Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to **ECOSOC** CAMUN'13. ECOSOC is a very technical committee and I am hoping to see a lot of in-depth research on the basics of our not just the agenda but how these things really work in the real world.

While this is the simulation of the United Nations, I expect all members present in the committee to uphold the rules of procedure and diplomacy in the committee till the very end. You are the representatives of your allotted countries and it is expected of you to grasp the magnitude of the gathering and the issue at hand.

This background will offer very basic insights on the agenda and will serve as the starting point for your research. By no means, should you limit your research to what's given here and you are at optimum liberty to bring up more issues in the committee and discuss and debate them in the three days of this conference.

I would like to see the committee work towards unambiguous clauses and solutions and build a consensus in the committee. Research the opinion of your country's government and also the state of the situation all across the globe. All facts, figures and statements you make count hence, make sure you back them up with substantive proof from acceptable sources. Finally, the executive board would like to leave it to the delegates to decide the order in which they'd like to set the agendas.

Hoping to witness constructive debate

Ayushi Parvathaneni

President

ECOSOC

About ECOSOC

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established under the United Nations Charter and serves as the main liaison and discussion forum for the 14 United Nations agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions pertaining to economic and social issues. ECOSOC also stands as the agency where policy recommendations for Member States and the United Nations as a whole are born. Its main responsibilities include: working towards full employment and improvement of living, economic and social conditions; devising ways to address global economic, social and health issues; promoting partnerships among member states in the arenas of culture and education; and inspiring all to hold important regard for human rights and basic freedoms. On all of these issues, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has the ability to serve as the starting point for related studies and reports as well as to join in the efforts to arrange and continue with the work brought forth from large-scale global conferences on economic and social issues. The Council's purview covers more than 70 per cent of the United Nation's human and financial resources.

As a mandate of the 2005 World Summit, ECOSOC created both the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). The AMR's goal is to evaluate the work that has been done on the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) agreed upon at major conferences and summits, while that of the DCF is to contribute to the success of the work of various partners in development. In 2010, peace women monitored the AMR given its focus on actions and achievements with regard to "the global agenda on women's issues" and the mainstreaming of gender, framing its work around the following themes in 2010:

"(i) Promoting greater coherence: how can all policies be geared towards development goals?

(ii) Accountable and transparent development cooperation: how can we build more equal partnerships?

(iii) The role of various forms of cooperation including South-South and triangular cooperation.

(iv) Impact of multiple crises: Allocating resources among competing needs; and

(v) Achieving the MDGs by 2015: an agenda for more and improved development cooperation".

Source:
United Nations

AGENDA: Effective Use and Distribution of Food Resources

GLOBAL FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTAGE

The issue of food losses is of high importance in the efforts to combat hunger, raise income and improve food security in the world's poorest countries. Food losses have an impact on food security for poor people, on food quality and safety, on economic development and on the environment. The exact causes of food losses vary throughout the world and are very much dependent on the specific conditions and local situation in a given country. In broad terms, food losses will be influenced by crop production choices and patterns, internal infrastructure and capacity, marketing chains and channels for distribution, and consumer purchasing and food use practices. Irrespective of the level of economic development and maturity of systems in a country, food losses should be kept to a minimum.

Food losses represent a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs. Producing food that will not be consumed leads to unnecessary CO2 emissions in addition to loss of economic value of the food produced.

Economically avoidable food losses have a direct and negative impact on the income of both farmers and consumers. Given that many smallholders live on the margins of food insecurity, a reduction in food losses could have an immediate and significant impact on their livelihoods. For poor consumers (food insecure or at-risk households), the priority is clearly to have access to food products that are nutritious, safe and affordable. It is important to note that food insecurity is often more a question of access (purchasing power and prices of food) than a supply problem. Improving the efficiency of the food supply chain could help to bring down the cost of food to the consumer and thus increase access. Given the magnitude of food losses, making profitable investments in reducing losses could be one way of reducing the cost of food. But that would, of course, require that financial gains from reduced losses are not outweighed by their costs.

How much food is lost and wasted in the world today and how can we prevent food losses? Those are questions impossible to give precise answers to, and there is not much ongoing research in the area. This is quite surprising as forecasts suggest that food production must increase significantly to meet future global demand. Insufficient attention appears to be paid to current global food supply chain losses, which are probably substantial.

There are five stages from production through consumption wherein food is wasted: These five system boundaries were distinguished in the food supply chains (FSC) of vegetable and animal commodities. Food loss/ waste were estimated for each of these segments of the FSC. The following aspects were considered:

Vegetable commodities and products:
Agricultural production: losses due to mechanical damage and/or spillage during harvest operation (e.g. threshing or fruit picking), crops sorted out post harvest, etc.

