



United Nations Educational,
Scientific, and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO)

MUNUC 34



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CHAIR LETTER

Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 34! I'm Helen Wei, and I am so excited to be serving as one of your co-chairs for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, also known as UNESCO. This committee brings together a multitude of questions that will challenge our understanding of political systems, history, and culture as related to indigenous communities, and I can't wait to delve into these discussions with you all.

A little bit about me: I am a second year in the College majoring in Biological Sciences. Because I'm originally from Chicago, I attended MUNUC all four years throughout high school, and I hope you all enjoy this conference as much as I have! Besides chairing this committee, I also chair the Inaugural Summit on Journalists' Rights at ChoMUN, UChicago's college MUN conference, and compete on UChicago's travel MUN team. Outside of MUN, I am the Vice President of Bridge to College, an editor for PULSE magazine, and I conduct research in a cancer biology lab on campus.

Through this committee, we hope that you will come together to tackle two of the many pressing issues facing communities around the world: the endangerment of indigenous languages and the exploitation of indigenous crops. Indigenous communities in every country are often ignored and taken advantage of by more dominant political powers, and as a result, their cultures and livelihoods are at stake. The issues facing indigenous communities have continued for centuries, so we encourage you to bring innovative, effective solutions to the discussion. Above all else, we hope you will learn more about the world around us, and have fun! I look forward to getting to know you all throughout the course of the conference weekend. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Helen Wei

helenweia@uchicago.edu

Dear delegates,

Welcome to UNESCO and MUNUC XXXIV! This year, UNESCO will be focusing on two issues that disproportionately affect indigenous communities all around the world. I am excited to see how the nature of our committee, with its focus on educational, scientific, and cultural issues, will shape the discussions and solutions presented over the course of our conference together.

A bit about me: My name is Emma, I'm a second-year in the College studying Sociology and History, and this is my second year at MUNUC! Last year I was a moderator for ECOSOC and I am so excited to be co-chairing UNESCO this year and experiencing MUNUC in person! In addition to MUNUC, I also compete with our MUN team, and staff UC3P: Main Page, a public policy podcast produced by the Harris School of Public Policy. I am also involved with ChoMUN (UChicago's collegiate conference), and will be a Crisis Director for the Unilever/Ben and Jerry's Transition Team, 2000 committee. Although Model UN has become a huge part of my college life, I spent my time in high school performing on stage in both musical theater and dance productions.

Although we have chosen to focus on language endangerment and crop exploitation, we hope that you will use these topics as stepping stones to engage with broader issues of cultural preservation and development on an international level. We recognize that these issues may be new for many of you, and we hope that this background guide will provide you with both a strong foundation for committee and in your daily life as well. We also encourage you to explore outside of committee and continue your own research if you'd like to learn more! I am unbelievably excited to meet you and see what you bring to UNESCO at MUNUC 34!

Warmly,

Emma Kugelmass

emkugelmass@uchicago.edu

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, was established on November 4th, 1946 and held its first General Conference in Paris on November 19, 1946. The founding body had 44 member countries and was a reincarnation of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), which was established by the League of Nations in 1922. The ICIC, with members like Albert Einstein and Marie Curie, was committed to international intellectual pursuits in a wide range of fields. UNESCO was founded with similar goals: to create an organization that could create a true culture of cooperation and peace throughout the global community.

UNESCO has pursued these goals through programs focused on education, natural and social sciences, culture, and information. The range of programs and activities led by UNESCO has expanded and broadened over the years, including aims such as promoting cultural heritage, protecting freedom of expression, supporting knowledge sharing and scientific development, and strengthening the bond between nations. Past successes of UNESCO include preserving 1073 World Heritage sites in 167 countries, coordinating tsunami early warning systems, and building youth networks across 9 Mediterranean countries.¹

Now, UNESCO contains 193 member states and each member state has one vote in UNESCO's General Conference, which meets every two years. Most work occurs in special commissions and committees convened with expert participation.² Currently, the committee contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, with goals including zero hunger, quality education, sustainable cities and communities, and climate action. UNESCO is prioritizing indigenous groups, youth, small island developing states, and least developed countries, as these groups face the most urgent challenges. Through the collaborative efforts of all member states, UNESCO is working toward a more intellectual and peaceful future.

¹ "UNESCO in Brief - Mission and Mandate." UNESCO, July 12, 2021. <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>.

² Mingst, K.. "UNESCO." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 1, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/UNESCO>.

TOPIC A: ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Statement of the Problem

Language is at the heart of everything we do. From the sounds that we make, to the words, phrases, and grammar that we use, language defines our thoughts, emotions, and dreams, and determines how we share them with others. For individual communities and cultural groups, language is at the crux of everyday life, whether it be songs, prayers, stories, or greetings. In addition to serving as a symbol of identity, language is also an expression of a particular worldview by specifying how we interact with others and interpret the world around us. Furthermore, languages are incredibly vast repositories of the knowledge and history of a group or community. For instance, stories and myths are often passed down through oral tradition which would be irretrievably lost if the language was to disappear. Similarly, a language also encodes vital information about the environment, agriculture, medicine, and other collective knowledge.³ Much of this local knowledge is developed and handed down through generations through unique, indigenous languages. In every way, language is essential to our humanity and way of life.

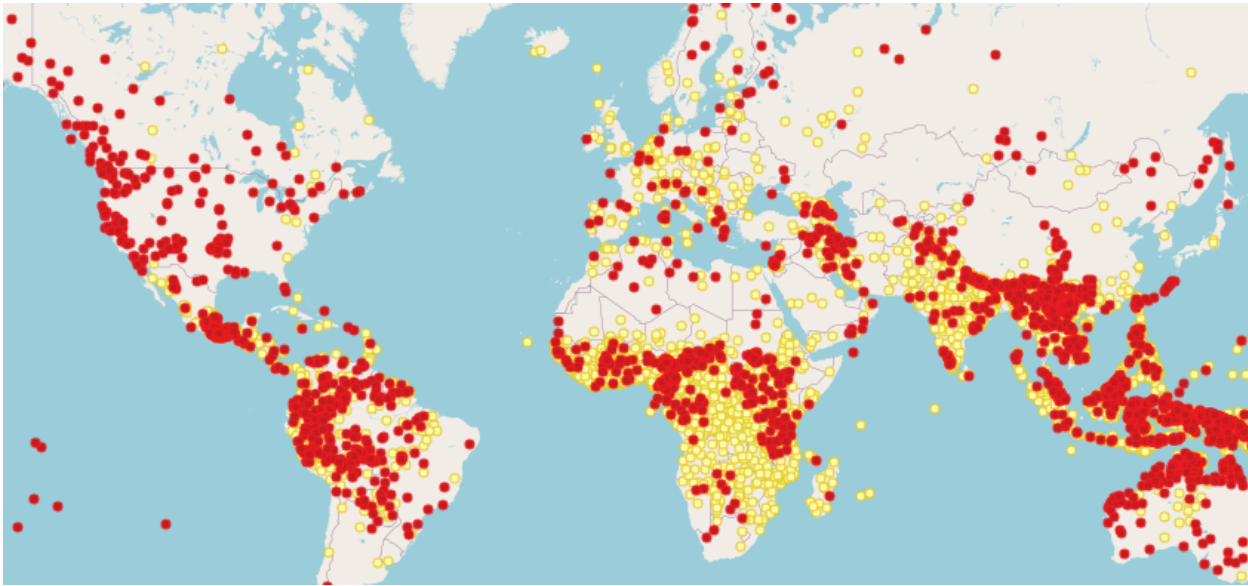
However, today, one-third of the world's languages have less than 1,000 speakers,⁴ and over half of the world's languages, by some counts even 80%,⁵ are at risk of vanishing within the next century, such as languages spoken by the Aboriginal peoples of Australia to those spoken by tribal minorities of Africa and Asia. When language is lost, the historical and cultural wealth of communities are often lost as well. An **endangered language** is a language that is no longer being actively taught or used in daily life. UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2002) offers this definition of an endangered language: "when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there

³ Woodbury, Anthony C. "What Is an Endangered Language?" Linguistic society of America. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/what-endangered-language>.

⁴ "Extinct Languages: When and Why They Die off: IIs." ILS Translations, November 5, 2019. <https://www.ilstranslations.com/blog/understanding-extinct-languages-when-and-why-they-die-off/>.

⁵ Woodbury, Anthony C. "What Is an Endangered Language?" Linguistic society of America. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/what-endangered-language>.

are no new speakers, adults or children.” These languages are not being learned by new generations of children or by new adult speakers and will soon become extinct when their last speaker dies.



Map of the languages spoken around the world. Red represents an endangered language and yellow represents a robust language (<https://www.sil.org/worldwide>).

The intergenerational sharing of linguistic traditions is stunted by both external and internal pressures. Economic, political, and social factors have contributed to the endangerment of native languages and the increased prevalence of **lingua francas**, common languages between speakers. For instance, because the global economy and official business often span multiple countries, if not continents, they rely upon languages such as English, French, Spanish, or Chinese as methods of communication. Accordingly, speakers of an endangered language often have limited employment opportunities compared to those who speak a more dominant language.⁶ Similarly, when industrialization comes to regions where minority languages are spoken, the majority language, which is often an unofficial language such as English or Spanish, is used to train employees in the new plants and factories. Indigenous communities are further forced to adopt lingua francas as a result of economic development plans by central governments to integrate indigenous regions into the industrial sectors of the economy. As a result, many native language speakers are forced to

⁶ “Endangered Languages: About World Languages.” MustGo.com. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://www.mustgo.com/worldlanguages/endangered-languages/>.

abandon their mother tongues in order to survive and secure their livelihood. The economic and financial implications of lingua francas may serve as an external pressure that threaten indigenous languages, but also have the ripple effect of catalyzing internal pressures and attitudes: parents will encourage their children to learn languages of wider communication instead of their heritage languages in order to be better suited for a global economy.⁷

Additionally, while lingua francas often become the unofficial language of various regions and businesses, government policies also often promote the use of a specific language through instituting it as an official language.⁸ For instance, political documents, road signs, and public infrastructure are commonly limited to being written in the official language. Similarly, schools are often conducted in an official language.⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Endangered Languages: About World Languages." MustGo.com. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://www.mustgo.com/worldlanguages/endangered-languages/>.

⁹ Hornsby, Michael. "Language Endangerment." Languages In Danger Language endangerment Comments. Accessed August 22, 2021. <http://languagesindanger.eu/book-of-knowledge/language-endangerment/>.



Most popular language in every country. Because these languages are the most popular, they are often the lingua franca that citizens use to communicate with each other, or they become the most popular language as a result of being the nation's official language (both at the cost of indigenous and native languages). <https://thegate.boardingarea.com/what-are-the-third-most-popular-languages-in-every-country-in-the-world/>

Furthermore, colonial forces throughout history have strictly prohibited the learning of indigenous languages through **linguistic genocide** as a method of oppression and persecution. Linguistic genocide is the death of a language through conscious destructive efforts and has occurred in regions around the world. Speakers must choose between persecution or the adoption of the most widely spoken language.¹⁰ Whether it be through physically punishing people for speaking

