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UNCTAD

UN Conference on Trade and Development



TechMUN



Topic 1

Mechanisms to Promote Intercontinental Trade for Infrastructure Growth in Developing Nations

Introduction

Trade has been an integral part of the movement of goods, development of infrastructure, and overall enhancement of a society or culture throughout human history. In fact, trade is what allowed the spread of ideas, customs, and theologies that ended up shaping society into what it is today. Nations across the globe rely on communicating and exchanging goods with one another to support their economies, however, geography plays a tremendous role in how well a country can truly partake in this "trade race." Countries must continually output products and/or services in order to remain afloat, as a lack of trade can plunge the entire nation into cultural blackout.

In recent years, the global community has recognized the pivotal role of intercontinental

trade in fostering economic development, especially in developing nations. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is tasked with addressing challenges and proposing solutions that facilitate trade, with a particular focus on infrastructure growth in developing countries.

Topic History

The promotion of intercontinental trade for infrastructure growth in developing nations has been a historical challenge addressed through various mechanisms. Throughout history, colonial powers often established trade routes and infrastructure in their colonies primarily for the extraction of resources, with limited consideration for the long-term development of the regions. However, in the post-colonial era, efforts were made to foster intercontinental trade as a means of promoting infrastructure growth in developing nations.

One significant historical mechanism has been the establishment of international development organizations and agreements. Institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created in the mid-20th century to provide financial and technical assistance to developing nations. These organizations have played a role in funding and supporting infrastructure projects that enhance trade capabilities, such as the construction of ports, roads, and communication networks. International agreements, like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO), have aimed to reduce trade barriers and promote a more open and equitable global trading system.

In recent decades, the rise of public-private partnerships (PPPs) has become a prominent mechanism for promoting infrastructure growth in developing nations. Governments collaborate with private entities to finance, build, and operate infrastructure projects. This approach aims to leverage private sector efficiency and innovation while addressing the funding gaps that often hinder large-scale infrastructure development. International financial institutions often play a role in facilitating and supporting such partnerships.

Despite these mechanisms, challenges persist. Issues such as debt sustainability, geopolitical tensions, and unequal distribution of benefits from trade and infrastructure development remain critical considerations. The history of mechanisms to promote intercontinental trade for infrastructure growth in developing nations reflects an evolving landscape of global economic cooperation and the ongoing quest to balance economic interests with sustainable and inclusive development.

Current Situation

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): China's Belt and Road Initiative is a significant contemporary example. Launched in 2013, the BRI is a global infrastructure development strategy aimed at enhancing trade connectivity. China has invested in building infrastructure, such as ports, railways, and highways, in numerous countries across Asia, Africa, and Europe. For instance, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) involves substantial investments in Pakistani infrastructure, including the development of the Gwadar Port. While these initiatives can stimulate economic growth, they have also faced criticism for potential debt traps and concerns about environmental and social impacts.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): In Africa, the AfCFTA, operational since January 2021, is fostering intra-African trade. It aims to create a single market for goods and services, facilitate movement of people, and promote industrialization. Nations like Ghana and Kenya have been actively involved, and this initiative is expected to contribute to infrastructure development by improving transport and communication links.

European Union Connectivity Strategy: The European Union (EU) has its own connectivity strategy, focusing on improving infrastructure connections with Asia. Countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland and Hungary, have been engaging in projects to enhance transport links. The Three Seas Initiative, involving 12 EU countries situated between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas, is an example of a regional effort to boost infrastructure and trade.

These, among others, are some of the main initiatives currently being carried out in the 21st century to help increase interconnectedness across continents to support developing nations. However, delegates are strongly encouraged to research further initiatives pertaining to their specific nations for a more thorough breakdown of exact measures being taken and other related countries.

Directives

As global experts on trade, infrastructure development, and economics, you are tasked with finding innovative ways to tackle the aforementioned issues. Below are some guiding questions to assist you in your discussion around creating resolutions and policies involving these topics:

- How would your nation plan to deal with possible economic downturn if funds are diverted towards helping bolster economic growth and infrastructure development in another country? How would you deal with potential public backlash or disapproval?
- What measures has your country already taken and what relationships does it have with other countries as of today? What countries do those have alliances with? Is there any way you can expand your network?
- How will you choose which countries to prioritize in terms of directing your efforts to promote intercontinental trade?
- What sorts of goods/services/other items can you use to promote intercontinental trade? Are there certain supply and demand relationships that already exist that you can make use of?
- How will you deal with setbacks that hinder infrastructure development? What are some ways to address these issues in a cost-effective manner?

Please remember to keep your nation's position on these topics and its history in mind when creating blocs and writing resolutions.

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Topic 2

Monitoring Child Labor in Global Value Chains

Introduction

In the vast network of global commerce, where products move across continents through intricate supply networks daily, the shadow of child labor often lurks unnoticed. In our increasingly-connected world, it is more important than ever to discuss the Monitoring of Child Labor in Global Value Chains (GVCs). This issue transcends geographical boundaries, demanding attention and collective effort to unearth and eradicate the exploitation of vulnerable children in the pursuit of economic gains, which has been swept

under the rug, time and time again.

Child labor persists as a pervasive challenge, and within the labyrinth of GVCs, its intricacies are magnified. From agricultural fields in rural areas to factories producing our everyday commodities, the innocence of childhood is sometimes sacrificed for the sake of profit when children are placed in vulnerable positions. Your exploration seeks not only to understand the nuances of this issue but also to catalyze discussions that pave the way for meaningful and ethical change that is long-term and can help put a permanent stop to this pressing issue.

