Study Guide

ECOSOC

Economic and Social Council

Universidad de Navarra | FACULTAD DE DERECHO

UNMUN
MODEL OF UNITED NATIONS

Welcome Letter from the Chair:

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Universidad de Navarra Model United Nations Conference 2025! On behalf of the organizing committee, it is an honor to have you in the Economic and Social Council.

The Dais of this committee is composed of Kyra Nicole Abastillas Bello (a third-year International Relations + Geopolitics and Diplomacy student from the Philippines) as the President, Andrea Kuoman Jiménez (a third-year Law and International Relations student from Peru) as the Vice-President, and Valentina Leguizamon (a third-year International Relations student from Colombia) as the Secretary.

When brainstorming the possible issues for discussion in the upcoming conference, the three Chairs were challenged to design topics that not only aligned with ECOSOC's mission of advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental work – but also UNMUN 2025's own conference theme of *"New World Order: Paving the New International System."* With this, the Chairs looked to the most pressing issues in regions currently at the margins of international relations but predicted to hold vital roles in the geopolitical epicenter of the future global order.

After much research and preparation, they are proud to announce that the distinguished delegates of the Economic and Social Council of UNMUN 2025 are tasked with finding solutions for two highly relevant issues, namely:

A. *The Malacca Maritime Dilemma: Addressing Threats in the Socioeconomic Crossroad of the Indo-Pacific Region.*
B. *5 Years to Go: Reviewing the Feasibility of the 2030 Agenda in the Horn of Africa.*

In light of this, the Chairs have prepared this study guide that contains information on everything – from the mandate of ECOSOC to the possible topics of discussion – that is vital for the entire committee to know. However, they stress that nuanced debates are also expected during the conference proper. Thus, each delegate is urged to branch out from the study guide and do their own research into how their allocation relates to the topics at hand.

Mindful of the complexity of such a challenge, the Chairs stress that they are available to address any questions or concerns at any point of the conference process. They are here to ensure that UNMUN 2025 is a smooth (and fun!) experience for all those involved.

With this, the Chairs thank all the delegates for choosing to embark on UNMUN 2025 with the Economic and Social Council. Best of luck in all the pre-conference preparations!

Till February,

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About the Committee: United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):

- ### *Introduction:*

As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is dedicated to advancing three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.[1] As such, ECOSOC has played a critical role in fostering international cooperation and dialogue on key global issues since its establishment in 1945 by the UN Charter.

- ### *Mandate and Functions:*

ECOSOC's primary goals include promoting economic growth, enhancing social equity, and ensuring environmental sustainability. To achieve these objectives, Chapter X of the UN Charter[2] empowers the ECOSOC to undertake several vital tasks, including but not limited to:

1. Fostering debate and innovative thinking on pressing global issues;
2. Forging consensus on effective strategies and policies;
3. Coordinating international efforts to achieve agreed-upon development goals;
4. Following up on the outcomes of major UN conferences and summits;
5. Conducting studies and reports on international economic, social, cultural, educational, and health matters;
6. Making recommendations to the General Assembly, UN member states, and specialized agencies;
7. Promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

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[1] Economic and Social Council, "ECOSOC at a Glance ," Un.org, 2021, https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us.

[2] United Nations, "United Nations Charter (Full Text)," United Nations (United Nations, 1945), https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text.

8. Preparing draft conventions for submission to the General Assembly;

9. Organizing international conferences on relevant issues;

10. Coordinating activities of specialized agencies through consultations and recommendations;

11. Collecting and disseminating reports on the implementation of its recommendations and those of the General Assembly;

12. Providing information and assistance to the Security Council upon request;

13. Performing functions assigned by the General Assembly and as specified in the UN Charter.

For this work, ECOSOC holds short sessions, preparatory meetings, round tables, and panel discussions throughout the year.[3] In particular, their subsidiary and related bodies carry multiple types of meetings including High-level, Coordination, Operational Activities, Humanitarian Affairs Segments, and the Management Segment. In these gatherings, ECOSOC conducts its work using 6 official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

- *Membership and Composition*

ECOSOC comprises 54 member governments, elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms (Economic and Social Council, 2024). The Council's membership is based on geographical representation:

- 14 seats for African States

- 11 seats for Asian States

- 6 seats for Eastern European States

- 10 seats for Latin American and Caribbean States

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[3] Economic and Social Council, "Frequently Asked Questions," Un.org, 2021, https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us/faq.

- 13 seats for Western European and other States

This structure ensures a diverse and inclusive representation of member states, fostering comprehensive and balanced discussions on global issues.

Overall, ECOSOC's role in shaping international policies and its collaborative approach to addressing global challenges make it an essential component of the United Nations' efforts to promote sustainable development and improve the well-being of people worldwide.

Topic A – The Malacca Maritime Dilemma: Addressing Threats in the Socioeconomic Crossroad of the Indo-Pacific Region

- ## *Introduction:*

Deep in the heart of the Southeast Asian region lies one of the most important political, economic, and strategic waterways in the world. Known as the "Strait of Malacca," the channel crucially links the Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Western markets by connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through the Andaman and South China Seas, respectively. Such an advantage can be attributed to its location and territorial delineation, which the International Hydrographic Organization[4] defines as being enclosed within:

1. "A line joining Pedropunt (the northernmost point of Sumatra at 5°40′N 95°26′E) and Lem Voalan (the southern extremity of Goh Puket [Phromthep Cape on Phuket Island] in Siam [Thailand] at 7°45′N 98°18′E) to its WEST;

2. A line joining Tanjong Piai [Bulus] (the southern extremity of the Malay Peninsula at 1°16′N 103°31′E) and The Brothers (at 1°11.5′N 103°21′E), and thence to Klein Karimoen (at 1°10′N 103°23.5′E) to its EAST;

3. The southwestern coast of the Malay Peninsula to its NORTH; and

4. The northeastern coast of Sumatra as far to the eastward as Tanjong Kedabu (at 1°06′N 102°58′E), thence to Klein Karimoen at its SOUTH."

At 800 km long yet only 65 to 250 km wide, however, the narrow nature of the Strait makes it prone to hazards like piracy, shipwrecks, congestion, ecological disasters, and even

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[4] (International Hydrographic Organization 1953)

spillovers from neighboring territorial disputes (such as that bubbling in the South China Sea). While these threats may be considered problems in their own right, scholars – from the Association for Asian Studies to the National Bureau of Asian Research – suggest that there are larger implications to the question of worldwide stability. In 2012, the Central Intelligence Agency even declassified an document dating 1971 that labelled the strait a "passageway of international concern.[5]"

From a geopolitical perspective, current global and regional powers seeking to expand their influence have begun to recognize the advantage that control over this strategic location would provide an aspiring hegemon in the realization of its goals.

Since tensions in the channel have already begun to rise among the USA, China, and even small states, it thus seems necessary to acknowledge that the Indo-Pacific may very well be the socioeconomic and geopolitical epicenter of the future global order. As a result, protecting and fostering it becomes the task of the committee at hand.

For this endeavor, the next parts of this study guide highlight key concepts, historical contexts, current statuses, stakeholders, and case studies essential to fulfill this goal. The expectation is that the information provided will empower the committee to find a viable solution to the volatile situation at the Strait of Malacca.

- ### *Keywords and Important Concepts:*

1. Armed Robbery Against Ships - The Code of Practice for the Investigation of the Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships (resolution A.1025(26), annex, paragraph 2.2)[6] defines this concept as:

   a. *Any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy, committed for private ends and directed against a ship or*

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[5] (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012)

[6] (International Maritime Organization 2009)

against persons or property on board such a ship, within a State's internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea; or

b. *Any act of inciting or intentionally facilitating an act described above.*

2. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - Formed on August 8, 1967, this political and economic union in Southeast Asia represents the states and people most directly affected by issues in the Strait of Malacca. It is composed of 10 member states, with the most relevant ones in the topic of debate being the states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

3. ASEAN Centrality - According to the ASEAN Charter, this term refers to the commitment that the union has to serve a "proactive role as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent, and inclusive." Moreover, renowned scholar Amitav Acharya establishes that synonyms for this phrase include ASEAN as the leader, driver, architect, institutional hub, vanguard, nucleus, or fulcrum of regional cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific. As an approach to the issue at hand, ASEAN centrality proposes that Southeast Asian states hold the largest stakes at the Strait of Malacca and must therefore be at the forefront of finding solutions to it.