Postharvest handling and storage: including losses due to spillage and degradation during handling, storage and transportation between farm and distribution.
Processing: including losses due to spillage and degradation during industrial or domestic processing, e.g. juice production, canning and bread baking. Losses may occur when crops are sorted out if not suitable to process or during washing, peeling, slicing and boiling or during process interruptions and accidental spillage.
Distribution: including losses and waste in the market system, at e.g. wholesale markets, supermarkets, retailers and wet markets.
Consumption: including losses and waste during consumption at the household level.

Animal commodities and products:
Agricultural production: for bovine, pork and poultry meat, losses refer to animal death during breeding. For fish, losses refer to discards during fishing. For milk, losses refer to decreased milk production due to dairy cow sickness (mastitis).
Postharvest handling and storage: for bovine, pork and poultry meat, losses refer to death during transport to slaughter and condemnation at slaughterhouse. For fish, losses refer to spillage and degradation during icing, packaging, storage and transportation after landing. For milk, losses refer to spillage and degradation during transportation between farm and distribution.
Processing: for bovine, pork and poultry meat, losses refer to trimming spillage during slaughtering and additional industrial processing, e.g. sausage production. For fish, losses refer to industrial processing such as canning or smoking. For milk, losses refer to spillage during industrial milk treatment (e.g. pasteurization) and milk processing to, e.g., cheese and yoghurt.
Distribution: includes losses and waste in the market system, at e.g. wholesale markets, supermarkets, retailers and wet markets.
Consumption: includes losses and waste at the household level.

CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF FOOD LOSSES AND WASTE

Food is wasted throughout, from initial agricultural production down to final household consumption. In medium and high-income countries food is to a high extent wasted, meaning that it is thrown away, even if it is still suitable for human consumption. Significant food loss and waste do, however, also occur earlier in the food supply chain. In low-income countries food is mostly lost during the production-to-processing stages of the food supply chain.
In industrialized countries food gets lost when production exceeds demand. In order to ensure delivery of agreed quantities while anticipating unpredictable bad weather or pest attacks, farmers sometimes make production plans on the safe side, and end-up producing larger quantities than needed, even if conditions are "average". In the case of having produced more than required, some surplus crops are sold to processors or as animal feed. However, this is often not financially profitable considering lower prices in these sectors compared to those from retailers.
In developing countries and, sometimes, developed countries, food may be lost due to premature harvesting. Poor farmers sometimes harvest crops too early due to food deficiency or the desperate need for cash during the second half of the agricultural season. In this way, the food incurs a loss in nutritional and economic value, and may get wasted if it is not suitable for consumption.

EXAMPLE :. Snapshot case: appearance quality standards

Carrot quality standards, by the supermarket chain Asda As research for the book 'Waste – understanding the global food scandal' (2009), Tristram Stuart visited several British farms in order to understand how quality standards affect the level of food waste. Among others, Stuart visited M.H. Poskitt Carrots in Yorkshire, a major supplier to the supermarket chain Asda. At the farm, the author was shown large quantities of out-graded carrots, which, having a slight bend, were sent off as animal feed. In the packing house, all carrots passed through photographic sensor machines, searching for aesthetic defects. Carrots that were not bright orange, had a blend or blemish or were broken were swept off into a livestock feed container. As staff at the farm put it: "Asda insist that all carrots should be straight, so customers can peel the full length in one easy stroke" (Stuart, 2009). In total, 25-30% of all carrots handled by M.H. Poskitt Carrots were out-graded. About half of these were rejected due to physical or aesthetic defects, such as being the wrong shape or size; being broken or having a cleft or a blemish.

Supermarkets seem convinced that consumers will not buy food which has the 'wrong' weight, size or appearance. Surveys do however show that consumers are willing to buy heterogeneous produce as long as the taste is not affected (Stuart, 2009). Consumers have the power to influence the quality standards. This could be done by questioning them and offering them a broader quality range of products in the retail stores.

Poor storage facilities and lack of infrastructure cause postharvest food losses in developing countries. Fresh products like fruits, vegetables, meat and fish straight from the farm or after the catch can be spoilt in hot climates due to lack of infrastructure for transportation, storage, cooling and markets.

Unsafe food is not fit for human consumption and therefore is wasted. Failure to comply with minimum food safety standards can lead to food losses and, in extreme cases, impact on the food security status of a country. A range of factors can lead to food being unsafe, such as naturally occurring toxins in food itself, contaminated water, unsafe use of pesticides, and veterinary drug residues. Poor and unhygienic handling and storage conditions, and lack of adequate temperature control, can also cause unsafe food.

Food is also lost during processing because of spoilage down the production line. Errors during processing lead to final products with the wrong weight, shape or appearance, or damaged packaging, without affecting the safety, taste or nutritional value of the food. In a standardized production line these products often end up being discarded (Stuart, 2009; SEPA, 2008).

