STUDY GUIDE

AI and Sustainable Development

Discuss how AI can contribute to achieving the UN SDGs, particularly in poverty reduction, clean energy, and climate action

St PETER'S SCHOOL
Barcelona

SMUN 2030

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1. Welcoming letter from the chairs

Honourable delegates,

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Development Programme committee in SMUN 2030. We are extremely honoured to chair and guide you through this journey and we are undoubtedly committed to make it memorable.

During the debating sessions, you will be discussing Artificial Intelligence and its role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially in terms of poverty reduction, clean energy and climate action. The awareness of the relevance of sustainable development and the crucial role of Artificial Intelligence have done nothing but skyrocketing in the last few years. Therefore, new challenges have arisen and there is an imperative need for creative and well-prepared representatives to find common ground for global governance.

In order to properly debate all the issues embedded in such a transnational matter, the participation of every single state is vital. Although this study guide offers a general overview of the issue, it is only the welcoming step. Consequently, you will need to consult external sources to find specific information about your country's position and actions. In this line, we strongly encourage all delegates to engage in in-depth research to become real experts on the topic. A solid investigation not only enriches the discussion, but it will also provide you with all the confidence to succeed in this committee.

Do not forget to have fun while trying your hardest to do your best, both parts are equally fundamental in a Model United Nations.

Please, do not hesitate to contact us in case you have any doubts. We are looking forward to meeting all of you in the committee sessions!

Yours sincerely,

Carla Kañero, Fiona Gabalda Barbeito and Martina Jutglà

2. The committee: United Nations Development Programme

This section is focused on introducing the United Nations Development Programme as the committee in which the discussion will take place. Therefore, it is crucial to contextualise its historical context, composition and funding mechanisms to better understand its mandate and competences.

2.1 History

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was officially established in November 1965 by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 2029. Resulting from merging the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (1949)and the United Nations Special Fund (1958). The initiative did not come into action until early 1966.

2.2 Composition and Funding

The UNDP is mainly led by an Administrator, an Associate Administrator and an Executive Office Chief of Staff, currently the positions are covered by Achim Steiner, Haoliang Xu and Michele Candotti, respectively. Additionally, there is the Bureau of the Executive Board with a president and vice-presidents of each of the regional groups and regional hubs. Moreover, there are external offices with the aim of collaborating and assessing the procedures that take place within the UNDP, such as the Independent Evaluation Office or the Human Development Report Office.

Importantly, the UNDP has close ties with other actors, including national governments, UN bodies (UN Sustainable Development Group), International Financial Institutions (World Bank, African Development Bank…), private companies, foundations, civil society organisations and Goodwill Ambassadors and Advocates. Precisely, the UNDP receives its core resources from the aforementioned stakeholders. In terms of states, it is worth mentioning the United States of America ($80.65M), the Federal Republic of Germany ($74.43M) and the Kingdom of Sweden ($70.72M) as the major regular donors of 2022. The four thematic Funding Windows in which the funds are allocated are poverty and inequality; governance, peacebuilding, crisis and resilience; nature, climate and energy; and, gender equality and women's empowerment. More than $95 million was distributed among 117 countries in order to finance UNDP's initiatives in 2022.

2.3 Mandate and Competences

The committee's efforts are oriented towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda worldwide. In this line, the mandate aims to "end poverty, build democratic governance, rule of law,

and inclusive institutions."[1]

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDP established a Strategic Plan of action for the following years (2022-2025) with the ultimate aim to strengthen collaboration between bodies at different levels to offer fair and sustainable solutions to current multidimensional challenges.

The Strategic Plan (2022-2025) acts on the basis of poverty eradication while provoking a structural transformation that enables countries to modify their actions towards a sustainable and inclusive development and a strength of resilience, especially regarding effective responses to crises of diverse nature. Achieving the previous objectives is not viable without a strategic innovation of already existent systems that should be based on an inclusive and ethical digitalisation of the same. Moreover, multilateral partnerships become a vital tool to enable the adaptation of the Strategic Plan to global, regional and local priorities.

Interestingly, the UNDP controls and monitors data of a wide range of development indicators, including the Human Development Index (HDI), and submits periodic reports of its evolution.