Nations must be guided by a shared commitment to justice, empathy, and the creation of a world where every child's rights are not just acknowledged but fiercely protected. This discourse is not just about policies and resolutions; it is about shaping a future where the fruits of progress are not tainted by the exploitation of the most vulnerable among us. You and your fellow delegates will delve into the complexities of Monitoring Child Labor in GVCs with the determination to forge pathways toward a more equitable and compassionate global economy.

Topic History

Throughout history, child labor has been a major issue as children were often seen as easy labor, as they often had to be paid little to nothing to work and could complete tasks adults could not due to their physical size. In the 19th century, the rise of labor movements responded to the alarming conditions of child labor during the Industrial Revolution. Legislative measures, exemplified by the Factory Acts in the United Kingdom, marked initial attempts to curtail child labor, setting the stage for broader reforms. The International Labour Organization (ILO), founded in 1919, later emerged as a pioneering force in the global fight against child labor. Over the years, the ILO has spearheaded numerous conventions and initiatives to eradicate child labor, including Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Ratified by numerous countries, this convention calls for the prohibition and elimination of the most egregious forms of child labor, such as slavery, trafficking, and hazardous work. However, this measure only protects children from the worst forms, and does not address all forms of work children are forced to do.

In recent decades, a shift towards heightened awareness and concerted action has taken center stage. The 1990 World Summit for Children marked a significant milestone, as world leaders pledged to eradicate child labor by the year 2020. While progress has been made, challenges persist. The global community, recognizing the intricacies of supply chains, embarked on initiatives like the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, encouraging businesses to ensure respect for human rights, including

the elimination of child labor, throughout their operations. Additionally, the late 20th century saw child labor gain overall prominence as a human rights concern, notably with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. The ILO's 1999 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work reinforced the commitment to eliminate child labor globally.

Some nations have demonstrated commendable commitment to this cause. For instance, Brazil's "National Plan for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker" outlines a comprehensive strategy to combat child labor within its borders. Meanwhile, initiatives like the U.S. Department of Labor's "List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor" shine a spotlight on products and industries associated with child labor, urging consumers and businesses to make informed, ethically conscious choices. Despite these positive steps, the persistence of child labor in certain regions underscores the necessity for continued global cooperation, robust legislation, and vigilant monitoring mechanisms.

Current Situation

Countries grappling with the pervasive issue of child labor in their value chains have implemented a range of measures to address this deeply entrenched problem. In India, a comprehensive legal framework, including the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, prohibits the employment of children below 14 in various occupations. India's National Child Labour Project (NCLP) focuses on the rehabilitation of rescued child laborers, providing them with education, vocational training, and nutritional support. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program in the country emphasizes early childhood care and education, aiming to prevent children from entering the workforce prematurely. In Bangladesh, the government has ratified key ILO conventions and adopted a National Child Labour Elimination Policy, prioritizing education, social awareness, and legal enforcement. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has also taken steps within the garment industry to ensure compliance with labor standards.

Across Africa, concerted efforts have been made to combat the pervasive issue of child labor through a series of targeted measures. Legislative reforms have been enacted across the region to establish age restrictions, define hazardous work, and institute penalties for violations. Several countries have developed National Action Plans, outlining comprehensive strategies encompassing law enforcement, awareness campaigns, and initiatives to improve educational access and address the root causes of child labor. Acknowledging the critical link between education and child labor, nations in the region such as Malawi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Ghana have implemented educational ini-

tiatives, building schools, offering scholarships, and addressing gender-based barriers to ensure increased enrollment and retention. Agricultural reforms aim to improve productivity and family income, particularly in the prevalent agricultural sector, while social protection programs provide essential support to vulnerable families, alleviating economic pressures. Collaboration with international organizations, NGOs, and donor agencies, as well as community engagement initiatives and the establishment of child labor monitoring systems, reflects a multifaceted approach to address the complex challenges associated with child labor in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite progress, ongoing commitment and collaborative efforts remain essential to sustainably eliminate child labor and secure a brighter future for the region's children.

Additionally, the European Union (EU) has implemented a range of specific measures to combat child labor within GVCs. Through its trade agreements, the EU incorporates clauses emphasizing labor standards, including the prohibition of child labor, encouraging adherence to international norms. The EU is also advancing due diligence legislation, compelling companies to identify and prevent human rights violations, including child labor, throughout their supply chains. The EU's comprehensive approach is evident in its 2020-2024 Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which outlines strategies to strengthen engagement with partner countries, promote responsible business conduct, and support civil society efforts against child labor. Collaborating with international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the EU leverages expertise and resources to enhance global initiatives. Financial allocations support development programs aimed at eradicating child labor, focusing on education, community awareness, and capacity-building. Emphasizing supply chain transparency and encouraging corporate social responsibility initiatives, the EU showcases a commitment to ethical practices, human rights, and the elimination of child labor within the complex landscape of GVCs.

Directives

As global experts on development, policymaking, and economics, you are tasked with finding ways to tackle the pressing issue of child labor in GVCs. Below are some guiding questions to help you create resolutions and policies involving these topics:

- How can countries strengthen their legal frameworks to effectively prohibit and regulate child labor within GVCs? What measures can be taken to enhance the enforcement of existing child labor laws and ensure accountability at all levels of the supply chain?
- What measures can be implemented to improve access to quality education and raise awareness about the consequences of child labor within communities? How can educational initiatives be tailored to address specific challenges?
- How can technology, such as blockchain and data analytics, be leveraged to enhance supply chain transparency and traceability? Are there innovative technological solutions that can assist in monitoring and reporting instances of child labor in real-time?
- How can diplomatic channels be leveraged to encourage cooperation and adherence to international standards in regions where child labor is prevalent?
- How can transparency within GVCs be improved to trace and monitor the presence of child labor effectively?

Please remember to keep your nation's position on these topics and its history in mind when creating blocs and writing resolutions.

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