

FMUN 2018

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Written by: Annette Yospe

Topic I: Combating Poverty Amongst Indigenous People and Afro-descendants
Topic II: Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2018 Florida Model United Nations conference! I am pleased to introduce you to the committee of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. I am Annette Yospe, and I am ecstatic to be serving as your Director. Currently, I am pursuing my Bachelors in Business Administration with a focus in Marketing and Pre-Law. Model United Nations has been a part of my life since the start of my collegiate career, and I am so excited to share this experience with all of you! I am looking forward to meeting you all and seeing how delegates address the topics of this committee. The topics of this committee are:

Topic I: Combating Poverty Amongst Indigenous People and Afro-descendants

Topic II: Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean

I encourage you to be creative in your position papers and to be thorough in your research. This background guide is intended to serve as a resource and introduction to your topics; however, it is not meant to replace your individual research. I hope you enjoy these topics and look forward to seeing all your hard work!

Overview

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations and focuses on establishing economic and social development amongst international communities¹. ECLAC, also commonly referred to as its Spanish name, CEPAL, was established by the Economic and Social Resolution 106(VI) on February 25, 1948. Originally, the focus of ECLAC was limited to Latin America, but this scope was then expanded in 1984 to include the Caribbean countries with resolution 1984/67, passed by the Economic Council².

The mandate of ECLAC is to contribute to the economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean, help establish international relations in order to reinforce economic ties globally, and promote and direct the actions needed in order to accomplish these two objectives³. In 1996, this mission was expanded to emphasize the commission's responsibility to work closely with regions throughout their developments⁴. In addition, the mission of the commission includes the design and oversee of public policies, provision of expertise, providing training and advisory boards when needed, initiate international cooperation, and to serve as a medium for Latin American and Caribbean countries to discuss problems and opportunities⁵. There are two regional headquarters established by ECLAC; one dedicated to Central America located in Mexico City, Mexico, and one dedicated to the Caribbean countries, located in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and Tobago.

Since ECLAC's establishment, it has achieved global recognition for its significant contribution to regional, economic, and social development in Latin American and Caribbean countries⁶. ECLAC uses a dynamic approach referred to as "historical structuralism" which "focuses on the analysis of the ways in which the region's institutional legacy and inherited production structure influence the economic dynamics of developing countries and generate behaviours that differ from those of developed nations⁷". In addition, ECLAC uses a methodology of analysis that allows for the continuous evolution of thoughts and actions that change in accordance with changing conditions. This has allowed ECLAC to become a major role in Latin American and Caribbean macroeconomic history⁸. Notable involvement from ECLAC includes its role in the introduction of inertial inflation to economies, its contribution to the debt crisis in the 1980's, and their overall contribution to sustainable development⁹.

¹ Economic Commission. "About ECLAC." Latin America Population Will Reach 625 Million Inhabitants by 2016, According to ECLAC Estimates | News. October 08, 2014. Accessed August 13, 2018.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴"Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)." Greening the Blue. Accessed August 17, 2018.

⁵Ibid.

⁶ Unidas, Naciones, and CEPAL. "History of ECLAC - CEPAL - Naciones Unidas." Latin America Population Will Reach 625 Million Inhabitants by 2016, According to ECLAC Estimates | News. Accessed August 17, 2018.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

The current Executive Secretary of ECLAC is Alicia Bárcena, elected in July of 2008¹⁰. Decisions in ECLAC are decided by the majority of Member States present and voting¹¹. There are 46 Member States, 33 being from Latin America and the Caribbean, and the remaining 13 being from other Asian, European, and North American countries. In addition, there are 14 Associate Members comprised of non-independent Caribbean territories. The Member States that comprise ECLAC are as follows:

Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

¹⁰ <https://www.cepal.org/en/team/alicia-barcena>

¹¹ <https://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/2/33132/DGI-1403.Rev.6-Reglamento-CEPAL.pdf>

Topic I: Combating Poverty Amongst Indigenous People and Afro-descendants

Introduction

There is a significant amount of cultural diversity in Central America, causing nations to struggle in protecting all people's rights. Latin America and the Caribbean both contain a significant amount of cultural and racial diversity; however, both regions are faced with extremely high levels of poverty amongst some more than others. Indigenous people and Afro-descendants experience the worst of these groups in terms of poverty, discrimination, social exclusion, and other hindering factors¹². Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants face these barriers that in return hinder their development and make them more susceptible to live impoverished lives¹³.

