

SEATTLE MUN 2024

Exploring Economic Dependency Through Banana Republics

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SEATTLE MUN

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2024

Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome to SeattleMUN 2024—and perhaps the BEST committee ever.

I'm Reagan Ricker, a junior at Lakeside School, and I am more than elated to be serving as your director— but I am even more excited about my incredible dais team. Your wittingly charming, superbly amazing chair is Kavya Rengan, a sophomore at Interlake, and your AD is the one and only incredible Eric Chang, a sophomore at Newport High School. If you're reading this, you have made the wonderful—and most importantly, right— committee choice of the High Level Political Forum and we look forward to creating a MUN-derful experience for you (pun intended!).

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is arguably the UN's most central body to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. With the help of 17 SDGs, each with a specific goal on maintaining global sustainability and structure, it is more important than ever to constantly be assessing our progress (and at times, lack thereof). At times however, these proposed ideas of sustainability may directly attack your country's systems of governance and order— it is your job to balance your understanding of your position as a country alongside your role as a larger puzzle piece towards a bigger picture of prosperity.

It is universally held that the Cold War was the catalyst for the decolonization efforts of countless countries—and yet modern day neocolonialism has arguably almost rolled back many of those campaigns. With the ability to materialize as a country's economic dependency on another, influence of voting processes, resource exploitation and the privatization of certain markets, it goes without saying many countries are now forced to deal with a new form of colonization. But the nuances of neocolonialism are never ending—and the debate is much larger than oppressors against the oppressed. Historically, HLPF has instead chosen to focus on environmental sustainability, exploring the viability of universally clean water, climate justice and healthcare. Instead, it is our intention with the HLPF at SeattleMUN 2024

to refocus these conversations. Thus, our topic for SeattleMUN 2024 will explore the economic dependency of countries through banana republics.

Position Papers will be required for award eligibility and are due by February 18th at 11:59 PM. While delegates should follow traditional Position Paper guidelines (a brief introduction of the topic, a comprehensive breakdown of the country's position on the topic(s), and possible solutions), delegates are strongly encouraged to be creative with their resolutions and to try their best to deeply explore the nuances of the topics at hand. Further instructions on how to write a Position Paper can be found on the SeattleMUN website under resources. This background guide is an excellent jumping-off point for research; however, to fully explore the complexities of creating and preserving sustainable systems, it is important for delegates to fully explore the complexities of their own position first.

I, along with the rest of your fabulous dais team, am so incredibly excited to be a part of HLPF, whose vision involves creating peace and prosperity on a global scale. Achieving this certainly won't be easy but we have full confidence that the fruitful work during SeattleMUN 2024 will be a fantastic stepping stone. We look forward to seeing each and every one of you conduct debate, enact solutions and collaborate — as the committee name implies—at a high political level. (That is of course, not to say your Dais isn't also looking forward to a little bit of karaoke during Fun Mun...). Happy researching and see you soon!

Reagan Ricker

Director | SeattleMUN (HLPF)

Seattle Model United Nations 2024

Committee Overview

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is an economic and social council of the UN that was created to implement the sustainable development goals of the UN on a global scale. Aside from implementing these goals in countries worldwide, the HLPF works to increase political stability and help fund sustainable infrastructure creation, especially in underdeveloped countries.

Established in September of 2013, the HLPF was created to replace the previously existing Commission on Sustainable Development, due to growing concerns about the sustainability of the planet and its resources. The UN had created the sustainable development goals to give countries benchmarks to reach and progress points to work towards in their development as a nation, but there was no actual implementation in many countries, which raised major concerns about the effectiveness of the UN in aiding developing countries with these goals in mind.

Thus, the HLPF was formed. Ever since its creation, the HLPF's main objective is to assist countries in attempts to follow the UN's 17 sustainable development goals by providing resources to help them attain these goals and create councils to monitor them in their attempts to reach these goals. In the past, the HLPF has been more focused on what it considers its largest global issue: eradicating poverty.

The HLPF largely relies on voluntary participation from governments. Countries are requested to conduct voluntary national reviews (VNRs) to aid the HLPF in enforcing the sustainable development goals. Most of the initiatives considered in the HLPF require support from governments to ensure that they are working in the best interests of everyone involved. These VNRs and regular reviews are conducted with the intention of pushing countries towards more sustainable infrastructure through government and UN funding, as well as increased political stability to ensure that these measures are implemented effectively.