Despite the fact that the committee does not have the competences to enforce measures, it offers meaningful support to states in pursuing their national goals in terms of human development and sustainability. The role of local experts remains fundamental to adapt global strategies to the needs and features of each territory.

3. Key definitions

Artificial Intelligence (AI): refers to "the theory and development of computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation and interpretation,"[2] according to the Oxford Dictionary and used by the UNDP. Importantly, it is necessary to highlight that AI is usually able to learn and conduct autonomous decision-making processes on its own due to the combination of complex algorithms.

Digitalisation: refers to "the integration of digital technologies into everyday life"[3] which is the resulting process from transforming physically-gathered data and information into electronic device-readable language, such as computer or algorithm language.

Human development: refers to a process of enlarging the choices, capabilities and opportunities of every human being in all areas of life, at the same time as including the

[1] United Nations Development Programme, "About Us," accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.undp.org/about us.
[2] Milica Begovic, Alex Oprunenco, and Lejla Sadiku, "Let's talk about artificial intelligence," United Nations Development Programme, (March 13, 2018), https://www.undp.org/blog/lets-talk-about-artificial-intelligence.
[3] Maria E. Mondejar, Ram Avtar, et al., "Digitalization to achieve sustainable development goals: Steps towards a Smart Green Planet," *Science of The Total Environment* 794 (2021): 148539, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721036111.

human being in the decision-making process of the choices with direct implications in their lives.[4]

Poverty: refers to surviving with an "income of less than US $2 per day."[5]

Sustainable Development: refers to the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[6]

Sustainable Development Goals: 17 integrated objectives in accordance with the Agenda 2030 plan in order to promote an ecologically compatible sustained growth guaranteeing decent living standards for all.

4. History of the topic

This block provides an overview of the evolution of the topic over the last decades, which is meaningful to understand today's problems and the expectations of the committee.

4.1 Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development

The establishment of the Agenda 2030 was not the first attempt to improve universal quality of life in regards to environmental commitment. The concept of Sustainable Development originated in the UN Conference on the Human Environment that took place in Stockholm in 1972.[7] It is regarded as the first global meeting in which the environmental discussions were at the core. The major outcomes were the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment on the one hand, and the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on the other.

In 1987, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled "Our Common Future" – also known as the Brundtland Report – offered insights about the development tendencies of the time. It emphasised the differences between the Global North and Global South in terms of consumption, development, poverty and inequalities. As a consequence of these critical warnings, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – also known as the Earth Summit – took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Joint and inclusive economic, environmental and social development were the most discussed issues. The most relevant results were the Rio

[4] United Nations Development Programme, "Human development: definition, concept and larger context," in *Arab Human Development Report* (July, 2002): 15-23, https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210059039c006
[5] United Nations Academic Impact, "Addressing Poverty," accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/addressing-poverty.
[6] Aakash Singh, Anurag Kanaujia, et al., "Artificial intelligence for Sustainable Development Goals: Bibliometric patterns and concept evolution trajectories," *Sustainable Development*, (2023), https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2706.
[7] Karen Whitfield, "Quick Guide to Sustainable Development: History and Concepts," (March 2015), https://senedd.wales/research%20documents/qg15-003%20-%20sustainable%20development%20history%20and%20concepts/qg15-003.pdf.

Declaration, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the establishment of the Agenda 21.

Furthermore, the twenty-first century began with the UN Millennium Declaration establishing the Millennium Development Goals, which can be considered as the major predecessor of the current Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In the last decades, multiple summits have taken place concerning sustainable governance, including the – World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and the Rio+20 in 2012. The latter caused the final inclusion of the objectives for sustainable development in the global agenda, which later ended being the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs result from a United Nations General Assembly resolution of September 2015.[8] Seventeen goals with specific targets and indicators were established with the paramount objective of settling a "new universal Agenda"[9] to seek sustainable development. The agenda was meant to "come into effect on 1 January 2016"[10] and its entire implementation is aimed by 2030 (Agenda 2030).

The initiative was motivated by the increasing global awareness of the need for a change in governance towards a new model committed to achieve a long-lasting growth and development eliminating poverty and discrimination in accordance with the environment while ensuring the proper development of future generations.

4.2. Artificial Intelligence

Despite Artificial Intelligence (AI) being considered a twenty-first century development for many, its origins are worth-mentioning in order to have a global overview of its impact.

