing goes for countries with corrupt systems or leaders because their aims are often not on their country's development but rather personal gain.

Technological advancements and their benefits on the development of member states

Technological advancements benefit countries economically because it cuts down on production costs, improves communications, as well as advertising businesses on multiple platforms. This has been shown in India where SMSs were sent out to rural areas telling farmers the best places to sell their crops. Through this they increased their incomes and this can also be seen in other countries such as China. There is certainly a correlation between technological advancements and development.

The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015 the United Nation adopted the 2030 sustainable development goals. Their aims are to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve life. All members of the UN signed it and are all contributing as much as they can.

Goal number 8 calls for decent work and economic growth which relates to our issue of establishing technology banks for LDCs. By establishing a technology bank it will greatly help towards economic growth in these countries and will also help with global sustainable development. One method of achieving such a goal is goal 17 which encourages international cooperation. This is of vast importance because it is only through the help of MEDCs a technology bank can be established, since they can help with the computer science and funding behind the whole project.

The issue of intellectual property rights

An issue which has arisen in the discussion of the funding and creation of a TB is that of intellectual property rights.

Generally, one of the reasons LDCs have been withheld from economic development is not only the lack of an established and well-funded Academy, but also a lack of access to copyrighted and classified research, as well as patented designs. Patented designs could be vital to a country's agricultural and industrial needs, especially when it comes to economic self-sufficiency. One of the reasons for the inability of LDCs to establish themselves in sectors not related to natural or raw resources is the sheer cost of respecting intellectual property rights when it comes to a variety of patented designs.

Obviously, intellectual property rights should be upheld. However, the UN Technology Bank should offer ways to compensate intellectual property owners correctly, without putting a financial strain on LDCs.

COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Turkey

Turkey is the member state in which the TB for LDCs will hold its premises, in accordance with the Istanbul programme, something which was reaffirmed in 2017.

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

The UN DESA, apart from being the arm of the UN which sets the criteria for LDCs, is also an organisation which provides nations, including LDCs, with valuable economic statistics and advice on their own development. It is one of the bodies of the UN which works towards the SDGs.⁸

World Intellectual Property Organisation

One of the 15 Specialised UN Agencies, tasked with leading the development of a balanced International Intellectual Property System.⁹ The WIPO is an important mediating factor in all international agreements which relate to Intellectual Property.

PREVIOUS UN ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE MATTER

<https://www.un.org/technologybank/content/key-documents>

www.un.org/press/en/2017/dev3292.doc.htm

⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/about/who-we-are.html>

⁹ <https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/>

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Funding is one of the main issues here. One way of overcoming this is international cooperation and loans. Although this is not always a viable solution if a country cannot pay it back. Theoretically, they should be able to pay it back in the long term since setting up a technology bank will greatly help the LDCs grow economically, but some countries are not in the right stage to be able to take such a risk.

Improving LDCs technology and online servers will allow them to be able to access technology banks faster and safer. This can be done through LDCs governments or organisations set up in order to improve broadband. Education also plays a role here and improving people's knowledge on Information and Communications Technology in LDCs will allow more people to work towards establishing a technology bank.

A Technology Bank should focus, especially in its initial steps, heavily on the assessment of LDCs on an individual basis. This includes their current capacities, as well as their needs on a short and long-term developmental basis. Perhaps, if possible, different sub-commissions of a Technology Bank would allow for this.

Another way a Technology Bank would help in development for LDCs is the strengthening of their Academies. Access to a greater amount of research, as well as previously patented designs, would help these nations greatly. However, delegates should be careful as to ensure property rights are being upheld, unless this is against your country's policy. Additionally, joint research between institutions in MDCs and LDCs should be encouraged.

Research your nation's policy on financial aid to LDCs, and base your resolution draft, as well as your alliance for this topic, on previous and current policy aims. LDCs and nations in the Southern Hemisphere would be more likely to draft a resolution calling for more financial aid, whereas MDCs might be slightly more protectionist.

For obvious reasons, a Technology Bank is absolutely reliant on the expertise, knowledge and understanding of technological advancements from MEDCs, and thus this topic will be a test of the cooperation between member states.

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