

UNHRC

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Yonsei Model United Nations

Chair Report.

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United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

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[Agenda A: Securing the proper implementation of labour rights in the post-pandemic situation]

Yonsei Model United Nations 2024

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About the United Nations

The United Nations is the largest intergovernmental organisation that was founded in 1945 after World War II. Consisting of 193 member states, the United Nations endeavours to sustain international peace, security and cooperation, guided by the United Nations Charter.

A replacement for the League of Nations, the United Nations has been the centre of discussion and euphony for multilateral issues such as general disarmament, international security, multilateral cooperation, international economy, human rights affairs and sustainable development. The United Nations is operated under six major organs - The Secretariat, General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council and the International Court of Justice. The United Nations has also assigned other specialised agencies and rapporteurs in reach for international peace and security.

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The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental organisation that stands as a main proponent for securing human rights around the globe. Founded in 2006 by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council fosters proper

acknowledgment and social promotion of human rights. Decisions are made by 47 countries respectively designated through the consent of United Nations member states. It monitors governments so that they adhere to the decisions of the council, warn of potential human rights infringement, and respond to actions that hint at human rights abuse. UNHRC works with active support from the Advisory Committee and Special Procedures, the authorities of expertise regarding specific rights or countries. Together, the three bodies contribute to the betterment of citizens' sense of assurance regarding human rights.

Agenda Introduction

Agenda A: Securing the proper implementation of labour rights in the post-pandemic situation

COVID-19 shutdown demanded humanity skip the period of transition and hurry the shift from commuting to work to teleworking. It is true that workers with access to digital tools quickly transitioned to digitalization and teleworking, utilising their working time flexibly in the new hybrid working patterns. However, the steep surge of flexibility in working environments brought up new challenges to workers by eliminating the personal boundaries of time management and becoming ignorant of employees' privacy and labour rights. The case was even desolating for those who were marginalised in temporary positions or insecure jobs. In 2022, more than 200 million people worldwide were cut off access to the labour market due to mass unemployment. The current social infrastructure proved to be incapable of remedying jobless citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only created radical transformations in the labour market but also exposed structural obstruction of it and the mistreatment of the rights of our vulnerable stakeholders. This social alarm brought light to pre-existing dilemmas like unstable unemployment insurance for low-wage workers, the predicament of informal workers, representative gaps of gender inequality, and even child labour.

To provide the enjoyment of fundamental labour rights, we must focus on improving work conditions by stabilising work environments from home, promoting gender-equal opportunities in participation in leader positions within the labour market, providing job search assistance and security of income during the process, and refurbishing the social net to empower labour rights.

Key Terms

Right to Work

A Right to Work (RTW) ensures the protection of rights to the opportunity for freely achieving employment in the labour market regardless of participation in labour unions. The UNHRC provides that the fulfilment of the Right to Work initiates from preventing discrimination in employment or forced labour in all forms. It grants employees an equal chance of vocational realisation under fair and deserved working conditions. Workers must also be allowed to voice their requests regarding their working environment and employment status at their discretion. Right to work is closely intertwined with other categories of human rights; the job status of an individual provides for a respected satisfactory life. Access to be given the chance to work must be available of adequate quality working conditions such as reasonable work time and payment of fair wages accordingly.

Workers

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines 'worker' as a person in employment, aged over 15 or over, who has done at least one hour's paid work in a given week or who is absent from work for specific reasons (annual leave, sickness, maternity, etc.) and for a certain period of time. All forms of employment are covered (employees, self-employed, family helpers), whether the employment is declared or not. Workers who are employed include people committed to all activities, including an absence of work lasting 3 months or less, or with compensatory income linked to activities such as training authorised by the employer, regular work as part of seasonal activity, and short-time working.

Teleworking

Teleworking is the style of working remotely from the actual corporate office space through digital access utilising the internet, email, and virtual platforms. With the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking emerged as a sufficient alternative to the risky on-site work environment. Digital advancement proved its reliability of providing decent accessibility of communication, ruling out concerns of past employers regarding the work efficiency of their absent employees. Teleworking dominates as a welcoming and desired form of working.

Workers have become accustomed to starting the day on their own terms, with more flexibility in working and individual time.

Workplace flexibility

The post-pandemic world invited an alternative work style to industries adaptable to teleworking and hybrid work models. The workplace has earned spatial and temporal resilience with regard to employees' physical attendance at the office. Flexibility in the workplace ensures that workers are available to arrange working environments freely. It reduces avoidable expenses of time and operating cost and, at the same time, boosts productivity for employees. Technology gets rid of physical constraints and brings a new paradigm of leaping into adjustments in its best form for each individual worker.

Unemployment

The global definition of unemployment refers to the population of the labour force currently not working under three conditions. To begin with, the individual regarded as a member of the labour force is capable of working. The OECD specifies standards for the labour force to indicate that one must satisfy the working age between 15 to 64. Furthermore, the individual is actively seeking employment. They wish to pertain to their jobs but specific circumstances hinder their employment status. Lastly, even though the two former conditions apply, the individual cannot be assigned a place in the labour force.

Child labour

The ILO defines child labour as work that deprives children (any person under 18) of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity and that is harmful to their physical and/or mental development. It is not a neutral term and does not encompass the superficial idea of young people performing work. It implies that the child's right to education and health is harmed due to the labour they take part in. It is not just helping with daily housework for their loving families but labour activities that hinder basic schooling and the child's mental and moral status. Child labour extends to the passing down of economic difficulties through generations. The rights of children must be protected from labour exploitation.