In Latin America, there are over 800 different indigenous peoples, accounting for nearly 8% of the entire population. One-fourth of these people live in voluntary isolation within Latin America, making the attempts of inclusion into politics difficult¹⁴. While in the past 20 years, indigenous people have been drifting out of isolation and into politics, the overall participation in governmental policies and decision is still low, according to the United Nations Development Programme. In the small percentage of indigenous peoples who are involved in political decisions, participation amongst women is especially low due to the "triple glass ceiling" women face of being indigenous, female, and poor¹⁵.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are estimated to be 150 million Afro-descendants today, the largest population of Afro-descendants globally¹⁶. In countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, as well as most Caribbean islands, Afro-descendants make up the majority of the population. In North American countries Afro-descendants also make up a significant amount in populations. In the United States of America, 40 million people identify as black or African American. Despite their large numbers in populations, Afro-descendants have historically rarely been represented in the government. In addition, Afro-descendants are reported to stand in a low-economic status across all Americans, struggling to attain high levels of human development. Despite improvements in the welfare systems, the inequality still continues. Women of Afro-descendants experience even more of a struggle than men. Typically women are reported to stand in a lower socio-economic standpoint and experience more discrimination than men.¹⁷

The social attitude and discrimination towards Afro-descendants are derived from their historical presence within the Americas. Afro-descendants ancestors were victims of the transatlantic slave trade during the 16th century. The stigma associated with race because of slavery can still be seen in the discriminations many faces. Despite slavery being abolished, the unjust treatment towards Afro-descendants is still present and can be traced back to the prominence of slavery within the

¹² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

¹³ <https://www.padf.org/afro-descendants-indigenous-groups/>

¹⁴ <http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance/political-participation-and-inclusion/citizen-democracy--analysis---advocacy-.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/assets/pdf/PAD-final%20for%20NY.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://stories.minorityrights.org/afro-descendants/chapter/301/>

Americas¹⁸. Many countries have tried to combat racism; however, due to the low economic status and social inequalities, justice is not seen often¹⁹.

One of the biggest concerns of indigenous peoples is their lack of secure freedoms and human rights. These threats to their rights lead directly to impoverished lives and should be addressed separately from discrimination problems. In order to specifically address the issue of human rights amongst Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Economic and Social Council established the sub-commission the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. A continued issue amongst this sub-commission was the lack of a uniform approach to indigenous questions. In addition, the Member States, specifically those in Latin America, were seen denying the existence of certain indigenous groups or misrepresenting population numbers in order to avoid criticism by the European Member States. While the start of international concern for indigenous peoples began with Latin America, it continued with Western Europe and the other Member States. The issues amongst Indigenous peoples brought attention to "a consistent pattern of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms" as stated in the ECOSOC resolution 1503²⁰.

Currently

Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere stands at the first United Nations Sustainable Development Goal. The international poverty line is at \$1.90 USD per day, with 783 million people living below this and supporting families. Poverty encompasses a variety of definitions that expand beyond monetary struggles. Poverty includes hunger, malnutrition, discrimination, lack of access to resources, education, political decisions, and other factors that ensure a sustainable lifestyle²¹.

Indigenous people and Afro-descendants continue to face the ever-widening poverty rate gap between them and the rest of the population. It is estimated that indigenous people living in Latin America are three times as likely to be suffering from extreme poverty than other Latin American citizens. In the past, researchers have been unable to gather the information needed to explain exactly why indigenous people are so much more susceptible to poverty, however recent studies done by the World Bank have gathered microdata that brings us closer to understanding the struggles these people are facing²².

The location of where indigenous people's reside has a significant impact on the likelihood of them entering into poverty. Often, indigenous people live in rural areas with very little communication with outside areas. Because of this, education is impaired²³. While some do have access to education, the quality of the education they are receiving is very much lacking. Education available to indigenous people has been seen globally being used as a tool to assimilate these people into societies. Indigenous people are reluctant to go to school when the education they are learning has been seen to be culturally insensitive and used to strip them of their culture. In

¹⁸ <http://stories.minorityrights.org/afro-descendants/chapter/301/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ https://www.jstor.org/stable/762100?seq=16#metadata_info_tab_contents

²¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

²² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/why-are-indigenous-people-more-likely-to-be-poor>

²³ Ibid.

addition, the indigenous people receiving the education often have no say in the curriculum that goes into it; another example of social and political exclusion. These education systems and policies are formed without the input of any indigenous people often; as a result, threatening the culture of their children, and leading to the reluctance to education²⁴.