4. Indo-Pacific - In terms of geo-spatiality, this region is broadly understood as an interconnected space between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Its expanse is debated to be ranging from the eastern shores of Africa to the western coast of the United States. Strategically, the Indo-Pacific has also been seen as a continuum across the two oceans joined together by the Strait of Malacca as its main trading channel. In contemporary times, the shift from the terminology "Asia-Pacific" to "Indo-Pacific" reflects a simultaneous shift from states' continental approach of looking at security to a maritime approach.[7]

5. Littoral State - A coastal country with land territory adjacent to a particular maritime area. In the context of the Strait of Malacca, these states include Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

6. Malacca Dilemma - Coined in 2003 by then-Chinese president Hu Jintao, this term reflects the Strait of Malacca's role as an effective choke point in China's economic network, and

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[7] (Das 2019)

subsequently, a hindrance to their regional and global ambitions.[8] Due to their country's dependence on imported energy as well as a lack of reliable allies in the region, they possess a particular vulnerability to a naval blockade in the shortest sea route connecting itself to the Middle East. [9]

7. Maritime Silk Roads (MSRs) - Unveiled by China in 2013, this development strategy aims to boost infrastructure connectivity throughout Southeast Asia, Oceania, the Indian Ocean, and East Africa.[10] It is the maritime complement to the Silk Road Economic Belt, which focuses on land infrastructure development. Many of these Silk Road projects reflect a strategic effort by Beijing to reduce its reliance on the conflict-filled Strait of Malacca.

8. Piracy - Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines this violation as:

 a. Any illegal act of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft and directed:
  i. On the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
  ii. Against a ship, aircraft, persons, or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;
 b. Any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft; or
 c. Any act inciting or intentionally facilitating an act described above.

9. Strategic Lane of Communication (SLOC) - A maritime route between ports used for trade, logistics, and naval activities in a region.[11] Consequently, it facilitates large-capacity sea

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[8] (Hung 2023)

[9] (Paszak 2021)

[10] (Green 2018)

[11] (Agustiyan, Mamahit, and Suwarno 2022)

transportation and is the core of large-scale sea freight such as crude oil. The Strait of Malacca is considered a vital SLOC in the Indo-Pacific region.

10. String of Pearls Strategy - This geopolitical hypothesis proposed in 2004 by American political researchers refers to the Chinese network of military and commercial facilities along its sea lines. While Beijing claims that these projects are entirely peaceful and have solely been deployed to protect its trade interests, other powers have expressed concern that they are indicative of China's growing geopolitical influence.

- ## *Background & Historical Context:*

Nowadays, the Strait of Malacca is renowned for its central position in the world trading ecosystem. Historically, however, the body of water only fast-tracked the commercial activity of a specific riverine and coastal people known as the Malays. This group located mainly in West Borneo, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula inspired the Strait's ancient name: the "Sea of Melayu.[12]"

Before the 15th century, the northern portion of the aforementioned sea was the main site of the production of goods made from aromatic woods, forest resins, and gold.[13] It is worth noting that these commodities were primarily produced by the interior communities; a specialized task made possible by their precise knowledge of the trees and natural resources in a particular section of the forests. Simultaneously, the south of the sea served as the main port where the final products were brought to be imported and exported. As a result of this geographical specialization, a network of land and water routes was created within the Sea of Melayu that facilitated the internal collecting and sale of desired products.[14] From 1400 and 1511, such a network was ruled by the Malacca Sultanate, with the center of the administration being located in the modern-day state of Malacca, Malaysia. It was this leadership that inspired the Strait's contemporary name.

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[12] (Ahmad, Andaya, and Andaya 2017)

[13] (Burkill 1936)

[14] (Andaya 2000)

From the turn of the 15th century to the end of the 18th century, however, internal demand for forest products was overtaken by an international demand for pepper and tin – goods which were also largely produced in the Malay Peninsula. Consequently, this radical conversion inspired a major change in the participants of trade in the region. From an exclusively intra-Malaya exchange of goods, sailors and traders from all over the world began to turn their eyes to Southeast Asian products.

Critically, these international actors favored the more accessible southern sea routes over the short northern river-land routes that primarily served to link various waterways. This preference can be further attributed to the fact that the Strait of Malacca links the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, which allowed travelers from India and the Arab world to arrive in Southeast Asia more quickly.[15] Such a route was a much-welcomed alternative to the then-popular yet more time-consuming journey through the Sunda Strait.[16] As a result, it was this natural facilitation of access to trading sites that reinforced the Strait's undisputable role as a geoeconomic crossroad that remains today.

In the end, however, it is not solely organic factors that fostered commercial activity in the region when other forms of mobility were limited. In 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was created as an intentional initiative of policymakers to cultivate the naturally endowed Strait to be a formal geoeconomic crossroad.[17] This cornerstone legal document established the Strait of Malacca as an international sea lane where all ships enjoy the "right of transit passage" or the freedom of navigation solely for continuous and expeditious transit. As a result of the lowering of artificial barriers, commercial activity in the Strait notably increased.

Still, this induced usage of the body of water, combined with the existence of shallow reefs and scattered islands, means that maritime traffic in the Strait must transit at considerably reduced speeds.[18] Unfortunately, this scheme reportedly leaves ships vulnerable to maritime

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[15] (Vann 2023)

[16] (Evers and Gerke 2006)

[17] (United Nations 1982)

[18] (Simon 2011)

crime, with authorities reporting a notable spike in the number of piracy, armed robbery incidents, and collisions from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s.[19]

In response to this security threat, authorities have drafted and released a series of detailed guidelines, regulations, and instructions throughout the years to guide the responsible and safe usage of the body of water. A pamphlet created by the Marine Electronic Highway[20] reports that some of these historical initiatives to include the:

1. 1972 International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs);[21]

2. 1998 Rules For Vessels Navigating Through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee 69;[22]

3. Singapore Port Information by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore;

4. Admiralty Charts, 5502-Mariners' Routeing Guide Malacca & Singapore Straits by the UK Hydrographic Office;

5. Passage Planning Guide of the Malacca and Singapore Straits by Witherby Publishing Group;

6. Ships' Routeing and Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) by the IMO;

7. IMO Circulars and Resolutions;

8. Admiralty Sailing Directions, Malacca Strait and West Coast of Sumatera Pilot by the UK Hydrographic Office; and the

9. Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.[23]

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[19] (Ichioka 2009)

[20] (Marine Electronic Highway 2024)

[21] (International Maritime Organization 1972)

[22] (International Register of Shipping 2019)

[23] (ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre 2009)

- *Current Status:*

Despite these established guidelines and the continued efforts of the aforementioned littoral states to promote them, the functionality risks associated with the Strait of Malacca's use have significantly increased over the years as more and more ships pass through it.[24]

The first threat is that of navigational hazards, attributed to the fact that approximately 90,000 ships reportedly use the Strait per year.[25] Given this high level of congestion within a narrow area, the body of water has long been considered a chokepoint in the international community. When collisions do occur, they severely delay or disrupt the flow of goods. Unfortunately, these accidents can cause environmental damage, with some clashes reported to have resulted in oil spills and the disturbance of marine life.