Historical Background

Ever since the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, labour unions were formed, and labour movements flourished. The industrialised jobs created abundant factory jobs and labour in coal mining or transportation construction, accordingly bringing about a discussion on the human rights of 'workers'. While there were plentiful job opportunities for labour-intensive jobs, inferior working conditions have severely threatened their quality of life. To mark the end of the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles mentions the establishment of the International Labour Organization(ILO) in 1919. The ILO improved recognition of infringement of rights in the labour force, providing regulation on maximum hours of work, unemployment, and protection for working women and young children. The world began to focus on improving the working environment and workers' status in the economy and respecting proposals from labour unions to secure labour rights. Global economic trends tend to be closely intertwined with the situation of our workers. Landmark periods of socio-economic crises in contemporary history follow adaptive amendments concerning labour rights.

The great depression began in the United States of America and quickly spread to European nations, eventually swallowing the world into the worst global economic recession in history. Prevailing economic hardships and newly constituted unions motivated a global surge in labour activism. Workers addressed individual governments to raise wages, guarantee security, and provide justified working conditions. Active protests, strikes and collective bargaining activated political discourse on the treatment of worker's fundamental human rights by raising awareness of the hindrances regarding worker justice. Workers successfully justified their righteous demands through the gradual forming of a consensus that it is time when domestic governmental policies should devote themselves to appreciating citizens' human rights. When the Second World War ended in 1945, the fluctuating political, economic structures by social reformation had induced major advancements in labour rights. Labour movements by unions continued their endless effort for a better workplace. The post-war era was a time for many nations to be committed to economic rehabilitation and reconstruction of social infrastructure. In particular, many Western countries had their main focus on achieving a welfare state. The social welfare programs by these welfare states

provided stricter regulation for safe working environments to guarantee workers at least the minimum of security. Further, women entered the labour force with a more political selection of significant jobs, highlighting discrimination and discourse on gender equality in labour supply.

Unequal opportunities for vocational achievements then expanded to an international scale. Rapid globalisation enticed businesses to take advantage of economic disparities around the globe. Corporations decided to seek methods of ‘outsourcing’ for their production, transferring to regions with low-cost labour standards and insufficient labour regulation. Many workers in the production regions suffered inhumanely low wages, long working hours, and poor working conditions. The disorganised global supply chain made it much easier for companies to avoid responsibility for violating worker’s rights while making it impossible for workers to be properly compensated. Nations with regions with weak labour protections were the main targets of exploitation. The ‘race to the bottom’ among corporations to compete for lower costs intentionally and unintentionally provoked a vicious cycle of child labour and forced labour with the smallest wage and the worst work conditions. As a response, ILO led the updating of international labour standards to become more competitive and sustainable, providing initiatives to urge corporations to bear social responsibility. In General Comment 18: The Right to Work, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights(CESCR) provided detailed guidance regarding member state’s obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to work.

After the global financial crisis of 2008, mass unemployment and corporate policies of cost-cutting and wage stagnation demonstrated an unavoidable decline in the total workforce. Many employees had to rely on insecure jobs, including precarious jobs with temporary, informal work. Not only workers in private companies but also jobs in the public sector were in danger due to insufficient national budgets. Even governments could not sustain public officials, let alone provide social welfare services. Gradual recovery from the financial crisis seemed to suggest substantial improvements in labour rights. The Global Jobs Pact (GJP) was introduced to tackle the ‘global’ crisis. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced new issues and amplified the previously encountered problems. As the UNHRC, we must analyse the repeated socio-economic fluctuation and its corresponding human rights measurements. Post-COVID society shows some familiar patterns from history and some unfamiliar consequences remaining a dilemma to solve, calling for adaptation to the evolving industry needs.

Status Quo

Lockdown policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic brought extreme downturn to global functionality and economic status. The decline of mobility in local citizens and global networks resulted in a global financial crisis (GFC) beginning in February 2020 for most countries. Workforce downsizing, cut-back, and restructuring of corporations resulted in massive unemployment and the transition of many workers to unstable job positions. OECD calculations based on national labour force survey data displayed a decline in the employed population between December 2019 and April 2020 - each the peak and trough of activity during the crisis. The decrease ranged from nearly 40% in Mexico to around 8-9% in Japan and the Republic of Korea. Workers who have lost their jobs or participated in insecure, vulnerable working environments faced insufficient legal protection of their right to work. Of contact workers, it is estimated that 850 million people are likely to have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, leading to an estimated decline in their earnings of 34% in G20 developed economies and 76% in G20 emerging economies. Precarious workers not only suffer poverty but also structural barriers such as unstable unemployment pensions and lack of opportunities to rebound to the labour force, closely targeting their right to work.

Percentage change from peak to trough during the COVID-19 crisis and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)

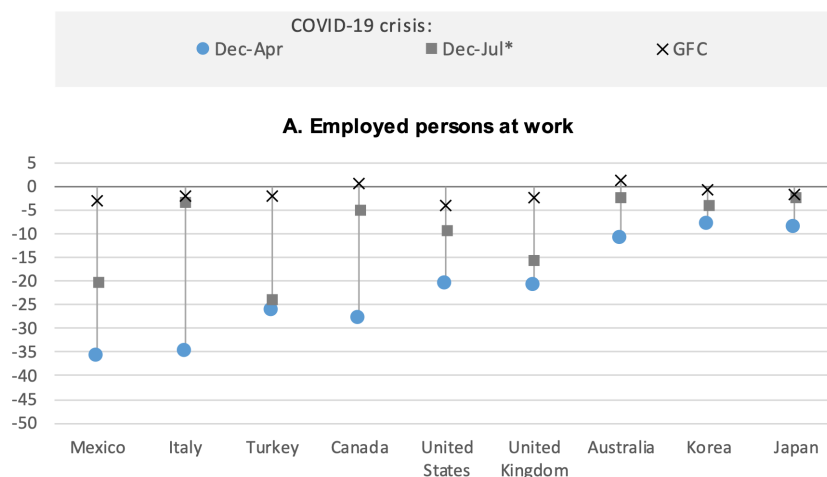


Figure 1: Unprecedented falls in employment and total hours worked, OECD 2020

Infringements of labour rights are not a new concept; continuous negotiation between employers and employees strived to enhance labour conditions, but the pandemic pushed humanity back to unavoidable recession. There must be an acknowledgment on the inequitable labour distributions to prevent stepping back from what we have achieved up to this day. It is the reality that in the current social state, vulnerable populations accept low wages and tough working conditions for living at the minimum. They are subject to most social insecurity and job loss. Children and women are the main stakeholders of the matter. Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour emphasizes child that we must “provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment, provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment and provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.” However, the interconnected chain of the economy saw falling prices of commodities as a starting point of another chance for the thriving of child exploitation. Reduced household income in crisis areas due to COVID-19 induced surging supply of child workers. Desperate children were vulnerable to low-wage working conditions and child human rights abuses. School closure aggravated the situation for children more prone to commit to full-time labour rather than receiving education in safe environments.

Plus, lockdown effects on educational and child-care facilities forced women to leave the workforce. The ILO provides that in 2020, approximately 2,000,000 mothers left the labour force due to the pandemic. Even if we account for the economic rebound today, rehire rates are much slower for women than men. Especially mothers being unable to bounce back to work proves the unfairness of employment strategies and the inadequacy of local governmental support for child care. Those who remained in the workforce also endured gender injustice. While caregiving jobs were essential to combat the medical crisis, the majority of them, consisting of female workers, had been mistreated for their work value. Women have led many fronts regarding the pandemic, however continue to be underrepresented in society. This implicitly reflects the severity of the mistreatment of female workers in the labour force and urges the committee to quickly address the matter.

Unprecedented cutting-edge innovations in work patterns introduced new complications. Technological development accelerated during the pandemic and allowed businesses worldwide to adapt to flexible work styles. Remote working also known as teleworking utilised digital space for employees to access work while being absent from

physical work areas. As a result, it is true that workplace flexibility has supported employees to be able to secure control over themselves. However, personal boundaries became vague, making it harder for employees to maintain work-life-balance or manage work stress. The employers' monitoring systems initiated concerns regarding digital surveillance and privacy invasion. Another issue from the rapid transition in working style was that it marginalised workers who have difficulty in utilising technological skills, calling for demand for reskilling adaptation.

With ongoing rehabilitation in this post-pandemic world, the UNHRC must give emphasis on discussing labour rights to adapt to the maturing work environments and societal challenges. The committee must focus on preventing all forms of human rights abuses, including the unemployment crisis, child labour, gender inequality in the workplace, and problems regarding teleworking. Delegates are expected to both tackle aforementioned violations and remedy the constitutional human rights of the global society.

Past Actions by Nations and Organisations

The Global Jobs Pact (GJP)

After the 2008 financial crisis, ILO member states attending the International Labour Conference adopted the Global Jobs Pact in June 2009. The pact focuses on rehabilitation from potential social and economic crises that require urgent action worldwide. It prepares for global scale response to handle upcoming international issues impacting labour. Its policies aim at generating employment, extending social protection, respecting labour standards, promoting social dialogue, and shaping fair globalisation. The pact not only provides guidelines for financial recovery in the job market during crisis situations but also mentions job security in a broad manner by encompassing protection of young people in the workforce, promotion of gender equality, and advocating workers' right to voice their own rights. Since the Global Jobs Pact, Member States have progressed domestic labour policies to support workers. Australia has shown increased investment in public infrastructure, Germany has cut down work hours and improved partial unemployment benefits, and the Republic of Korea has negotiated wage restraint.

Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No.205)

Recommendation No. 205 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) was introduced during the International Labour Conference in June 2017. It holds its significance in focusing on recovery regarding the labour force after crisis situations such as global conflicts and disasters. It welcomes Member States to participate in international discourse and monitoring for flexible and resilient responses to any dynamic crisis. It calls for 1) awareness raising and advocacy; 2) policy advice, development cooperation, and capacity development; 3) knowledge development and dissemination; 4) international cooperation and partnerships. The COVID-19 pandemic is precisely what the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation had aimed to prepare for. The recommendation provides guidelines for member states on employment and work initiatives in post-crisis situations.

European Framework Agreement on Telework

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe/the European Union of Crafts and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UNICE/UEAPME), and the Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation (ECPE) have committed to the joint framework agreement on telework for worker's security within the European Union (EU). The rights of teleworkers are ensured to be treated without discrimination to regular employees. Inhibiting forced labour inside and outside the working office, the framework defines the voluntary nature of teleworking and regulates the data protection and privacy of teleworkers. Appropriate monitoring systems with regards to Directive 90/270/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment are to be revised by the EU for adjustments to the surplus usage of digital devices during work.

Stances of Major Countries and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

USA

The United States of America is one of the foremost nations to suffer extreme labour shortages after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Figures showing permanent job losses between January 1994 and September 2020 reveal the surging unemployment index

after the COVID-19 crisis. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was introduced to be amended with the National Labor Relations Act through the Protecting the Right to Organise Act of 2019 to protect workers. After the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) Tax Credit and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act were both signed into law in March 2020, the United States of America displayed recovery of labour force participation. However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of people who were long-term unemployed still showed an increase of 781,000 to 2.4 million from October 2022 to October 2023.

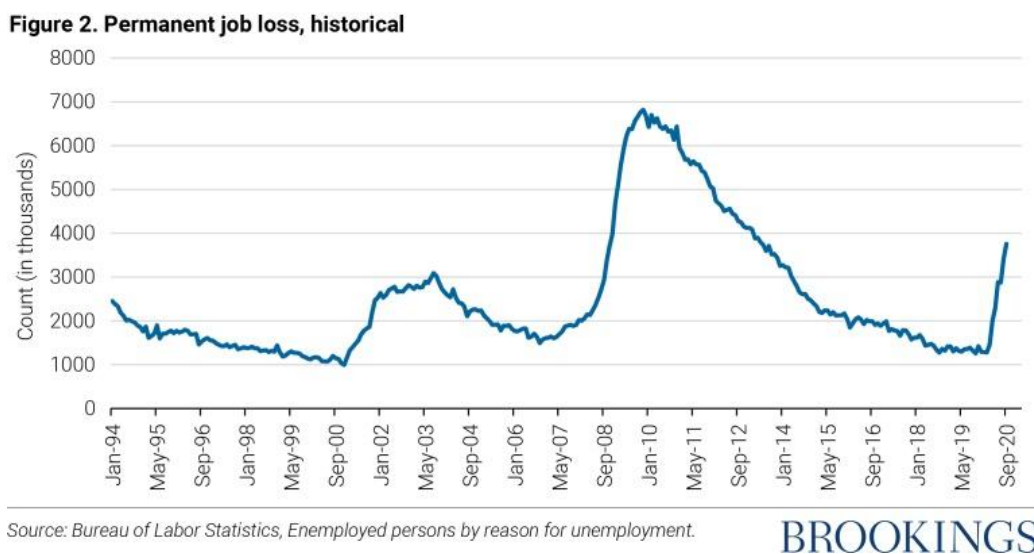


Figure 2: Permanent job loss in the United States of America, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023

Norway

GDP per capita remains to be one of the top rankings among OECD countries even during and after the pandemic. Norway’s labour policies are renowned for its supportive welfare systems and generous measures to protect the rights of workers. Plentiful sick leave, pension, and disability compensation systems surely enhanced work conditions. However, this simultaneously had a knock-on effect of a minor decline in the domestic labour supply. Though data show spots for possible improvements, Norway still plays a leading role in securing labour rights of workers. In 2020, the Norwegian government’s post-pandemic policy reduced financial liability for employers and increased compensation for laid-off employees. This targeted both employers and employees to reduce the mandatory employer

payment. After a minimum of 2 days or a maximum of 10 days mandatory employer payment period, temporarily laid-off employees were supplemented by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization (NAV) for daily unemployment benefits.

Republic of Korea

The governmental agency of the Republic of Korea, the Korea Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC), has displayed remarkable responses to the COVID-19 crisis. It has aggressively attempted a fast test, continuous tracking, and better treatment strategy to cope with the coronavirus outbreak. The "Korean New Deal" Plan, announced at the 7th Emergency Economic Council Meetings (EECM) on July 14, 2020, has organised policy responses regarding improving social protection in the labour market. The South Korean Ministry of Employment and Labour actively regulated and gradually increased financial support for small enterprises in adaptation to the worsening situation of the labour market. From the initial increase of support from 67 percent to 75 percent of suspension assistance to the secondary increase from 75 percent to 90 percent, the Korean government provided immediate feedback on funding corporations to admit more workers according to excess labour supply.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

According to the second edition of ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of work, the ILO has four pillars for policy responses to COVID-19: Pillar 1, Stimulating the Economy and Employment; Pillar 2, Supporting Enterprise, jobs and incomes; Pillar 3, Protecting workers in the workplace; Pillar 4, Relying on social dialogue for solutions. Mainly, Pillar 3 targets the betterment of our primary stakeholders, the workers. It emphasises the need for medical care to tackle the health burdens of COVID-19 in a safe environment, as well as adaptive working strategies for a sustainable labour market, urging the prevention of discrimination and exclusion. ILO calls for occupational safety and health (OSH) measures, health access for all, and suggested work arrangements such as teleworking and expanded access to paid leave. Unfortunately, in such an unprecedented crisis, we cannot predict outlooks regarding the duration, magnitude, or long-term impacts of this uncharted data. Thus, the ILO emphasises real-time monitoring among the international community for updated policy responses. It suggests providing open trade regimes, stable international

capital markets, and international liquidity for low-and middle-income countries. Not only supports countries with a high level of informal economy but protects formal workers from unwillingly retreating to informal work status and remaining in the secure, formal sector.

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour(IPEC+)

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) is one of the core Flagship Programmes regulated by the ILO. Extending from the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1992 (C182) and focusing on achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, IPEC+ allocates funding targeting regions that have been disproportionately burdened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Referring to past actions during the 2008 global pandemic and the 2014 Ebola epidemic, IPEC+ is devoted to immediate and sufficient aid to the crisis situation. It focuses on providing income support with specific costs for educational and healthcare expenses for unprotected workers. Analysis by the ILO proves that Cash transfer programmes contribute to a 40 percent decline in child labour from 2000 to 2016, allowing it to be an appealing support method. Along with UN agencies such as FAO, IOM, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank, IPEC+ actively supports Member States of Alliance 8.7 for monetary assistance to vulnerable states. Among the required budget aim of US\$71 million, IPEC+ has allocated \$21 million (USD) for remedying measures such as raising awareness and detecting and monitoring exploitation to rescue young and forced workers.

Possible Solutions

1. Providing updated guidelines for job retention(JR) schemes

Job Retention (JR) schemes have been utilised during previous economic downturns such as the 2008 financial crisis. Steady employment status is the core criterion to fundamentally protect the right to work. Job retention schemes have provided immediate financial support to workers during the lockdown period, reducing unavoidable costs to prevent fluctuation in the labour market. However, now are in the time of post-confinement from the COVID-19 pandemic. Member States must consider the necessity of updating past policies, which requires recovery in the initial confinement phase of 2020 to 2021. More specifically, there is a necessity for a more sustainable model of JR scheme that gradually

decreases the amount of subsidy along the progress level, therefore easing off financial burdens on enterprises. The committee may recommend unharming policy transitions by moderately allocating unemployment support measures to Member States with a more severe lag of economic recovery.

2. Revising Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) systems

Child labour requires meticulous monitoring to actively approach and identify human rights infringements in the labour environment. The institution of an international Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) system engages the local government's labour inspection. It promotes domestic community training by providing incentives for strengthening the local capacity of labour laws. Fostering inter-agency collaboration within member state governments, NGOs, and international organizations by utilizing global databases to share analysis on supply chains, including child labour. The accurate reports on violation of human rights in child labour will become the fundamentals for inspection of suspected incidents of the violation. Member states must consider regular and continuous evaluation of the CLM systems to be without loopholes in inspection processes and with flawless transparency.

3. Promoting gender-equal representation in the workplace

The lack of women's representation in labour environments begins from structural barriers prevailing in the job market. Encouraging the selection of women in professional leadership positions is a key to solving the long-existing problems.. Women in executive positions can build capacity in an increase of female employment and consecutively, the promotion of existing women employees. Fixing the disproportionate opportunities for female executives to voice their rights allows for a chance of active communication to advocate equality in the right to work. Plus, reinforcing work flexibility would relieve mother's burden in their workplace. By utilising teleworking, now surely provided with better access after the pandemic, working mothers can be given a better chance to participate in the workplace. When resolving gender inequality, the committee must begin with building fundamentals for a work environment where gender-equal respect for worker's rights.

Questions to Consider

- How have governments and international organisations adapted to fluctuations in previous social and financial crisis situations?
- Elaborate on the past efforts by local governments and international organisations to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to human rights.
- Most policies have been focused on immediate, short-term control of the pandemic. What measures are necessary to sustainable recovery from the pandemic in the long term perspective?
- How can international organisations collaborate to revise protocols and recommendations on labour rights issues continuing since before the pandemic?
- How can the international society contribute to improving working conditions for vulnerable or marginalised workers in the labour market?
- What role does technology play in the work environment of remote workers and teleworkers? Why is it essential to address the sudden shift in work patterns?

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Chair Report

[Agenda B: Building Frameworks and Infrastructure to Promote Social Inclusion of Disabled People]

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Chair(s): Sunwoo Yoon

Student Officer: Jihoo Lee

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Agenda Introduction

Agenda B: Building Frameworks and Infrastructure to Promote Social Inclusion of Disabled People

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) emphasises, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself including necessary social services, and the right to security”. The UDHR is absolutely and thoroughly applied to every human being regardless of gender, social status, nationality, religion, or disability. Everyone who needs support has a human right to receive it adequately. Nonetheless, fundamental human rights are not upheld in many communities of our society.

In this agenda, we will focus on the provision for persons with disabilities. Today, 16% of the world's population, a significant number of approximately 1.3 billion people, possess serious disabilities or chronic health issues. Developing countries' disability-related infrastructure exhibits insufficient accessibility and is unaffordable. In the status quo, where 80% of persons with disabilities are from the Third World, the urgency of the matter is pronounced. Even in more developed countries, many facilities are merely superficially present. Especially, the COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted the social blindspot of structural hurdles that constrain the convenience of our stakeholders. While in-person services best support some, the escalated level of accessibility cancels out the chance of suppliance.

It is critical that we reach a society equipped with inclusion that grants full accessibility to buildings, facilities, workspace, and social communication by procurement of measures that target fundamental rights of persons with disability. Alongside the

enhancement of infrastructure, world citizens must focus on improving citizenship for a conscientious global society. Persons with disabilities must have the same human rights and the chance to participate in our community as everyone else.

Key Terms

Disabled People

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 61/106 defines persons with disabilities to “include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” Disability is an individual state of physical or mental illness in which they face difficulties in their daily life. These difficulties can include a variety of different limitations that one faces. Such examples can be the disclusion from social activities, tentative pressure to be part of a society or traditional group, and cultural setbacks. Altogether, all kinds of disabilities limit individuals from engaging in social activities available in our society.

Physical barriers

The term encompasses physical attributes of individuals such as chronic diseases, ageing, and physical disabilities that prevent full accessibility of utilising existing infrastructure systems. The negligence or incomplete recognition of physical barriers has been one of the most common underlying hindrances against disabled people. To achieve an improved level of inclusivity for those with physical barriers, governmental institutions have strived to reframe infrastructure and expand barrier-free zones.

Accessibility

The United Nations defines the term accessibility as creating an equally accessible environment for all individuals in society. Accessibility is provided by government support for maintaining households, social security, and support for individual circumstances in society. An increase in accessibility means an individual gains broader opportunities to utilise common workspace areas and community services, increasing the benefits from the universal

connection between society and citizens. Examples can include enhancing safety and near locations of public facilities or improving communication and awareness of infrastructure.

Social inclusion

According to the World Bank, social inclusion refers to the improvement of adaptability of the environment for all individuals to benefit from social participation and interaction in society. This term is commonly used to recognize and emphasise the importance of confronting barriers and promoting connectivity between individuals throughout society. By allowing all social groups to participate in societal activities freely, social inclusion encourages beneficial diversity in communities.

Infrastructure

The term refers to the necessary physical structures that are present in our society, which require progression in both developed and developing nations. Sufficient infrastructure encompasses the capability to support society's facilities. Regarding the specific agenda, the term specifically focuses on the thorough facility management in areas of rural conditions and in need of assistance. Infrastructure open to the public is owned and developed by the government, which is why these facilities are often dependent on the nation's economic status and ability to generate income and development.

Assistive technologies(ATs)

Assistive technologies(ATs) are necessary for the living development of disabled individuals. ATs are designed to assist the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. These technologies aim to enable smooth social participation for those with physical or intellectual limitations. Examples of fast-forwarding assistive technologies include digital citizenship, where individuals interact and communicate through active engagement in the digital society. New assistive technologies are constantly developing to improve further societal boundaries.

Historical Background

For the past centuries, the disabled population were prone to poverty and inaccessibility, while experiencing limitations in gaining independence, due to limited access to their own skill development and education. Mistreatment due to stereotypes and judgements also stood as obstructions of disabled people as an autonomous human being.

Public recognition of the rights of people with disabilities took place rather recently, but steady efforts have followed ever since. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3 proclaimed the annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons. The resolution aimed to promote the rights and well-being of disabled people in all spheres of society; it also intended to increase awareness of the situation of disabled people in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006, has advanced the rights of disabled people. Accessibility and inclusion of disabled people are fundamental rights recognized by the CRPD and are not only objectives but also prerequisites for the enjoyment of other rights. Article 9 of the convention seeks to enable disabled people to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life and development. The resolution calls upon member states to take appropriate measures to ensure that the disabled population have access to all aspects of society on an equal basis with others, as well as to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility.

Further works by the United Nations include the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the New Urban Agenda, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development improved social inclusion of the disabled. Thus, from the past, national legislation and policies on health care have been in line with the CRPD to support the disabled population actively. Nations prioritised the importance of identifying and eliminating obstacles and barriers to accessibility in healthcare and public facilities. Throughout the past 10 years and more, the rights of disabled people have been long recognised across the world by voicing disability awareness from special UN Agencies. The UNHRC has also connected these branches of the disability network to be controlled at every station worldwide.

However, facilities generally focused on simply providing healthcare personnel with disability inclusion; public service delivery for minorities was not fully developed. Assistive products were not introduced until the beginning of 2021. Research and data monitoring of disabled individuals have not been secured. Systematic control of the identification of the disabled population, as well as adequate service delivery for people with disabilities, remains one of the most critical goals to solve. Despite the coordinated works of numerous Member States assisting their respective populations across regions, disabled people will inevitably require further inclusion and attention at national levels. Although these agencies have provided an accessible environment to the disabled population, the changes in community policies and infrastructural availability still require substantive improvements.

Status Quo

In 2008, the UNHRC passed resolution 7/9, underlining the subject of ‘Human rights of persons with Disabilities.’ The resolution highly promotes the need to protect, reaffirms the fundamental freedom that disabled individuals must gain, and urges government support to address the rights of the disabled. The resolution also encourages all members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to use existing standards and accessibility guidelines to eliminate obstacles regarding equal access to basic human resources and infrastructure. And so, even though the vulnerability faced social challenges in previous years, they were constantly supported by the early actions of public authorities and public awareness campaigns hosted by the national government systems. This established a common foundation for improving social rights and regional infrastructure frameworks. With more than 80% disabled individuals in developing countries, the Human Rights Community, CRPD, and the UN body adopted several legal treaties with neighbouring nations to implement ‘Disability Inclusion Strategies.’ The plan included benchmarks for disability programs in different UN centres, to engage senior citizens who were historically inactive and weak in advocating for their rights and the establishment of multilateral teams with pre-knowledge and professionals on enhancing disability inclusion. This act highly encouraged most adults and minorities to strengthen societal boundaries and recruited many disabled groups to actively participate in communal campaigns.