Another barrier contributing to poverty rates a month's indigenous people and Afro-descendants is lack of political representation. In the 1970's and 1980's, a movement towards political inclusion of indigenous people within Latin America began to take off. However, despite this advancement, little progress was made in the long-term effect. Indigenous people struggle to contribute to national and local legislation and decision making. Because of this, they are unable to provide a secure claim to indigenous land²⁵. Afro-descendants also have limited access to political representation due to a multitude of factors. Many afro-descendants have overcome obstacles and run for a political position; however, they rarely are seen getting elected due to the continued racism amongst voters within Latin America. In North America, there are constant civil rights movements in order to bridge this political gap and increase afro-descendant identity. Despite these, countries face issues such as continued discrimination, exploitation, segregation, and more. All of these contribute to the lower quality of education, and the significant lack of political representation²⁶. Because of the significant lack of representation, indigenous people and Afro-descendants are subjected to potentially harmful assimilation policies²⁷.

Afro-descendants and indigenous people both have limited access to a sustainable labor market, making stable sources more difficult to achieve. Due to their lack of "formal" education and heavy discrimination, indigenous people and Afro-descendants are left with limited access to financial resources and economic development in an already limited employment market²⁸.

Indigenous people and afro-descendants face the continued battle to secure basic human rights. Often, national governments state their objectives of settling indigenous claimed land disputes. However, these actions usually have ulterior motives such as large developmental projects that are set to take place on this land²⁹. The human rights of indigenous people are infringed daily, from the dispossession of land to forced removal from their homes. This denial of land impacts them in the short term, and in the long term³⁰. In Colombia, afro-descendant territories stand on the grounds of resource-rich lands and areas of extreme conflict. Afro-descendant communities have been caught in the crossfire of armed forces who seek to control and exploit their land. In addition, these Afro-Colombians face the threat of their land being used for large developmental projects, forcing them to leave their homes. This forced displacement leads to mass violence and targeted killings in Colombia³¹.

²⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/08/indigenous-people-have-a-right-to-quality-education-but-so-far-we-ve-failed-them/>

²⁵ <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/IndigenousPeoples/introduction.html>

²⁶ <http://stories.minorityrights.org/afro-descendants/chapter/301/>

²⁷ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/human-rights.html>

²⁸ <https://www.pdf.org/afro-descendants-indigenous-groups/>

²⁹ <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/human-rights-indigenous-peoples>

³⁰ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/human-rights.html>

³¹ <http://stories.minorityrights.org/afro-descendants/chapter/301/>

While indigenous people are gaining representation in the United Nations with organizations such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Assembly of First Nations, Survival International, and more, these organizations have only been able to establish legal recognition of rights to indigenous people, not secure them³². While these organizations have led to many Central American governments establishing rights of indigenous people on paper, in many cases this is only the case. The rights, resources, territory, and culture, are left open for taking. While many indigenous people and Afro-descendants have expressed their interest in improving their government's treatment of their people, they have no desire to participate in their economic models out of fear of land and resource exploitation³³. As said by the chair of the UNPFII, Victoria Tauli-Corpus,

"There are more and more arrests, killings and abuses. This is happening in Russia, Canada, the Philippines, Cambodia, Mongolia, Nigeria, the Amazon, all over Latin America, Papua New Guinea, and Africa. It is global. We are seeing a human rights emergency. Much of the world's natural capital – oil, gas, timber, minerals – lies on or beneath lands occupied by indigenous people."

³² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/sep/23/indigenous-people-crisis-land-resources>

³³ Ibid.

Conclusion

The problems indigenous peoples and afro-descendants face are not unique to Latin America and the Caribbean but can be witnesses globally. The United Nations estimates that it would cost around \$175 million to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by the year 2030 in its first Sustainable Development Goal, making this an entirely achievable target³⁴. The governmental policies being established and followed have significant effects on the livelihoods of all citizens, but can be especially impactful on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. By 2030, the United Nations aims to ensure all people have equal rights to natural resources, economic resources, basic services, and ownership over property. In 2007, the General Assembly passed The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the most comprehensive declaration regarding the rights of indigenous peoples. This document created unison amongst the 148 supporting the Member States and established a framework to create minimum living standards³⁵. While Member States agree to UNDRIP, Member States often are seen not following the guidelines and standards they set in place.

To work towards the goal of ending poverty, the United Nations makes recommendations to people of all classes and ages to work collectively. To young people, the United Nations urges involvement and participation in policy-making to create a stronger voice and share inter-generational knowledge, sparking innovation. For policymakers, it is important to focus on formulating strategies and fiscal policies that promote sustainable employment and focus on the poor opposed to the wealthy. For those in the private sector, the United Nations stresses the importance of creating economic opportunity that is inclusive of all, and to focus on areas where the poor are mostly located. In most Central American countries, these areas include indigenous people and afro-descendant populations. Another group, the United Nations, calls upon to make efforts in reaching the end to poverty are the science and education communities. Not only can these communities promote awareness, but innovation to new solution and techniques for combating poverty. With these new approaches, these communities can increase sustainability and development amongst those who need it the most³⁶.

Reducing the number of impoverished lives amongst indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants is a challenge. While countries are making efforts, such as the inclusion of indigenous peoples and afro-descendants into constitutions, these efforts must be increased in order to see results. After research, by providing access to better infrastructure plans with access to credit, land, health, education, and nutrition, the overall positive impact can be enormous³⁷. In addition, overall changes in societies are required to see a shift in how indigenous people and Afro-descendants are viewed and treated. In order to reach the Sustainable Development Goal #1 of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, we must start with helping those who are hurting the most³⁸.

³⁴ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

³⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

³⁶ https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1_Why-it-Matters_Poverty_2p.pdf

³⁷ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/why-inclusion-indigenous-peoples-and-afrodescendants-matters>

³⁸ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/why-inclusion-indigenous-peoples-and-afrodescendants-matters>

Topic II: Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean

Introduction

After centuries of research, it's been proven that human activity can alter the global climate over time. This effects of this human interaction are not limited to only changing the climate, but changing the patterns of weather worldwide. In the 1800's research started being conducted regarding the idea that carbon dioxide (CO₂) was collecting in the Earth's atmosphere. This research leads to the early theory that CO₂ along with other gasses could not only collect but insulate the planet. By the 1950's, there was enough data gathered to support the researcher's global warming theory. In 1988, a turning point was reached when global temperatures sharply increased, and scientists recorded the hottest summer to date at that point in time. Researchers noted the increase in wildfires and droughts, and the global public began to pay attention to the effects climate change could have. In response to the rapidly changing environment, the United Nations established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to address these impacts and effects, and begin a unified approach to addressing the issue. Researchers predicted the potential ramifications of climate change, including predictions of severe heat waves, droughts, powerful hurricanes, and the loss of many cities due to rising sea levels. In the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted by every Member State with the intention of reducing human impact on climate. The UNFCCC established a duty to developed countries to developing countries to assist in the responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Kyoto Protocol was then signed in 1997, becoming the first binding global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions³⁹.

The Kyoto Protocol was the beginning of the global approach to stopping climate change. In addition to the still present skepticism over the theory of global warming itself, influential countries such as the United States of America believed the agreement itself was fundamentally flawed and would cause economic harm⁴⁰. Global leaders then formed a new agreement that had elements of both the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen and Cancun agreements; The Paris Agreement. With the Paris Agreement, transparency amongst the Member States was increased, and the nationally determined contribution (NDC) of countries could be strengthened⁴¹. The Paris Agreement's central goal is to respond to the threat of climate change. To do this, Member States began to take a unified approach in seeking ways to deal with the forthcoming impacts. This included the new allocation of financial resources, new innovation of technology, and new capacity-building to be implemented, supporting both developing and developed nations in this approach⁴².

Current Situation

The Paris Agreement is notable for being one of the less controversial global agreements with only one Member State rejecting the treaty. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have taken great efforts in meeting the standards of the Paris Agreement. Countries are making sufficient use of markets in order to reduce emission, and more than two-thirds of proposed actions involve

³⁹ <https://www.history.com/topics/natural-disasters-and-environment/history-of-climate-change>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ <https://www.c2es.org/content/history-of-un-climate-talks/>

⁴² <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

setting carbon prices⁴³. Latin America and Caribbean countries were amongst the first 14 to ratify the Paris Agreement and the most ambitious about its goals. To further expansion, The Latin American and Caribbean Carbon Forum (LACCF) was established as a regional conference to educate businesses and market stakeholders in the climate finance opportunities⁴⁴.

