



ArcMUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

**Achieving sustainable development; universal access to
clean water.**

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION

In order for you to be fully prepared for the session, you should follow the next steps:

1. Get accustomed to the procedure of the session. Please feel free to read the procedure in the official website of ArcMUN2017. (<http://aristoteliocollegemun.weebly.com/rules-of-procedure.html>). We will explain the procedure once more when in person, so please do not worry that much for the rules from now.
2. Read your Study Guide and indulge yourselves in individual research. Read the links provided in this guide and also do research in other websites and mass media. However, keep in mind that you should conduct your research based on official data provided by formal websites (i.e. the UN website, the European Commission etc.)
3. Know the policy of the country you are representing. You should always bear in mind that during the conference you will be representing **a specific country** and its policies and not your personal point of view on the issue debated.
4. You should know not only your country's view on the topic, but also some general information regarding alliances, geopolitical state, natural resources etc.
5. Write and send to the committee email before **February 1st**, a position paper, in which you will explain your country's point of view, measures and possible suggestions on our topic; "***Achieving Sustainable Development: Gaining Universal Access to Clean Water***".
6. Visit the session's website to see the official example of a position paper and how it should be structured.

WELCOMING LETTER

Dear Delegates,

It is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to this year's ECOSOC of ARCMUN 2017. We are delighted to be serving as the Board of the Committee for the ***15th Aristotelio College Model United Nation Conference*** and we look forward to meeting and working with all of you. This document is meant to serve as your research guideline for the conference.

Our Committee is faced with the challenging task of comprehensively dealing with a very crucial issue currently placed at the top of the international agenda. *Achieving sustainable development through the universal access to clean water and sufficient sanitation facilities* can serve as a huge step towards a better world for everyone. Our response should be unanimous and our work should exceed all expectations.

More precisely, our proposals should be practicable with the sole purpose of rendering the world as a better place.

To conclude we would like to welcome you once again to this year's ECOSOC Committee and simultaneously urge you to research the topic which is to be discussed in our debates. A decent start, shall be starting of course your study guide as a stepping stone from where you can expand your research.

We look forward to meeting you all in March!

Amicably,

Kostas Georgios Christos, Mouttsakis Panagiotis

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Nowadays, the aspect of *sustainable development* has proven to be one of the main pillars of improvement for the modern society. It is obvious that *sustainable development* as a term is multidimensional, because it can be achieved through various ways. One of them is ensuring universal access to clean water, but it is important to bear in mind how critical water is for the survival of our planet. Apart from that it is crucial to combine the effect of clean water with the improvement of sanitation and hygiene. Unavoidably, the vitality of water in accomplishing the continent's development goals is widely recognized.

After the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework expired without facing adequately those challenges, this led to the creation of a new and more detailed agenda dealing with sustainability measures until 2030 with precise targets and enriched with new goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda includes a goal on water and sanitation (SDG 6) that sets out to “*ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*” SDG 6 expands the MDGs focus on clean water and sanitation to now compensate all water parameters including the management of water, wastewater and ecosystem resources and water scarcity.

A total of **748 million** people still do not have access to an improved clean water source while, existing indicators do not address with the proper attention the role water supplies. **This led to the United Nations General Assembly in July/28/ 2010** which recognized *the human right to water and sanitation*. It also acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights. After all, the importance of water as a human resource is irreplaceable because it is directly linked to issues like poverty eradication, education, health issues and environmental management.

Even though numerous attempts occurred, in order to establish water management mechanisms in order to deal with the phenomenon of water scarcity, a considerable amount of states face huge challenges and often fail to comply with the requirements for the implementation of the SDGs. Consequently, water is a key factor in managing situations like epidemics, migration, inequalities, political instability and natural disasters. Moreover, states often tend to participate in regional or international conflicts in order to take advantage of areas, where the presence of water features is intense.

All in all, the universal access to water is a crucial issue because it contains not only the issue of its sustainability but also the issue of water quality. As a valuable resource with high impact in state economies and in the phenomenon of climate change, it is the responsibility of the Committee to discuss, analyze and find feasible solutions that will function as the basic groundwork in order for policymakers to adopt reforms, especially in the sections that concern the improvement of sanitation, hygiene and sustainable water management.

BASIC DEFINITIONS

- **Sustainable development:** was explicitly conceptualized by the Brundtland Commission in the document "Our Common Future" where it was defined as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).
- **Clean water:** Potable water free from harmful microorganisms and substances, safe to drink or use for food preparation, without risk of health problems.
- **Hygiene:** according to World Health Organization (WHO), hygiene refers "*to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases*".
- **Sanitation:** according to World Health Organization (WHO), the word sanitation refers "*to the maintenance of hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection and wastewater disposal*".
- **Access to safe water:** the ability to have an adequate amount of safe drinking water located within a convenient distance from the user's dwelling

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

Although the universal access to clean water is a prerequisite for *sustainable development*, a growing number of incidents and factors display significant role in the deceleration of the current progress. Clearly, the complexity of the issues lies in the interlinkages that water acquires with the economies, the environment and the governments.

1. THE ROLE OF URBANIZATION

The phenomenon of urbanization and increased industrialization is set to increase the overall demand for water in cities by 2050. By 2030, it is anticipated that the urban population in developing countries will be around 3.9 billion people. Consequently, the population growth has transformed into an urban phenomenon concentrated in the developing world where the global water demand is projected to increase highly, mainly due to growing demand from manufacturing, electricity and domestic use. Meanwhile access to clean water is actually deteriorating, where the most rapid urbanization occurs and outpaces the public services leaving slum populations in the developing world without sufficient water and sanitation facilities in these communities. Despite the fact that access to water sources in urban areas is decently developing, **UN Water** highlights that issues like the quality of water services and affordability are not taken into consideration. So, many cities in developing countries do not have the necessary infrastructure and capacity buildings to deal with water-related issues.

2. THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Water belongs to the process of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between the climate system, the human society and the environment. Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of climate change has influenced the way and the pace that our planet evolves. Because the impacts of climate change are complex and

unpredictable, the availability and demand for water are likely to be affected as the sea level is expected to rise in the following years. With the alarming increase of urbanization upon coastal areas, it is necessary to address the issues of flooding and water contamination, as a growing number of populations tend to live in concentrated and highly vulnerable areas, such as river banks and water dams they are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The most well-known environmental changes that occur, due to the effects of climate change consist of the melting of glaciers, the drying of the wetlands, as well as the phenomena of deforestation and soil erosion which put into jeopardy the socioeconomic development of each community. Apart from those consequences, a fearful outcome of climate change is the insufficiency of existing water resources which cause *water scarcity* and sometimes aid in the escalation of unprecedented water crises. So, the biggest aftereffect of this incident is directly related with water availability.

3. WATER QUALITY AND LACK OF SANITATION

While water as a natural resource has become more accessible to populations the past few years, still questions arise for its quality and the lack of adequate and sustainable water-related services which deems water as unsafe for drinking. As of 2016, about 1.9 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion people to improved sanitation facilities. The vast majority of those lacking access to clean water and hygienic facilities live in rural areas, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Unfortunately, 3.5 million **deaths** occur each year due to inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene mostly in developing countries mainly by the occurrence of water-borne diseases. It is clear that the poor quality of water results in economic costs like increased water treatment, health issues and deterioration of ecosystem services. Alarmingly, the deficit of sanitation resulted in the creation of international development programs named *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)* which aim to ameliorate health conditions and promote hygiene education in schools. Despite of this incident, many countries are falling short to fulfill *Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)* their commitments in order to meet their defined national access targets for sanitation and drinking-water. Thus, the access to safe drinking water combined with proper and adequate sanitation services function as two of the most efficient ways of improving human health and a sustainable modern society.

INTERNATIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The topic of universal access to clean water and sanitation, in all its manifestations and forms, turns out to be one of the most crucial issues that the international community shall deal with. The international legal framework, created the past decades, constitutes a beacon of hope, lighting up the path that States need to follow in order to ensure a better future for the generations to come.

The concept of basic water requirements to meet fundamental human needs was first established at the 1977 *United Nations Water Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina*. Its Action Plan asserted that all peoples, whatever their stage of development and their social and economic conditions, had the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs. Additionally, a number of other plans of action have referred to safe drinking water and sanitation as

a human right. ***In the Program of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development***, States affirmed that all people have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation. ***The Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)*** in 1996, also recognized water and sanitation as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. Another proof that access to clean water and sanitation is a top priority for States, is the ***1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes***, which provides that States parties must take appropriate measures to provide access to drinking water and sanitation and to protect water resources used as sources of drinking water from pollution.

Special mention should also be given to the adoption of general ***comment No. 15 on the right to water, in November 2002, by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights***, where the right to water is defined as the right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.

A turning point was the adoption in July 2010 by the ***United Nations General Assembly of resolution 64/292, sponsored by Bolivia, recognizing these rights***. The aforementioned initiative was a milestone as it was the first time a high-level United Nations political body recognized water and sanitation as fundamental human rights. Another important declaration is the outcome document of the ***United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development «The future we want» (Rio +20)***, June 2012, where, under the section on «water and sanitation», states: «*We reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, to be progressively realized for our populations with full respect for national sovereignty*». We also highlight our commitment to ***the 2005-2015 International Decade for Action, Water for Life***. This was the first United Nations declaration in which all UN Member States recognized the rights to water and sanitation. Last but not least, universal access to clean water and sanitation is one of 17 Global Goals that make up ***the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***, placing water and sanitation at the very core of sustainable development.

To summarize it is necessary to mention a couple of regional declarations which have also recognized the right to water, some of which are:

- Abuja Declaration of the first Africa-South America Summit – November 2006, where 65 African and South American States committed to “promote the right of our citizens to have access to clean and safe water and sanitation within our respective jurisdictions.”
- Message from Beppu of the first Asia-Pacific Water Summit – December 2007, where ten Heads of State and Government, 37 States from the wider Asia-Pacific region unanimously adopted the «***Message from Beppu***», which recognizes the «people’s right to safe drinking water and basic sanitation as a basic human right and a fundamental aspect of human security. »
- The Council of Europe has asserted that everyone has the right to a sufficient quantity of water for his or her basic needs.

POINTS TO CONSIDER DURING THE DEBATE

- ✓ Are the existing water management programs adequate for ensuring the quality of water and sanitation?
- ✓ To what extent can the actions of NGOs contribute in the achievement of universal access to clean water?
- ✓ How can groundwater sources contribute in the alleviation of water supply in rural and urban areas?
- ✓ Which measures should be taken by the international community in order to avoid *water scarcity*?
- ✓ Can sufficient sanitation display a significant role in the decrease of epidemics and water contamination?
- ✓ Which measures should be taken in order to address the issue of insufficient water infrastructures in **developing countries** and the problems deriving from them (f.e absence of proper sanitation, bad hygiene)?

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