



# **Presidium Model United Nations 2021**

## **World Bank**

*Agenda: Devising a strategy for the economic upliftment of the Sahel  
Region*

## **Letter from the Executive Board**

Greetings Members,

This guide was created to serve as a starting point to your research and to give you a brief overview of the subject matter. It is important that you use this document as a reference point for more research and not as an end in itself. It is also important to note that this committee can only be dealt with if you have the willingness to research extensively and translate research into ideas.

The Executive Board as well as the organisers want to make this as comfortable an experience for you as possible. Your comfort will be a priority for us at all times. Do not hesitate at any point to approach us with your doubts. As frivolous as they might sound in your head, trust me, we had them when we were starting out as well. Your confidence will grow bit by bit as you get accustomed to your surroundings in committee. Come with an open mind, come with a willingness to observe and most importantly come with a willingness to try. I have learnt that public speaking is somewhat addictive. Give yourself that first chance and it will grow on you.

I wish you all the best and hope that we can make this an enriching experience for you. We can be reached to address your doubts and queries at all hours.

Regards,

Pratham Sharma

President

Soumil Mittal

Vice President

## About the Committee

The past 70 years have seen major changes in the world economy. Over that time, the World Bank Group—the world’s largest development institution—has worked to help more than 100 developing countries and countries in transition adjust to these changes by offering loans and tailored knowledge and advice. The Bank Group works with country governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, regional development banks, think tanks, and other international institutions on issues ranging from climate change, conflict, and food security to education, agriculture, finance, and trade. All of these efforts support the Bank Group’s twin goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity of the poorest 40 percent of the population in all countries.

Founded in 1944, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development—soon called the World Bank—has expanded to a closely associated group of five development institutions. Originally, its loans helped rebuild countries devastated by World War II. In time, the focus shifted from reconstruction to development, with a heavy emphasis on infrastructure such as dams, electrical grids, irrigation systems, and roads. With the founding of the International Finance Corporation in 1956, the institution became able to lend to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries. And the founding of the International Development Association in 1960 put greater emphasis on the poorest countries, part of a steady shift toward the eradication of poverty becoming the Bank Group’s primary goal. The subsequent launch of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency further rounded out the Bank Group’s ability to connect global financial resources to the needs of developing countries.

Today the Bank Group’s work touches nearly every sector that is important to fighting poverty, supporting economic growth, and ensuring sustainable gains in the quality of people’s lives in developing countries. While sound project selection and design remain paramount, the Bank Group recognizes a wide range of factors that are critical to success—effective institutions, sound policies, continuous learning through evaluation and knowledge-sharing, and partnership, including with the private sector. The Bank Group has long-standing relationships with more than 180 member countries, and it taps these to address development challenges that are increasingly global. On critical issues like climate change, pandemics, and forced migration, the Bank Group plays a leading role because it is able to convene discussion among its country members and a wide array of partners. It can help address crises while building the foundations for longer-term, sustainable development.

The evolution of the Bank Group has also been reflected in the diversity of its multidisciplinary staff, who include economists, public policy experts, sector experts, and social scientists, based at headquarters in Washington, D.C., and in the field. Today, more than a third of staff are based in country offices.

## Introduction to the Sahel Region

Sahel is the ecoclimatic and biogeographic realm of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian savanna to the south. Having a semi-arid climate, it stretches across the south-central latitudes of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea. The Sahel part of Africa includes from west to east parts of northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, the extreme south of Algeria, Niger, the extreme north of Nigeria, the extreme

north of Cameroon and Central African Republic, central Chad, central and southern Sudan, the extreme north of South Sudan, Eritrea and the extreme north of Ethiopia.