Next, another threat is that of Piracy and Armed Robbery (PAR) against ships passing through the body of water. In 2023, the IMO's Annual Report noted 85 PAR incidents in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore area.[26] With a mere worldwide total of 150 successful and attempted incidents of PAR in 2023, it emerges that nearly 57% of incidents came from this particular Strait. To make matters worse, authorities find it difficult to trace the origins of these attackers and hold them accountable due to the international nature of modern-day pirates. In a TIME article entitled "the Most Dangerous Waters in the World," McCauley[27] illustrates this Malaccan reality with a single statement: "it could be a Japanese-owned ship, sailing under a Panamanian flag, using an Indonesian captain with a Filipino crew."

Finally, environmental risks stemming from climate change have continuously worsened the situation at the Strait. As sea levels rise, fish migration patterns alter, and land begins to erode, the livelihood of coastal communities and the timely transportation of goods through the Strait of Malacca are threatened.

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[24] (Pitakdumrongkit 2023)

[25] (Nofandi et al. 2022)

[26] (International Maritime Organization 2024)

[27] (McCauley 2021)

For the committee of ECOSOC, such maritime risks notably translate to socio-economic issues. On the one hand, threats occurring in the Strait are considered injustices directly experienced by people and communities. As the crew aboard these ships face threats, injuries, and death while passing the Strait of Malacca, these realities tangibly take away from their suitable living conditions, opportunities, labor rights, freedoms, and human dignity.

On the other hand, the Strait can be likened to one of the most vital arteries of the world's trading anatomy. Therefore, natural and man-made problems within it threaten to clog the beating heart of the larger global economy. In the end, a complete shutdown could occur if left unchecked, effectively distorting the worldwide provision of goods and services.

Therefore, the challenge to the committee is to continue fostering the economic benefits provided by the Strait while ensuring that the people keeping the gears of trade running remain fully protected in the process. This balance will be key in harnessing the full potential of the body of water.

- ### *Main Actors and Stakeholders:*

1. Non-State Shipping Actors: Crew Members, Workers, and Passengers aboard Ships

The primary actors affected by the topic at hand are the individuals braving the dangers in the Strait every day. While this line of work is generally meant to be a normal source of income for the shipping community, those particularly passing through the Strait of Malacca remain constantly vulnerable to injuries, kidnapping for ransom, and death at the hands of traffickers and pirates.

As a result, certain practices for safe navigation exist to reduce the risk of dangerous incidents and deter aggression. Since attackers seek easier and more accessible ships to raid, initiatives of crew members to make themselves look more challenging to rob have included:

1. Establishing visible security rounds;
2. Securing all doors and hatches effectively;
3. Ensure that the ship is always well-lit;
4. Keeping a safe distance from suspicious vessels;

5. Maintain communication with local authorities and other surrounding ships;

6. Avoiding sailing close to known piracy hotspots;

7. Equipping themselves with water cannons and loudspeakers;

8. Frequently practicing drills on anti-piracy tactics and protocols; and

9. Install surveillance equipment (such as CCTV cameras and motion sensors).

Aside from these initiatives to detect suspicious activity, other measures exist to persecute attackers and repatriate victims in the event that these incidents are successful. Still, they are not fully effective in addressing the issue at hand. Thus, the bulk of the social dimension of ECOSOC's work on the issue will focus on the further protection of this vulnerable group of people.

2. Littoral States: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore

Historically, three specific states have led such efforts to address the risks associated with the Strait and have shouldered the bulk of their costs. Known as littoral states, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are the most affected by issues in the body of water due to their close proximity to it. In response, they have created joint-initiatives to mitigate the negative impacts on their own sources of livelihood, recreation, and transportation. These efforts include but are not limited to:

1. An "Eyes-in-the-Sky" (EiS) program and Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG) by the Malacca strait seas patrol (formerly MALSINDO, a coordinated patrol scheme involving their respective navies used to jointly monitor and regulate all activities in the area);[28]

2. the Vessel Traffic Information System (VTIS), an operation by port authorities to facilitate the requirements, reports, and communications with ships;[29] and

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[28] (Khalid 2006)

[29] (Maritime Port Authority Singapore, n.d.)

3. the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) framework, which consists of the Malacca Straits Sea Patrol (MSSP), "Eyes-in-the-Sky" (EiS) Combined Maritime Air Patrols , and the MSP Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG) as a joint defense diplomacy activity upheld by a collection of multilateral contacts and exercises between their officials.[30]

These measures and the prerogative that the three states have over decisions related to the Strait, however, do not take away from the fact that the responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of the body of water does not solely fall on them. As many of the these states themselves are considered developing nations, such efforts could very well apply immense pressure and tax their already limited resources.

Instead, the 1982 UNCLOS posits that the general international community must be equally responsible for initiatives in the Strait. Nonetheless, it maintains that the voices of the littoral states are arguably the most important given how deeply affected they are by the situation. ECOSOC must keep this in mind when creating solutions to address the issue.

3. Global Powers: The USA, China, their Allies, and ASEAN

Situating the current issue in the wider context of the world order reveals how the channel may be key to the geopolitical ambitions of global and regional powers attempting to maintain or revise it. To this end, the last stakeholders in this topic are heavily linked with the competitive dynamic between current and aspiring global powers.

Currently, the US Navy is the major security provider in the maritime domain. Some scholars even go as far as claiming that the dominant position of the USA in the Western Pacific "has been, is, and will remain largely defined by sea power.[31]"

However, this reality poses a significant problem to China since the Strait is its economic "lifeline" to Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. The use of this word is not done lightly; it

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[30] (Sulistyani 2019)

[31] (Gompert 2013)

reflects just how dependent their economy seems to be on this body of water. Reports account that ⅔ of China's maritime trade volume transits through the Strait annually. Likewise, analysts also shed light on how the country channels about 80% of its oil imports through this strait, representing 60% of its entire oil supply. Thus, potential naval blockades by their rivals could effectively cut them off from the rest of the global supply chain and present them with a serious wartime economic security threat.[32] As a result, China has been seeking alternative routes to relieve the Strait and draw them out of a vulnerable situation.

On the one hand, suggested natural substitutes include the Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar Straits. Their use, however, would present problems of their own. First, the narrow and shallow nature of the first Strait makes it an unsuitable passageway for large, modern ships.[33] Furthermore, the latter two are much longer routes that would incur additional shipping costs estimated to be around $84 to $220 billion per year.[34]

On the other hand, man-made initiatives in the Maritime Silk Roads have also been explored. First, Thailand has repeatedly proposed cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Kra that would deduct approximately 1,200 km or 72 hours from the journey between the two oceans.[35] Still, it could take eight to 10 years to build with current estimates putting construction costs at about US$28 billion. Likewise, an alternative is the installation of a pipeline, in collaboration with Myanmar, that would deposit oil 770 km across the country to southwest China.[36] Still, financial and ecological costs have continuously prevented its full materialization. Finally, China has invested approximately $50.60 billion in a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor with the end goal of creating a Gwadar-Xinjiang port that would foster the import of oil from West Asian countries.[37] Like the previous projects, however, other problems have arisen

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[32] (Myers 2023)

[33] ("The Malacca Dilemma: A Hindrance to Chinese Ambitions in the 21st Century" 2019)

[34] (Rosli 2012)

[35] (Min 2015)

[36] (Lee, Aizhu, and Myint 2017)

[37] (Kanwal 2018)

during construction, such as concerns over the safety of Chinese workers, the resentment of Baloch nationalists, and allegations of growing debt traps.