Topic Intro

Coined in 1904 to describe Latin American countries whose economy relied heavily and usually solely on the export of bananas, the term "banana republic" was used to refer to bananas themselves. The term has now become associated with much

more than the influence of the yellow fruit. Nowadays, the term banana republic refers to any developing country whose economy relies purely on one product or industry. These countries experience the same gross and complicated issues of foreign dependency.

The New Imperialism period (1833-1914), characterized by colonial expansion was one of the main reasons why both World War II and the Cold War were seen as perfect opportunities to redefine the global stage in a postwar world. Indeed, many countries— particularly those in Africa and later in South America—seized their chance to gain overdue independence. But even for the countries that were able to do so, many are still trapped under the iron grip of colonial powers through trade dependency. With economies like Nigeria, whose exportation of oil is responsible for 99% of the country's money, or Cuba, where exportation of sugar to Western states makes up 77% of its economy, some historians would argue that these countries, while sovereign, aren't yet entirely free. This utterly disproportionate dependency on exportation from a singular product leads itself to exposed political and economical systems, and makes said country vulnerable to continued exploitation. The ramifications are severe. And it begs the question: what happens to a country like Zambia, whose mining of copper produces 87% of the country's overall wealth, when the copper runs out?

In accordance with the United Nation's 12th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of "responsible consumption and production," the High Level Political Forum wishes to turn its attention to the implications of banana republics on a global scale, in hopes to create more sustainable avenues of both consumption and production for the future.

Working to achieve the 12th goal requires the nuanced navigation of individual countries' economies, and exploring how to shift the entire economy of a country to rely on other products as well (or how to become independent of foreign exportation entirely).

In a term now known as internal colonization, countries must grapple with the support of these banana republics and the exploitation of their citizens by their own leaders.. Dictators such as General Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and the Somoza

Dynasty in Nicaragua have proven that a desire for money trumps all—even the lives of your own people.

Internal colonialism remains one of the biggest issues on the contemporary political stage yet, and remains a main contributor as to why some banana republics actively advocate for the chance to stay banana republics.

Although coined in 1904, banana republics very much live on. While no longer under the same names, the companies from which the term originates still litter the aisles of your local Costco and grocery stores. Standard Fruit, one of the major fruit plantation owners in Honduras was renamed to Dole, the company responsible for the pineapple frozen yogurt notorious at Disneyland and in 1976, the United Fruit company was bought out and renamed to Chiquita bananas. Delegates must reconcile both with the historic and contemporary implications of banana republics if they are to even come close to moving towards a sustainable future.

Topic History

In 1870, American sailor and businessman Captain Lorenzo Dow Baker bought bananas in Jamaica for one shilling. What would happen next—when he eventually returned to the United States and sold them in Jersey City for \$2—would go on to define the next century of bloodshed and colonization of Latin America, and the birth of what would later become “banana republics.”

But of course, it didn't start out as a project of colonization: with the invention of refrigeration, companies quickly realized they could store food for longer...long enough to transport them to the States. Just three decades later, having noticed what great potential lay in Latin America, the Boston Fruit Company proposed a merger in 1899 with Minor C. Keith, who owned three banana companies alongside an extensive railroad system in Central America. And with this, the United Fruit Company was born.

But the United Fruit Company didn't only deal in the importation of bananas. Instead, it ruthlessly acquired railroad and telegraph companies as subsidiaries, which it used to pitch itself as a credible partner for development and modernization, in order to win land concessions. There was blood on the bananas they grew. Their growth came at the terrible cost of the exploitation of indigenous and native peoples

as they seized some of these countries' most important infrastructure, including hospitals and ports. By the mid-20th century, the company owned over 600,000 acres in Central America and the Caribbean, and by 1930, United Fruit Company controlled 90% of the banana import business in the United States and was the largest employer in Central America. The colonial powers like the United States were the ones exerting these examples of gross exploitation, but that didn't mean the presidents and political governors weren't complicit. Local business elites and military strongmen like Dominican president General Trujillo and the Somoza Dynasty in Nicaragua eagerly partnered up with the United Fruit Company: there may have been blood on those bananas, but as long as it wasn't theirs, the fruit was just the same to these Central American dictators.

But that's not to say there weren't signs of hope. In the mid 20th century, Guatemala found itself under a new president, Dr. Juan Jose Arévalo, who ran on a platform of addressing human rights violations and promised reform to the presidency. Followed by Colonel Jacobo Arbenz in the 1951 democratic elections, Guatemala continued to see a rise in political freedoms by allowing Communists in Guatemala to participate in politics. By 1952, Arbenz had expropriated 225,000 acres and made them available to rural workers and farmers at a time when just two percent of landowners owned 70% of usable agrarian lands, and farm laborers were kept in a form of debt slavery. But the United Fruit Company still stood in his way.

Guatemala therefore offered to pay them \$1,185,000 for their land: precisely what the company had said the land was worth when calculating its value for taxation. But the company knew what was actually at stake: political control over the land and people of Guatemala.

Instead, they claimed that the land was actually worth a much larger figure than its own assessment: \$19,355,000. When the government refused to relent, The United Fruit Company called U.S. President Eisenhower for backup and with the help of the U.S., who was growing increasingly concerned over the "communist" reforms so close to home, the company began a massive anti-communist propaganda effort against Guatemala in the U.S. press. In 1954, they removed Arbenz and eventually replaced him with dictator Colonel Castillo Armas, effectively rolling back all of the reforms in place. Although democratically elected governments returned after 1996,

economic inequality that has its roots in the United Fruit era continues into the 21st century in Guatemala, where more than half the population lives in poverty, despite modern companies like Chiquita continuing to profit heavily.

Other countries like Honduras serve as examples of how and why it's so difficult to break the cycle of economic dependencies early banana republics created. In 1910, Cuyamel Fruit Company bought land for banana plantations in Honduras—but that wasn't their only goal. In 1911 Cuyamel's founder, Samuel Zemurray orchestrated a coup d'état, effectively replacing the Honduran government with Manuel Bonilla, who gave concessions to foreign businesses. The resulting political instability led to economic stagnation; Honduras's foreign debt grew, which further undermined Bonilla's government and gave the corporations more power.

While banana republics were created by large colonial powers, the intersectionality of today's day and age has made it so companies like the United Fruit Company are not the only perpetrators of exploitative economic dependency. It is only through understanding the subtleties of power in banana republics that delegates might better understand the nuances of contemporary banana republics.

Past Action

Banana republics have been a pressing issue since the creation of the United Fruit Company's creation. Action to combat the economic dependencies have mainly been taken through the passing of acts to ensure some economic stability to those countries or reform movements. The HLPF has also established general initiatives that cover economic aspects of production, in which economic dependencies have been tackled. However, there is also pressure to maintain banana republics because of the numerous farming, processing, packing, and shipping labor jobs opened in countries such as Costa Rica, Honduras, and Ecuador that provide crucial jobs for laborers who cannot find jobs elsewhere.

The establishment of these banana republics has given rise to disputes between the banana republic countries and the economically free countries throughout history due to economic interests between the two clashing against each other. This controversy has culminated in movements and agreements to establish

more equitable conditions in the trade of resources as well as protests against large corporations.

The International Banana Agreement (IBA) of 1974, which was signed by Latin America, the EU, and the US, aimed to establish fair and sustainable conditions in the global banana trade, which had been riddled with price fluctuations and economic imbalances. It was mainly aimed to support the massive banana exports in areas such as Latin America and the Caribbean. The IBA established a quota system, in which countries importing would agree to purchase only a certain percentage of total resources. Furthermore, an export price range was established for which resources could fluctuate to ensure the economy of exporting countries. However, the agreement did not completely prevent the exploitation of the exporting nations as it had hoped to due to inadequate price stabilization during times of economic distress, challenges in enforcing the quotas with economically free countries, and increasing tensions from disputes of quota allocations.

Land reforms have also been crucial in improving the stability of the exporting countries. For example, the Agrarian Reform in Guatemala during 1952 aimed to redistribute uncultivated land, such as land owned by the United Fruit Company to peasants. While partly successful, such as seizing some land from the United Fruit Company, the land reform program led to the Guatemalan Coup of 1954 and a period of political and economic instability. In the coup, the United Fruit Company went against president Jacobo Árbenz to maintain their control over vast unused farmland.

Guatemala was portrayed as a communist country by the United Fruit Company in order to involve the CIA, and backed by the CIA, the military invaded Guatemala in 1954. This shows how difficult changing economic dependency from banana republics can be because of the disproportionate power between foreign politics and banana republic countries. Nevertheless, the land reforms were a small step for Guatemala towards economic independence and inspired other land reform movements in other countries too.

More recently, Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have been implemented to address the improvement of banana republic countries. Fair Trade Bananas from companies like Chiquita ensure that workers have fair wages and ethical labor standards. Other companies like Dole have created environmental

initiatives, such as their Water Stewardship initiative, to make the cultivation in countries much more sustainable and reliable for exporting countries by reducing water consumption and pesticide use.

Considerable improvement in the economic dependency of countries on banana republics through policies has been made, but banana republics continue to affect many countries. Another initiative that HLPF has specifically taken is the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP). Adopted in 2012, 10YFP is an initiative of 193 UN member states to work towards sustainable development and consumption of economies. While economic dependency or neocolonialism are not outright addressed, the development of banana republic countries has no doubt been centered around managing the economic dependency of the one resource and the outside political pressures of foreign states for these states. However, with issues bound to arise in the future, all countries must evaluate what actions must be taken, and what position they hold in terms of banana republics.

Current Situation

The term “banana republics” has evolved to describe unstable countries that rely on a sole product or good for the foundation of their exports and economy. Due to the term’s generalization, a number of countries fell under the umbrella of being a banana republic. For many of these countries, it was due to various forms of political instability such as governmental failures or civil unrest. This eventually led to their economic uncertainty. The banana republics create unsustainable economies, since a country would lose the majority of its revenue if it loses the one product it relies on.

For example, Bangladesh is a banana republic for fast fashion, making up 83.5% of their total exports. Lots of banana republics have a large workforce that is available for exploitation, making them appealing for major companies looking to cut costs and make a profit. Many countries worry about this unhealthy economic dependency, but the tradeoff is both jobs and money. If countries decide to divert their economies away from big companies and successfully find a solution to replace the money made from exports, they still lose thousands of jobs provided by major

corporations. Any government that wants to become independent and create a sustainable economy has to consider how their people will survive.

The first major point of contention is between economically independent countries and those that have become banana republics. This relationship is similar to the historical relationship between colonized countries and their colonizers. These relationships and interactions are still present, bringing in a form of neocolonialism where large countries control smaller countries' economies. Countries that are economically sustainable, support banana republics because goods that they need are created and exported at low prices. This provides cheap resources that are easy to access. Banana republics are opposed to this, as their people are being exploited and underpaid, and their economies are suffering as well. Economic dependency on a company or product provides a quick route for instability and economic collapse.

Countries must consider many factors when attempting to change their status as banana republics. The priorities of the government will factor into this decision, deciding whether countries will stay reliant on companies for the jobs or seek independence for the hope of a more stable economy.

Additionally, many governments could have other focuses at this time, as recovering from COVID and other catastrophes have raised global issues and caused even more instability than seen before. Governments will need to decide whether the risks associated with independence are worth it, or if they need to consider an alternative solution to save their economy and their people.

Bloc Positions

Countries in Support of Banana Republics: Belgium, France, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Pakistan, Spain, The Republic of the Congo, the United Kingdom, the United States

These are countries that benefit from banana republics due to being too reliant on a singular product which promotes to stop being a banana republic. First world countries in this bloc, such as Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and the US, have economies that are not reliant on banana republics but instead benefit from the cheap products produced by banana republics. Therefore they support the continuation of banana republics and this form of economic dependency.

The third world countries in this bloc, specifically Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Pakistan, and the Republic of the Congo, are deeply entrenched in being dependent on banana republics that they cannot find another solution in risk of their economies crumbling. They have no other possibility for economic prosperity, which causes them to support banana republics. These countries will push for a continuation in the creation and upkeep of banana republics and will instead focus on ways that banana republics can be more economically profitable or aid to their host nations.

Countries in Opposition to Banana Republics: Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Uganda

These countries currently have banana republics but have stable enough economies to deviate from relying on banana republics to hold up their economy. Countries such as the ones in this bloc are harmed by the fact that banana republics severely hurt their laborers and deprive them of true economic success. These countries are exploited by larger countries for their excess of resources and laborers as well as their cheap production costs. These countries, however, have some economic stability and an economy outside of their main export. They can survive without being banana republics and can shift their economies to a different product without collapsing. These countries will push for reducing or eliminating banana republics as they recognize the harms of being one, and surviving without it.