For hundreds of years, the Sahel region has experienced regular droughts and megadroughts. One megadrought lasted from 1450 to 1700, 250 years. There was a major drought in the Sahel in 1914 caused by annual rains far below average, leading to large-scale famine. From 1951 to 2004, the Sahel experienced some of the most consistent and severe droughts in Africa. The 1960s saw a large increase in rainfall in the region, making the northern drier region more accessible. There was a push, supported by governments, for people to move northwards. When the long drought period from 1968 through 1974 began, grazing quickly became unsustainable and large-scale denuding of the terrain followed. Like the drought in 1914, this led to a large-scale famine, but this time somewhat tempered by international visibility and an outpouring of aid. This catastrophe led to the founding of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The Sahel region faces environmental issues that are contributing to global warming. If the change in climate in the Sahel region "is not slowed-down and desertification possibly reversed through sustainable practices and any form of reforestation, it is only a matter of time before" countries like Niger lose their entire landmass to desert due to unchecked unsustainable human practices. Over-farming, over-grazing, over-population of marginal lands, and natural soil erosion, have caused serious desertification of the region. This has affected shelter construction, making it necessary to change the used materials. The Woodless Construction project was introduced in Sahel in 1980 by the Development Workshop, achieving since then a high social impact in the region. A major initiative to combat desertification in the Sahel region via reforestation and other interventions is the Great Green Wall.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, Terrorist organizations including Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in the Sahel have contributed to the violence, extremism and instability of the region. In March 2020, the United States sent a special envoy for the Sahel region to combat the rising violence from terrorist groups. Envoy Peter Pham started his new role on 1 March 2020. He has been the U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa since November 2018. The violent herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, Mali, Sudan and other countries in the Sahel region have been exacerbated by climate change, land degradation, and population growth. Droughts and food shortages have been also linked to the Northern Mali conflict. On 9 July 2020, the United States raised concerns over growing number of allegations of human rights violations and abuses by state security forces in Sahel. The US response came after Human Rights Watch released documents regarding the same on 1 July.

### Challenges to Economic Development in Sahel Region

Africa's Sahel region faces many complex and interconnected challenges. When the Sahel is in the news, it is often because millions of people are at risk of going hungry. A humanitarian crisis usually unfolds on the back of a food crisis. In 2012, the lives of up to 18 million people were put at risk following a major food crisis in the region. This year, more than 11 million are facing the same plight, while 1.4 million children are threatened with severe malnutrition. Even in normal years, millions are in a permanent state of food insecurity. Over the past five decades, persistent droughts have contributed to famine episodes. There is now a need to break the cycle of recurrent food crises in the region, many humanitarian actors say.

Throughout this year's lean season—the period between harvests from May to September—the World Food Programme (WFP) gave food to between 5 and 6 million people each month through its nutrition and food security programme. In 2012 the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) helped more than 5.2 million people through support to off-season food and crop production, soil and water conservation and rehabilitation projects, and desert locust control and monitoring. With its partners, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is also mobilizing resources and assisting communities in need.

Historically the Sahel has been characterized by strong climatic variations and irregular rainfalls, which pose two of the biggest obstacles to food security and poverty reduction in the region, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Things have gotten worse in recent decades, experts say. Between 1970 and 1993, the region recorded 20 years of severe drought. The frequency and severity of droughts and floods has increased over this period. FAO reports that over 80% of the region's land is degraded. By 2050, writes Malcolm Potts of the University of California–Berkeley, with greenhouse gas emissions rising, temperatures will be warmer by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius and extreme weather events will have become more common.

Various factors account for the Sahel's environmental crisis. “Over the last half century,” UNEP notes, “the combined effects of population growth, land degradation (deforestation, continuous cropping and overgrazing), reduced and erratic rainfall, lack of coherent environmental policies and misplaced development priorities, have contributed to transform a large proportion of the Sahel into barren land, resulting in the deterioration of the soil and water resources.”

Among other recommendations, UN officials have urged regional cooperation to defuse tensions between countries of the region, and thereby reduce the risk of increased conflict and environmentally induced migration. Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP, has pointed to “the urgent need for scaled-up investments in adaptation, moving forward on the Green Fund, and supportive measures such as reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as well as realizing the climate finance of \$100 billion a year by 2020.”