Despite consecutive efforts, individuals with disabilities remain to be challenged to survive, socialise, and be respected as normal citizens in society. Especially, the pandemic brought negative changes resulting in more assistance needed for the disabled population. According to the International Centre for Evidence in Disability, individuals with disabilities were three times more likely to describe their healthcare access as ‘significantly worse’ during the pandemic compared to those without disabilities. Additionally, one-third of them reported having encountered “additional barriers” to utilise disability-related healthcare services. Such changes can be attributed to diverting healthcare resources and facilities toward pandemic response efforts, seriously affecting those with greater healthcare needs. Common issues of shortages in facility resources and supply barriers “such as reduced access to food, health, and social care, and reduced access to education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities” had heavily burdened disabled people. In response, local governments began to practise strategies to overcome these problems by prioritising the disabled population.

On the other hand, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has also brought new insight into how to respect the human rights of disabled people. The rapid implementation of remote work and education measures have proved that digital adjustments were feasible to support accessibility to social infrastructure. Digitised versions of public services incorporated the possibility of strengthening opportunities for the social participation of disabled people. However, it is the reality that disabled groups still have limitations when technical assistance may be needed. It is important to consider not only the development of such technology but also how adaptive and compatible it is with disabled people in diverse perspectives.

As a result of the pandemic, there is a need to understand both the positive and negative impacts of new policies and regulations. By understanding these impacts, public and private bodies can identify opportunities to maintain more inclusive changes and consider further inclusion beyond the pandemic. The experience gained throughout the pandemic allows us to create better systems for all and be more responsive to potential crises in the future. There is space for improvement in the acceptance and application of inclusive design of both physical and digital space. The way inclusive design is understood and implemented is the central focus of one of the sub-programmes of AT2030, ‘Inclusive Infrastructure.’ the policy and practice of inclusive design and the perceived inclusivity of the built environment.

Past Actions by Nations and Organisations

Ecuador: New Urban Agenda

In 2016, Ecuador introduced the country's strategic plans of the "New Urban Agenda" to build disability inclusion of individuals through high-level control of urban regions. The main objective was to engage national governments, local authorities, urban policymakers, and practitioners, to ensure that the "New Urban Agenda" set by the organisation, will be genuinely inclusive of and accessible to all, particularly to people with disabilities. The framework incorporated civil society and representative organisations or groups of disabled persons to facilitate participatory decision-making processes and advancements in urban infrastructures. Methods were taken under practical and technical expertise and called for commitments for actions further to advance accessible and integrated urban planning and construction. Ecuador is still in the midst of the accomplishment of raising 'social protection programs' for addressing economic inclusion and more service-related public awareness. For example, the 'Enhance Refugee Self-Reliance' program, a UN-led program targeting Ecuador, conducted infrastructure frameworks to enable social opportunities for disabled refugees.

China

China started to enforce infrastructure upgrades targeting those with disabilities in 1989. The areas of upgrade included streets, public buildings, and transport facilities. Shanghai has especially developed its efforts to build a barrier-free environment as part of a countrywide initiative to make social life more convenient for the elderly and disabled groups. For example, laws for creating an accessible or barrier-free environment for residents provided detailed directions for specific constructions of buildings, maintenance and operation modifications, and monitoring of accessible facilities in the city. Also, China's financial hub, one of the largest finance networks in China, joined to complete legislation on constructing a more accessible environment.

Democratic Republic of India: Disabilities Bill

The Disabilities Bill, passed in the Indian Parliament in 2016, set the common ground for all Indians to create barrier-free access to buildings and transport systems. This was part

of the “Accessible India Campaign,” a national programme to make public buildings and transport less hostile for the physically challenged. More than 50% of buildings were planned to be made fully disabled-friendly by July 2018. However, according to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) of India, in 2016, only 3% of buildings have become accessible.

United Nations Disabled Committee: Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) actively promoted accessibility in consideration of reframing sustainable and inclusive development for all disabled people. DESA has overall taken the initiative of organising separate expert group meetings on accessibility, for example, building friendly environments in Washington DC in 2010. Such goal development included enlarging information and communication and technological software (ICTs). Constant publications regarding analytical research have influenced the disabled to participate in supporting intergovernmental processes and allowing greater connection with their supporters. The department under the UN Agency: Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) and the Inter-Departmental Task Force on Accessibility at the UN Headquarters have also been actively promoting accessibility and disability inclusion within the work of the UN body. This calls attention to connecting global parties participating in building inclusive infrastructure globally.

Stances of Major Countries and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The United Kingdom

The Equality Act, declared in 2010, forbids every kind of discrimination against disabled people in the UK. It defines discrimination against disabled people to include direct and indirect forms, harassment, and being victimised for upholding their human rights. Such written documents were expected to guide public and private sector bodies to fulfil the requirements. However, the UK government’s equalities office reported two years after the act that the inclusion of disabled people in the workforce had relatively not shown significant change compared to the case of gender gaps. Governmental survey analysis shows that 56% of employers replied with a score of 1 to the question of supporting legislation for disabilities on a scale of 1 to 10. The office explained that employers had refused to include or promote

disabled employees because they are guaranteed more sick leave requirements. Such phenomena imply areas for improvements in the appliance of human rights notions.