In the aftermath of World War II, governmental investments in scientific research skyrocketed with the ultimate aim to have the best equipped technology as a competitive advantage for future security crises. Between the 1950s and 1990s, the world witnessed the development of algorithms of increasing complexity. Nonetheless, it was not until the 1990s that AI came to be progressively introduced in everyday lives. In the first stages, the technology was used to solve simple problems. However, the introduction of deep learning techniques enabled AI to learn and operate more autonomously every time.

Due to the fact that in the vast majority of countries the most advanced technology is military-related, AI was primarily introduced to this field as Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems or AI-driven drones, among others. The end of the Cold War, partly

[8] United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, seventieth session, A/RES/70/1 (October 21, 2015), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

[9] United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1.

[10] United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1

meant the end of the Arms Race between the United States of America and the United Socialist Soviet Republic because of the disintegration of the latter. In this line, experts and scholars point that a new global Arms Race might be taking place nowadays, this time with AI developments as a central and distinctive tool.

Nevertheless, AI applications go further beyond the military field as AI has been introduced to civil life for different purposes. These include rapid data gathering both for private and public organisation in order to facilitate the decision-making processes, supporting healthcare professionals by improving diagnoses and surgeries and ensuring the protection of property rights through the detection of plagiarism in academic research.

In this line, special attention deserves AI uses in governance, particularly in the concerns of this committee: sustainable development to eradicate poverty, dependence on clean energy and facing climate action.

4.3. Evolution of AI applications for Sustainable Development

Science and technology play a central role in order to achieve a fair and sustained development over time. Therefore, AI provides a unique and unprecedented support to work on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it is shown by the increasing trend of AI uses for this purpose worldwide.[11]

AI contributions need to be properly coordinated between governing bodies at different levels. In this sense, joint strategies between local, national, regional and international entities foster the implementation of global strategies for common objectives worldwide while adapting them to the particularities and needs of every state. Additionally, considering a wide variety of non-state actors becomes vital in the attempt to reach and engage global communities. Stakeholders, such as private companies, academia and civil society, are fundamental as Sustainable Development is intended to involve all areas of life. Therefore, beyond treaties and governmental policies, it is equally important to gain the commitment of all actors due to the fact that the problem is a transversal one and the solutions must be so as well.

AI applications for Sustainable Development began predicting extreme weather phenomena by gathering data from satellites. It enabled vulnerable spots to reinforce an advanced response and improve their capacity-building. Later on, AI tools were progressively introduced to the production processes in order to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by improving the efficiency of energy management. In this line, the optimisation of renewable energies and natural resources has also increased given the support offered by the biometrics and learning processes of AI. More recently, AI has begun to be used in terms of overcoming disparities and inequalities between territories. In the case of Starlink, Elon Musk's initiative based on the location of satellites in Earth orbit to offer worldwide Internet connection has arisen multiple controversies in the last few years.

[11] Singh, Kanaujia, et al., Artificial intelligence for Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, there are initiatives and research oriented to eliminate socio-economic and geographical barriers in regards to education and healthcare with AI playing a central role. Interestingly, the concept of Smart Cities gained importance along this decade and multiple policies are presented following this line of action. It implies a high digitalisation and technology integration in the city management in order to become more efficient. Some examples include AI uses to monitor traffic flows, to improve public transportation networks and civil infrastructure and to improve waste management.[12]

Despite the aforementioned AI applications helping to pave the way for Sustainable Development, the discussion about the ethical concerns implied in the process cannot be avoided. AI raises controversies in various regards. Firstly, most AI systems function as a consequence of analysing millions of collected data from individuals. In this context, critics argue that violations of individuals' privacy constantly take place. Secondly, in reference to the previous statement, legislation in favour of transparent uses and policies of AI applications is a core element to get the trust of society. Transparency is a major issue in concern to AI due to the fact that the lack of the same can lead to power abuses of those with access to the data. Finally, there have been heated debates about accountability. As AI devices may make decisions on their own, unjustified actions, potential biases and moral responsibility need to be managed in an appropriate way to make the most of AI contributions within an ethical framework. Consequently, reaching global ethical standards for AI applications will help to ensure an accountable use of the technology in a human-machine teaming.