Political instability has plagued some of the Sahel's countries for years. In Mali, the military coup of March 2012 brought an abrupt halt to 20 years of stable democracy. In its aftermath, terrorists who had occupied most of the northern region started heading south, intent on taking control of the whole country. In January 2013 a French-led and Chad-supported intervention stopped their advance. The conflict compounded the security and humanitarian crisis, in part by disrupting supply routes and causing food shortages.

The crisis in neighbouring Darfur, Sudan, and the presence of an armed rebellion in the east did damage to Chad's security that will last for many years. During Niger's 50 years of independence, notes a report by the International Crisis Group, a think tank, the country has seen two armed rebellions, four coups, seven governments and periods of promising democratic change as well as reversals.

In a region with porous borders, a political or security crisis in one country is often a serious threat to neighbours. These borders have benefited criminal networks and drug traffickers. The UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has estimated that major illicit flows linked to criminal activities in the Sahel amounted to \$3.8 billion annually. UNODC recently helped broker an agreement among Mali, Morocco, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Algeria to address the problems caused by drug trafficking,

organized crime and terrorism. In July the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to assist Mali on its way back to stability.

Agriculture in the Sahel employs a majority of the region's work force and contributes heavily to its gross domestic product (accounting for up to 45% in some countries of the region). It also plays a central role in food security. Yet it remains highly underdeveloped and is characterized by an almost total dependency on three to four months of rainfall per year, as well as by low use of external inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, the absence of mechanization and poor links to markets.

According to UNEP, the recurrent droughts of the 1970s and 1980s caused massive losses of agricultural production and livestock, loss of human lives to hunger, malnutrition and disease, massive displacements of people and shattered economies. Climate change could also have negative consequences on agricultural production and food security in the Sahel, says UNEP. All in all, the countries of the Sahel perform poorly on UNDP's Human Development Index, a measurement of a country's economic and social well-being.

The World Bank believes irrigation could allow the Sahel's agriculture to overcome the challenges posed by a hostile environment and produce more food for its people. "Although desert and aridity define the Sahel," said World Bank Vice President for Africa Makhtar Diop in a recent op-ed piece, "its vast water resources remain untapped. In a region where farming is the predominant economic activity, sadly, only 20% of the Sahel's irrigation potential has been developed. Worse still, one quarter of the area equipped with irrigation lies in a state of disrepair."

#### Impact of COVID-19 economically in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa, home to more than 1 billion people, half of whom will be under 25 years old by 2050, is a diverse continent offering human and natural resources that have the potential to yield inclusive growth and eradicate poverty in the region, enabling Africans across the continent to live healthier and more prosperous lives. With the world's largest free trade area and a 1.2 billion-person market, the continent is creating an entirely new development path, harnessing the potential of its resources and people.

The region is composed of low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries, 20 of which are fragile or conflict-affected. Africa also has 13 small states, characterized by a small population, limited human capital, and a confined land area.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 shock in Sub-Saharan Africa is severe. However, countries in the region are continuing to weather the storm. Economic activity in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have contracted by 2% in 2020, reflecting a slower-than-expected spread of the virus and lower COVID-19-related mortality in the region, strong agricultural growth, and a faster-than-expected recovery in commodity prices. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has plunged the region into its first recession in over 25 years, with activity contracting by nearly 5% on a per capita basis. It has also exacerbated public debt vulnerabilities, which are high and continue to rise in many countries. Vulnerable groups, such as the poor, informal sector workers, women, and youth, suffered disproportionately from reduced opportunities and unequal access to social safety nets. This situation could push up to 40 million people into extreme poverty, erasing at least five years of progress in fighting poverty.

In East and Southern Africa, the growth contraction in 2020 is estimated at  $-3\%$ , 0.9 percentage point less than projected in October 2020, mostly driven by South Africa and Angola—its two largest economies. Disruptions in the tourism industry and lockdowns caused substantial slowdowns in Botswana, Namibia, Madagascar, and the island nations. Mining dependent economies such as Mozambique and Zambia continued to experience output contractions in the second half of 2020. Growth in Western and Central Africa contracted by 1.1% in 2020, less than projected in October 2020 partly due to a less severe contraction in Nigeria, the subregion’s largest economy, in the second half of the year. Real gross domestic product in the subregion is projected to grow by 2.1% in 2021 and 3.0% in 2022. Fragile countries in the region are expected to experience a strong decline in growth as COVID-19 (coronavirus) exacerbates the drivers of fragility.