To make matters worse, many scholars have found that other Asian states might perceive such Chinese initiatives as offensive threats to their own interests and would likely join US efforts to balance them.[38] Such is the case for India, which has continuously turned to the West to challenge China's increasing interest in the Indian Ocean.[39] This idea also applies to Japan, whose Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) has conducted cooperative naval deployment with the US Navy in the Strait of Malacca following reports of Chinese military exercises in Japanese waters adjacent to the Pacific Ocean.[40]

In contrast, ASEAN's small and middle powers have called for an "ASEAN centrality" approach to the issue. Rather than individually employing a hedging strategy by cooperating economically with China or engaging militarily with the USA, they desire to come together as a regional bloc to lead the way to find solutions for the issue occurring in their own backyard. In particular, ASEAN's approach to this security issue has historically been done through confidence-building measures, shared awareness, and transparent exchanges of best practices for reducing the tension and conflict between its members. Nonetheless, questions remain about the effectiveness and feasibility of such an approach considering the financial and political constraints of the states.

With each actor wanting to steer a solution to the issue at the expense of the other, the clashes in the Strait of Malacca seem to be intangible as much as they are physical and perceivable. Thus, the double conflict remains of whether actors should maintain a status quo they perceive as detrimental to their ambitions, or risk driving away their allies directly into the hands of their rivals. How each actor acts and counteracts in this endeavor is vital to the formation of the world order and the overall international system.

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[38] (Paszak 2021)

[39] (Seyedi 2022)

[40] (Panda 2019)

- *Cases of Study:*

1. Sustainability and International Conventions:

The Malacca Strait region is characterized by environmental geographic features that harmonize the ecosystem of both the seabed and the land of the littoral states. Among these features are reefs, mangroves, and volcanoes.

The reefs play a crucial role in regulating sea temperature, which in turn helps mitigate the accelerating flood crisis in Malaysia. However, the quantity of reefs is insufficient due to the turbulence caused by the constant traffic of ships. Additionally, ship traffic contributes to oil spills, which contaminate the strait's waters and endanger the lives of numerous species.

Mangroves, on the other hand, serve as natural barriers that protect the littoral states from the constant threat of tsunamis, which are triggered by the frequent movement of tectonic plates. These mangroves are safeguarded under the Ramsar Convention of 1971, which has also raised awareness within local communities, leading to the establishment of conservation parks dedicated to the preservation of these vital ecosystems.[41]

Volcanoes, earthquakes, and floods represent the most immediate and dangerous factors in the Malacca Strait region. These natural events cause the displacement of communities near coastlines or active volcanoes, which in turn jeopardizes the internal economy of the littoral states by necessitating unforeseen expenditures on refugee assistance, land reclamation for agriculture, and infrastructure restoration. Such economic disruptions also negatively impact international investment in ports and the national economies, particularly those reliant on agriculture.

Tanking into account this information, the committee must develop initiatives to enhance the efficiency of the Strait of Malacca in an environmentally sustainable manner.

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[41] (National Report on the Implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 2021)

2. Navigational Hazards: Congestion, Collisions, and Shipwrecks

The Strait of Malacca handles approximately 60% of global maritime trade, leading to an annual increase in shipping traffic of about 3%.[42] The IMO acknowledges that this increased activity in the Strait is inherently risky, with maritime accidents leading to injury or even death of members of a shipping crew being relatively common.

In terms of economics, navigational hazards also remain a significant concern due to the large volume of oil transported through this route. Approximately 60% of the cargo transported in the Strait consists of oil. Therefore, collisions increase the risk of oil spills, which could negatively impact the environment and exacerbate natural disaster risks.[43]

With this information, the committee must come together to improve on current traffic schemes and initiatives to lessen the threats brought about by navigational hazards.

3. Maritime Piracy and Armed Robberies (PARS)

Historical records show that this security problem has been present in the Strait since the 14th century, corresponding to the time when seaborne trade increased in the region.[44] As a result, various counter-piracy measures – ranging from the dispatch of Admiral Zheng He to battle attackers during the Ming Dynasty to the implementation of the MSP framework in the mid-2000s – have been implemented to try to minimize incidents.[45]

Nonetheless, numerous scholars posit that these counter-piracy measures merely address the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of PAR. Therefore, a more effective solution to the issue at hand would consider the factors that make the Strait a conducive environment to PARs in the first place.[46]

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[42] (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2023)

[43] (World Bank, 2024)

[44] (Rahman 2021)

[45] (Ong-Webb 2006)

[46] (Crossley 2023)

In this regard, the resolution of ECOSOC must first acknowledge that the increasing trend of PAR incidents in the Strait correlates with the growing demand for commodities and goods in the region. With more ships traveling through the waterways, pirates see an opportunity to target these vessels for their valuables. This increased density, combined with the region's vast and complex network of waterways, provides many hiding spots for pirates and makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to track them down.

Furthermore, the committee must address the ongoing political instability in surrounding countries that may contribute to PAR incidents in the waters. Since political unrest causes increased crime and lawlessness, pirates may take advantage of this situation to carry out their attacks. Beyond the immediate threat to the safety of crew members that this reality presents, there is also thus a potential risk of worsening overall stability in the region.

4. Transnational Blackmarket Activities: Weaponry, Contraband, and Human Trafficking

The Strait of Malacca is a prime location for illicit affairs conducted by criminal networks linked to the black market. The increase in maritime traffic and the incomplete control exercised by both local and international authorities render the Strait an ideal venue for illegal trade. Commonly trafficked items include crude oil, elephant ivory, weapons, and human kidneys. These criminal networks are often connected to terrorist organizations that acquire these items through the black market, primarily within the littoral states. Additionally, estimates for child trafficking are also alarming, with the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) organization approximating that between 40,000 and 70,000 children are trafficked in the region each year.[47] Malaysia is the third most common destination for trafficked victims, while Singapore ranks fourth.[48]

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[47] (ECPAT, 2023)

[48] (UNODC, 2023)

Criminal networks employ various tactics to evade detection, including altering the flags, colors, or other features of ships after committing crimes. They also exploit the high volume of trade traffic to distract authorities and avoid inspection of their containers.[49]

These ongoing threats prompted the intervention of the UNODC in the region, leading to a regional collaboration aimed at enforcing maritime law in partnership with the Indonesian Coast Guard (BAKAMLA), the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). The focus of this regional partnership was to provide training in the Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) facility in Batam, Indonesia, with practical exercises conducted in the Strait of Malacca to enhance military capabilities. These new approaches by the international and regional communities aim to address security issues by uniting littoral states and developing joint tactics that continue to improve to this day.[50]

Addressing these issues is crucial not only for enhancing security within the Strait but also for protecting individuals outside the region who fall victim to trafficking networks. Such networks are responsible for severe abuses, including kidnapping for prostitution or illegal adoption and the trafficking of human organs. The committee must develop effective measures to combat these criminal activities and safeguard both maritime and land-based communities.[51]

5. On-going Proposals to Relieve the Strait

Modification of Registration Methods

To enhance the security of the Strait of Malacca, particularly in the face of navigational hazards such as congestion that can facilitate transnational black market activities, it is crucial to implement a faster and more secure registration system. Such a system should aim to streamline the registration process without impeding traffic flow and mitigate the issue of

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[49] (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2023)

[50] ("Indonesia Is Becoming a Center of Excellence in the Fight Against Maritime Crime," 2023)

[51] (ECPAT, 2023)

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flag manipulation, a common tactic used by illicit operators to obscure the origins of their vessels.[52]

Multinational Cooperation

The varying solutions proposed by the littoral states impact regional patrols in the Strait of Malacca and the effectiveness of international collaboration. Indonesia and Malaysia have generally favored restrictive policies, while Singapore has adopted a more open approach, advocating for foreign involvement to develop partnerships and enhance security measures.[53] This divergence in strategy affects the coherence and efficiency of regional security efforts.

Malaysian New Port on the Malacca Strait

Malaysia plans to develop a new container port in Negeri Sembilan, located on the western coast of the Malay Peninsula and facing the Malacca Strait. This port will be the first in Malaysia to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) technology with the following features:

1. Automation and Efficiency: AI facilitates the automation of various port operations, including crane movements, container handling, and internal transportation. This automation improves turnaround times, increases throughput, and reduces labor costs.

2. Predictive Maintenance: AI systems can forecast equipment failures and maintenance needs by analyzing sensor and machinery data. Predictive maintenance helps to minimize downtime, lower repair costs, and extend the lifespan of port equipment.

3. Optimized Logistics: AI algorithms optimize the routing and scheduling of container ships, trucks, and trains, ensuring efficient goods movement. This optimization reduces congestion, decreases fuel consumption, and enhances overall logistics efficiency.

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[52] (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2023)

[53] (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2023)

4. Enhanced Security: AI-powered surveillance systems and cybersecurity measures can detect and respond to threats in real-time, thereby improving the security of port facilities against cyber-attacks, theft, and unauthorized access.

5. Data-Driven Decision Making: AI analyzes extensive data from various sources to provide actionable insights, aiding port operators in making informed decisions, optimizing resource allocation, and improving strategic planning.

6. Environmental Sustainability: AI assists ports in reducing their environmental impact by optimizing energy usage, managing waste, and monitoring emissions. These AI-driven solutions support sustainable port operations and align with global environmental objectives.

7. Improved Customer Service: AI enhances customer service by providing real-time shipment tracking, automated communication, and efficient handling of customer inquiries, thus improving the overall experience for port users and stakeholders.[54]

Delegates are encouraged to consider these aspects in future sessions and to propose viable solutions accordingly.

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[54] (Port Technology, 2024)

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Topic B – 5 YEARS TO GO: REVIEWING THE FEASIBILITY OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

- ## *Introduction:*

The Horn of Africa (HoA) is home to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. The country of Djibouti is a small nation of 1 million inhabitants approximately situated in a strategically advantageous location on the northeast coast of the HoA, encompassing an area of 23,200 square kilometers. Ethiopia, whose capital city is Addis Ababa, is a landlocked nation which encompasses an area of 1,104,300 square kilometers and has an estimated population of 108.4 million. Eritrea has a total area of 117,000 square kilometers, with its capital city, Asmara, situated on the edge of the Eritrean highlands in the northeastern part. The coastline of Eritrea faces the Red Sea and is shared with Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Lastly, Somalia, whose capital is Mogadishu, is bordered to the west by Ethiopia, to the north by the Gulf of Aden, to the east by the Gulf of Tadjoura and the Somali Sea, and to the southeast by Kenya. With a total area of 637,657 square kilometers, it has the longest coastline on the African continent[55]. The Somali Peninsula is also a term used to refer to a portion of the HoA, particularly the regions of eastern Ethiopia and Somalia[56].

There is also the Greater Horn of Africa (GHoA), which adds parts of Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, and is one of the world's most vulnerable geographical areas[57]. This region continues to face one of the most severe food insecurity crises in decades, further aggravated by ongoing conflicts and the effects of recurrent climatic phenomena, such as El Niño. GHoA nations are amongst the poorest in the world except for Kenya, which is slowly transforming into a middle-income country[58]. Nairobi is the third-largest economy in sub-

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[55] (Horn of Africa Initiative 2024)

[56] (Britannica 2024)

[57] (World Health Organization 2024)

[58] (Osman 2022)

Saharan Africa, preceded only by Nigeria and South Africa. It is regarded as the economic and financial hub of East Africa, with a population of 48.4 million[59].

The HoA is currently going through one of its most perilous periods, marked by inter-state armed conflicts and increasing political fragmentation[60]. According to the WHO Health Emergency Appeal 2024 for the GHoA, the region is home to 4.5 million refugees and 10.06 million internally displaced people[61]. Violence has particularly worsened in Ethiopia and South Sudan, especially since 2020, despite the signing of peace agreements and the implementation of optimistic government reforms. These conflicts have had a detrimental impact on critical areas such as food security, nutrition, peace and overall security[62].

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as displayed in figure 2, also referred to as the Global Goals, were formally adopted by the 193 members of the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, hunger, discrimination against women, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated in a manner that acknowledges the interdependence of various domains, recognizing that actions taken in one area will inevitably affect outcomes in others. It features 17 interconnected goals, 169 targets, and 232 indicators[63]. This integration also underscores the necessity for development to strike a balance between social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Moreover, it has been agreed by the member states that progress for those who are furthest behind should be a priority and that in order to achieve this it would be necessary the input of creativity, expertise, technology, and financial resources from civil society as a whole[64]. SDGs regarding combating poverty and hunger

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[59] (Horn of Africa Initiative 2024)

[60] (Gaid 2024)

[61] (World Health Organization 2024)

[62] (Abebe 2021)

[63] (United Nations Development Programme 2024)

[64] Ibid.

eradication are still lagging behind due to corruption, lack of strong leadership and political institutions, and minimum productivity levels[65].

Moreover, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established in 2012 as a result of the Rio +20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. It serves as the principal global platform for evaluating and delineating progress towards the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda[66]. The HLPF calls upon Member States to undertake regular national evaluations of their progress in implementing the agenda as part of its follow-up and review processes. According to General Assembly Resolution 67/290, the forum meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment[67]. In addition, every four years, this forum brings together Heads of State and Government for two days within the framework of the General Assembly[68]. These national evaluations are conducted voluntarily and encompass both developed and developing countries. The Voluntary National Review (VNRs) are designed to serve as an impetus for Member States to share their experiences, including both achievements and obstacles encountered, as well as insights gained in the process of implementing the goals[69].

- ***Keywords & Important Concepts:***

1. UNDESA - The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is responsible for the development of UN resolutions guided by the transformative 2030 Agenda for

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[65] (Osman 2022)

[66] (UN Sustainable Development Group 2022)

[67] (United Nations 2012)

[68] Ibid.

[69] (UN Sustainable Development Group 2022)

Sustainable Development. The Department discusses the world's most pressing issues and promotes common solutions for stakeholders[70].

2. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) - A process through which countries assess and present their national progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including the achievement of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the commitment to leave no one behind[71]. The purpose of the VNRs is to present a snapshot of the country's status in implementing the SDGs, with the aim of accelerating progress through sharing experiences, peer learning, identifying gaps and good practices, and mobilizing partnerships.

3. SDG Quality of education - Free primary and secondary schooling for all children by 2030. The goal is to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, eliminate gender and wealth disparities, and achieve universal access to quality higher education. To meet Goal 4, funding for education must become a national investment priority. Additionally, measures such as free and compulsory education, increasing the number of teachers, improving basic school infrastructure and embracing digital transformation are essential[72].

4. SDG Zero hunger - Aims to eradicate all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, ensuring that everyone, particularly children, has access to sufficient and nutritious food throughout the year. Achieving this goal involves promoting sustainable agricultural practices, supporting small-scale farmers, and ensuring equitable access to land, technology, and markets. Additionally, international cooperation is crucial for investing in infrastructure and technology to enhance agricultural productivity[73].

5. SDG Gender equality - Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a fundamental human right, but also essential to achieving a sustainable future. The empowerment of women and girls has been shown to contribute significantly to economic growth and development. However, significant obstacles remain, such as sexual violence and

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[70] (UNDESA n.d.)

[71] (United Nations 2015)

[72] (United Nations Development Programme 2024)

[73] (United Nations Development Programme 2024)

exploitation, unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, and discrimination in public office Additionally, climate change, natural disasters, conflict and migration disproportionately affect women and children. It is therefore crucial to ensure that women have equal rights to land and property, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and the benefits of technology and the Internet[74].

6. SDG Sustainable cities and communities - Achieving sustainable cities involves fostering professional and entrepreneurial opportunities, providing safe and affordable housing, and building resilient communities and economies. This requires investments in public transportation, the creation of green public spaces, and the enhancement of urban planning and management through participatory and inclusive approaches[75].

7. SDG Peace, Justice and strong institutions - Seek to substantially reduce all forms of violence and work together with governments and communities to end conflict and insecurity. Promoting the rule of law and the protection of human rights, along with efforts to stem the flow of illicit arms and increase the participation of developing countries in global governance institutions, are central elements of this effort[76].

- *Background & Historical Context:*

From 2010 to 2020, the HoA exhibited a 5% increase in economic growth. Nevertheless, the considerable proportion of young people under the age of 35, representing 70% of the region's population, has resulted in a highly saturated graduate market, which has in turn led to elevated unemployment rates[77].

Furthermore, the mortality rates per 1,000 births among children under five years of age have been effectively reduced between 2010 and 2015 in Eritrea (from 56% to 47%), Kenya

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] (Osman 2022)

(62%% to 49%%), and Uganda (75% to 55%). In this manner, the region is demonstrating overall progress towards achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which bodes well for the future[78]. Additionally, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 731 million in 2015. Nonetheless, eradicating extreme poverty is still far from being a reality and it is one of humanity's most challenging objectives as advancements were set back by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kenya introduced the SDGs into its third Medium Term Plan (2018-2022) and published a national work plan of implementation. Similarly, Somalia included SDG execution in its National Development Plan (NDP), contextualized to Somalian reality[79]. Somaliland is following an homogenous approach, drafting the NDP II, based on the SDG framework. However, analysts note that even though development plans are stated, they tend to not be implemented. For example, Sudanese law clearly states against corruption in the health service, but the government has no real will to enforce this[80]. These documents are called 'donor documents' as they include SDGs just to please donor humanitarian organizations. Multiple repressive governments in the HoA are reducing the role of civil societies through the implementation of restrictive laws[81].

Moreover, the "Program for Development Projects in Africa" (PIDA) was launched in 2012 to improve the region's infrastructure and promote its inclusion in the global economy. The coordinated development plans consist of the following projects: Lamu Gateway Development (US$5.9 billion), Multimodal North-South Corridor (US$2.3 billion), Multimodal North Corridor (US$1 billion), Addis Djibouti Corridor (US$1 billion) and Central Corridor (US$840 million)[82].

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[78] (Henao et al., 2017)

[79] (Henao et al., 2017)

[80] (Saferworld 2017)

[81] Ibid.

[82] (Saferworld 2017)

- *Current Status:*

Over the past two decades, East African countries have made notable progress in increasing primary school enrolment through the implementation of programs such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiative. However, the proportion of students progressing to secondary and postsecondary education remains minimal[83]. Currently, more than 3.5 million children in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia are at risk of dropping out of school due to the current drought. The impact has been particularly severe on girls' education. As the Horn of Africa suffers its worst drought in 40 years, many families are forced to leave their homes in search of food, water and other resources. This constant migration disrupts the lives, education and health of families and children. Nonetheless, displacement is not the only factor driving children out of school; water shortages have also led to the spread of disease in schools and the reduction of food assistance programs[84].

Since 2018, there have been notable shifts in the political and security landscape of the HoA. The current tensions in the Red Sea, largely caused by the Houthis in Yemen, have brought to the fore the role of Djibouti as a host country to numerous foreign military forces. The United States, China, France, and Saudi Arabia, have all established naval bases in the tiny country, with other military forces also maintaining a presence[85]. Regarding Eritrea, President Isaias Afwerki has been the leader of the one-party state since 1993. In 2018, an unexpected rapprochement with Ethiopia led him to contribute with troops to the subsequent conflict between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Tigrayan forces in the northern region, which borders Eritrea[86]. Concerning Ethiopia, violence persists in certain areas of the Amhara and Oromia regions. Additionally, the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Prime Minister Abiy and the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, whose independence is not recognized by Somalia or any other country, has resulted in a

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[83] Ibid.

[84] (TRT World 2023)

[85] (Masuda 2023)

[86] (Brooke-Holland 2024)

deterioration of the relationship between the country and Somalia[87]. With respect to Somalia, in a statement released earlier this year, Somalia's President, Hassam Sheikh Mohamud, who was elected in 2022, set a deadline of the end of 2024 for the expulsion of the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab. The group, which is linked to Al-Qaeda, has been engaged in conflict with the Somali government since 2006. Also, the African Union peacekeeping force, ATMIS, is scheduled to complete its withdrawal of troops by the end of 2024[88].

Currently, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure the completion of the SDGs, especially in conflict-ridden and brittle states, as in the case of the HoA. Even though this is the region where it is the most difficult to achieve the SDGs, it is also the zone where more support and pressure exists to complete these objectives. Multiple regional programs have been launched to try to achieve the sustainability goals agenda including the Drought Resilience and Sustainable Initiative (IDDRSI), the Regional Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the Compact, Institutional Strengthening Action Program (ISAP)[89]. Despite this, the majority of the global population is unaware of the SDGs. Even Colombia and Denmark, leading countries in advertising SDGs as part of their national policy, report that only around 12% of their population has knowledge of the initiative. Statistics are unavailable for the Horn of Africa, but it is estimated that even fewer people are aware of the programme in the region[90].

By 2030, it is estimated that 0.5 million individuals in Djibouti would be living below the poverty line, with a daily income of less than $1.25. The estimates for other nations in the region are even more concerning. It is projected that 50.9 million individuals in Ethiopia, 28.4 million in Kenya, and 23.4 million in Uganda are expected to survive on this extremely meager income[91]. It is therefore anticipated that poverty will increase in all the aforementioned states, which are currently failing to meet the majority of the 17 SDGs.

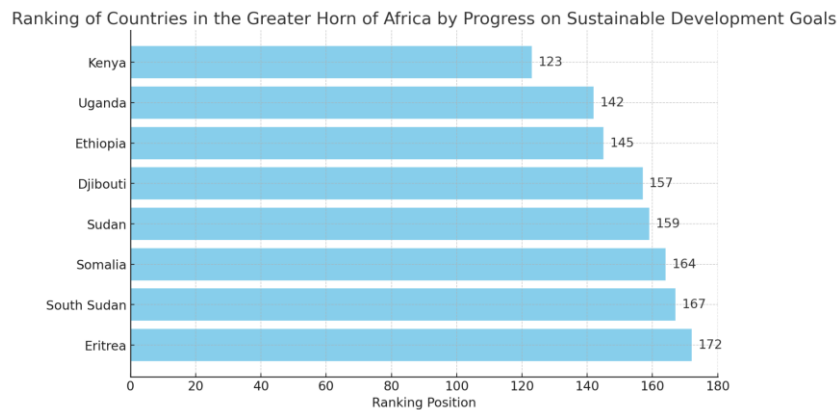---

[87] (Ylönen 2024)

[88] (Brooke-Holland 2024)

[89] (Osman 2022)

[90] (Saferworld 2017)

[91] Ibid.

SDGs need to be locally contextualized by policy enforcers so that the HoA population can translate "abstract global concepts into the language and discourse of what is currently being contested in a particular context"[92], increasing engagement rates. Furthermore, the policy documents should be translated into the local languages, and local NGOs should be partnered with to facilitate the operationalization of the SDGs.

Not a single country in the GHoA region has achieved satisfactory scores on all 17 SDGs; SDG 3 (Good health and Well-being), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions) encounter the most significant obstacles. Uganda ranks 142th and Djibouti ranks 157th out of 167 nations worldwide in terms of meeting the Global Agenda 2030. This indicates that the current situation is deviating from the intended course and, consequently, there is a need for the governments to accelerate socioeconomic and political reforms. The SDGs can only be achieved through effective governance and the rule of law.

Ranking of Countries in the Greater Horn of Africa by Progress on Sustainable Development Goals

Country	Ranking Position
Kenya	123
Uganda	142
Ethiopia	145
Djibouti	157
Sudan	159
Somalia	164
South Sudan	167
Eritrea	172

Figure 3. Comparison of countries in the GHoA based on their rankings in achieving the SDGs, with positions ranging from 1st to 167th.