Case Studies

Kenya

Kenya is a populous nation with over 50 million people and numerous resources, such as fertile land, metals, and other freshwater resources.

However, Kenya has many characteristics of a banana republic country. The backbone of Kenya's economy is the agricultural sector, which is close to one third of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and involves more than 40% of the total population. This reliance is especially dominated by their key agricultural products: tea, coffee, and flowers. Reliance on these key agricultural products stem from the unique

nature of Kenya's physical environment and rural population. Kenya's diverse regions and fertile soils make it a prime location to grow cash crops like tea and coffee. Furthermore, the large portion of Kenya is farming based and heavily relies on subsistence and commercial farming for their living.

Another influence on the large reliance of the agricultural sector is the legacy of historic colonial influence. Up until Kenya had gained independence in 1963, British colonial administration had required the creation of plantations to farm tea and coffee on a large scale. Land was taken from indigenous groups and focused into these plantations and the infrastructure was very extractive, with little to no emphasis on diversifying the economy or making it sustainable.

Today, however, Kenya strives to break this loop of a single crop focus and foreign influence. Kenya has begun industrializing all of their economic sectors through the implementation of various plans like the Kenya Industrial Transformation Program (KITP) that aims to transform Kenya into an industrializing economy. Ways Kenya has tried to free itself from the colonial legacy is the creation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010, that reemphasizes a framework to solve past injustices of unequal distribution of land and unsustainable land usage that the British colonial rule had inspired.

United States

The United States of America is one of the world's most influential and wealthy nations. As a global superpower, it has a crucial role and influence on national politics, economics, culture, and technology. Especially in economics, the US is able to establish a considerable hold on valuable resources from across the world. An example is the United States' favorable terms during negotiations for access to oil and prices through the establishment of multinational oil corporations in the Middle East. Furthermore, political influence and economic partnerships targeted to support American values creates much easier access to oil.

The Iraq War in 2003 was influenced by many factors and while the official rationale for the war was Iraq's possession of dangerous weapons, critics also delved into how oil resources were considered. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, there was lots of discussion on how American multinational oil companies had possibly been

involved. ExxonMobil, which is one of the world's largest oil companies, quickly entered into oil agreements to reconstruct Iraq after the aftermath of the war. Because of this, ExxonMobil was able to enter into a contract with Iraq and started to develop the oil industry. While there is no direct correlation with the Iraq war and ExxonMobil, ExxonMobil was able to provide for the post war country and therefore establish easier access and control over oil in Iraq.

There have been many acts against and for the increased control of the US on Middle Eastern oil. For example, in Iraq there are the Product Sharing Agreements that outline how international oil companies can extract and export the oil. American oil production has raised concerns on the environmental impact of the rapid oil extraction and seeks to reduce oil as their main trade with other countries.

Guiding Questions

What steps has your country taken to promote or oppose the banana republics?

How does your country benefit from the existence of banana republics, and how is it harmed?

How have the economic impacts of banana republics affected other sectors of your country?

What past measures created by other countries regarding banana republics could help your country with its situation if implemented?

What actions have been taken by foreign NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in relation to banana republics?

What, if any, is your country's current plan of action to deal with the situation of banana republics?

Further Research

<https://www.fao.org/world-banana-forum/projects/living-wage-advocacy-initiative-liwin/en/>

This article discusses a UN initiative to ensure that workers in banana republics are treated fairly and paid well to ensure that these banana republics can keep operating safely

<https://www.prwatch.org/news/2010/12/9834/banana-republic-once-again>

This website shows the story of how a banana republic company affected Honduras's government

<https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/media-centre/blog/10-ways-fairtrade-helps-advance-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/>

This article shows an initiative adopted by the UK (fairtrade standards) that helped workers in banana republics

<https://press.un.org/en/2009/ga10840.doc.htm>

This website shows how banana republics have affected political unity of certain countries

https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/S13_Thesis_Donovan.pdf

This article studies on how those in banana republics are affected by them through their culture as well as their economy

https://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_22.02.01_u

This website analyzes banana republics as a form of imperialism with highlighting how bananas came to be so important.

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