In terms of climate change and its effects, Central America is often referred to as a disaster zone. While Central America is only responsible for a small percentage of overall greenhouse gasses emitted, its one of the most vulnerable to its long-term consequences. Due to the region's location, the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans both pose significant threats to Central America. Some of these threats include widespread droughts, cyclones, and the El Niño-Southern Oscillation⁴⁵. The World Bank reported a list of catastrophic projections for Latin America and the Caribbean if a four-degree warming scenario were to occur. Some events on the list include more category four and five hurricanes headed towards the Caribbean, 1.4-meter sea level rise in the Rio de Janeiro and Barranquilla, 90% of the land experiencing extreme heat events that are experienced every 700 years, and more. Currently, we are living in a one-degree difference world, and experiencing its effects along with impacts of a two-degree world⁴⁶.

The threat of intense hurricanes to small Caribbean islands has been more prevalent than ever before. With the rising temperatures, weather events have become unfamiliar and unpredictable. The Caribbean Islands were struck with two devastating category five hurricanes within one week, which has not happened since the 1800's. While these areas are accustomed to seeing hurricanes develop nearby, they cannot predict the rapid development of a tropical storm to a powerful hurricane. The setback to the Caribbean economies will take years to overcome, the money required to rebuild after the destruction is staggeringly high, and the already poor living conditions have been made worse. Despite the small emissions of greenhouse gasses from Caribbean Islands, they have made large efforts in moving forward towards the global goal of limiting the increase in temperature rise⁴⁷.

The economy of Latin America and the Caribbean is heavily agriculture-based, with 18% of its GDP being entirely agriculturally derived. This industry relies on consistent climate, and even the smallest changes in weather can be especially devastating. Because of this, local and regional economies will be impacted by the increasing temperatures and more frequent droughts. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the fight to reduce poverty and increase economic sustainability will be made even more difficult, and efforts will need to be nearly doubled to adapt to new circumstances. Adapting to climate changes will be costly, but the cost of changing now opposed to leaving the problem for the future is proven to be less costly⁴⁸.

Conclusion

⁴³ <https://unfccc.int/news/countries-in-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-region-leading-climate-action>

⁴⁴ <https://www.latincarbon.com/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/35229-economics-climate-change-central-america-summary-2010>

⁴⁶ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2014/12/02/climate-change-impacts-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-confronting-the-new-climate-normal>

⁴⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/06/climate-change-in-the-caribbean-learning-lessons-from-irma-and-maria>

⁴⁸ <https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/35229/1/lcmex1978i.pdf>

In order to address this serious threat, climate change must be addressed by the public and private sectors, citizens, social organizations, education systems, and the collective international community. Developing better technology and sharing knowledge on how to reduce vulnerability and improve adaptation will allow for a globally unified approach to slowing down the increasing temperature, and lessening the unpredictable effects. In addition, the importance of maintaining sustainable economies and integrating a low-carbon international mindset is crucial to mitigating these effects. Opposed to following the current ad hoc technique pattern in the rise of devastating climate events, establishing national, regional, and international sustainable adaptive agreements would be highly beneficial. These agreements should involve vulnerability-reduction efforts, adaptive actions, well as plans for the global transition to low- carbon economies⁴⁹.

Climate change is a global issue, and its solution must have a global approach. ECLAC has made the following recommendations to deliver a proactive response:

“Adaptation by human populations through poverty and inequality reduction policies, including the policy areas of food security, integrated management of water resources and impact reduction de extreme events with strengthened land-use and territorial planning. Transition to sustainable, low-carbon economies that are efficient in the use of natural resources, introducing structural and technological changes especially regarding energy security and efficiency, integrated water management and the curbing of deforestation. Protection of natural ecosystems, especially forests, in order to improve their own adaptation and assure the long-term provision of eco-systemic services, as a key policy area for both adaptation and sustainability. Far-sighted and proactive fiscal policy and financing measures as a cross-cutting policy area to create the correct incentives for the economic transition and adaptation. Leveraging of the Central American integration process and opportunities, especially critical for managing water resources, food and energy security, competitiveness and trade implications and international negotiations.⁵⁰”

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.