United Nations, *Sustainable Development Report*, 2024, data,

https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings

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92 (Saferworld 2017)

- *Main Actors & Stakeholders:*

1. Djibouti

By 2017, 21.1% of the Djibouti population was living below the national poverty line, with 18.9% of the population experiencing undernourishment. In terms of its progress towards achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education), Djibouti is performing poorly. With only 66.5% of the population enrolled in schools[93], the country is far from achieving the 2030 target, ranking 157th out of 167 nations in terms of progress[94]. Djibouti experiences one of the highest unemployment rates in the region. There is a dearth of skilled young professionals, as the state does not actively promote universal education[95].

Their Vision 2035 initiative aims to establish the nation as an international trading powerhouse in the HoA. This will be achieved by diversifying the economy in a manner that ensures sustainable development and substantial poverty reduction. The Accelerated Growth and Employment Promotion Strategy (2015-2019) and the Inclusion, Connectivity and Institutions Plan (2020-2024) have sought to foster job creation and inclusive growth. These strategies have the potential to advance Djibouti's progress towards achieving the 2030 SDGs, particularly in comparison to other countries in the region[96].

2. Ethiopia

The government has implemented measures to ensure that the general public is well-informed about the SDGs and actively involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases[97]. Ethiopia ranks 145th out of 167 nations worldwide[98] in terms of meeting

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[93] Ibid.

[94] (Sustainable Development Report 2024)

[95] (Henao et al., 2017)

[96] (Osman 2022)

[97] Ibid.

[98] (Sustainable Development Report 2024)

the Global Agenda 2030. The poverty headcount rate of living on less than $1.90 a day was 25.3% in 2020, as measured by SDG 1 (No Poverty), but the mortality rate among newborns has decreased significantly, reaching 27 by 2020, suggesting a promising outlook for the future[99].

Furthermore, the Ethiopian government is endeavoring to increase public accessibility to universal healthcare and primary and secondary education, with the objective of attaining 80% school enrollment. Nevertheless, the lack of adequate funding and the prevalence of corruption have undermined the efficacy of the health sector. Moreover, Ethiopia is committed to solving the issue of oil and gas dominance by initiating the construction of the Millennium Grand Renaissance Dam. This project, with a price tag of $8 million, will become the largest hydroelectric dam in Africa upon completion[100].

3. Eritrea

The ongoing effects of climate change continue to present a multitude of challenges to food and nutrition security, water supply, public health, and wildlife across Eritrea[101]. Hence, it is imperative to prioritize measures to regulate air pollution, especially in industrial areas and urban centers by implementing policy changes, such as phasing out leaded fuel, the use of reduced sulfur fuel, initial testing of natural gas in vehicles, and restricting the import of obsolete vehicles, as Eritrea has done[102].

Moreover, as shown in figure 4, Eritrea is one of the countries of origin with the highest proportion of the population who are refugees, with 10.833 million as of 2015 to 12.893

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[99] Ibid.

[100] (Henao et al., 2017)

[101] (UN Sustainable Development Group 2022)

[102] Ibid.

million people by 2023[103]. In terms of achieving the 2030 Agenda, this country is ranked below 167 other countries[104].

Countries of origin with the highest proportion of the population who are refugees, 2015 and 2023 (number of refugees per 100,000 people)
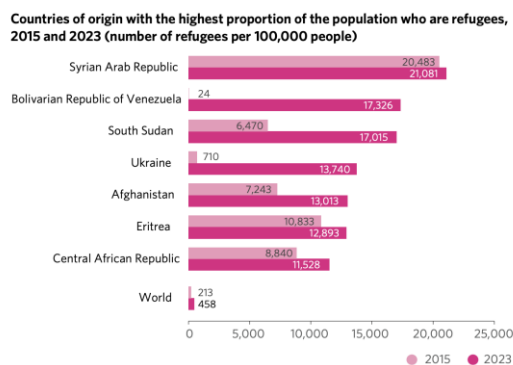
Figure 4. Eritrea ranks as the sixth country globally with the highest number of refugees as of 2023.

United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report*, 2024, image, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf

4. Somalia

In the HoA, Somalia's performance is extremely low, ranking 164th out of 167 countries in achieving the SDGs[105]. In 2017, the Somali government made little progress in eliminating poverty (SDG 1), with 69% of the population living on less than $1.90 per day. In 2016, 73.6% of the Somali population resided in settlements. Additionally, in 2014, the country had the lowest life expectancy in the region, with an average lifespan of approximately 55 years. Somalia had the lowest aggregate governance score in Africa between 2006 and 2015. It will therefore find it challenging to meet the 2030 Agenda[106] due to its ongoing conflict,

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[103] (Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024)

[104] Ibid.

[105] (Sustainable Development Report 2024)

[106] (Osman 2022)

and its lack of a strategy for its implementation[107]. It has only one program currently working to achieve the SDGs, the Social Protection and Disaster Management program. The program is funded entirely by external donors and has not demonstrated improvement in any of the country's sustainability indicators, as the government remains outside the mission[108].

5. Kenya

This particular country is performing better than the majority in the region, as evidenced by its ranking of 123th out of 167 countries[109]. With regard to SDG 4 (Quality Education), it is notable that 80% of the Kenyan population was enrolled in primary school in 2017, with an average duration of schooling of 6.5 years. Kenya also achieved an 87.8% literacy rate for individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2018. Moreover, in 2017, 63.8% of Kenya's population had access to electricity, and 71.8% of energy consumption came from renewable sources, a high figure by international standards, concerning SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Meanwhile, mobile technology has been centered in Nairobi (Kenya), often called the "Silicon Savannah". There, innovations in crowdsourcing platforms such as Ushahidi and mobile money systems such as M-Pesa have been driven[110].

However, with regard to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the country exhibited a relatively elevated maternal mortality rate of 342 per 100,000 in 2017, when compared to other nations in the area. Also, according to SDG 1, which aims to eradicate poverty, Kenya had a headcount rate of 15.9% in 2020, based on the $1.90 a day poverty line. In addition, the Kenyan healthcare system continues to experience shortcomings, particularly in rural areas[111].

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[107] (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2019)

[108] (Osman 2022)

[109] (Sustainable Development Report 2024)

[110] (Sustainable Development Report 2024)

[111] (Osman 2022)

- *Cases of Study*

<u>*1. Food Security*</u>

The incidence of severe food insecurity in the region has surged by 25%, from 38 million affected people to 47.4 million since the emergency was declared in mid-2022. Sudan and South Sudan are countries of great concern, but there will still be needs throughout the Greater Horn of Africa region in 2024[112]. In the HoA, food insecurity is associated with the persistent prevalence of poverty in the region, as well as natural and man-made factors that impede the community's usual farming and non-farming activities[113].

As food security has deteriorated, Eritrea and Somalia are now below the sub-regional average, recording food security levels of 0.6 and 0.7 tons per capita, respectively[114]. These countries are over-dependent on food imports, making them highly susceptible to the volatility of the international market and the willingness of humanitarian donors. Food imports are affected by the lack of transport infrastructure in the region. To exemplify, only 8% of the countries in the region transport their goods by rail. The lack of adequate infrastructure has a direct impact on trade costs, as these are inflated by the enormous logistical costs of moving merchandise through inadequate networks[115]. Despite this, the Ethiopian government is expanding road and rail infrastructure, as well as moving the country into the industrial age. The total length of Ethiopian roads has increased to 113,067 km[116]. But corruption at the ports is increasing waiting times, hampering access to international trade and food supply for landlocked countries such as Ethiopia[117].

Ethiopia is improving on SDG 1 (No Poverty) by investing in agriculture, the primary sector of the country's economy, and starting to promote manufacturing through market-driven

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[112] (World Health Organization 2024)

[113] (Abebe 2021)

[114] (Henao et al., 2017)

[115] Ibid.