5. Previous actions

In this committee, AI applications will be discussed to reach SDGs 1, 7 and 13. Consequently, this module contains a detailed explanation of each SDG, as well as the most relevant UNDP actions and strategies to achieve them.

5.1 SDG 1: No Poverty

The first SDG addresses poverty in all its forms around the world. It aims to protect vulnerable populations while facing the increasing cost of living and enhancing social policies. It is divided into five targets, including eradicating worldwide extreme poverty (living with less than $1.25 a day), reducing by a half the percentage of world poverty, strengthening national social protection policies, ensuring universal access to basic services and ownership and improving the resilience of vulnerable populations to natural or economic disasters. Additionally, targets 1.a and 1.b highlight the necessity of cooperation between countries and flexible frameworks to eradicate poverty and boost development.

[12] Blockchain Council, "Artificial Intelligence in Sustainable Development," LinkedIn, (July 1, 2023), https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/artificial-intelligence-sustainable-development-blockchaincouncil.

The aforementioned objectives are measured according to indicators, such as the share of population living below the international and/or national poverty line by different features, the proportion of beneficiaries of social protection systems or the relation between economic loss and disasters in line with the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[13]

Importantly, the assessment of the tendencies regarding the targets of SDG 1 shows a relatively sustained decrease of poverty and extreme poverty in the last decades. However, the COVID-19 pandemic switched the improvement and it is estimated that 7% of the world's population "will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030."[14] Ongoing armed conflicts and climate change are the major challenges to reach the objectives, particularly in politically unstable regions.

5.2. SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

SDG 7 refers to sustainable energy and establishes the guidelines to guarantee universal access to modern and affordable energy, to skyrocket the use of renewable energy and to double the improvement rate in efficient energy. Furthermore, it is encouraged to invest in clean energy related infrastructure and updated technology to decrease economic differences between countries. The indicators that measure these targets are the population with access to electricity and primary reliance on clean fuels and technology, the percentage of renewable energy compared to the total energy consumption, the relation between primary energy and GDP, the international financial flows supporting clean energy development and the capacity of developing countries to generate renewable energy.[15]

In pragmatic terms, improvements must be considered in the fields of heating, transport and electricity. Moreover, more than 670 million people do not have access to electricity nowadays, which is a major concern in sub-Saharan Africa, leading to unsafe living practices. The volatility in energy prices and the slow process of global electrification pose a risk to 2 billion people, who will be forced to rely on polluting systems by 2030.[16] In this sense, progress has been made, but accelerating the measures to reach the targets is imperative to obtain noticeable results.

[13] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere, targets and indicators," accessed January 7, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#targets_and_indicators.
[14] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere, progress and info," accessed January 7, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#progress_and_info.
[15] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, targets and indicators," accessed January 7, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7#targets_and_indicators.
[16] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, targets and indicators," accessed January 7, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7#targets_and_indicators.

5.3 SDG 13: Climate Action

Climate Action emphasises the urgence of effectively combating the effects of climate change. The latter include global warming, the rise of sea-level and unpredictable weather phenomena. Climate change intensifies the differences between regions and threatens the highly vulnerable ones with a mortality rate fifteen times higher in comparison to the very low vulnerable spots. In this context, the SDG 13 aims to improve universal resilience to natural disasters and climate related events, lead the focus of worldwide policies to climate change at different levels from an integrated approach and raise human and institutional awareness on the impact and mitigation of climate change. In addition, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are strongly encouraged to commit to the agreement and it is stressed to tackle the issue from an inclusive perspective, including marginalised groups.[17]

The main indicators that are measured to assess the evolution of SDG 13 consider the number of directly affected people in relation to natural disasters, the amount of countries adopting national disaster risk reduction strategies, the total greenhouse gas emissions in a year, education policies and economic sources mobilised to achieve the goal of the $100 billion commitment.[18]

Evidence proves that already taken actions are not enough to mitigate the effects of climate change. Consequently, the world currently faces wild weather phenomena that affect the most vulnerable populations provoking famines and uncertainty. Importantly, there are territories at risk of disappearance due to the rising sea-levels, which will eventually lead to a global displacement crisis.

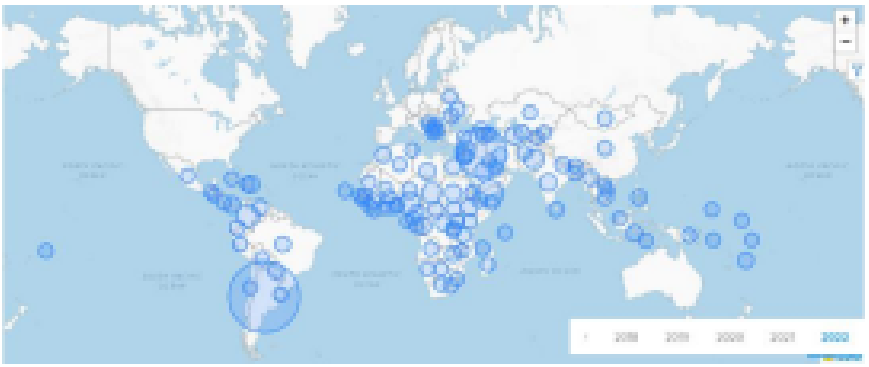
5.4 UNDP Lines of Action

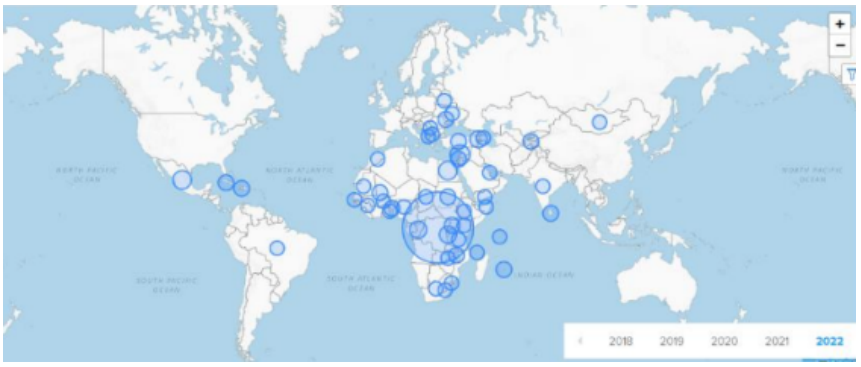
The establishment of the UN SDGs and the progressive introduction of AI technology for civil purposes have reinforced UNDP lines of action in the last decades. Placing worldwide development at the core of its projects, the UNDP submits annual reports summarising and assessing its activities. In this sense, the committee established six major signature solutions to pursue improvements in the SDG targets. The most relevant are “keeping people out of poverty,” “closing the energy gap” and “promoting nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet,” which are associated with SDGs 1, 7 and 13 respectively.[19] Focusing on these particular objectives, 25 million people got access to basic services, 4.6 million people benefited from clean, affordable and sustainable energy for the first time and $224 million were invested to reinforce green recovery and put into consideration natural heritage.[20] The data belongs to

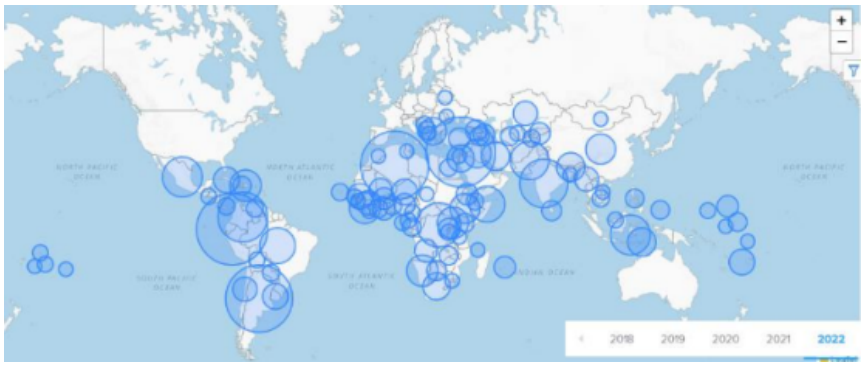
[17] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, targets and indicators,” accessed January 7, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13#targets_and_indicators.
[18] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “13. Take urgent action.”
[19] United Nations Development Programme, “UNDP transparency portal,” accessed January 7, 2024, https://open.undp.org/.
[20] United Nations Development Programme, “United Nations Development Programme Annual Report 2022,” accessed January 7, 2024. https://annualreport.undp.org/.

