

Delegation from Uruguay
Position Paper for the Economic and Social Council

In 2019 the topics to be discussed in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are the following: Education in Post Conflict Situations; Implementing SDG 7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All; Promoting the Political, Socioeconomic, and Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The stated issues are seen by Uruguay as extremely important for the international community. The majority of the announced topics are also addressed in the list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹, which were set by the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations (UN) and are considered by Uruguay as essential directions of the policy improvement. Therefore, Uruguay is looking forward to discussing these topics and coming closer to possible solutions at the upcoming ECOSOC meeting.

I. Education in Post Conflict Situations

Access to education is the key factor in economical growth, promotion of inclusivity and tolerance among the population, poverty alleviation, as well as prevention of conflict. SDG 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all”. Conflict is one of the main obstacles on the way to achieving education access for everyone. It exposes the population to all sorts of violence and often leads to forced displacement due to the high level of danger and the inability of the state to adequately support and secure the society. The children in countries and territories involved in conflict frequently have no opportunity to pursue even elementary education. Furthermore, a lot of children suffer from malnutrition and being separated from the parents. Therefore, extended conflict situations produce a whole generation of physically underdeveloped and weak, psychologically distressed, uneducated people. Uruguay believes that such issues should be seen on a greater scale and with an outlook in the future they create for the affected populations.

In order to productively work on resolving the consequences of conflict the UN has multiple international organizations. First of all, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) both work on providing access to education in places affected by conflict. Moreover, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) aims at protecting rights and ensuring safer environment to the refugees, stateless, and forcibly displaced people.

The state of Uruguay has not been involved in serious conflicts in the past several years. Nonetheless, the state provides significant support in UN Peacekeeping missions. For example, 900 Uruguayans have been working on the MONUSCO mission in the Republic of Congo. Uruguay was also the first country in Latin America to demonstrate willingness to resettle Syrian refugees. The refugees in Uruguay received language and skill training, along with job opportunities and financial support from the state.

Education is seen an irreplaceable instrument in strengthening Uruguay’s economical and social stability. Uruguay demonstrates low illiteracy level, while the people aged 17-22 reach 9,8 of targeted 10 years of education. One of Uruguay’s priorities is to decrease the number of students who drop out of school. Usually the students from the least advantageous social and economic backgrounds drop out of school, such as male students living in rural areas without parents and with many siblings. Hence, Uruguay attempts to change the current situation by offering scholarships and other ways of financially supporting the students and their households, as well as promoting the importance of finishing the secondary education for the stable future income and other social and economic benefits. UNICEF Uruguay also emphasised the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and set it as a priority for the office to raise awareness about the significance of the first 1000 days of a child’s life.

Uruguay plans on continuing to support the UN Peacekeeping missions worldwide, as it has been doing for the last 70 years. By actively engaging in the international peace building operations Uruguay sets a positive example for other Member States, especially those in Latin America, demonstrating the importance of every bit of help in the universal struggle for peace.

II. Implementing SDG 7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All

¹ UN General Assembly, Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015

Around 1.1 billion people all over the planet do not have access to electricity, while 40% of the world population still relies exclusively on the non-renewable sources of energy, such as fossil fuels, oil and natural gas. Providing reliable access to energy for everyone is the first step in sustainable social and economic development. Introducing renewable energy sources is a necessary step in the poverty eradication. Moreover, substantially increasing the portion of energy generated from renewable energy sources is incredibly important for the international community in order to effectively combat man-made climate change and the challenges it brings about. Serious financial and institutional investment is needed to modernise the infrastructure and introduce modern energy sources. Therefore, energy is treated by the UN as one of the priority goals in development – SDG 7, but also plays an important role in other development goals in Agenda 2030, such as SDG 1, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, and SDG 13, which promote eradication of poverty and inequality, along with sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and climate action respectively.

Uruguay takes the goal of securing everyone's access to sustainable and reliable energy very seriously. Uruguay ranks as one of the most electrified countries of Latin America with 99,7% of the population having access to electricity and 98,4% having access to clean technologies. Moreover, Uruguay succeeded to almost double the percentage of renewable energy sources in the final energy consumption from 31,6% in 2006 to 59,9%. Furthermore, by 2016 Uruguay's electric generation mix is made up of 97% of renewable energy, and only 3% of fossil fuels. Thus, Uruguay has put a lot of emphasis on modernising energy generation and use.

Uruguay plans on expanding the electricity coverage in the rural areas to increase 100% access, along with enhancing the urban infrastructure for more stable electricity connection. Apart from furthering the techniques that are already being successfully implemented in the energy sphere, there are multiple objectives Uruguay is aiming at working on. First of all, the promotion of more conscious energy consumption by the public and organizations in order to save more energy is important. In fact, Uruguay's goal is to decrease the overall energy consumption by 5% by 2024. Moreover, Uruguay intends to encourage the increase of electricity use in the ways that are not fully developed in the country, such as public and private transportation, will lead to higher demand for clean energy. Uruguay is looking forward to discussing other ways of promoting and achieving more reliable, sustainable and affordable access to energy as it is a very basis for further development in many other spheres.

III. Promoting the Political, Socioeconomic, and Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The cultural heritage of a state is frequently a mix of multiple religious, ideological, and linguistic traditions. However, the age of colonisation led to marginalisation and exclusion of whole groups of indigenous peoples – the populations that historically had their settlements on the land that was further conquered by other, often more technologically advanced communities. Nowadays, the UN works on promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, as those are too frequently left behind. *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) (2007) ensures the right of indigenous people for self-determination and political engagement. Furthermore, most indigenous peoples have developed unique traditions and ways of understanding, that are not always apparent to the rest of the population. For that reason the organizations working with the indigenous populations need to respect the cultural frameworks existing within the indigenous societies.

Since 1830s there are no indigenous peoples recognised in Uruguay. Scholars working on the topic of cultural and ethnic heritage point out the fact that the indigenous tribes fully disappeared because of the diseases that Europeans brought and the constant conflict with the conquerors. The negligence and brutality of the colonisers of Uruguay cannot be justified. Uruguay respects the history of its land and all the people who have ever lived there. Thus, in 2002 the skeletal remains of the representatives of the indigenous peoples that had been brought to France in nineteenth century for studying and exhibiting were returned back to Uruguay. There they were buried with honours.

Uruguay faces the issue of racial inequality and is promoting the equal rights through education and multiple policies are being implemented. Even though Uruguay cannot directly apply the policies developed by the UN, it intends to fully participate in the discussion of those, as well as support the implementation of the policies in other countries, especially those in Latin America, since the states of the continent share a tightly interconnected past. Since indigenous people constitute only 5% of the world population, but account for the significant 15% of the poorest, Uruguay is profoundly concerned with the goal of securing the decent and equal social, economic and cultural position in the world.