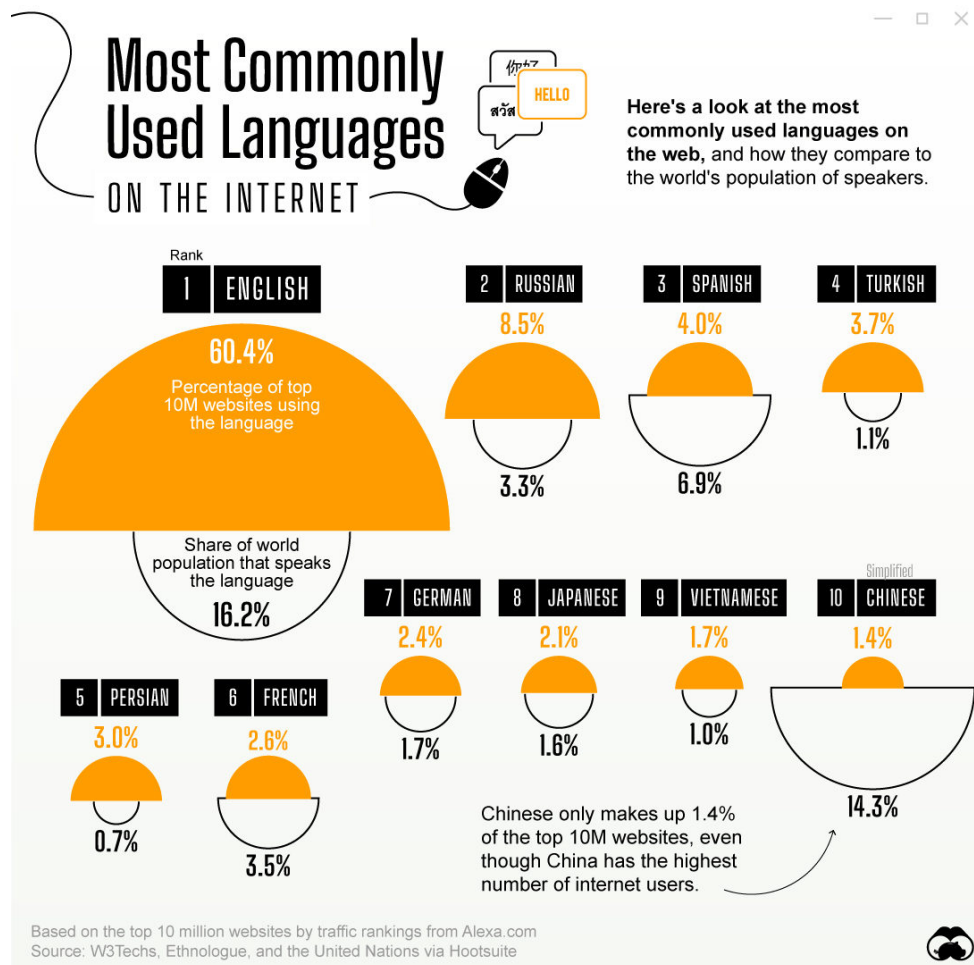
¹⁰ Newton, George. "Endangered Languages – the Loss of Human Identity." Cherwell, March 20, 2020. <https://cherwell.org/2020/03/20/endangered-languages-the-loss-of-human-identity/>.

indigenous languages, switching education systems for children to a colonial language, or forced assimilation of indigenous people, colonization has led to native language death and the perpetuation of a dominant language in many countries around the world. For instance, Turkey's ethnic Kurds have been forbidden to formally teach or even print their own language. Thus, there is often no environment in which native languages can be spoken. This lack of space for native speakers of endangered languages has accelerated this loss.

Historically, colonization by European forces of Asian and African countries has led to the distinction of English as a “prestigious” language. As European nations have colonized various nations, they have forced the spread of Western languages at the cost of indigenous languages. This is because a new community is typically founded on similar principles as the colonists left behind, and these colonies were typically expectant that indigenous societies should convert to their worldviews legally, religiously, culturally, and linguistically. Thus, through colonial laws and the power imbalance that occurred as a result of the colonial forces overtaking many regions, the cultures and languages of indigenous communities were oppressed.

Finally, globalization, mass media, and the internet, have increased the prevalence of “prestigious” languages, such as English, around the world. As countries become more connected, language diversity has rapidly declined. For instance, at many international forums and even smaller-scale events such as conventions and conferences, attendees rely on English to communicate with each other, significantly decreasing accessibility for non-English speakers. Additionally, the digital divide on the Internet is also pushing out many languages: of the 7,000 languages spoken around the world, only about 250 languages are well-established online.¹¹ These social conditions have increased learning of the dominant language and discourages the passing down of heritage languages.

¹¹ Richmond, Ben. “The Internet Is Killing Most Languages.” VICE, April 1, 2014.
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/ezvxge/the-internet-is-killing-most-languages>.



English leads as the most spoken language on the Internet, despite the smaller percentage of people around the world that actually speaks the language (<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-most-used-languages-on-the-internet/>)

Through these various forces that promote more dominant languages and detract from the passing on of indigenous languages, whether it be social, economic, or historical factors, the number of speakers of native languages has diminished significantly. As the number of speakers of a language decreases, the risk of the language becoming extinct increases dramatically. According to one study, there is a minimum threshold of approximately 330 speakers after which language revitalization becomes nearly impossible. As the language population size approaches this threshold, speakers find it increasingly difficult to use their language in a day to day context. Therefore, it is especially important that language preservation efforts are targeted towards communities with very few remaining speakers before they disappear forever.

At the present moment, there are many efforts towards preserving languages that are at risk of extinction. UNESCO's Constitution includes the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity as a fundamental principle. It states, "contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language, religion, by the Charter of the United Nations" (UNESCO Constitution Article 1). International organizations have aimed to work with linguists and experts to collect data on and document endangered languages, develop educational policy to promote bilingualism, and improve the living conditions of native speaker communities. However, despite these efforts, languages continue to slip away day by day at an alarming rate, taking with them centuries of cultural wealth and wisdom. For instance, a few extinct languages from the United States from Native American tribes include Eyak, Yana, Tunica, and Tillamook.¹² After their extinction, these languages were never spoken again and any artifacts containing those languages are no longer able to be understood. It is the responsibility of UNESCO to confront the death of languages and protect those around the world that are at risk.

¹² "Extinct Languages: When and Why They Die off: ILS." ILS Translations, November 5, 2019.
<https://www.ilstranslations.com/blog/understanding-extinct-languages-when-and-why-they-die-off/>.

History of the Problem

Throughout history, powerful colonialist governments have suppressed the identity of indigenous communities by prohibiting the use and spread of their native languages, also known as linguistic genocide. At the 1948 International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the UN Ad Hoc committee described linguistic genocide as a central aspect of **cultural genocide**. They defined cultural genocide as “any deliberate act committed with intent to destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racial or religious group on grounds of national or racial origin or religious belief, such as prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group.”¹³

The language of “linguistic genocide” is important because it is distinctly different from language death. Language death is the natural disappearance of a language that results from the speakers moving away from a language for their own reasons, such as speaking a lingua franca to conduct business in the global economy. However, this rhetoric puts the blame on the speakers themselves, rather than the social and political systems that have forcefully prohibited the speaking and spread of a language. On the other hand, “linguistic genocide” calls to light the deliberate effort to diminish the presence of a language, especially by an authoritative force such as the government. By studying instances of linguistic genocide in the past, we can identify both social practices, as well as policies enacted by the government and written laws and legislation, that have significantly contributed to language deaths and prevent the further endangerment of languages in the future.

One way in which governments and leaders in power have contributed to linguistic genocide and forced indigenous assimilation is through formal education systems. The suppression of children speaking and learning their native languages is two-fold: punishment and subtractive learning. First, children were prohibited to speak their indigenous language through physical and mental punishment. Books in prohibited languages were often burned and children who spoke in prohibited

¹³ “Linguistic Genocide.” Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. Encyclopedia.com. (August 16, 2021). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/linguistic-genocide>

languages were forced to stand in the corner or carry heavy objects.¹⁴ Additionally, shame was often used as a tool to punish children for speaking a prohibited language, such as calling out children in front of the class or rewarding classmates if they revealed to their teachers the identity of other children using the forbidden language.¹⁵ For instance, up until the 1970s, government policies banned and discouraged Aboriginal people in Australia from speaking their languages. In many cases, children were barred from speaking their mother tongue at school or in Christian missions.¹⁶ The Aboriginal people impacted by these policies are now referred to as the Stolen Generations, and around 200 languages were lost in the process.

In more contemporary times, physical punishments are used less frequently, but structural arrangements have still forced the assimilation of schoolchildren. If the children's own language has no place in the curriculum, if it is not the main language of teaching, and if there are no teachers in day-care centers or schools who are legally allowed to use the children's language, the language becomes de facto prohibited, and the children are forced to abandon their native languages and rely upon the dominant language.¹⁷

In addition to punishments for speaking their native language, subtractive learning also detracts from proficiency in their native language. In subtractive language learning, "a dominant or majority language is learned at the cost of the mother tongue".¹⁸ Rather than teaching the dominant language alongside the native language and supporting their coexistence, subtractive teaching takes away from a child's linguistic knowledge. The children are forcibly transferred to the dominant group linguistically, thus culturally transferred as well, and their mother tongue is effectively replaced.

Subtractive learning is amplified through both the lack of information about linguistic education within the indigenous community and the uninformed consent of parents. Many parents in indigenous communities do not have an understanding of the negative consequences of subtractive

¹⁴ "Linguistic Genocide ." Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. . Encyclopedia.com. (August 16, 2021). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/linguistic-genocide>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Korff, Jens. "Loss of Aboriginal Languages." Creative Spirits, September 22, 2020. <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/language/loss-of-aboriginal-languages>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hough, David A., and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. "Beyond Good Intentions: Combating Linguistic Genocide in Education." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 1, no. 1 (December 2005): 106–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718010500100107>.

language education, and encourage their children to learn the dominant language in order to improve their job prospects and opportunities. For instance, Māori leaders in the 1870s, after the introduction of state primary education, petitioned Parliament requesting that formal education for their children be conducted only in English.¹⁹ English was the language of urban New Zealand including in the workplace, schools, and even in leisure activities. Leaders and parents believed that conducting education solely in English would allow the children to fully participate in the modern sectors of New Zealand life. They didn't anticipate the negative effects this would have on the collective health of the Māori language. Because of the dominance of English and the suppression of Māori, children began to turn away from their native language first, and then Māori customs second. By the 1980s, fewer than 20% of Māori were regarded as native speakers, and even for those few, Māori was ceasing to be the everyday language in the home.²⁰ This example of the Māori people demonstrates the power of education in the survival of a language, but also the lack of information that is presented to parents and community leaders when it comes to linguistic perpetuation.

¹⁹ 'History of the Māori language', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/maori-language-week/history-of-the-maori-language>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 31-Jul-2020

²⁰ Hough, David A., and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. "Beyond Good Intentions: Combating Linguistic Genocide in Education." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 1, no. 1 (December 2005): 106–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718010500100107>.



Maori community members, photo taken around the 1900s
<https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/45735/kautā-around-1900>

Linguistic Diversity and Ecology: A Case Study of the Comcaac

Throughout history, language has carried accumulated knowledge and information passed down through generations. One type of knowledge that is crucial to the coexistence of indigenous communities and their surrounding ecosystems is traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).²¹ Traditional ecological knowledge is defined as the “knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings, including humans, with one another and with their environment”. In particular, TEK is important for the cultural transmission of agriculture, hunting, and fishing methods, protecting the habitats of endangered or culturally important species, and understanding

²¹ Ibid.

natural phenomena.²² However, the loss of indigenous languages puts TEK at risk of disappearing as well, especially because much of the information is passed down orally, endangering many ecosystems and communities.

For the Comcaac (Seri people) of Sonora, Mexico, a seafaring and hunter–gatherer culture community, traditional ecological knowledge is a vital part of their language. The ancestors of the Comcaac have lived in the arid coastal region of the Sonoran Desert and Gulf of California for millennia. However, as of 2007, there are only around 900 speakers of Cmiique litom (the Seri language) which holds the collective knowledge of biodiversity among the Comcaac.²³

The language of Cmiique litom and its phrases, terms, and expressions are indicative of the way in which the Comcaac interact with and view the world around them, especially the land and seascapes. Because of the importance of the environment to the Comcaac, places with significance are referenced through detailed names, including descriptions of the plants and animals. For instance, “Moosni Oofija”, meaning “what the green sea turtles encircle,” refers to a specific place in the ocean where turtles aggregate, and “Seenel litxo” means “where there are many butterflies”. “Seenel litxo” is also significant for human survival because it refers to a place where one would find fresh water after rains on the extremely arid San Esteban Island.²⁴ Through the names and phrases within the Seri language, we not only learn about the biological phenomena and culturally significant sites of the region, but also about what the Seri people value and converse frequently about, giving insight into their culture and way of life.

²² Kangas, Tove S. “Linguistic Genocide? Children's Right to Education in Their Own Language.” Eldis, February 2006. <https://www.eldis.org/document/A46628>.

²³ Benjamin T. Wilder, Carolyn O'Meara, Laurie Monti, Gary Paul Nabhan, The Importance of Indigenous Knowledge in Curbing the Loss of Language and Biodiversity, BioScience, Volume 66, Issue 6, 1 June 2016, Pages 499–509, <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biwo26>

²⁴ Ibid.