Lack of processing facilities causes high food losses in developing countries. In many situations the food processing industry doesn't have the capacity to process and preserve fresh farm produce to be able to meet the demand. Part of the problem stems from the seasonality of production and the cost of investing in processing facilities that will not be used year-round.

Source: UNFAO study on Global Food Losses and Wastage (Interpack 2011)

WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences. In many countries, health problems related to dietary excess are an ever increasing threat, In fact, malnutrion and foodborne diarrhea are become double burden.

Food security is built on three pillars:

- Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
- Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation.

Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. There is a great deal of debate around food security with some arguing that:

- There is enough food in the world to feed everyone adequately; the problem is distribution.
- Future food needs can - or cannot - be met by current levels of production.
- National food security is paramount - or no longer necessary because of global trade.
- Globalization may - or may not - lead to the persistence of food insecurity and poverty in rural communities.

Issues such as whether households get enough food, how it is distributed within the household and whether that food fulfils the nutrition needs of all members of the household show that food security is clearly linked to health.

Agriculture remains the largest employment sector in most developing countries and international agriculture agreements are crucial to a country's food security. Some critics argue that trade liberalization may reduce a country's food security by reducing agricultural employment levels. Concern about this has led a group of World Trade Organization (WTO) member states to recommend that current negotiations on agricultural agreements allow developing countries to re-evaluate and raise tariffs on key products to protect national food security and employment. They argue that WTO agreements, by pushing for the liberalization of crucial markets, are threatening the food security of whole communities. Related issues include:

- What is the net impact of the further liberalization of food and agricultural trade, considering the widely differing situations in developing countries?
- To what extent can domestic economic and social policies - and food, agricultural and rural development policies - offset the diverse (and possibly negative) impacts of international policies, such as those relating to international trade?
- How can the overall economic gains from trade benefit those who are most likely to be suffering from food insecurity?

- Do gains "trickle down" to enhance economic access to food for the poor?
- How can food and agricultural production and trade be restrained from the over-exploitation of natural resources that may jeopardize domestic food security in the long term?
- How to ensure that imported food products are of acceptable quality and safe to eat?

Source: UNWHO: http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/

FOOD AID FOR FOOD SECURITY?

Food aid is one of the oldest forms of foreign aid and one of the most controversial. Food aid has been credited with saving millions of lives and improving the lives of many more, but it was also a serious obstacle in the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Nothing seems more obvious than the need to give food to hungry people, and yet this apparently benevolent response is far more complicated than it seems. Does food aid do more harm than good? This issue of *The State of Food and Agriculture* seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with food aid, particularly in crisis situations, and the ways in which it can – and cannot – support sustainable improvements in food security.

Questions about food aid's potential to depress commodity prices and erode long term agricultural development in recipient countries were first raised by T.W. Shultz (1960). Since then, some development specialists have worried that food aid can destabilize local markets, create disincentives for producers and traders and undermine the resilience of food economies. The possibility that food aid may create "dependency" on the part of recipients is a long-standing concern of policy-makers in the donor community as well as in recipient countries. The concern is that food aid, like other forms of external aid, has the potential to influence the incentives of recipients such that short-term benefits erode longer-term strategies for sustainable food security.

It has also been argued that food aid may make recipient governments dependent on foreign resources, enabling them to postpone needed reforms or to abdicate responsibility for the food security of their people. Like any other external resource, food aid may be captured by local elites who – through incompetence, corruption or malevolence – fail to channel it to the intended beneficiaries.

Food aid has been criticized as a wasteful means of transferring resources to needy people, not least because almost one-third of all food aid resources are captured by domestic food processors, shipping firms and other intermediaries in the donor countries (OECD, 2006). Such findings reinforce the widely held view of food aid as a donor driven response, designed more to subsidize domestic interests in the donor country than to help the poor abroad. Some critics even say that commodity food aid should be banned, except in clearly defined emergencies where it serves a legitimate humanitarian function (International Relations Center, 2005). Even in the case of emergency response, food aid policy is criticized as being inflexible and unresponsive to the particular contexts in which it is deployed. Emergency needs assessment is dominated by "food aid needs assessment", which presupposes that food aid is the appropriate response mechanism, often resulting in interventions that are too narrowly focused.

SOURCE: ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0800e/a0800e.pdf

Questions to consider:

1) How to prevent food wastage?
2) What sectors need to be strengthened to reduce food wastage and distribution?
3) Are there any policies that could be implemented by the governments to ensure effective food distribution and curb wastage?
4) Is food aid a necessity?
5) Can a criterion be worked out to determine a country's food security levels and necessity for food aid?
6) To reduce food wastage, how can mechanisms be developed such that the producer-wholesaler-consumer chain works with better efficiency and more transparency?

You could come up with many such questions and their answers.
Best of luck with your research!