Germany

Germany is known for its accelerating advancements in public infrastructure and generous spending on investments regarding citizen welfare; simultaneously maintaining financial stability. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was one of the first governmental forces among member states of the United Nations to have initiated an ‘Action plan for the inclusion of peoples with disabilities.’ The welfare-focused government constantly innovates and assesses the quality of infrastructure available for specialised groups in vulnerable situations. For example, Book IX of the German Social Security Code (SGB IX) elaborates on the human rights of disabled individuals by promising equal accessibility and chances for participation in society. The German government is devoted to coordinating measures to include disabled individuals within urbanised boundaries by methods including public protocols to inform citizens about the disabled population, services providing equal access to shelters and buildings to all, and forming disabled communities.

Republic of South Africa

South Africa significantly lacks developmental resources and is inefficient in infrastructure repairs. Public facilities management in South Africa have been insufficient, and existing policies are currently poor in delivery. South Africa faces difficulties in meeting the standard capacity of social programs, and domestic organisations are unlikely to promote structural efficiency regarding sustainable goals. The nation considers strategic national assets management and methods to alleviate the burdens faced by areas where disabled minorities are densely populated. The South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA) created efforts to coordinate sustainable yet proficient infrastructure achievements and form shared networking of providers and members of infrastructure growth. The association is currently contacting service providers responsible for researching developments for disabled people. These African service technicians have designed infrastructure for the disabled in regions, constantly adjusted present data systems of infrastructure buildings, and advanced infrastructure security systems for better construction

of centres and buildings. Therefore, the association aims to branch out more communicational assistance for displaced populations by setting up regional offline organisations across rural areas.

Kenya

With more than 918,270 disabled people, Kenya concentrates on developing adaptive policies for securing the human rights of disabled people. As the nation faced numerous challenges regarding technical assistance, the Kenyan National Urban Development Policy (NUDP) connected central governments with private sectors. Furthermore, the United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) aimed to increase disabled capacities to advocate for their rights to access infrastructure necessities. It plans to coordinate its framework with the National Council of Kenyan government and private educational institutions further to elaborate efforts on the social inclusion of disabled people.

UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services)

The UNOPS is an essential global sector that allows infrastructure and assistance to financial institutions and assets. Nations must meet economic stability when starting infrastructure protocols and large projects. Therefore, the organisation supports through funds focusing on operating and managing infrastructure and procurement implementation. It carries updated documentation on infrastructure adjustments and necessary improvements towards sustainable development in the future. Technical advisors can provide essential services that enable security during natural disasters and long-term achievement for the vulnerability as they are currently establishing groundworks for ordinary individuals.

Possible Solutions

1. Introducing and enhancing the communication of digital citizenship

The rapid rate of technological development calls for interdependency on the daily use of high-tech infrastructure. Telecommunication with other individuals is inevitably used for networking and connection. Allowing digital citizenship would enable citizens, especially disabled people, to gain independence and accessibility for all infrastructure needs.

Transportation accessibility, workspace engagement, and special recognition of digital transformation support long-term assistance for a higher quality of life for the disabled population.

2. Partnership between cross-national organisations and United Nations organisations

Collaboration between national organisations and fostering positive solidarity among disabled individuals would promote participation among international organisations in the crisis at hand. Previous contributions practised by recognizable organisations, such as the programs hosted by the National Federation of the Blind and the International Association of Accessibility Professionals, have enabled connection within many disabled communities. Especially, numerous resolutions and objective plans proposed by UN departments hold the responsibility to evaluate and strengthen social inclusion for all humanity, including the disabled population. The committee must consider re-evaluating past frameworks and the integration with other sectors of UN organisations.

3. Providing technical alternatives and urban assistance in major populated areas

It is imperative that the committee address areas where disabled populations are densely located and suggest recognisable solutions that utilise technical alternatives. There must be a thorough analysis of the root causes of such dense populations and the allocation of urban assistance resources according to the data. By encouraging member states to collaborate for the identification and prevention of potential limitations and damages concerning such a large population, we can advocate sustainable support for the disabled population.

4. Public awareness programs in least developed nations

The Human rights of disabled people tend to be only written by law, and not by practice. Member states must begin with raising social awareness of the social burdens that people with disabilities face. Educational services on information on various types of disabilities and challenges faced by disabled people would promote a sense of sympathy within the international society. Such programs would be most effective for the young generation since they would elicit more recognition in the long term. Overall, improvements

in the public notion of disabled minority problems may be followed by a consensus for supporting the development of specialised facilities within local communities. The least developed countries are the most in need of betterment of public recognition for providing adequate infrastructure.

Questions to Consider

- What makes a society that includes disabled individuals? How does social inclusion relate to living conditions, and how can a nation contribute to improving it?
- Under what standards and criteria can Member States assess the level of appropriate infrastructure incorporation?
- How can Member States encourage the active development of technical and urban assistance in both the local and national level?
- Which types of technology are essential for living in the post-COVID society, and require more accessibility to disabled people? How can we ensure this accessibility?
- Define the providers and resources needed to build and maintain infrastructure. How will Member States encourage the provision of these services to all?
- Consider the status quo of the development of infrastructure for disabled individuals. How can we ensure sustainable development of accessible environments for all?

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