[116] (Osman 2022)

[117] (Henao et al., 2017)

policies, including the encouragement of private capital and the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises[118]. However, according to the World Bank, undernourishment remains high in Ethiopia (32%), Kenya (31%), Uganda (26%) and Djibouti (16%). On average, 30% of the population in the GHoA states was undernourished in 2017[119]. Moreover, due to the overdependence on agriculture in East Africa, investing in technology could improve the quality of life of the poorest segments of the region's population[120]. As long as this dependence remains unchanged, the chances of achieving the SDGs in their entirety will remain slim.

Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 will be a challenging goal in the HoA, as food chains are currently disrupted due to the invasion of Ukraine, which has created the largest global food crisis since World War II. Civil organizations and local governments have tried to encourage sustainable agriculture by supporting and subsidizing small producers, working for equal access to land, and investing in agricultural technology. But, the nature of the land in the HoA is 70% arid and semi-arid land, which means that agriculture is already limited to 30% of the available land. Hence, the region has increased its global connectivity and has benefited from its coastline, which will allow shipping and fishing to become major economic activities in the near future[121].

2. Peace and Security

The Tigray conflict, which began in November 2020, remains central to Ethiopia's current political turmoil. The war erupted between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), causing widespread destruction and a severe humanitarian crisis. The Pretoria Agreement, signed in November 2022, sought to end hostilities and establish peace. While there have been notable advances, such as the formation

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[118] (Osman 2022)

[119] (Henao et al., 2017)

[120] Ibid.

[121] (Osman 2022)

of an inclusive interim administration in Tigray, the removal of the TPLF's terrorist designation by the federal government, the resumption of humanitarian aid and basic services, and the re-entry of the ENDF into Mekelle (the capital of Tigray), several critical elements of the agreement remain unfulfilled[122]. Progress on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Tigrayan forces has been slow, and Eritrean troops continue to occupy parts of northern Tigray. Additionally, the unresolved status of territories claimed by both Tigray and Amhara state remains a major source of armed conflict.

Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea have deteriorated considerably since the Pretoria Agreement. Eritrea, which is not a party to the agreement, continues to support the Amhara militia, Fano, in its conflicts against the TPLF. The continued presence of some 40,000 Eritrean troops in parts of Tigray has further strained relations, contributing to greater regional instability[123]. The conflict in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions of northern Ethiopia has inflicted severe damage on the civilian population. A significant portion of the Tigray inhabitants remains uprooted and without access to urgently needed humanitarian aid which which have led to an increase in diseases, such as malaria and measles, which pose a major threat to public health[124].

Sudan's civil war, which broke out in April 2023, was triggered by a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti[125]. This conflict has plunged the country into widespread violence, displacement and the collapse of law and order. The origins of the conflict are deeply rooted in Sudan's convoluted political landscape following the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir in 2019. The transitional government, consisting of military and civilian components, struggled to manage deep tensions and factional rivalries. The disintegration of this fragile coalition government precipitated the current all-out war between the SAF and the RSF. Efforts to mediate and

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[122] (Gaid 2024)

[123] Ibid.

[124] (Human Rights Watch 2023)

[125] (Gaid 2024)

resolve the conflict have been numerous, but largely unsuccessful. The African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and various international actors, including the United Nations and regional powers such as Egypt and Ethiopia, have attempted to broker peace[126].

The crisis in Sudan has triggered additional displacement, with more than 4.9 million displacements tracked in the sub-region. Conflict-induced displacement has further exacerbated vulnerability to malnutrition due to lack of water, poor hygiene and the resulting increased risk of infections and outbreaks. The conflict has also disrupted treatment programs for 50,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition[127].

In January 2024, Ethiopia and the Somaliland regional state signed a Memorandum of Understanding granting Ethiopia a 50-year lease over a 20-kilometer stretch of Somaliland's coastline for the development of a seaport, in exchange for Ethiopian recognition of Somaliland. This deal provoked a strong reaction from the Somali federal government, which considered it an illegal land grab and a violation of Somaliland's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The international community largely supported Somalia's position, which led to Ethiopia's diplomatic isolation. Consequently, this development has considerably strained relations between Ethiopia and Somalia[128].

Amidst these conflicts, Djibouti has emerged as a relative bastion of peace, serving as a crucial anchor of stability in the tumultuous HoA. Yet, unlike previous crises, regional leaders and organizations have shown a remarkable lack of effective leadership[129]. This deficiency has made the region increasingly vulnerable to outside interference and has exacerbated unrest and crises, which continue to impede progress.

3. Migration

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[126] Ibid.

[127] (World Health Organization 2024)

[128] (Gaid 2024)

[129] Ibid.

Initially, restrictive political regimes diminish the potential for regular migration; however, they can also redirect migrants into irregular migration channels. For instance, a study examining Eritrean migrants in Ethiopia showed that the risks associated with irregular transit become tolerable as individuals lose faith in formal processes and channels[130]. In other cases, granting citizenship to a specific group of migrants may be hesitant due to divisions within multinational states and concerns that new citizens may exacerbate separatism or displace political power. In part, Kenya's reluctance to grant citizenship to Somali immigrants and refugees can be attributed to the state's strained relationship with the Kenyan Somali community[131].

Ethiopia has suffered one of the most severe droughts in its recent history due to delayed and poor rainfall over the past five seasons. This extreme water shortage, coupled with significant livestock losses, has forced thousands of people to migrate in search of essential resources such as water, food, and access to health and nutrition services[132]. Moreover, the countries of origin with the highest number of migrant fatalities are those currently engaged in armed conflict, such as Ethiopia[133].

Also, Ethiopian migrant girls working as domestic servants are at greater risk of sexual abuse and rape by their employers than other girls. This is due in part to their social isolation and economic dependence on their employers. Recently, there has been a significant increase in the migration of teenage Ethiopian women to Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, for domestic work[134]. The main driver of this trend is rising incomes, especially significant considering the challenges such as deteriorating agricultural cycles, land scarcity, lack of job opportunities, and a rising unemployment rate facing Ethiopia, one of the most impoverished nations in the world. Nonetheless, poverty is not the only catalyst. For adolescent girls, migration is a way to escape early marriage, oppressive social norms, and lack of control

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[130] (O'Neil et al., 2017)

[131] Ibid.

[132] (World Health Organization 2024)

[133] (Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024)

[134] (O'Neil et al., 2017)

over their lives. Currently, Ethiopian youth are also motivated to migrate by the established culture of migration, increasing dependence on remittances, and peer pressure[135].

4. Advanced Efforts towards Gender Equality

On the one hand, in Djibouti, only 26% of parliamentary seats were held by women in 2020, and only 10% of women held ministerial positions, a low percentage even for the region[136]. Similarly, in Kenya, only 25% of ministerial positions and 21.8% of seats in the national parliament were held by women in 2020[137]. On the other hand, 195 out of 470 members of parliament and 47% of ministers in Ethiopia are women, indicating progress on SDG 5[138]. Somaliland is leading efforts to tackle judicial corruption by recruiting and training new attorneys general, including women. In addition, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa has worked relentlessly for women's rights in justice and politics[139].

Ethiopia only references the SDGs addressing women's participation in the economy and political decision-making processes in its Five-Year Growth and Transformation Plan II (2015-2020)[140]. With regard to Somalia, no data is available on SDG 4 (Quality Education), but is known that in 2019, only 24% of parliamentary seats and 15% of ministerial positions were held by women[141].

Moreover, with respect to SDG 4, there has been a decrease in harmful practices, but it has not kept pace with the increase in the population. More than 230 million females have had female genital mutilation. Across Africa, more than 144 million girls and women have

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[135] Ibid.

[136] (Osman 2022)

[137] Ibid.

[138] (Osman 2022)

[139] (Saferworld 2017)

[140] Ibid.

[141] (Osman 2022)

experienced this practice, with particularly high rates in Djibouti, Guinea, and Somalia, where at least 90% of girls and women are impacted[142].

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[142] (Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024)

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