**Message from the Director of the United Nations General Assembly Second**

Welcome, Delegates!

My name is Nickii Webb-Cottrell and I have four years of experience with DAYMUNC, having served as the Secretary General during the 2018 conference. I’m so honored to have the opportunity to lead you during the 2020 Dayton Model United Nations Conference (DAYMUNC) in just a couple of short months in the General Assembly Second Committee.

There are six main organs of the United Nations (UN), with the General Assembly (GA) being one of the largest bodies with 193 Member States. The General Assembly of the United Nations receives its mandate through Chapter IV of the UN Charter.[[1]](#footnote-1) The scope of the GA reaches all questions and topics within the United Nations however this organ of the UN can only make recommendations to Member States and the Security Council.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Second Committee of the General Assembly is known as the Economic and Financial Committee.[[3]](#footnote-3) This committee focuses on aspects of economics, poverty, sustainable development, food security, among others, all working towards global partnerships.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Please keep in mind that this background guide serves as an introduction to the topics to be discussed. It is not exhaustive nor is it meant to limit your personal research in preparation for the committee. If there are any terms or concepts you find confusing, please feel free to reach out to your fellow teammates as well as myself during the conference.

Our topics are as follows:

1. Increasing Youth Leadership and Participation in Society
2. Integrating Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) into Sustainable Development

I look forward to seeing you all in February and can’t wait to see the new and exciting ways you cover these topics.

Thank you,

Nickii Webb-Cottrell

**I. Increasing Youth Leadership and Participation in Society**

***Introduction***

Young people between the ages of 15 to 25 years constitute approximately one-fifth of the global population, but less than 2% of global parliamentarians. Youth participation in civil society varies according to region, gender, race, and other socioeconomic characteristics. Youth face discrimination in the workplace, government, and their pursuit of education. Young people are often dismissed by older generations, especially in civil society, creating youth disenfranchisement with governance.

Participation is a part of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* and it proves to be an underlying theme throughout much of the UN’s efforts.[[5]](#footnote-5) Youth participation is low in formal networks, but many young people choose to participate in political movements through universities and social media.

***Existing Framework***

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) highlights the “full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and decision-making” as a core area of focus to achieving its goal of youth betterment.[[6]](#footnote-6) The WPAY outlines six actions that Member States can take to address the importance of youth participation. These are:

* Promoting information-sharing to increase youth awareness of participation opportunities;
* Increasing youth education on their rights and responsibilities;
* Supporting youth organizations;
* Acknowledging that youth have a unique outlook that can prove to be vital in decision-making for development;
* Strengthening cooperation between organizations at all levels of governance in regard to youth; and
* Encouraging governments to bring a youth representative to all GA proceedings to ensure a youth outlook in international decision-making processes.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is the central body to discussing youth issues. The UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) called upon Member States to issue proposals to increase youth participation in order to “inform public policy-making, training youth as effective leaders, extending access to justice, opening space for youth empowerment and democratic governance.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The UNDP DGTTF outlines a System-Wide Action Plan on Youth to increase youth participation and decision-making authority.[[9]](#footnote-9) The first section of this plan involves providing support to young people’s participation in inclusive political processes and democratic practices with a focus on formal frameworks in government to encourage a positive outlook by society, capacity building among youth skill sets, specifically leadership skills, and female empowerment to shrink the gender gap in future generations.[[10]](#footnote-10) The second section of the System-Wide Action Plan on Youth highlights a need to provide support to youth inclusion in decision-making for all levels of decision-making processes, especially in regard to sustainable development and peace building.[[11]](#footnote-11)

***Conclusion***

The international community is working to better involve youth in decision-making processes, encouraging information-sharing across local, regional, and international agencies. The barriers to youth participation, including poverty, job insecurity, lack of education, cannot be solved by increasing participation alone. States need to cooperate to combat these underlying issues to achieve greater success in this shared goal.

***Questions to Consider***

* What is your Member State doing to combat the underlying issues of lack of youth participation? Can this be implemented at the international level?
* What programs or plans of action has your Member State implemented in regard to youth participation in civil society and decision-making processes?
* Are there any formal frameworks in place to support youth participation? Legal frameworks? National youth organizations? Others?
* How, if at all, does your Member State impede youth participation efforts? Are they working to overcome those obstacles?
* What financing efforts are evident in your Member State to fund youth participation programs? Are they achievable at the international level?

**II. Integrating Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) into Sustainable Development**

***Introduction***

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are vital to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as ICTs increase access to knowledge, job training and opportunities, and information-sharing across and within States.[[12]](#footnote-12) ICTs are varying forms of technology used to transmit, share, store, and/or edit data and information, including, but not limited to, the Internet, computers, cell phones, television, and radio.[[13]](#footnote-13) According to ITU News, “ICTs facilitate real-time communications, data analysis and decision-making, accelerating the pace of economic change and increasing market volatility.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Sustainable development is reliant on the ability to share knowledge quickly across borders and ICTs empower us to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a way that was impossible with the Millennium Development Goals. ICTs infrastructure investments are taking place in most States, leading to an expansion of knowledge, job creation, and somewhat reduced inequality.

However, the degree to which individuals have access to ICTs varies greatly and is slow-moving. Marginalized groups and Developing States are at a disadvantage when obtaining access to and using ICTs, especially in regards to the Internet.

***Existing Framework***

The 56th Session of the UN General Assembly (GA) passed a resolution in 2001 creating the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).[[15]](#footnote-15) Subsequently, the Geneva and Tunis Summits represented 175 and 174 countries (respectively) working together to understand what ICTs meant for modern society.[[16]](#footnote-16) In the Overall Review of the Implementation of the Outcomes of the WSIS, the GA affirmed that WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were interconnected and as such, Member States should work closely to ensure that the outcomes of the WSIS were used to meet the SDGs.[[17]](#footnote-17) Following the initial WSIS in Geneva and Tunis, a WSIS Forum was created, holding an annual conference in Geneva with varying Member States, UN bodies, and nongovernmental organizations in attendance.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In addition, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has existed since the 1800s, working to promote collaboration among States in regards to ICTs from the beginning.[[19]](#footnote-19) ITU encourages information-sharing across the public and private sectors, using the information to address key areas of action. These are:

* Accessibility to ICTs: Achieving Equitable Communications for Everyone,
* Affordable, Ubiquitous Broadband Networks,
* ICTs, Sustainable Development, and Climate Change,
* ITU Cybersecurity Activities,
* Digital Divide: Connect the World,
* Emergency Telecommunications: Telecommunications Saves Lives,
* Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and SME[[20]](#footnote-20) Development,
* Internet Policy and Governance,
* Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls Through ICTs, and
* Youth, Innovation, and Academia.

Looking at the ITU’s key areas of action, it is no surprise that they are one of the leading organizations in the coordination efforts of ICTs and sustainable development.

***Conclusion***

The international community is working diligently to achieve the SDGs, incorporating ICTs into their action programs. Even with increasing investments in ICTs infrastructure, not all groups have equitable access to ICTs or sustainable development efforts in their communities. Marginalized groups continue to fall behind in a category that is seemingly increasing access to knowledge and education everywhere.

***Questions to Consider***

* How is your Member State contributing to obtaining the SDGs? Are they doing so with or without ICTs?
* Although access to ICTs is growing, what is your Member State doing to minimize the digital divide between marginalized groups, paying special attention to the gender gap?
* How is your Member State financing the integration of ICTs into society and sustainable development? Can this be successful at the regional or international level?

1. UN Charter, Article IV [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. General Assembly Second Committee Index [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *World Programme of Action for Youth.* UN Development Programme. 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making.* UN Youth. November 15, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A/RES/73/218 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *What is ICTS.* IGI Global Disseminator of Knowledge. 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lehr, William, ITU News, “Why ICTs are critical for sustainable development,” May 3, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. World Summit on the Information Society. “WSIS Action Lines: Supporting the Implementation of SDGs.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See above [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A/RES/70/125 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. World Summit on the Information Society. “WSIS Action Lines: Supporting the Implementation of SDGs.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *About ITU.* International Telecommunications Union. <https://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. SME stands for small and medium enterprises. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)