HAMUN 45
ECOSOC
Topic B: Eliminating ‘Brain Drain’ from Developing Nations
Letter From the Moderator

Hi! My name is Trisha Gupta, and I’m a freshman at Rice University. I’m currently studying Economics and Managerial Studies, with a minor in Business. This will be my first experience chairing at MUN, but I’ve been a delegate to HAMUN for all four years of high school, and I’ve had a wonderful time each year. I’ve been a delegate to this committee specifically two times - my freshman and senior year, first as Benin and then as Australia. I enjoyed my time as a delegate and appreciated the experience of being a part of this committee so much that I applied to become the director of ECOSOC! I look forward to continuing to be a part of the MUN community, and I hope that I can help create an amazing experience for you his year in this committee!

Committee Background

This committee is ECOSOC, an abbreviation for the Economic and Social Council, a committee that is formed with the purpose of galvanizing collective action towards a more sustainable world for global citizens to reside in. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, alongside the General Assembly, Security Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and Secretariat. Since its founding in 1945, it has been responsible for addressing the economic and social issues that come to the organization, especially in relation to the twenty-eight agencies and commissions under its purview. This Council is primarily a forum for discussion of international economic and social issues, and formulates policy recommendations to deliver to member nations and the overarching organization. Most importantly, the exhaustive list of tenets of ECOSOC include promoting a universal respect for human rights, encouraging global cooperation on health, cultural, and educational issues, amplifying social development, reinforcing the status of women, and advancing science and technology globally.

The current leader of this committee is Her Excellency Mona Juul, the 75th President. She directs this committee in championing its goals, stated under the UN charter, of promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, as a principal organ of the UN, ECOSOC is a key component of advancing progress towards the sustainable development goals, the UN's blueprint for building a better and more sustainable future for all through addressing the aspirations of achieving prosperity, peace, justice, and mitigating climate change. The committee is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. Due to reforms over the last decade, as explicitly stated in GA resolution 68/1, ECOSOC has strengthened its role in identifying emerging
challenges, promoting innovation, and achieving a balanced integration of the pillars of sustainable development. Built on its coordination role in the UN system, ECOSOC is the gateway for UN partnership and participation by the rest of the world. Productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, business, youth and non-governmental organizations characterize ECOSOC, a unique global meeting point.

**Topic 2: Eliminating ‘Brain Drain’ from Developing Nations**

‘Brain Drain’ is a colloquial term for a phenomenon more formally known as ‘Human Capital Flight’, which is defined as the emigration of highly trained or qualified people from a particular country. Brain drain has been observed in developing countries for more than 50 years, and it has negative impacts on both the developing countries that are losing highly qualified workers and the developed countries that are receiving an influx of these highly educated employees. The most often occurrence of brain drain is in the form of international education - students from developing countries move abroad, most commonly to North America or Western Europe, in order to obtain their college education and tend to join the workforces of these countries instead of that of their home countries.

As a result, the countries they leave don’t reap the benefits of the brightest minds they have to offer - instead, the innovation and stimulation to the economy that those minds could provide is funneled towards to developed country that they have moved to. Consequently, the economies of developing countries miss the impact the most educated and qualified people could offer. Those remaining in the country don’t have as much expertise or education to offer towards improving the economy and quality of life in their country, and the country suffers short-term lack of growth and loss in potential as an outcome. The academic and technological labor forces of the developing countries languish, and the cycle of emigration intensifies as a result. Given that the country will lack academics, the schooling systems will continue to lack innovation and updated curriculums, and local colleges will hold less appeal than international colleges if the academia at these colleges are not involved in equally engaging pursuits as their international counterparts. Consequently, students will continue to favor an international education over a domestic education. Additionally, the technological labor force will also stagnate without a constant influx of innovative experts, and without domestic technological innovation the standard of living in developing countries will continue to improve at a slower pace than that of developed countries, further increasing the appeal of emigration to bright students looking to study abroad.

The committee of ECOSOC has acknowledged the pressing concern of brain drain, taking the stance that global cooperation is necessary to develop a solution. Instituting policies that regulate migration will be a key component of addressing ‘brain drain’ in order to promote the positive effects and mitigate the negative effects. Furthermore, looking to promote economic development in LDCs and
motivate bright students to devote their qualifications to their home countries will remain a fundamental overarching goal.

Background

Developing countries have been facing brain drain for around half a century, since increased globalization created more ease and prevalence of migration. Brain drain has led to marginal positive effects in these countries in one specific aspect - remittances play a large part in boosting the economies of LDCs and helping sustain households. Remittances are the money that emigrants send back to their home country in order to support their family members, which often add up to considerable sums and become essential to sustain many families’ finances in the absence of children who could directly provide from them. In Haiti, for example, remittances totaled to more than double of the country’s GDP.

Beyond remittances, however, brain drain has led to long-term economic and social ramifications in developing countries. The primary causes of brain drain are known as push factors, or reasons that migrants leave their home country. These push factors commonly include the larger issues such as political instability and unemployment, but also problems that are smaller in scale such as an absence of research facilities, nepotism and other forms of employment discrimination, economic and scientific underdevelopment, and poor working conditions. The secondary causes of migration are pull factors, or aspects of developed countries that potential migrants find attractive. They include intellectual freedom, prestigious institutions, and modernized technical training, as well as the larger-scale appeals like political stability and superior economic outlook.

The actionable negative effects that developing countries feel from brain drain are very concrete and large-scale. They include a loss of tax revenue, due to the migration of potential high-income earners and business owners, the loss of potential future entrepreneurs and innovators, causing a stagnation in small businesses and viable startups, and a decline in the country’s investment in higher education and loss in critical health and education services as fewer people take advantage of these institutions.

So far, the most successful tactics in addressing the issue have related to scientific and technological policies. The expansion of prestigious universities into developing countries through the opening of branches and onsite locations, such as Carnegie Mellon in Rwanda, has been fruitful in encouraging bright students to pursue education domestically instead of internationally. Furthermore, the establishment of research facilities in developing countries encourage potential migrants to forgo the difficulties of immigration in favor of working with resources in their home country, so long as they are comparable in scale and quality with the facilities found abroad. Essentially, the establishment of infrastructure found in
developed countries in developing countries encourages bright young intellectuals to dedicate their potential to their places of origin.

Current Situation:

Right now, the United States, Canada, and Great Britain are the prime receivers of brain drain candidates. These countries have been undoubtedly reaping the benefits, as the proportions of foreign-born Nobel Prize winners, top researchers, and successful entrepreneurs in each of these countries has been steadily increasing. However, these countries have been professing that they are seeing slight negative effects to domestic employees as a result - domestic employees have been seeing fewer employment opportunities due to the high numbers of educated, motivated migrants available to fill their positions in the labor force.

Developing countries that are seeing the negative impacts of brain drain have been focusing on attracting returnees - most who migrate remain in their host country rather than returning to their country of origin, but those who do return bring with them a higher level of education, global connections, and even venture capital. The countries who have been successful in attracting returnees have noticeably surged ahead economically - in Taipei, Taiwan, half of the companies emerging from their largest science park are started by US returnees, and Taiwan has surged in rankings to become the seventh largest economy in Asia. Taiwan, China, Korea, and Japan are the only countries who have been notably successful in attracting returnees, however, especially in comparison to South America and Africa, and this can be attributed to the opening of their countries to foster investment in domestic R&D and innovation.

In the future, potentially developing infrastructure for R&D and science and technology appears to be the preferred method for mitigating brain drain, but these improvements take decades - India’s initiative to build infrastructure dates back fifty years, but has only seen recent success in attracting successful emigrant entrepreneurs to open branches domestically.

Blocs:

- North American and European Bloc:
  - These countries have primarily been on the receiving end of brain drain, and have benefitted from the innovation and intellectual stimulation migrants have to offer; however, they are also seeing a lack of opportunities for domestic employees as a result of oversaturation in their workforce. They additionally have the resources and institutions to invest in positive infrastructural changes in developing countries.
South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asian Bloc:
  o These blocs have seen success in opening their countries to domestic R&D investment but still suffer negative effects of brain drain that are only currently beginning to alleviate with the increased return of emigrants to these countries.

African and South American Bloc:
  o These countries suffer the most from brain drain, and have seen the least success in attracting returnees or decreasing the number of highly educated professionals lost to brain drain, primarily due to an economic inability to establish research and scientific infrastructure.

Discussion Questions:
  1. What policies can ECOSOC propose in order to help developing countries encourage students who emigrate for higher education to return to their home countries?
  2. What measures can be taken in order to prevent the occurrence of brain drain?
  3. How can the primary factors of brain drain be addressed within a timely manner to create change within a decade rather than a half-century?

References/Sources:
https://www.thoughtco.com/brain-drain-1435769