UNDP-driven initiatives during 2022 in different regions.

These maps show the allocation of UNDP projects for SDGs 1, 7 and 13 respectively.







It is perceivable that the vast majority of initiatives are located in the so-called Global South due to the fact that the Southern hemisphere hosts some of the most vulnerable regions of the planet. It is also important to notice the changing concentration of projects depending on the nature of the initiative. In this sense, whereas for poverty eradication (map 1) there is a big initiative in South America and other dispersed projects along Africa and Southern Asia, the tendency changes while analysing the efforts to close the energy gap (map 2) as Africa clearly hosts the majority of the projects. Lastly, in terms of sustainability (map 3), the initiatives are broadly shared among continents.

Interestingly, strengthening inclusivity and resilience of all peoples are considered fundamental features in order to achieve any of the aforementioned goals.

Furthermore, the UNDP has already started to employ AI technology in their field projects to maximise their efficiency. The main uses have been for data gathering, such as to calculate carbon emissions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to assess the air quality of Argentina or to reduce pollution in India. But also, to guarantee access to basic services worldwide, including making the most of water and irrigation systems in Palestine, addressing food security in Zimbabwe and improving farmers' outcomes in Egypt. Additionally, AI has been used to improve satellite connections, for instance as a tool to identify plastic pollution in the Philippines. Lastly, other applications include

amplifying the access to legal aid in Guinea Bissau, enhancing tourism in Tanzania and promoting solar-powered mobile cookers in Sudan.[21]

6. Current situation

The action taken up to date has not been enough to achieve the expected results in SDGs. Consequently, reinforcing already existing institutions and strategies, as well as filling the existing gaps, become a priority in the Agenda 2030 is pretended to be fulfilled. In this line, AI is perceived to be an accelerator to achieve the SDGs and its role is going to be analysed in this section considering the strategies at a global, regional and national level and the resulting challenges of the process.

6.1 Global Governance

Currently, all UN agencies are aware of the need for an integrated approach in relation to the SDGs in their policies. The UNDP is performing under the bases of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 helping more than 100 countries to develop socially, economically and environmentally. Therefore, UNDP efforts in the present are not only oriented towards sustaining over time the successes achieved in the past, but the organisation is also working to implement new solutions.[22]

Apart from supporting local communities and governments, the UNDP is also promoting partnerships and joint initiatives with other international organisations.

One example is the participation of the UNDP in the Inter-Agency coordination strategy, especially in terms of Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction (AVPP), alongside with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The objective of enhancing cooperation between UN offices is to improve the efficiency of communications and information exchange. Furthermore, the UNDP and the Geneva Declaration Secretariat have established regional centres to share practices in order to reduce the stability of given regions and to adapt the strategies to each territory, which are considered unconditional requirements to boost development.[23]

Another UNDP partnership is with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Both organisations joined the Global Maritime Energy Efficiency Partnerships Project (GloMEEP) to reduce the greenhouse

[21] United Nations Development Programme, “United Nations Development Programme Annual Report 2022.”
[22] United Nations Development Programme, “Integrated Solutions,” accessed January 8, 2024, https://sdgintegration.undp.org/integrated-solutions.
[23] United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, “Inter-Agency Coordination,” accessed January 8, 2024, https://disarmament.unoda.org/disarmsec/coop/.

emissions resulting from the shipping industry. Measures, such as political reforms, new regulations, knowledge creation, awareness raising and partnerships with private companies to increase the investment in Research and Development, took place in Lead Pilot Countries. These spots were Argentina, China, Georgia, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, Panama, Philippines and South Africa.[24]

Narrowing the scope from international to regional collaboration, most of the regions are currently cooperating in the efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The African Regional Partnership for Sustainability and SDG Reporting (ARP) was established in January 2022 and represents 29 African countries and over 400 stakeholders to strengthen regional infrastructure, achieve high-quality sustainability, promote the investment of the private sector to achieve sustainable practices in line with the SDGs and share information, knowledge and common discussions to improve development in the region.[25]

The European Commission has also boosted the Smart Specialisation Strategies for Sustainable Development Goals (S3 for SDGs) in cooperation with UN agencies. The main goals of the initiative are to develop sustainable science and technology to meet national and regional needs through innovation. The strategy identifies the main priorities of each state in relation to the SDGs and offers a network of collaboration with the institution's parties to support the country.[26]

The Mediterranean countries and stakeholders are also involved in the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025, whose objective is "investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development."[27] Particularly, the MSSD aims to plan sustainable Mediterranean cities (SDG 7) and to tackle climate change as a priority (SDG 13). Additionally, the strategy is constantly tracked and periodic evaluations take place.[28]

The Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership is constituted by the UNDP, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to promote joint platforms and forums to include policy-makers, academia, the private sector and civil society in a common dialogue to raise regional awareness and exchange knowledge. The partnership is taken into practise through a data portal to track the regional and subregional progress of SDGs, the release of annual reports with recommendations and challenges and the aforementioned regional dialogues.[29]

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[24] International Maritime Organization, "Global Maritime Energy Efficiency Partnerships Project (GloMEEP)," accessed January 8, 2024, https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/partnershipsprojects/pages/gloomeep.aspx
[25] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "African Regional Partnership for Sustainability and SDG Reporting (ARP)," accessed January 8, 2024, https://unctad.org/isar/areas-of-work/regional-partnership-in-africa.
[26] European Commission, "Smart Specialisation for Sustainable Development Goals," accessed January 8, 2024, https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-development-goals.
[27] United Nations Environmental Programme, "Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)," accessed January 9, 2023, https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/mediterranean-strategy-sustainable development-mssd.
[28] United Nations Environmental Programme, "Mediterranean Strategy."
[29] Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership, "About the partnership…" accessed January 9, 2024, https://sdgasiapacific.net/about/about-asia-pacific-sdg-partnership.

6.2 National Strategies

At a national level, many governments design short and middle-term strategies incorporating AI for development purposes. However, the use of AI has deep implications that need to be regulated to avoid abusive and illicit practices. In this context and considering AI a driving force to improve the development of societies, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) established its National AI Strategy[30], the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also guidelines on AI applications,[31] Costa Rica is the first country of Central America to introduce their AI Strategy,[32] the Indian National Strategy for AI (NSAI)[33] and the United States of America National AI Research and Development Strategic Plan[34] are just some examples of the multiple countries investing in AI technologies.

The competence is constantly increasing and no country wants to be left behind in the new technological race on AI. Therefore, despite having very similar initiatives, each state develops its own national strategy to safeguard their interests and influence in the international system. Considering common efforts for universal development is crucial to understand UNDP purposes but not to forget national interests and limitations is essential to understand the behaviour of the actors.

6.3 Challenges

In the attempt to merge AI and SDGs, some considerable challenges arise. Consequently, the committee must take them into account while proposing measures and solutions. The complexity of the issue obliges actors to deal with a wide variety of difficulties in different fields.

In sociological terms, raising worldwide awareness about the importance of achieving the Agenda 2030 is fundamental. In this sense, governmental efforts always depend on the nature of the regimes governing each country, therefore, there are states more willing to contribute and collaborate than others. As proved in previous sections, the objectives are ambitious and necessary, so consensus needs to be reached for a global commitment of all parties. Moreover, considering the existing inequalities between and within countries can be a determinant factor that might end up leading the

[30] Government United Kingdom, “Guidance National AI Strategy - HTML version,” updated December 18, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-ai-strategy/national-ai-strategy-html-version.
[31] United Arab Emirates, “UAE Strategy for Artificial Intelligence,” updated November 7, 2023, https://u.ae/en/about the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/government-services-and-digital transformation/uae-strategy-for-artificial-intelligence.
[32] Marco Novak, “Costa Rica presenta estrategia de transformación digital con IA,” Forbes, (September 7, 2023), https://forbes.com.es/crypto/costa-rica-presenta-estrategia-de-transformacion-digital-con-ia/.
[33] NITI Aayog, “National Strategy for artificial Intelligence #AIFORALL,” (June, 2018), https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-03/National-Strategy-for-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf.
[34] Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence of the National Science and Technology Council, “National Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Strategic Plan 2023 Update,” the White House, (May 2023), https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/National-Artificial-Intelligence-Research-and Development-Strategic-Plan-2023-Update.pdf.

discussion to one side or another. Importantly, not all governments are committed to act under inclusive policies regarding peoples in remote areas and minorities. Therefore, there is a risk concerning a potential increase of inequalities within countries.