Comcaac (the Seri people) (<https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2021/04/02/comcaac-nation-in-sonora-demands-water-with-historic-gathering/>)

Additionally, the Cmiique litom language also encodes biological knowledge that has otherwise been lost. For instance, “Tosni Iti Ihiiquet”, meaning “where the pelicans have their offspring,” refers to Rasa Island, which is a seabird island in the middle of the Gulf of California. This name seems contrary to the fact that the island has not had breeding pelicans in the recent past. However, digging deeper into the history of the island through a translation of Italian naturalist Federico Craveri's journals from 1856, reveals that there were indeed young pelicans on Rasa Island, thus confirming the accuracy of the Seri phrase.²⁵ Without the knowledge passed through Cmiique litom, the ecological past of the island may have been lost forever.

Despite this rich history and linguistic wealth, the Seri have experienced persistent external pressures on their language and land. In particular, economic pressures as a result of globalization have forced many Comcaac to turn away from traditional livelihoods, such as hunting and fishing. As

²⁵ Ibid.

a result, much of the accumulated ecological knowledge associated with these cultural practices and ingrained ways of life aren't being passed down to future generations. Many Comcaac are also learning Spanish in order to participate in the global economy,²⁶ which threatens the health of their native Cmiique litom language.

To combat these pressures, researchers and linguists have worked towards preserving the language and culture of the Comaac. For instance, linguists Mary Moser and Stephen Marlett have created a trilingual Seri–Spanish–English dictionary.²⁷ As a result of many of these efforts, many Seri adults have regained reading and writing ability in their native language, and the traditional knowledge, including TEK, held by Seri elders is being documented, maintained, and celebrated.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Past Actions

The United Nations has increasingly acted to protect endangered languages, indigenous languages, and linguistic minorities. UNESCO has consistently been at the forefront of these actions, emphasizing the importance and impact of language on all aspects of international cooperation. This will be discussed further in the next section (Potential Solutions), but UNESCO has led member states away from the indirect protection of language through general cultural protection for minorities. Instead, more recent UN actions aim to protect minorities by protecting language specifically, rather than relying on indirect protection potentially included in related areas. The UN-adopted *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities* (1992) marks the current iteration of language protection by UN bodies. In the declaration, language is referred to as something that is both critical to identity and potentially threatened when not used by the majority.²⁸ Language is highlighted as both a worthy and increasingly necessary element of broader minority protection.

Between 2002 and 2003, UNESCO would further their 1992 commitment to minority protection by introducing multiple language-oriented resolutions, programs, and conferences. In April of 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled *Multilingualism*. Much like its title suggests, the document affirmed the social importance of **multilingualism** as a promoter of “diversity and international understanding”.²⁹ Multilingualism is more than just knowledge of multiple languages. True multilingualism is the ability to fully engage with others using more than one language. Similarly, communication is more than just basic conversations. Communication includes frequent exchanges of culturally relevant information (business transactions and employment, comedy and cultural celebrations, education, religion, shared identities, etc.).

In order to be effective, multilingualism must be functional. Disappointingly, the *Multilingualism* resolution exclusively promoted multilingualism with “official languages of the United Nations”. The official languages of the UN, also known as **lingua francas**, are English, French, Spanish, Chinese,

²⁸ General Assembly Resolution 47/135, *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, A/RES/47/135 (18 December 1992), available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/minorities.aspx>

²⁹ General Assembly Resolution 56/262, *Multilingualism*, A/RES/56/262 (9 April 2002), available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/458390?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

Arabic, and Russian. The resolution did not include indigenous or endangered languages. If the UN's answer to increasing minority protection is to focus on language diversity, and the answer to increasing language diversity is multilingualism, then this multilingualism cannot exclude the very languages that need protection and should not encourage linguistic practices (like further popularizing lingua francas) that threaten their future survival.

In 2002, UNESCO also assembled an Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages and in 2003, held a Safeguarding Endangered Languages Meeting. These two groups were composed of experts representing a variety of languages, countries, and cultures that would shape the next stage of UN language preservation. In 2003, UNESCO introduced **Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE)** assessment tools as a culmination of the prior two years' work. LVE uses a variety of metrics to quantify the current and future health of languages. LVE was presented as a multipurpose linguistic assessment tool, useful for developing revitalization and linguistic maintenance practices and developing language protection policies.³⁰ Because LVE has both survey applications and policy applications, it was considered to be wide-reaching. Additionally, by presenting a standard process of evaluation, it introduced yet another tool for standardized comparison in a socioscientific field. The LVE benchmarks are depicted in the graphic below.

³⁰UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages (10-12 March 2003), available from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000183699>.



Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) Principles

([://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality/))

The United Nations declared 2008, the “International Year of Languages” and dubbed 2019, the “International Year of Indigenous Languages”.³¹ Furthermore, 2022-2032 has been titled, the “International Decade of Indigenous Languages”.³² These awareness campaigns have been spearheaded by UNESCO and have promoted language as a critical cultural concern worthy of attention and resources. However the effectiveness of awareness is only as useful as the effort invested into this awareness. Every nation has indigenous cultures and indigenous languages that are potentially endangered. Additionally, every nation has potentially endangered cultures that either encourage or discourage language preservation and continuation. If countries are unaware of the factors that threaten languages, do not prioritize the protection of endangered languages, or do not acknowledge the importance of linguistic diversity, the issue of linguistic genocide will remain.³³

³¹“2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages To Be Launched This Month at UNESCO.” August 1, 2019. <https://en.unesco.org/news/2019-international-year-indigenous-languages-be-launched-month-unesco>

³²“UNESCO Launches the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages.” March 22, 2021. <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-launches-global-task-force-making-decade-action-indigenous-languages>

³³Khanna, A.L. “Review: Linguistic Genocide in Education - or World Wide Diversity and Human Rights?” Contemporary Education Dialogue 5, no. 2 (January 2008): 276–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184913411171>.

As a result, awareness campaigns are crucial. However, if the UN cannot provide programs and tools to address the issues presented by awareness campaigns, the campaigns are not particularly useful, especially considering the long-term.

In addition to declaring 2008 the International Year of Languages, UNESCO laid out succinct reasons for an increased commitment to linguistic prosperity.³⁴ Language was identified as a critical tool for sustainable development, which would become an increasingly important focus of the UN.³⁵

Furthermore, language is an essential aspect of the relationship between global and local communities - language acts as a bridge for cultural exchange.³⁶ 2008 also introduced a concrete practice for linguistic preservation: encouragement of **mother tongue language** policies and the implementation of multilingualism that was inclusive of mother tongue languages.³⁷ “Mother tongue” traditionally refers to the first language that a person learns and is often, but not always the language used in their home country. The distinction of mother tongue is especially important for communities where the first language or dominant language is an endangered one.

In 2007, the UN passed a resolution entitled *Rights of Indigenous People* in which critical claims were made about the importance of language protection and preservation, specifically in the instance of minority protection. In order to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, UNESCO articulated that language was an especially important tool for the continuation of indigenous histories, “oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literature”. Furthermore, the resolution identified language preservation of indigenous languages as particularly important, “despite the continuing efforts,” referencing the importance of languages “as an education medium” and necessitated both national and international action. Lastly, the resolution prioritized national mechanisms in order to

³⁴UNESCO Culture Sector 2011, *UNESCO's 'Language Vitality and Endangerment' Methodological Guideline: Review of Application and Feedback since 2003*, Towards UNESCO guidelines on Language Policies: a Tool for Language Assessment and Planning (30 May – 1 June 2011), available from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/unesco_language_vitaly_and_endangerment_methodological_guideline.pdf

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Thomas, Claire. "A positively plurilingual world: Promoting mother tongue education." *State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples* (2009): 82-91.

fully implement the goals of the resolution and recognized the importance of individual countries acknowledging their diversity of languages.³⁸

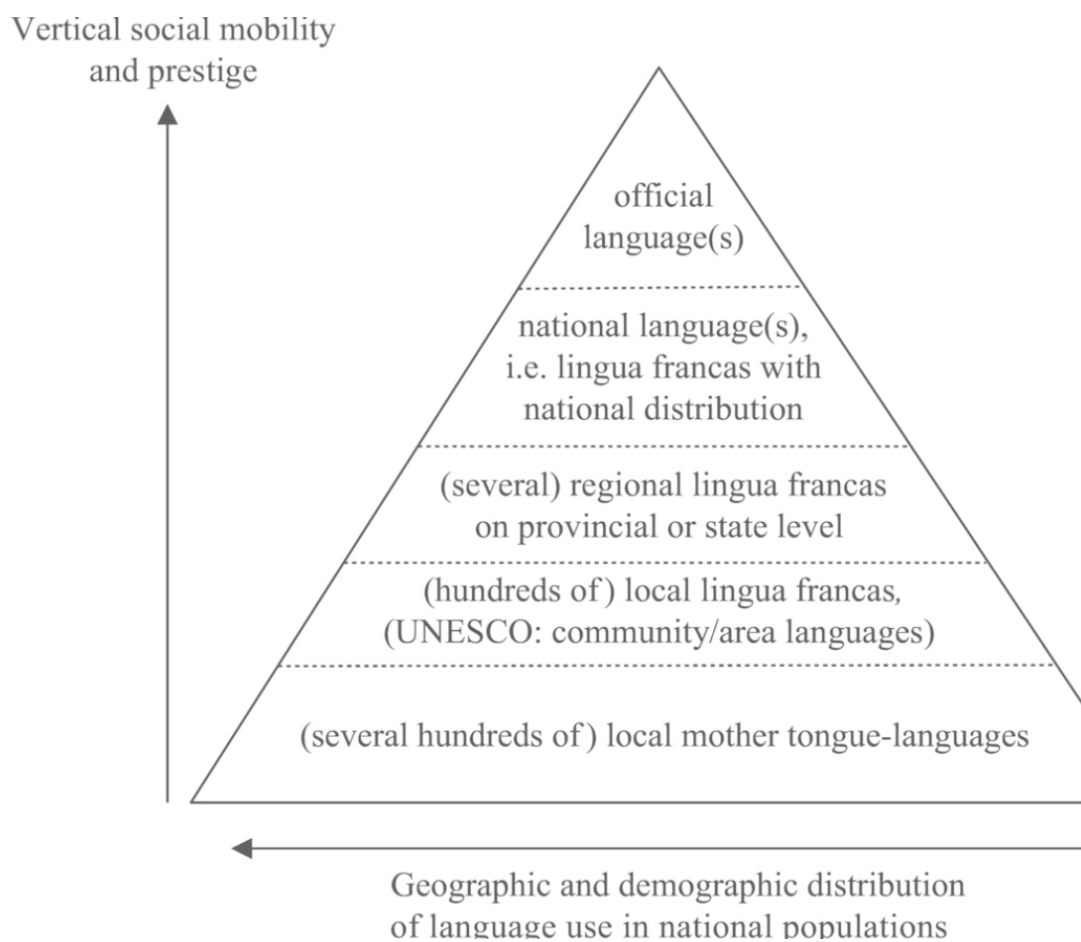
³⁸General Assembly Resolution 61/295, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, A/RES/61/295 (13 September 2007), available from https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Possible Solutions

Looking to the future, already deemed the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, there is so much UNESCO can and must do to continue the preservation and protection of endangered languages and maintaining linguistic diversity. Unlike the 1992 *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities*, we would like you to focus on solutions that prioritize the protection of language as an extension of educational, scientific, and cultural aims. Furthermore, we are excited to see how you create programs and plans of action that promote diverse multilingualism, instead of the *Multilingualism* approach from 2002 which acted in the name of linguistic diversity but reinforced the “superiority” of lingua francas, effectively threatening endangered languages further. Both the LVE Index and 2007 *Rights of Indigenous People* as well as the aims of 2019’s “Year of Indigenous Languages” provide a strong foundation for UNESCO’s next steps. The two primary areas of concern that your solutions should address fall into the following: protection of endangered languages and preservation of linguistic diversity.

The effective protection of endangered languages will require both individual action by nations and international cooperation. On a domestic level, countries can protect endangered languages by promoting inclusive multilingualism primarily through state-mandated or organized activities.³⁹ This would include the elimination of subtractive learning in formal education, providing information in the language of use for families especially those with younger children, and eliminating the ostracization of students and families who speak languages other than those used in the classroom. Furthermore, individual nations can promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity in their communities by actively working to include minority language speakers in the dominant culture instead of working against them or excluding them altogether. This includes working to improve the conditions of native speaker communities that often have fewer resources and options due to their consistent ostracization. Solutions that aim to protect linguistic diversity by introducing cultural and community reforms have both long-term and short-term benefits but are limited in efficacy by the resources and investment of individual nations.

³⁹Ibid.



Relationship Between Social, Cultural, and Financial Mobility Relative to Language,

(<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/language-and-development-in-africa/challenges-linguistic-plurality-and-diversity-problem-or-resource/7E6053A61AE291D2D9DDE78B4D977E30>)

An international and long-term solution for protecting endangered languages is the collection of data about endangered languages. Having this information will ensure the continuation of a language even as its speakers dwindle; however, it is not a substitute for the actual usage and is therefore only a partial solution. Additionally, gathering information about multiple languages, while a tremendous resource for the international community, will require the collaboration and cooperation of multiple nations to cull together and organize massive amounts of specific and particular social scientific research. Building on the LVE Index, the presentation of new standards for data collection, questions that the data should be able to answer, and timelines for research are all strong ways for UNESCO to reassert and introduce its current priorities surrounding linguistic

diversity and ensure that data collection is consistent with the body's broader educational, scientific, and cultural aims.

Eliminating threats to endangered languages will require the international community to reform their conception of language usage and linguistic diversity. The concept of "official languages" is in dire need of redress. "Official" languages do not need to be eliminated or "cancelled"; however, they should not be promoted to the detriment of endangered languages. This includes eliminating obstacles to political, economic, and social involvement that require the ability to speak a dominant language with fluidity and avoiding the promotion of multilingualism that only celebrates *lingua francas*. Furthermore, instead of the word "official" which is disparaging to minority languages, words such as "dominant" or "primary" could be used instead. Attempting to change the dominant languages of multiple countries to reduce their "prestige" would be a highly ineffective, nearly impossible solution.⁴⁰⁴¹ Instead, focusing on elevating awareness, interest, and respect for endangered languages will be a more realistic and long-term solution. Furthermore, reforming the idea of "official languages" addresses linguistic diversity and adversity on both a national and international scale.

The United Nations is committed to decolonization as stipulated by the equal rights self-determination clause in its Charter. One of the largest threats to linguistic diversity is the use of language as a tool for colonization. Therefore, in addition to the UN's commitment to language diversity as a principle of cultural and social protection, this diversity also promotes decolonization efforts and the reclaiming of fundamental United Nations principles. Looking ahead, as more and more non-self governing territories look to achieve sovereignty, UNESCO should hold up linguistic diversity as a bastion of autonomy and affirmation of pre-imperial identity. Continuing the UN's work against imperialism will require a focus on linguistic imperialism, as perpetuated through *lingua francas*, and eliminating the assumed necessity of "official languages" in an increasingly globalized world.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children, "Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education" (November 1995), PDF available from <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/PSDIV98.PDF>

The internet has been one of the most critical resources for establishing more and more international individual connections. Accordingly, technology should be used as a resource for documentation, sharing, and perpetuating endangered languages and should not promote existing threats to linguistic diversity, such as the necessity of official languages or limiting accessibility to information based on the language of use. Although these goals are admirable and essential for protecting and perpetuating endangered languages, they will be impossible without the establishment of internet identities for more uncommon languages.

These uncommon languages with a limited or non-existent internet presence are often indigenous languages that originate in communities that lack internet access and presence.⁴² Increasing computer access and usage and encouraging computer literacy in addition to using the web as a database and network for the spread of languages will reinvent the internet as a tool for language protection, rather than presenting yet another threat to linguistic diversity. Additionally, due to its international reach, the development of online linguistic resources can address multinational language concerns in an easily accessible way.

In crafting your solutions throughout the conference weekend, we hope you take into consideration the efficacy of past actions and these potential solutions, as well as bring your own creative ideas into the fold. We encourage you to branch into solutions that have never been done before, while still keeping your country's position and international diplomacy in mind. With the health of languages around the world on the line, it is more important than ever that countries work together to tackle these imminent threats.

⁴²Miguel Trancozo Trevino, "The Many Languages Missing From the Internet," *BBC.com* (14 April 2020), available from <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200414-the-many-languages-still-missing-from-the-internet>

Bloc Positions

When it comes to partnering with other countries to protect endangered languages and further linguistic diversity, there are certain considerations relative to each country's history with language to think about. Namely, countries that were or are currently imperial forces and largely responsible for language death should not continue to over-involve themselves in the domestic cultural interests of other countries, unless those countries specifically seek their involvement. Additionally, countries that share borders (including those with tumultuous relationships) may share indigenous communities and languages, and can partner together to protect specific endangered languages that they are both responsible for. Lastly, countries that have more recently achieved independence can act as model nations for claiming their unique independent cultural identity. Instituting language protection is one of many practices that reinforce a national commitment to indigenous culture and a clear indication of identity on a global scale. The following information is intended to introduce positions taken by different regions on this issue. Please do not feel pressured to assume these groups, they are only here to provide additional background that is more specific to individual regions.

North and South America

The Americas are considered to have the highest linguistic diversity compared to any other continent due to its relatively recent colonization as compared to Africa and Eastern Asia/Western Europe. More recently, countries such as Canada, the United States, Peru, Belize, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Mexico have all taken more recent steps towards indigenous language preservation and growth through both legislation and cultural initiatives.⁴³ In 2006, the United States based anti-discriminatory legislation concerning the protection of indigenous cultures and in 2019, the

⁴³ Luis Felipe López-Calva, "The Wisdom In Our Words: Protecting Indigenous Languages in Latin America and the Caribbean," Latin America UNDP, September 4, 2019.
<https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/presscenter/director-s-graph-for-thought/the-wisdom-in-our-words--protecting-indigenous-languages-in-lati.html>

Canadian government signed the *Indigenous Languages Act* with the intention of increasing protection and preservation of these languages.⁴⁴

Interestingly, there are multiple words from Latin American and Caribbean indigenous languages that have been incorporated into Spanish, the lingua franca used by Spanish colonizers. Words like “chamaco” (boys) and “cachito” (a piece of something) are commonly used in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua,⁴⁵ and Argentina respectively. Both of these words come from different dialects of the Mayan language. The Maya peoples were an ethnolinguistic indigenous group that lived throughout what is now referred to as South America. Although the incorporation of some indigenous phrases and words is a nice nod to original peoples, the Americas are an example of vast language death caused by an overwhelming dominance of lingua francas, in this case English and Spanish. Recent language preservation efforts are widely supported as is identifying with indigenous ancestry. In some South American countries, there has been a successful increase in the use of indigenous languages.⁴⁶

Europe, Russia

Europe is not a common focus for language preservation due to its low levels of linguistic diversity. Although there are languages that are specific to certain regions and countries (Catalan, Welsh, Basque, etc.), these languages are not considered endangered. Although greater linguistic diversity may have existed at some point in European history, there is very little documented evidence of these languages, and they are not used by speakers today.⁴⁷ Many European nations are responsible for major language death in countries around the world and presently encourage and support indigenous language preservation and protection programs.

⁴⁴Keren Rice, “Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada” The Canadian Encyclopedia, April 17, 2020. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indigenous-language-revitalization-in-canada>

⁴⁵“The Most Beautiful Mayan Words in the Spanish Language” Yucatan Magazine, May 22, 2019. <https://yucatanmagazine.com/the-most-beautiful-mayan-words-in-the-spanish-language/>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷Peter Bouda and Vera Ferreira, “Language Documentation and Conservation in Europe” Language Documentation and Conservation 09, University of Hawaii Press (2016). <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/lc/spog-language-documentation-conservation-europe/>

Russia, unlike other European countries, has multiple indigenous languages that can be found in Yakutia, Siberia. The Russian Federal Institute of Native Languages has made a concentrated effort in recent years to protect the native languages of the Yakutia region which include Yakut (vulnerable), Evenki, and Even (severely endangered). These languages are common first-languages for many children but are promptly discarded upon entering primary school.⁴⁸

Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea

The wealth of linguistic diversity is well-documented in Australia, where multilingualism is common amongst most Australians including indigenous speakers. Although indigenous speakers are more concentrated in some regions of Australia, including Northern Australia and in cities like Darwin, Port Augusta, and Kalgoorlie, the indigenous languages have begun to combine with each other creating new mixed dialects, similar to the kind of linguistic combining found in South America. Although these mixed languages preserve some indigenous vocabulary, they do not protect languages in their entirety, leaving them vulnerable to endangerment and extinction. However, these mixed languages have created strong modern identities for many original peoples and have created well-established cultural identities that have aided preservation efforts.⁴⁹

As mentioned previously in the background guide, New Zealand is home to the Maori people who are at risk of losing their native language. In the past 15 years, New Zealand has made increased efforts to protect and preserve te reo (“the language”) Maori due to the important implications the language has for the Maori people and their culture. In addition to working with global technology companies like Microsoft to develop translation tools and resources to connect the Maori community with other New Zealanders,⁵⁰ more traditional forms of language preservation, like the promotion of speaking first languages in primary school has also been critical for te reo protection.

⁴⁸Andrew Warner, “Russia Launches Project to Preserve Languages,” *LanguageMagazine.com*, March 7, 2021. <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2021/03/07/russia-launches-project-to-preserve-languages/>

⁴⁹Rhonda Oliver, Mike Exell. (2020) *Identity, translinguaging, linguisticism and racism: the experience of Australian Aboriginal people living in a remote community*. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23:7, pages 819-832.

⁵⁰Brad Smith, “Preserving Cultural Heritage One Language At A Time” *Microsoft On the Issues*, November 21, 2019. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2019/11/21/preserving-maori-language-microsoft-translator/>

Papua New Guinea is the most linguistically diverse country in the world, with over 840 indigenous languages, stemming from 33 different language families.⁵¹ Indonesia, which is home to 711 languages, is the second most diverse country. The largest reason for such differentiation in language within such a small physical territory is the distance between Papua New Guinea and the modern world. Despite this, indigenous languages are being used less and less, replaced with English and Tok Pisin (an English-based Creole). Tok Pisin is the primary lingua franca and English is commonly used in educational settings. The greatest threat to linguistic diversity is the trading of indigenous multilingualism, to bilingualism with a single indigenous language and lingua franca, to the exclusive use of a lingua franca (monolingualism).⁵²

Africa

Despite having the highest linguistic diversity of any continent (an estimated 700-3000 languages are native to different regions of Africa), many have already disappeared or will disappear shortly. Multiple countries have taken up different kinds of preservation efforts, but the expectation to learn and speak English, French, or Arabic, as well as more common African languages such as Swahili, Hausa, or Amharic continues to threaten the survival of indigenous languages.⁵³

Although linguistic diversity is declining like most other parts of the world, African nations have been able to maintain such high levels of diversity due to common multilingualism. The average number of languages spoken by an individual in Uganda was 4.34 in 2013.⁵⁴ Linguists have a direct positive association between genetic diversity and linguistic diversity. Because peak biological diversity is found at the location of a population's origins, this diversity is found in Africa.⁵⁵ Additionally, many

⁵¹Carmen Ang, "These Are the Top 10 Countries With the Most Linguistic Diversity" World Economic Forum, Mar 24, 2021. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/03/these-are-the-top-ten-countries-for-linguistic-diversity/>

⁵²Andrew Warner, "Linguistic Diversity Declines in Papua New Guinea," LanguageMagazine.com, June 10, 2021. <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2021/06/10/linguistic-diversity-declines-in-papua-new-guinea/>

⁵³"Diverse Efforts Made to Promote and Preserve Indigenous African Languages," Cultural Survival, accessed July 7, 2021. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/diverse-efforts-made-promote-and-preserve-indigenous-african-languages>

⁵⁴Kaji, Shigeki. "Monolingualism via multilingualism: A case study of language use in the West Ugandan Town of Hoima." *African Study Monographs* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1-25.

⁵⁵Claire Felter, "Why Does Africa Have So Many Languages?" Christian Science Monitor, April 21, 2015. <https://www.csmonitor.com/Science/Science-Notebook/2015/0421/Why-does-Africa-have-so-many-languages#:~:text=With%20more%20than%202%2C000%20distinct,be%20of%20found%20among%20individual%20African%20S.>

indigenous African communities have maintained their independence from one another, their biological and cultural uniqueness has remained as well. Furthermore, from a cultural standpoint African nations are markedly un-assimilationist compared to the cultural homogeneity of European nations, which promotes even further modern diversity. Unlike other parts of the globe, language extinction is less common in Africa most likely due to the high rates of usage in both home and academic settings, and fewer traces of widespread cultural colonialism unlike Europe and the Americas. Linguistic diversity and multilingualism varies from country to country within the African continent, but by and large, African nations greatly outrank other countries in linguistic diversity, protection, and multilingual cultural practices.⁵⁶

Asia

Throughout the Asian continent, there are hundreds of indigenous communities, with some southeast Asian countries containing hundreds within its borders (there are between 50 to 70 million indigenous people in Indonesia alone).⁵⁷ Southeast Asian nations are some of the most ethnically, culturally, and linguistically heterogeneous countries in the world.⁵⁸ According to a 2019 UNESCO report, countries in Southeast Asia are exceptionally high-risk for linguistic extinction given the stigmatization of mother tongues that threaten potential economic successes that come with using lingua francas.⁵⁹ Something that has been observed in many of these nations (in which there is an abundance of indigenous languages) is the inability for indigenous people to exercise basic human rights due to language limitations. This is yet another reason why linguistic diversity and protection requires immediate and thoughtful action from our committee: although lingua francas may threaten the survival of indigenous languages, the inability to speak multiple languages may threaten the personal livelihood of many individuals within indigenous communities.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Indigenous Peoples in Indonesia," International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, accessed September 10, 2021. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/indonesia.html>

⁵⁸ Do, Ngan Doanh M. "Linguistic diversity and ensuring the rights of ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia." *Edukacja Humanistyczna* 1 (2018): 45-53.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

China

Due to its enormous size, there are multiple indigenous ethnic minorities that are not officially recognized as such, or are not regarded as indigenous communities given their size, known history, or cultural relevance.⁶⁰ Additionally, like many other nations in which lingua francas are widely spoken even within indigenous communities, Chinese lingua francas like Mandarin and Cantonese are predominantly used to conduct research within indigenous communities, and this research is not widely shared. Or, if different languages are reported, they are identified as **dialects**, or variations of a singular dominant language and not unique unto themselves, despite being entirely different from one another.⁶¹ It does not appear that China is particularly interested in fostering the unique identities of different indigenous groups, largely due to the assumed effects this may have on the ability of China to assume a cohesive, singular identity.⁶²

⁶⁰“World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - China,” published by Minority Rights Group International, November 2017. published online by the United Nations Human Rights Council, accessed September 10, 2021. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce5b23.html>

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

Glossary

Creole language: A stable natural language created by the organic mixing of two or more other languages

Dialect: A form of a language that is unique, particular, or specific to an individual region but still shares the majority of its vocabulary with the parent language (indistinguishable from its parent language)

Endangered language: Language that has the potential to disappear due to limited use and speakers

Ethnolinguistic: Referring to a group of people that share both ethnic and linguistic cultural practices

Indigenous: Native to

Language death: The disappearance of a language; can be caused naturally by its speakers choosing to abandon the language to do non-external pressure or can be the result of discriminatory socio-political threat

Lingua francas: Common languages used by speakers of different languages, also known as dominant languages

Linguistic genocide: The death of a language through conscious destructive efforts and has occurred in regions around the world.

Multilingualism: Use of multiple languages by individuals or groups of people

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- Warner, Andrew. "Russia Launches Project to Preserve Languages." Language Magazine, March 5, 2021. <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2021/03/07/russia-launches-project-to-preserve-languages/>.
- Wilder, Benjamin T., Carolyn O'Meara, Laurie Monti, and Gary Paul Nabhan. "The Importance of Indigenous Knowledge in Curbing the Loss of Language and Biodiversity." Digital Object Identifier System. Bioscience, June 1, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biwo26>.
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TOPIC B: FOOD ACCESS AND EXPLOITATION OF INDIGENOUS CROPS

Statement of the Problem

Everyone loves food (even if you're not Gordon Ramsay). Food is a necessary vehicle of passing on tradition and sharing culture. It broadens our knowledge of both countries abroad and communities nearby and allows us to share histories and heritages. Food is an essential part of everyday life, both private and public. Additionally, food production and distribution is a vital element of social and economic development in our increasingly interconnected world.⁶³ Examining the relationship between UNESCO's member nations, their consumption habits, and the international supply chain of food distribution will provide us with a new perspective on sustainable cultural development. In order to meet ever-rising consumer demands, international food production has greatly impacted indigenous communities and the livelihoods of those working to supply **foodstuffs**, often at the expense of their own wellbeing.⁶⁴

On one end of the food demand spectrum, there is the constantly increasing demand for luxury and specialty goods. On the other, is the crippling challenge of hunger and food access. Although having access to food of any kind is the largest obstacle contributing to global hunger, another concern is the lack of consistent access to nourishing foods. **Food deserts** are regions where fresh, quality foods are in short supply and very expensive. In food deserts, people may have access to plenty of food, but the food is over-processed, unhealthy or lacking in essential nutrients, or unrealistically expensive for everyday consumption.⁶⁵ Furthermore, lack of access to nutritious meals contributes to unhealthy diets, leading to poor health and lifestyles.

⁶³ Culture and Food: Innovative Strategies for Sustainable Development," UNESCO World Forum, September 12-13, 2019, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/agenda_forum_parma_en.pdf

⁶⁴ Blending Our Past, Cultivating Our Future | UNESCO World Forum underscores culture, food and education for sustainability, UNESCO.org, September 13, 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/news/blending-our-past-cultivating-our-future-unesco-world-forum-underscores-culture-food-and>

⁶⁵ "The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well-Being," Food Research and Action Center, December 2017, <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-impact-poverty-food-insecurity-health-well-being.pdf>

Both of these concerns (limited access to foods and limited access to healthy foods) are issues frequently found in indigenous communities.⁶⁶ In many countries, indigenous communities are largely isolated from national food supply options (grocery stores, industrial farms, etc.) and are often left to rely on any packaged processed goods that they can obtain. Furthermore, the crops and foods that are traditionally eaten by these communities are threatened and destroyed by countries impeding on indigenous land,⁶⁷ making it impossible for indigenous people to sustain themselves with native food sources. Although in more recent years indigenous communities have been able to rely on commercial food sources, traditional native diets are unique to the land in order to maximize resources and foodstuffs around them.⁶⁸ If this land is used for anything other than production for food consumed by indigenous peoples, these communities won't have access to their primary food sources, thereby creating a possible food desert, potential for hunger, and/or unhealthy diets. Because of this relationship between access, options, and nutrition, food production and attainment is a critical subject in need of sustainable reform.

The irony of this overtaking is that indigenous agriculture may hold the answers to the pitfalls of modern agriculture. Since much of indigenous culture is rooted in a relationship with the Earth, as opposed to a relationship with profit, indigenous farming practices are being used to rehabilitate agriculture around the world.⁶⁹ The re-introduction of indigenous agricultural techniques, like agroforestry (surrounding farmed land with trees to produce a microclimate), crop rotation, and polyculture (planting multiple crops in one plot of land).⁷⁰

The concern of sustainable reform is especially true in countries that suffer from hunger, and for countries that largely **import** most of their food stuffs as this greatly affects the culture and economic structures of their countries as well. The international **supply chain** of food and crop

⁶⁶ Ruben, Alan R. "Undernutrition and obesity in indigenous children: epidemiology, prevention, and treatment." *Pediatric Clinics* 56, no. 6 (2009): 1285-1302.

⁶⁷ "My Fear is Losing Everything' The Climate Crisis and First Nations Right to Food in Canada," Human Rights Watch.org, October 21, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/21/my-fear-losing-everything/climate-crisis-and-first-nations-right-food-canada>

⁶⁸ Ann Gibbons, "The Evolution of Diet," National Geographic.com, accessed July 18, 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/evolution-of-diet/>

⁶⁹ DeWalt, Billie. "Using indigenous knowledge to improve agriculture and natural resource management." *Human organization* 53, no. 2 (1994): 123-131.

⁷⁰ Eva Perroni, "Five Indigenous Farming Practices Enhancing Food Security," August 14, 2017, <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2017-08-14/five-indigenous-farming-practices-enhancing-food-security/>

importation and exchange is a breeding ground for economic and agricultural exploitation because of food's essentiality in everyday life.⁷¹ Smaller nations that predominantly rely on imports are especially vulnerable to exploitation by the countries that they import from. Countries that are unable to produce adequate food supply themselves, rely on these imports to provide for their citizens.

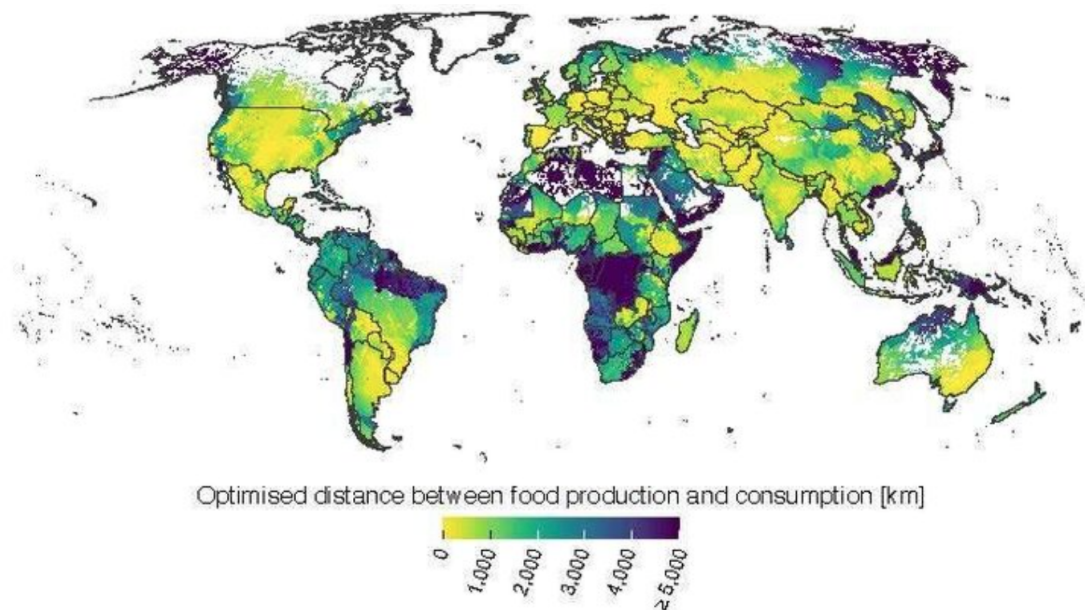
In order to afford importing food, many smaller nations rely on their **exportation** of expensive, "prime" items that are in high demand and are exclusive to their nations.⁷² However this is yet another potential sticky spot for these nations that are already living at the mercy of importation. With so much at stake, and entirely dependent on the success of their exports, these countries are at an increased risk of severe exploitation, given the pressure to meet international demand for their exports. These luxury goods include things like coffee, palm oil, and chocolate.

The following image depicts the distance between producers and consumers. As you can see, certain nations have quicker and closer access than others. Additionally, as shown in the image below, many countries with larger distances between production and consumption (the dark blue areas), are countries with weaker economic structures.⁷³

⁷¹Schmitz, Oswald J. "Exploitation in model food chains with mechanistic consumer-resource dynamics." *Theoretical Population Biology* 41, no. 2 (1992): 161-183.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³Kaitibie, Simeon, and Patrick Irungu. "Political Instability, Food Supply Disruptions and Food Security in a Highly Import-Dependent Economy." (2019).



"Distance Between Production and Consumption"

(<https://www.agritecture.com/blog/2020/5/7/impact-of-global-food-supply-chains-during-a-global-pandemic>)

Ethical growing standards, as well as **ethical transactions** in the international market are important to protect the cultural implications that food has. Ethical growing and production standards produce food without detrimentally affecting the environment, communities, and health of the people responsible for productions. Similarly, ethical transactions are respectful of the parties involved. They are honest exchanges that do not unfairly, or knowingly jeopardize either party. These are not hard and fast definitions or terms of agreements but rather a metric that we feel is appropriate and necessary for you to understand when discussing these issues in committee.

With such a high demand for food, **unsustainable agricultural** practices have become global norms.⁷⁴ Unsustainable agriculture threatens both the health of the climate and the health of consumers.⁷⁵ Unlike sustainable agriculture which does not prioritize the agricultural needs over the agricultural needs of the future, unsustainable agriculture is all-in for now, regardless of the limits and challenges it may impart on the future. Unsustainable agricultural practices include things like

⁷⁴ Verma, A. K. "Unsustainable agriculture, environmental ethics and ecological balance." *HortFlora Research Spectrum* 7, no. 3 (2018): 239-241.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

the overuse of chemicals and fertilizers which disrupt the chemistry of the soil and are toxic to humans, monoculture (growing a single crop which does not allow the soil's nutrients to be replete and leads to deforestation), underpaying workers, corporate agribusiness (buying or pushing out small farms in favor of farming corporations), overworking the soil, and many others. Sustainable agriculture can both remediate the problems caused by unsustainable practices while minimizing negative environmental impacts of agriculture and food production.⁷⁶

Sustainable agriculture has higher upfront costs that allow for greater resource and economic conservation later on. Accordingly, unsustainable practices are often used in places where it is impossible to afford starter costs for sustainability, or it is impossible to practice optimum safety due to higher labor costs. Often, food is processed using these more economically-efficient but unsustainable methods, such as spraying weed killer and pesticides across crops instead of requiring tedious weeding and including crops to attract pests away from the primary crop. The health of workers, farmers and the land become severely compromised by these shortcuts. Whether it's breathing in toxic pesticides, overworking the land, wasting water unnecessarily, or overworking farmers in order to meet demands, maximizing agricultural output is physically and environmentally taxing, and therefore unsustainable. Additionally, increased demand for certain goods burdens both the soil used to farm and the equipment necessary for production and packaging. It also threatens the ability of the nation to continue to produce at such a high level in the future.

An increased demand for certain types of foods, while sometimes the result of hunger and nutritional needs, can also be the result of health concerns (for example, a shift towards plant-based diets and an increase in demand for fresh produce year-round) or even food trends. One example of this is the drastic increase in avocado consumption over the past few decades. Although avocados have become incredibly popular, the plant still requires large amounts of space and water to grow. Additionally, they can only be grown in certain climates that are mostly concentrated in South America. Because of this growing demand, there is an increased pressure on the nations that do produce avocados, to grow and export enough to meet the demands of other nations. This pressure

⁷⁶ "Sustainable Development," UNESCO.org, accessed on July 18, 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/sd>

makes unsustainable agricultural practices appealing because it allows countries to meet export demands and save money while doing so.

To this point, sustainable food practices should absolutely be considered part of sustainable cultural development.⁷⁷ UNESCO's interest in maintaining culinary diversity addresses the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- Zero Hunger (SDG 2)
- Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)
- Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)
- Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)
- Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)

We'd like you to consider how sustainable agricultural practices, renewed commitments to indigenous communities, a focus on local food and food security, and an increased awareness of worker and land health can contribute to UNESCO's overarching goals for protecting and furthering cultural diversity around the world.

⁷⁷ "Enhancing food-related heritage in UNESCO designations to foster sustainable development," UNESCO.org, February 10, 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/news/enhancing-food-related-heritage-unesco-designations-foster-sustainable-development>

History of the Problem

Much of our current research dedicated to studying food history is focused on determining the best diet for humans in the future when considering the pressing threats of climate change. What makes the “best” diet could be any number of things: optimization of land for agricultural production, maximization of the nutrition value in food items, minimization of the economic impact of diet, consistent exploration of flavors, sustainability etc. The ultimate diet might be one of these things or it may be all of them. In search of the best diet, humans have experienced four major trends in agriculture: hunting and gathering, farming, industrialized farming, and the introduction and incorporation of GMOs.⁷⁸

Prior to agricultural development, (approximately 10,000 years ago), humans lived as hunter-gatherers. These hunter-gatherers were pushed away from prime farming land and were relocated to areas where a few communities still reside today. Foraging lifestyles could be found all over the world at one time, but the remaining hunter-gatherers can be found in the indigenous communities of the Arctic tundra, Amazonian rainforests, African grasslands, and remote islands off the coast of Southeast Asia.⁷⁹ The Hadza of Tanzania are considered to be the last remaining true hunter-gatherers. The way that hunter-gatherers eat is also referred to as the **paleolithic diet**, or “paleo” and has recently become increasingly popular due the idea that our genes still have not adapted to the kind of eating introduced by modern agriculture, or farming.

⁷⁸ Locay, Luis. "From hunting and gathering to agriculture." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 37, no. 4 (1989): 737-756.

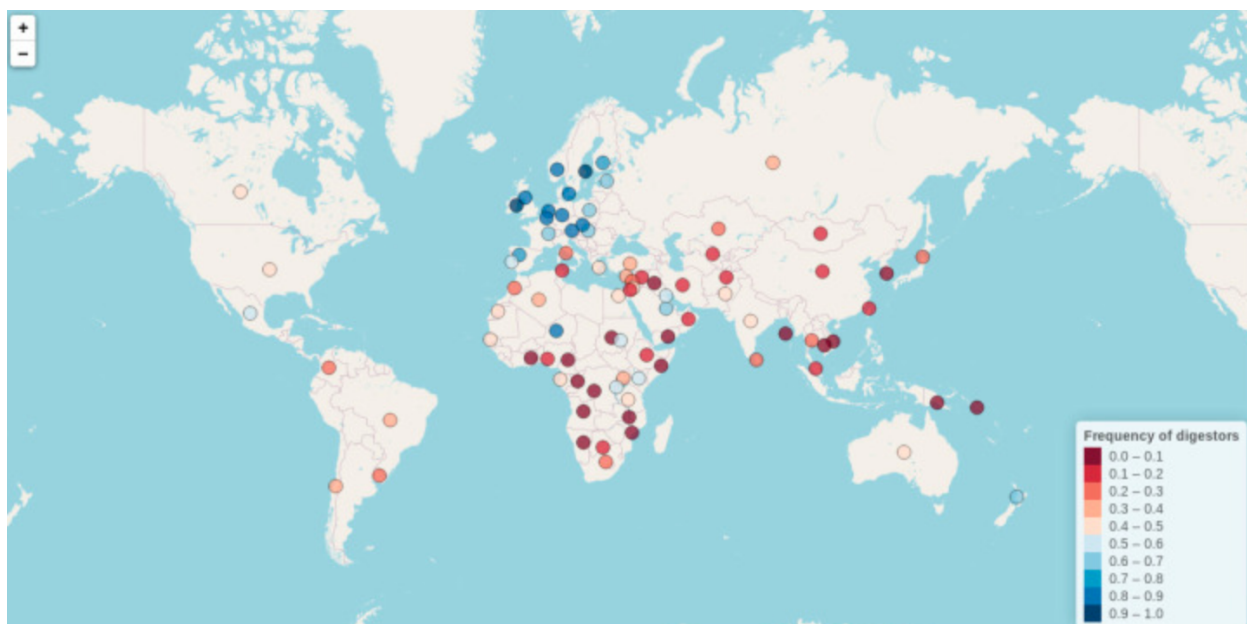
⁷⁹ Ibid.



The Hadza Tribe (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/evolution-of-diet/>)

However, the idea that humans have not continued to evolve beyond their original physical nature (including the evolution of diet) is challenged by food intolerance, especially those that affect certain ethnicities.⁸⁰ Lactose intolerance is a fantastic example of this because it stems directly from the history of cattle domestication and the integration of dairy into daily diet. The following map depicts lactose intolerance by frequency of digestion, lower levels of digestion indicate higher intolerance. Similarly, the body's ability to break down starches found in plants varies based on the frequency of plant consumption and the dependence on these kinds of foods for energy. To this point, food is much more than just survival, but a hallmark of human evolution and the development of culture and community. Food is documentation of history, showing how the world evolved into what it is today.

⁸⁰Young, Elspeth, Michael D. Stoneham, Anne Petruckevitch, Jeremy Barton, and Roberto Rona. "A population study of food intolerance." *The Lancet* 343, no. 8906 (1994): 1127-1130.



Lactose Intolerance Around the World

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7551416/>)

In more recent history, the evolution of diet and consumption has been largely affected by the increased processing of what we eat.⁸¹ In addition to consuming greater levels of animal products and non-seasonal produce (made possible by importation), humans frequently tend to cook their food before eating it. The incorporation of raw foods is much less common than it was in early iterations of the human diet (think hunter-gatherers). Cooking is one of the final stages of food production and begins to break down the nutrients in our food, so that when we eat it, our bodies are able to more readily absorb it. What this also means is that eating processed food allows us to gain weight more quickly than eating unprocessed foods alone. Richard Wrangham, a primatologist at Harvard University and author of *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*, believes that humans may have started overprocessing their foods, leading to an overconsumption of calories and causing health problems such as diabetes, heart failure, and other health problems associated with obesity. Accordingly, when indigenous communities have switched over to the highly processed, industrialized foods of modern diets, their health is severely compromised having even less

⁸¹Stahl, Ann Brower, R. I. M. Dunbar, Katherine Homewood, Fumiko Ikawa-Smith, Adriaan Kortlandt, W. C. McGrew, Katharine Milton et al. "Hominid dietary selection before fire [and comments and reply]." *Current Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (1984): 151-168.

experience with modernized food overproduction.⁸² This is why obesity is a rising issue in indigenous communities all around the world. The incorporation of highly processed foods is increasingly common in indigenous communities, as they become more and more reliant on mainstream food sources as their land and natural resources are being depleted or used for mainstream consumption and production.⁸³

A major factor in the development and streamlining of the human diet was a growing dependence on others for food. Once humans were able to cultivate and store foodstuffs, they could use these to trade with neighboring people in exchange for other kinds of food.⁸⁴ The increasing relationship between sociopolitical relations and access to wider varieties of food has continued into the present day. Because food became a symbol of social relations and was commodified, the difficulty of obtaining certain types of food meant that diet and access to certain kinds of food would become directly translatable into political power.⁸⁵ As you can see in the export graph below, many of the top exporting countries are also consistently regarded as dominant power nations in global economic and political affairs as well.

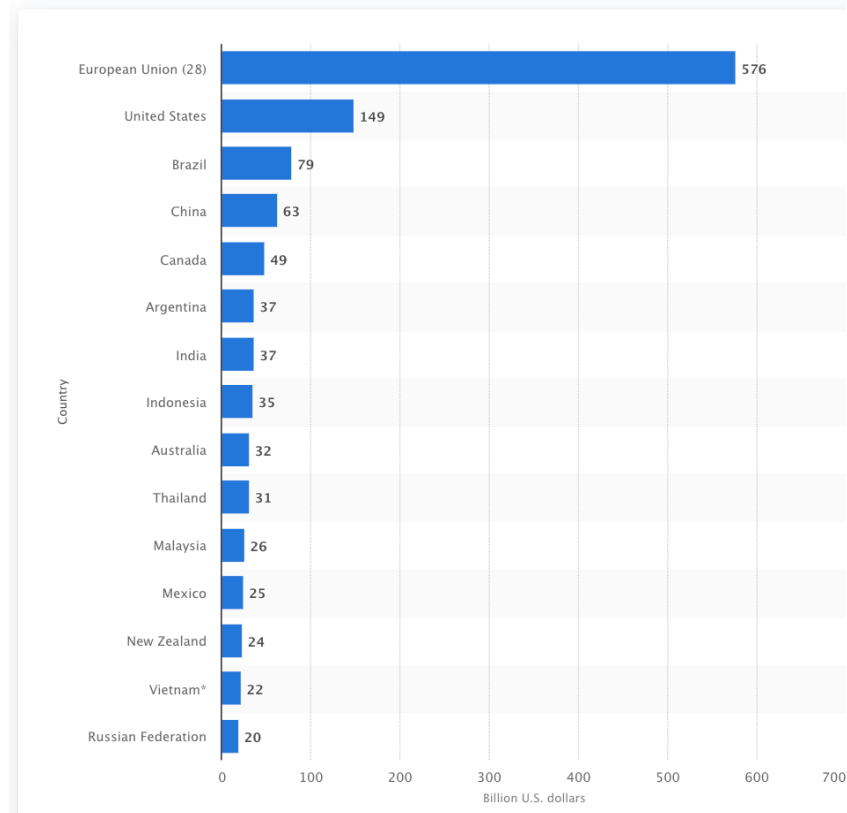
⁸² Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. First Results, Australia 2012–13. *Cat. no. 4727. 0.55.001* (2013).

⁸³ World Health Organization. *Obesity: preventing and managing the global epidemic. No 894* (2000).

⁸⁴<https://www.encyclopedia.com/food/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/food-supply-and-global-food-market>

⁸⁵"Food Supply and The Global Food Market," Encyclopedia of Food and Culture, Encyclopedia.com, July 18, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/food/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/food-supply-and-global-food-market>

(in billion U.S. dollars)



Highest Food Exporting Countries in the World, 2014

(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/236254/value-of-the-leading-15-global-food-exporters-by-country/#professional>)

This power of exportation was furthered by agricultural and industrial development that allowed for greater production, storage, and heartiness of crops in nations that experienced industrial growth and the benefits of mechanized production.⁸⁶ These advantages, as well as the often accompanying expansion of infrastructure and ability to transport foodstuffs, created unequal relationships between countries in which entire nations would fully depend on others to supply an essential resource. This dependence is significantly lessened if a dependent country can supply foods that are also high in demand.⁸⁷ However it puts significant pressure on the production of the good that's in demand, and can often lead to unsustainable agricultural practices that threaten the health and

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Amin, Samir. "Accumulation and development: a theoretical model." *Review of African Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1974): 9-26.

safety of workers, soil, crops, and their communities. This is an issue that concerns all kinds of nations regardless of exporting abilities: demand is consistently prioritized over nutrition and dependence is more important than self-sufficiency or sustainability.⁸⁸

Ultimately the **global food market** is controlled by prosperous exporting nations. Since 1961, the United States, Japan, and the European Union have controlled approximately 70% of the value of imports and more than 60% of the value of exports.⁸⁹ By reducing the value of their imports, top exporting companies have managed to gain even more control of the global food market by increasing their exports, furthering the dependence of other nations on themselves, and maximizing their profits. This dependence is also referred to as “**food power**” and has been used to exert social pressure on nations to enact reform. The United States used embargoes to apply this food power-fueled pressure to multiple nations (Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Sudan, others) in the latter half of the 20th century. Additionally, nations who rely on imports for primary food sources are at a greater risk of food insecurity. This is especially true in poorer countries where the cost of food is greater due to the fact that the majority of it is imported instead of grown or produced locally.^{90 91} Food power is both a geopolitical and economic conflict for countries and individual citizens alike.

⁸⁸ Basu, Kaushik, and Pham Hoang Van. "The economics of child labor." *American economic review* (1998): 412-427.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Barrett, Christopher B. "Does food aid stabilize food availability?." *Economic development and cultural change* 49, no. 2 (2001): 335-349.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Past Actions

In the past, the international community has taken a variety of actions, including treaties and conferences, in order to address and mitigate issues related to food and nutrition. It is important to consider these past actions in order to determine the best steps moving forward that will enact substantial change. In reading and learning about these treaties, take note the topics that were discussed, evaluate their effectiveness once implemented, and reflect upon the types of changes that were made (financial, social, legal, etc.).

In 1974, the first World Food Conference was held in Rome, where governments examined the global problem of food production and consumption. At this conference, they recognized the imbalance of food availability between developed and developing countries despite the increasing population sizes of developing nations. In order to address this issue, they called for nations to provide greater financial and policy support for rural development and established the International Fund for Agricultural Development which financed agricultural development projects and food production in developing countries. They also called upon all nations to cooperate in creating a stable world food trade with additional benefits for developing countries. Most importantly, they proclaimed that "every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties".⁹²

In 2012, the UN Secretary-General started an initiative called the The Zero Hunger Challenge which called for all countries to work for a future where every individual has access to adequate nutrition and resilient food systems. The Zero Hunger Challenge incorporates a variety of factors ranging from food system sustainability to ending rural poverty to promoting healthy food.⁹³

⁹² In *Report of the World Food Conference: Rome, 5-16 November 1974*. New York: United Nations, 1975.

⁹³ "Join the ZERO Hunger Challenge: UN Global Compact." Join the Zero Hunger Challenge | UN Global Compact. Accessed August 31, 2021. <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/sdg2>.



Principles of the Zero Hunger Challenge (<https://www.un.org/zerohunger/content/challenge-hunger-can-be-eliminated-our-lifetimes>)

In 2015, the international community addressed the role of smaller communities in food production through the Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States. The Declaration addressed the importance of promoting sustainable approaches to agriculture and fisheries, building resilience to climate change and disasters, and improving the rural livelihoods of smallholders and family farmers.⁹⁴ It encouraged work at the national, regional and inter-regional levels, and overall emphasized the importance in protecting the natural environment and resources in promoting food security. This recognition of the impact of climate change on developing nations and food production will be increasingly important in coming years.

Similarly, the Organization of American States also addressed the importance of environment and land, but specifically for indigenous communities. They emphasized the relationship between indigenous and tribal peoples and their territories, which is protected through the American

⁹⁴ Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States, in the framework of the SAMOA Pathway § (2015).

Convention. It states that the special relationship between indigenous and tribal peoples and their territories means that “the use and enjoyment of the land and its resources are integral components of the physical and cultural survival of the indigenous communities and the effective realization of their human rights more broadly.”⁹⁵ The lack of access to land and natural resources can produce conditions of extreme poverty for the affected indigenous communities because they are unable to practice their traditional cultivation, hunting, fishing or gathering activities, and thus it is important that states recognize the bond between indigenous peoples and their land, and prevent future exploitation of their resources, such as their crops. The document more specifically outlines land management policies, indigenous property rights, demarcation of ancestral property and much more; all of which can help protect the rights and resources of indigenous communities.

Most recently, the United Nations implemented the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), in collaboration with the World Food Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Children's Fund.⁹⁶ The establishment of this Decade indicates the commitment of the international community towards improving nutrition and food security for all. Through studying past treaties, declarations, and conferences, we can learn where past actions have succeeded and failed in order to create a future of greater food security and protection for indigenous communities.

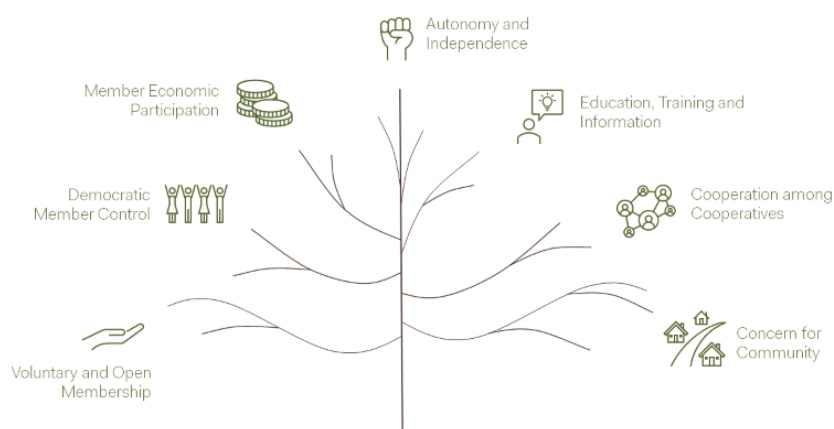
⁹⁵ In *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Rights over Their Ancestral Lands and Natural Resources: Norms and Jurisprudence of the Inter-American Human Rights System*. Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States, 2010.

⁹⁶ “UN Milestones - Food Security and Nutrition - a Global Issue - Research Guides at United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 31, 2021. <https://research.un.org/en/foodsecurity/un-milestones>.

Possible Solutions

One of the main issues is the inequity of the global food supply chain that leads to the exploitation of indigenous communities and other vulnerable groups and regions. Within many nations, there is an inequitable distribution of healthy food across socioeconomic and racial lines leading to food deserts. As a result, low-income communities, including indigenous communities, often aren't able to access healthy and/or nutritious food. In order to address the lack of healthy food, there are many possible solutions. At a smaller scale, food cooperatives, which are a type of food-retail business model in which members make decisions regarding food production and distribution through a democratic process, can provide communities with affordable, environmentally and socially responsible food products. Co-op workers are provided equitable pay and co-ops reflect their members' preferences when it comes to the food they sell. These stores are a great way to sell locally grown food and provide services to the community such as cooking classes, books, and kitchenware.⁹⁷

Seven Principles of a Cooperative Enterprise



Cooperative Business Model (<https://www.nbs.net/articles/how-to-adopt-a-cooperative-business-model>)

⁹⁷ Jill Rosenthal, Emily Gee, SEIU and the Center for American Progress, Marc Jarsulic, Christian E. Weller, Lily Roberts, Trevor Higgins, Hannah Malus and Chris Chyung, et al. "Homepage." Center for American Progress. Accessed August 21, 2021. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2016/05/12/137306/best-practices-for-creating-a-sustainable-and-equitable-food-system-in-the-united-states/>.

At the governmental level, the implementation of laws regarding permits and land use can promote the development of a more sustainable local food system.⁹⁸ For instance, more effective permitting and licensing processes can allow for vendors to more efficiently stock healthy food and to facilitate the creation of farmers markets and other spaces for vendors to sell healthy food. Additionally, laws that ban or allow land use for specific purposes can be used to stop continued development of fast food or unhealthy food retail and allocate public space for community food-growing initiatives.

For instance, in 2008, the City Council in South Los Angeles, California, passed a regulation prohibiting the establishment of new stand-alone fast food restaurants and drive-through services as a means to encourage healthier food options.⁹⁹ Other important laws within the food supply chain include strengthening worker wages, improving job quality and working conditions, and providing workers with the right to unionize. For example, Finland is known for its employee-friendly employment laws, and according to the Finnish law, employees have the right to belong to a trade union. Trade unions negotiate with employer unions on important issues such as wages and other working conditions on behalf of employees.¹⁰⁰

Finally, at the international level, the global supply chain can be improved to prevent the further exploitation of vulnerable communities. Half the global workforce is employed in agriculture¹⁰¹. A majority of the world's poorest people are subsistence farmers and fishermen. Small farmers and fishers around the world are caught in cycles of poverty, without access to education, employment, economic and social infrastructure, and political representation.¹⁰² In order to solve these issues and support the livelihoods and well-being of people working within the food system, major structural changes will be needed, especially at the legislative level. This includes the treatment of workers, knowledge transfer between nations, protecting the biophysical aspects of vulnerable communities (including biodiversity, scarcity of water, healthy soil systems), and the elimination of poverty cycles.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

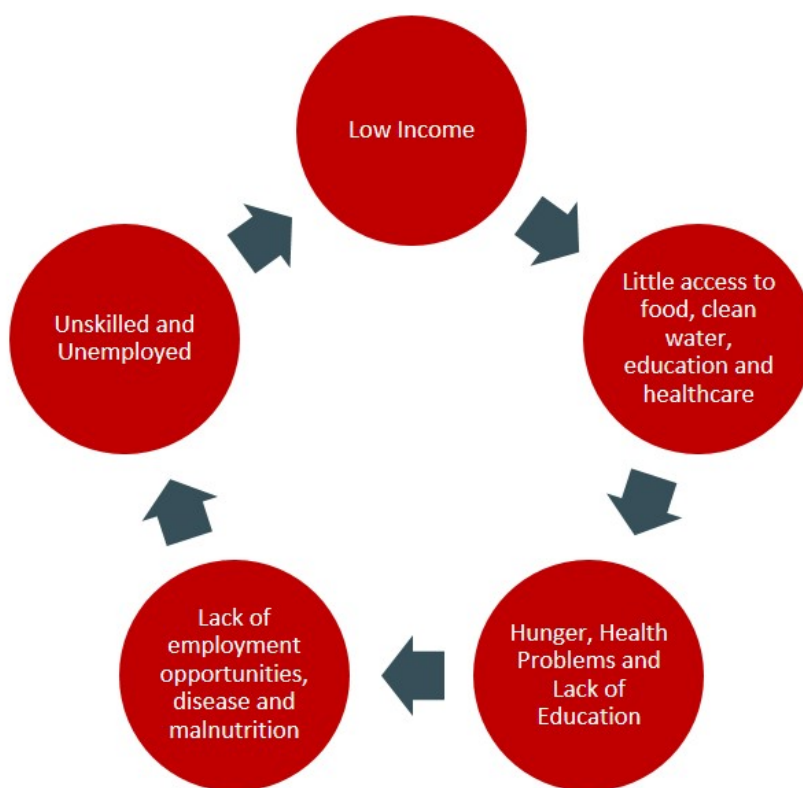
⁹⁹ Nykiforuk, C.I.J., Campbell, E.J., Macridis, S. et al. Adoption and diffusion of zoning bylaws banning fast food drive-through services across Canadian municipalities. *BMC Public Health* 18, 137 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5061-1>

¹⁰⁰ "Trade Unions." InfoFinland, May 21, 2021. <https://www.infofinland.fi/en/living-in-finland/work-and-enterprise/employee-s-rights-and-obligations/trade-unions#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Finnish%20law,trade%20union%20or%20unemployment%20fund.>

¹⁰¹ "The Global Food System: Analysing the TRENDS, Impacts and Solutions." Metabolic. Accessed August 21, 2021. <https://www.metabolic.nl/publication/global-food-system-an-analysis/>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Future international resolutions should work towards clarifying the laws in place to support workers, improve international cooperation, and facilitate global trade.



Cycle of poverty (<https://www.ezyeducation.co.uk/ezyeconomicsdetails/ezylexicon-economic-glossary/1149-cycle-of-poverty.html>)

Another main issue when it comes to the production of food that then disproportionately affects the health of indigenous communities and their surrounding environment is unethical, unsustainable growing standards. The World Resources Report on creating a sustainable food future, produced by the World Resources Institute in partnership with the World Bank, UN Environment, UN Development Programme and the French agricultural research agencies CIRAD and INRA, says: "If today's levels of production efficiency were to remain constant through 2050, then feeding the planet would entail clearing most of the world's remaining forests, wiping out thousands more species, and releasing enough greenhouse gas emissions to exceed the 1.5°C and 2°C warming

targets enshrined in the Paris Agreement — even if emissions from all other human activities were entirely eliminated.”¹⁰³

Technology can be a powerful tool when it comes to making food systems more resource-efficient and climate-resilient. Technology can be used in precision agriculture, gene-editing, and biological-based crop protection.¹⁰⁴ For example, genetically modified crops could possibly relieve global food shortage by providing bigger and better harvests for farmers. Golden Rice, created by researchers in Germany and Switzerland, contains three new genes that helps it to produce provitamin A. This could help feed the approximately 140 million children across 118 countries, especially in Africa and South-East Asia, that are deficient in Vitamin A, a deficiency that could lead to severe health concerns such as blindness.¹⁰⁵ However, a major trade-off with the use of technology is access: more developed countries are more likely to be able to afford and produce technology to improve their food systems, while developing countries and regions are left behind. When considering solutions related to technology, think about how technology can be shared in a fair manner.

Climate change threatens our future, and thus our food supply chains, through increases in temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and reductions in water availability that will drastically reduce agricultural productivity. In addition to addressing the root causes of climate change, such as greenhouse gas emissions, it is also important to address the ramifications of climate change on food security. For example, we can increase food sources by diversifying production and creating more regional supply chains, rather than ones that span the globe. These food networks will be stronger and more resilient, and are less vulnerable to foreign policy changes and tensions or major droughts and storms in different areas.¹⁰⁶ Overall, countries will need to come

¹⁰³ Searchinger, Timothy D., Creating a sustainable FOOD future: A menu of solutions to sustainably feed more than 9 billion people by 2050 § (n.d.).

¹⁰⁴ Written by Juergen Voegelé, Senior Director. “How to Build a Food System Fit for the Future.” World Economic Forum. Accessed August 21, 2021. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/four-priorities-to-help-fix-the-global-food-system/>.

¹⁰⁵ “Biotechnology – a Solution TO Hunger?” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 28, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/biotechnology-solution-hunger>.

¹⁰⁶ Holmes, Bob. “Growing a More Resilient Global Food System.” Knowable Magazine | Annual Reviews. Annual Reviews. Accessed August 21, 2021. <https://knowablemagazine.org/article/food-environment/2021/growing-more-resilient-global-food-system>.

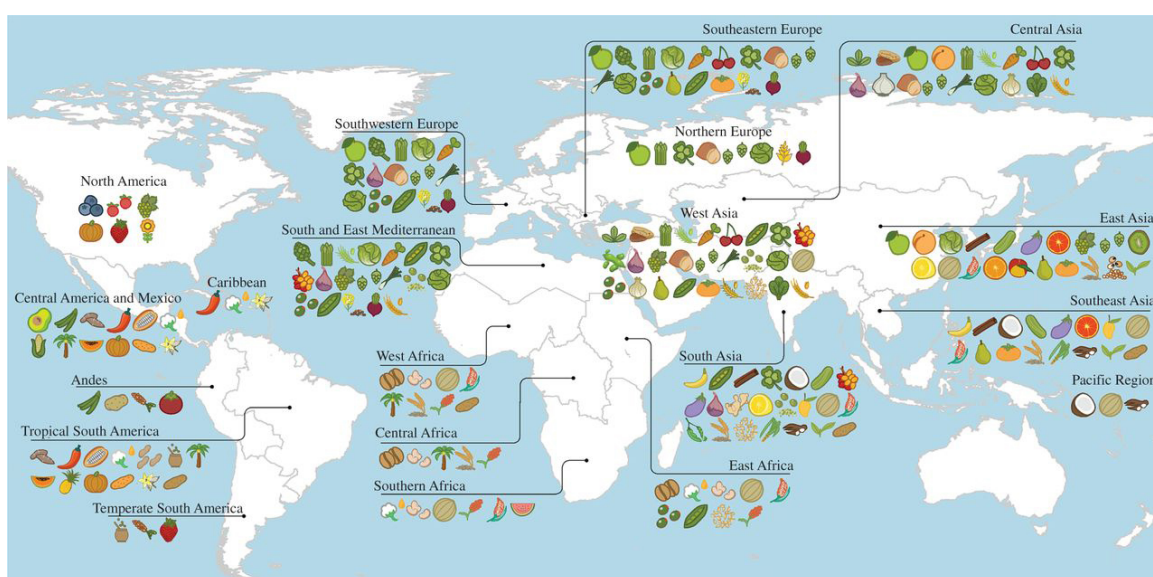
together to reconsider how food is currently moving from the farm to the table, and how these systems can be restructured for a healthier, more sustainable future for years to come.

Bloc Positions

This section of the background guide will describe the position that various countries are in as it relates to the global food market. However, during committee, please do not feel pressured to create blocs based on these distinctions, they are simply for the purposes of organizing the next few pages. In fact, we encourage delegates to work with a variety of countries in order to hear contrasting perspectives and create more diverse resolutions.

Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

These nations export enough agriculture to exert food power. Forced to rely on these nations in times of shortage, food-importing countries may face food crises if supplies are withheld. Because of their wealth of exports and the hypothetical power they have in withholding food from other nations, delegates representing these nations should consider how they can leverage their power to create a more equitable global food market and prevent any one country from dominating control over the supply chain. For instance, the governments of most food-exporting countries currently do not withhold food due to pressures from their agricultural producers, and such checks and balances should continue to exist in order to ensure the continuous movement of food around the world.



Major Crops Produced In Each Region (<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/06/13/481586649/a-map-of-where-your-food-originated-may-surprise-you>)

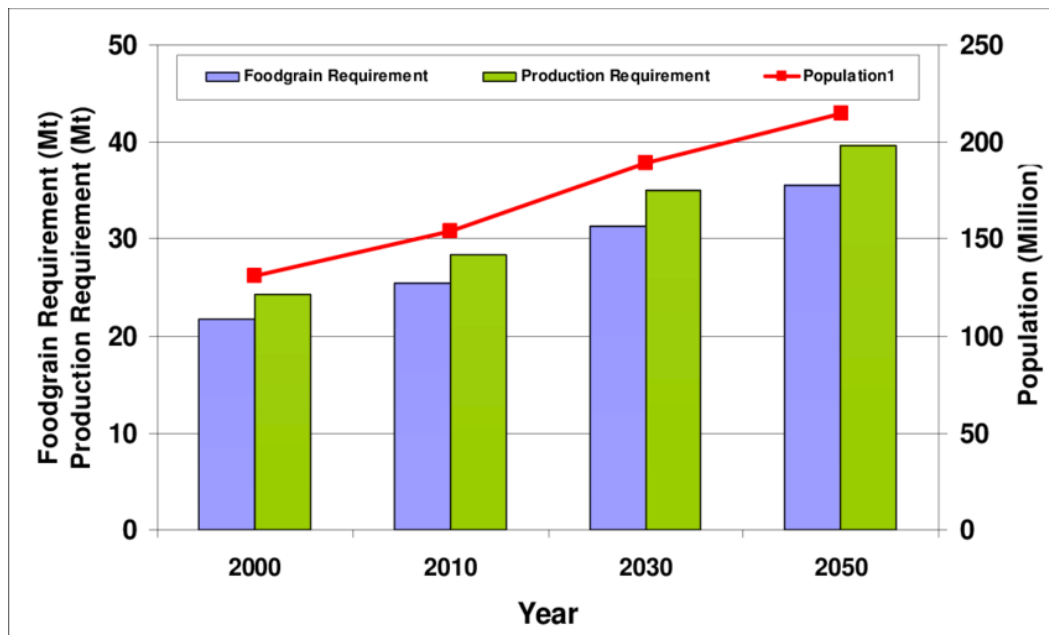
Africa

A majority of the nations identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as low-income food-deficit countries are in Africa. These countries lack the resources not only to import food but also to produce sufficient amounts domestically, which could be a result of both economic, social, historical, and environmental factors. As a result, these countries are both food insecure and susceptible to domestic and external shocks, which could affect the nutritional status of vulnerable populations. Countries identified as LIFDCs should consider improvements that can be made to remove themselves from the list, such as strengthening regional partnerships and local food systems, and solutions that are unique to their economic and environmental situation.

Asia and the Pacific Region

Much of the Asian population is under-nourished and the population is still growing. Despite the slowdown in population growth rates in percentage terms, the Asian population is growing more rapidly today (46 million more people per year) than it was in the early 1960s in absolute terms. The UN medium variant projection is that the Asian population will continue to increase until at least 2050, when it will exceed 5.25 billion people. Delegates representing Asian countries should consider solutions for how they will sustainably feed these rapidly increasing populations, as well as strengthen their agricultural trade, such as the current large-scale export of rice¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ "Developments and Trends in Food and Agriculture." The state of food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific region. Accessed August 22, 2021. <http://www.fao.org/3/ai411e/AI411E02.htm>.



Population Growth vs Food Grain Requirement in Bangladesh

(https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Population-Growth-Vs-Food-grain-requirement-and-production-of-Bangladesh-Source-Hussain_fig1_228521756)

Europe

Because of their historical positions and colonial ventures, many European countries still exert considerable influence on less developed countries, especially when it comes to their economic systems. This can lead to a power imbalance in the global supply chain, leading to the exploitation of vulnerable regions. Delegates representing these nations should consider how to restructure the hierarchy of the global food market in order to ensure that historically oppressed nations have equal, fair access to healthy food.

Latin America

The Latin American region is an important net exporter of food and agricultural commodities, accounting for 16% of total global food and agriculture exports and 4% of total food and agriculture imports.¹⁰⁸ The region is one of the few parts of the world with significant resources of unexploited

¹⁰⁸ Duff, Andy. "Latin America: Agricultural Perspectives." RaboResearch - Economic Research. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2015/september/latin-america-agricultural-perspectives/>.

agricultural land (concentrated in Brazil and Argentina), suggesting the region will continue to play a pivotal role in global food production and exports in the future. For instance, in Argentina, about 60% of virgin forest land is currently in use for cattle ranching and as cattle grazing land, but these millions of hectares of land could be used for agriculture in the future.¹⁰⁹ Delegates representing these countries should consider how to raise agricultural productivity to meet the needs of a growing world population and how food can be produced equitably, safely, and sustainably.

¹⁰⁹ Balk, Sabine, Arjuna Ranawana, Virginia Mercado, Raphael Mweninguwe, and Leonardo Rossi. "Facts and Figures Concerning Argentina's Ranching Industry." D+C. Accessed August 28, 2021. <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/facts-and-figures-concerning-argentinas-ranching-industry>.

Glossary

Ethical growing standards: Practicing the sale or production of agricultural goods in an ethical way by minimizing any negative impacts on anyone impacted by this production

Ethical transactions: Business agreements that minimize negative or unforeseen consequences for both parties involved

Exportation: The opposite of importation, the selling of goods to other countries that were grown, manufactured, or otherwise produced in the original country

Foodstuffs: Something that can be consumed as food

Food deserts: Areas of land where fresh, quality foods are in short supply and very expensive

Food power: The act of withholding or making available agricultural commodities for export by a nation or group of nations for the purpose of influencing the actions of another country or group of countries

Food supply chain: A food supply chain or food system refers to the processes that describe how food from a farm ends up on our tables. The processes include production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal.

Global food market: Food supply available to people that is often controlled by prosperous exporting nations and extremely vulnerable to economic and political interests

Import: In this context, a good that is brought into the country after being purchased by a country's government or businesses to be sold to its citizen

Paleolithic diet, or “paleo”: A diet consisting chiefly of meat, fish, vegetables, and fruit, and excluding dairy or grain products and processed food.

Unsustainable agriculture: Farming in ways meeting society's present food and textile needs that compromise the ability for current or future generations to meet their needs; for example: mono-crop farming, excessive fertilizer use, and over-dependence on irrigation

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