

ECOSOC

BACKGROUND GUIDE



ECOSOC
United Nations



MANDATE OF THE COUNCIL:

The Economic and Social Council (hereinafter ECOSOC) of the United Nations was established in 1945 and since then has been one of the six main bodies of the Organization. Its mandate (functions and powers) is described in Chapter X of the UN Charter. Amongst others, it may make or initiate studies and reports, recommendations, resolutions and prepare draft conventions always in accordance with the matters falling within its competence, which are the international economic, social, cultural, educational and health ones. ECOSOC is also in continuous interaction with the civil society.

It is a global forum for productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth and 3,200+ registered nongovernmental organizations.



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Each member state has the right to one vote and the decisions in the Economic and Social Council are made based on the majority of the members present and voting (Article 67). ECOSOC currently aims at advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental.² The Members of ECOSOC shall be fifty-four (54), with the possibility of reelection and with only one representative per member state.



Issue - 1: Ethical use of Biotechnologies:

Introduction:

Biotechnology stands at the intersection of science, ethics, and society, offering unmatched opportunities to address some of humanity's most pressing challenges. From breakthroughs in medical treatments and sustainable agriculture to advancements in environmental conservation, biotechnology holds immense promises and expectations.

However, these advancements come with profound ethical and societal implications. The rapid pace of innovation often outstrips the development of comprehensive international policies, leaving gaps in governance that could lead to unequal access, misuse, or unforeseen consequences. The ECOSOC convenes to address these critical issues.



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This committee provides a platform for Member States to deliberate on establishing equitable and ethical frameworks for biotechnological innovation while ensuring its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an agenda set by all United Nations members in 2015 to ensure a more peaceful and prosperous planet by 2030. As technology reshapes the boundaries of what is possible, this council seeks to ensure that its application uplifts humanity and preserves the environment, rather than aggravating existing inequalities or causing harm.



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Historical Background:

The field of biotechnology, in its broadest sense, has been shaping human civilization for thousands of years. Early forms of biotechnology include the domestication of crops and animals, as well as the use of microorganisms for brewing, baking, and fermentation.

However, the rapid evolution of the field began in the mid-20th century, catalyzed by groundbreaking discoveries in genetics and molecular biology. In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick unveiled the double - helix structure of DNA, laying the foundation for modern genetic engineering. By the 1970s, scientists developed recombinant DNA technology, enabling the manipulation of genetic material in unprecedented ways.

This marked the advent of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture, promising higher yields, disease resistance, and reduced environmental impact.



The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a surge in biotechnology applications, from the development of synthetic insulin to the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, raising profound ethical questions about the boundaries of scientific intervention. International efforts to regulate these advancements began to take shape, with frameworks like the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) emphasizing the need for equitable access to genetic resources and the protection of biodiversity. The 21st century ushered in a new era of biotechnological innovation.

Technologies such as CRISPR-Cas9, synthetic biology, and bioinformatics have revolutionized medicine, agriculture, and environmental science. Yet, these innovations have also worsened ethical dilemmas. For instance, human germline editing and synthetic organisms spark debates on bioethics, equity, and the long-term implications of altering natural ecosystems and already established food chains and .



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Governments and international organizations have responded to these challenges by proposing regulatory frameworks. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2000) and the Nagoya Protocol (2010) were established to govern the safe transfer, handling, and use of living modified organisms and ensure fair benefit-sharing of genetic resources. However, gaps in regulation and enforcement remain, particularly with rapidly evolving technologies.

Today, biotechnology's potential to address global challenges like food security, climate change, and public health is unparalleled. Yet, this potential must be balanced against risks of misuse, inequality, and unintended consequences. As this committee convenes, delegates are tasked with building on the lessons of history to ensure that biotechnology serves as a force for good in an interconnected and increasingly fragile world.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. Where should the line be drawn between scientific progress and ethical responsibility in biotechnology?
2. Should human genetic engineering and cloning ever be allowed, and if so, under what circumstances?
3. How can international regulations prevent “safe havens” for controversial biotechnological practices?
4. What measures can ensure that the benefits of biotechnology are shared equitably across all nations and populations?
5. How can governments and organizations protect individuals’ genetic data from misuse, while still enabling scientific progress?



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Useful Links:

<https://www.bio.org/statement-ethical-use-biotechnology-promote-public-health-and-national-security-and-fight-against>

<https://bioetica.governo.it/en/opinions/opinions-responses/ethical-and-juridical-considerations-on-the-use-of-biotechnologies/>



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Issue - 2: Impact of the integration of artificial intelligence across global labour markets

We convene to address one of the most transformative forces of our time: the integration of Artificial Intelligence into the global workforce. This is not a distant future scenario; AI is actively reshaping how work is performed, where it is located, and who is employed.

The central challenge before this committee is multifaceted. While AI promises a future of enhanced productivity, new industries, and the augmentation of human capabilities, it simultaneously poses profound risks. These include the potential for large - scale job displacement, the erosion of job quality, and a deepening of inequalities both within and between nations. The very nature of the global labour market with its complex supply chains, migrant worker flows, and stark divides between developed and developing economies makes this transition uniquely challenging.



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Will AI lead to a "race to the bottom" in labour standards as countries compete for automated investment, or can it catalyze a "race to the top" with better, more creative jobs? The outcome is not predetermined. It will be determined by the policies we design here: policies on skills development, social protection, international cooperation, and ethical governance. The world is watching to see if we can steer this technological revolution toward inclusive growth or allow it to fracture the global community.



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Historical Background:

To understand our present crossroads, delegates must recall that technological disruption is not new to the global labour market. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries mechanized production, decimating artisanal jobs but ultimately creating new urban industrial employment, albeit after a painful period of social upheaval and the rise of labour movements. In the late 20th century, globalization and information technology offshored many manufacturing and routine service jobs from the Global North to the Global South, reshaping national economies and leading to complex trade-offs between efficiency, job loss, and development.

However, delegates must understand that AI represents a qualitative shift. Previous automation largely affected routine manual tasks. AI, particularly machine learning, now automates non-routine cognitive tasks: analysis, pattern recognition, and even basic decision - making.



This means its impact cuts across sectors, from finance and law to healthcare and creative industries, affecting both blue-collar and white-collar professions globally.

The empirical evidence from the last decade offers a critical lesson: widespread net job loss has not yet materialized. Instead, AI has primarily led to a reorganization of tasks within existing occupations. For example, a marketing analyst may spend less time on data processing and more on strategy. Yet, this restructuring creates clear winners and losers.

Certain groups of workers: those with digital skills, adaptability, and access to training, are better positioned to thrive, while others risk being left behind. Furthermore, the "pervasiveness" of AI in the workplace introduces new historical challenges for worker well-being. It enables unprecedented levels of performance monitoring and algorithmic management, which can improve safety and efficiency but also lead to stress



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de-skilling, and a loss of human autonomy if mismanaged.

AI is a powerful tool for economic growth and human advancement, but its integration into the interconnected global labour market risks exacerbating pre-existing inequalities between and within our nations. The policies of the past are insufficient. We must now forge a new framework for a just transition.



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GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. Does AI integration reduce global employment opportunities or create new roles in emerging sectors?
2. Does this always threaten job security or can it enable workers to develop more valuable and future-proof skills?
3. Will global institutions implement binding regulations on AI in the workplace in the coming years?
4. Or will policies be adapted to ensure AI complements human labour without disrupting economic stability?



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Useful Links:

<https://institute.global/insights/economic-prosperity/the-impact-of-ai-on-the-labour-market>



ALL THE BEST!