Concerning AI applications, the world faces ethical and accountability challenges that may lead to fragmentation rather than to consensus. Determining whether a global ethical framework is necessary or, at least, under which circumstances and conditions AI should be used is crucial. Additionally, agreeing on accountability measures is vital to ensure a fair use of AI for development, including privacy concerns, while avoiding unlawful and unethical applications.

All in all, challenges need to be considered and addressed in order to guarantee a universal inclusion in the SDGs achievement process, as well as in the uses of AI technology.

7. Bloc positions

Given the worldwide scope of the topic, all states in the committee must have a say. Despite the fact that national strategies may vary depending on the regimes and policy-makers of each state, countries' foreign policy in terms of AI applications for SDGs must consider the position and limitations of the state itself.

On the one hand, developed states have national strategies that regulate AI and explain their ambitions concerning the technology. Most of them apparently commit to the SDGs, however further assessment must be done in terms of production outsourcing and other underlying practices that may contradict their public positions. Interestingly, there is a set of countries that reached their current levels of development at the cost of exploiting third countries, which allocates the former in a privileged position. Additionally, some developed states are willing to collaborate and invest in the development of foreign societies. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider whether the support is uninterested or it has underlying geopolitical interests to control foreign governments and expand their international influence. Countries included in this block are the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union, the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Republic of Korea or the United Arab Emirates.

In contrast, some developing countries face difficulties in terms of political, social and economic instability that challenges their capabilities. Sometimes, third countries intervene somehow in their economies and territories but it is very unlikely that these activities benefit the developing country. Moreover, there might be relations of dependency on third parties and/or UN offices or other international institutions. However, developing countries host the most vulnerable populations and are the most exposed to suffer the consequences of failing in achieving the Agenda 2030. Importantly, most of them have limited resources for development and AI technology is at the initial phases of its development in those territories. Many developing countries

ask for international assistance and support but it is crucial to improve resilience and avoid foreign dependency. Countries included in this block mainly belong to the Global South, including the Republic of India, the Republic of Costa Rica, the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of Maldives, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Federal Republic of Brazil or the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

8. Fundamental questions to be addressed

This section offers some basic issues that must be addressed during the debate:

- What is the role that AI can play in awareness campaigns in favour of the Agenda 2030?
- How can AI be used to ensure an inclusive achievement of the targets of SDGs 1, 7 and 13?
- How can the UNDP persuade non-committed states and stakeholders to work towards achieving the SDGs? Which incentives can be offered to all parties and stakeholders?
- Which measures can be implemented to reach the SDGs in the established period?
- Which measures can be proposed to reduce the inequalities between countries to achieve a universal and inclusive development?
- To what extent and at what price developed states are committed to collaborate to support developing countries?
- How can AI be introduced to improve existing projects? (concrete examples are encouraged)
- Who is accountable for unethical and abusive uses of AI? What can be done to protect vulnerable communities?
- How can the UNDP improve the existing Strategic Plan 2022-2025?
- How can the UNDP include AI to support regional partnerships for sustainable development?

9. Additional sources for further research

This section contains a series of materials that may be useful for starting the research beyond the content of this study guide. However, every delegate must adapt their research to the country that will be representing.

- Article about the possibilities of AI integration in social life and policy making to achieve the SDGs with specific examples for each SDG. https://ellisalicante.org/assets/publications/oliver2023_UNESCO_Mila.pdf
- Assessment of the risks and opportunities of AI integration in the SDGs practices. https://www.ai-for-sdgs.academy/ai-as-an-accelerator-for-sdgs
- Data from the World Bank regarding different topics linked to development, including climate change, environment, poverty, regional integration, social protection and social sustainability and inclusion. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic
- Information regarding the risks, challenges and principles for the use of AI. https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/ai_advisory_body_interim_report.pdf
- Partnership that works towards development to succeed and fulfil the SDGs. https://www.undp.org/news/osdg-initiative-recognized-top-100-ai-projects-advancing-sustainable-development-goals
- Short lecture on the role of AI in achieving the SDGs. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtvHrwOTc7E

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