Sub-Saharan Africa’s recovery is expected to be multi-speed, with significant variation across countries. Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola, the region’s three largest economies, are expected to return to growth in 2021, partly owing to higher commodity prices, but the recovery will remain sluggish. Growth is projected to rebound to 1.4% in Nigeria, 3% in South Africa, and 0.9% in Angola. Muted near-term growth prospects and slow vaccine rollout in the largest economies will weigh on the region’s outlook. Excluding Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola, activity is projected to expand at a more solid pace in the rest of the region with non-resource-intensive countries such as Côte d’Ivoire and Kenya, and mining dependent economies, such as Botswana and Guinea, are expected to see robust growth in 2021 driven by a rebound in private consumption and investment as confidence strengthens and exports increase.

Faster progress on vaccine deployment along with credible policies to stimulate private investment would accelerate growth to 3.4% in 2021 and 4.5% in 2022 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Alleviating the debt burden will release resources for public investment in areas such as education, health, and infrastructure. Investments in human capital will help lower the risk of long-lasting damage from the pandemic, which may become apparent over the longer term, and can enhance competitiveness and productivity. The next 12 months will be a critical period for leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area, to deepen African countries’ integration into regional and global value chains. Reforms that deliver reliable electricity, including better functioning of public utilities, can power the manufacturing sector and the digital economy. Finally, reforms that address digital infrastructure gaps and make the digital economy more inclusive—ensuring affordability and building skills for all segments of society—are critical for improving connectivity, boosting digital technology adoption, and generating more and better jobs for men and women.

Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, which provide the majority of jobs, have been particularly hard hit across the region where informal firms dominate employment. Public works and urban programs are being launched or scaled up to facilitate job creation in low income communities and to help increase access to livelihood support for extremely poor and vulnerable people like women and the youth. Meanwhile, the World Bank Group’s private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), is working to help the private sector navigate the pandemic and recover from the economic and financial impact of the crisis. This includes mobilizing IFC’s global \$8 billion COVID-19 fast-track financing facility to support existing clients in the region affected by the outbreak to increase financing for small businesses, develop digital infrastructure, help keep agriculture supply chains running, and enable local manufacturers to access working capital.

***\*It is important to remember, that the challenges posed by COVID-19 to the entire continent exerts relevance on the types of challenges one may also face in Sahel. It is important to understand the dynamics of a continent before devising a strategy for a particular region.***

***\*\*We have simply included a background of the region and challenges faced by the region and avoided any suggestions as to the strategy for the solutions due to an imperative region. We believe the delegates should be the one of bring forth ideas from a nascent stage rather than being restricted to some mentioned by us. We do not wish to lay down any benchmarks for idea to promote any and all ideas from each and every one of you regardless of experience. If the committee would feel the need to seek an input from the Executive Board as to possible ideas up for discussion, we will be more than happy to discuss them verbally during the conference rather than imposing some during this stage of research.***

#### Links for further research

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/15/the-world-bank-boosts-support-to-the-sahel-for-a-resilient-recovery-from-the-security-and-economic-crisis>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/>

<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2020/impact-malian-crisis-group-five-sahel-countries-balancing-security-and-development-priorities>

<https://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/wap-25-security-development-sahel.pdf>

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sahel>

<https://www.dfc.gov/investment-story/advancing-economic-growth-west-africa-and-sahel-region>

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/private-sector-can-help-transform-sahel>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sahel-adaptive-social-protection-program-trust-fund>

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25851MSMEs\\_and\\_SDGs\\_Final3120.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25851MSMEs_and_SDGs_Final3120.pdf)

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/12/04/climate-change-in-the-sahel-how-can-cash-transfers-help-protect-the-poor/>

[https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/africa/docs/sahel\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf)