JNAMUN 2026

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL COMMISSION

ECOSOC

AGENDA ITEM:

Reducing the negative impact of fast fashion on workers and the planet

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Letter from the Secretary General

Most honourable participants of Junior Nesibe Aydın Model United Nations 2026 (JNAMUN'26),

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to JNAMUN'26, which is organized by the hardworking and talented middle school students of Nesibe Aydın Gölbaşı Campus. I extend my sincere thanks to our academic team, who have researched every detail with great care to ensure that you enjoy such a prestigious and diplomatic conference. I also offer my appreciation to our organisation team for planning activities that will allow you to build friendships and collaborate with fellow delegates while having an enjoyable and memorable experience.

As the JNAMUN'26 team, our mission is to support our delegates in every respect, to help you gain insight into diplomacy, to develop your public speaking abilities, and to strengthen your language skills. Another valued aspect of attending JNAMUN'26 is the opportunity to form lasting friendships and create memories that will stay with you. Both our academic and organisation teams have worked with dedication to offer you the most enriching Model United Nations experience possible.

*This year in JNAMUN'26 we are hosting nine committees which are **UNHCR** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), **FAO** (Food and Agriculture Organization), **WHO** (World Health Organization), **UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), **CSW** (The Commission on the Status of Women), **UNICEF** (The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), **DISEC** (Disarmament & International Security Committee), **ECOSOC** (Economic and Social Council), and **SPECPOL** (Special Political and Decolonization Committee). The agenda items for each committee have been selected in line with the policies of their respective United Nations bodies.*

We wish you an exceptional Junior Nesibe Aydın Model United Nations experience. As the JNAMUN'26 team, we look forward to meeting you and supporting you as you achieve your goals to the very best of your ability.

Best of luck,

Mustafa COŞKUN

Secretary General of JNAMUN'26

1. Introduction to the Committee

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the United Nations' six principal organs and the UN system's central platform for coordination on economic, social, and sustainable development issues. Where the Security Council manages immediate threats to peace, ECOSOC manages the conditions that determine whether societies stay stable in the first place: jobs, inequality, health, education, social protection, gender equality, and the rules that shape global markets. ECOSOC is not an operational agency running factories or inspections on the ground. It is a system coordinator and policy engine that convenes governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, and accredited civil society to set priorities, align programs, and translate broad commitments into workable policy guidance. Its tools are agenda setting, convening power, reporting frameworks, partnership building, and resolutions that shape expectations and steer how the wider UN development architecture behaves.

ECOSOC's influence comes from how it sits at the center of a dense ecosystem. It oversees and coordinates functional commissions (such as the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women), regional commissions, and expert bodies that generate standards, evidence, and policy recommendations. It also provides the umbrella for major global review processes, including the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where countries present progress and gaps on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ECOSOC can request research, convene special meetings, issue agreed conclusions, promote multi stakeholder partnerships, and push coherence across agencies whose mandates overlap. ECOSOC outcomes are generally not legally binding in the way domestic labor law is, but they matter because they shape global norms, influence donor priorities, inform corporate and investor expectations, and often become the policy language that shows up later in national legislation, trade policy, procurement rules, and due diligence standards.

This agenda, “Reducing the negative impact of fast fashion on workers and the planet (SDG 8),” fits directly into ECOSOC’s mandate because fast fashion is a textbook case of development gains colliding with weak governance in global supply chains. The fast fashion model compresses design to retail cycles, drives constant price pressure, and relocates production to jurisdictions where labor enforcement is uneven and environmental compliance is cheaper to ignore. The result is not only environmental harm, but also systematic risks to decent work: excessive overtime, wage theft, poverty wages that do not meet basic living costs, unsafe factories, union suppression, gendered exploitation in highly feminized workforces, precarious subcontracting, and the shifting of risk onto informal workers and homeworkers who are hardest to regulate and easiest to underpay. The harm is structural, not accidental. When lead firms compete on speed and cost, the pressure cascades down tiers of suppliers, and the last mile of that pressure is often paid in human fatigue, injury, and suppressed bargaining power.

Linking this agenda to SDG 8 keeps the committee focused on labor outcomes rather than treating sustainability as only a recycling problem. SDG 8 is about productive employment, labor rights, safe working environments, and inclusive economic growth. In fast fashion, “growth” can look impressive in export earnings and job counts while still being development that fails its own people: employment without dignity, wages without sufficiency, and factories without effective safety guarantees. At the same time, the planet dimension feeds back into worker harm. Chemical intensive dyeing and finishing can contaminate local water systems, harming communities and workers; heat stress in poorly ventilated facilities increases as climate extremes intensify; waste dumping and air pollution degrade health in producing regions. In other words, “workers” and “planet” are not parallel lanes, they are coupled systems. When environmental externalities are pushed onto producing countries, those costs show up as public health burdens, degraded livelihoods, and reduced long term economic resilience, all of which are squarely in ECOSOC’s policy field.

ECOSOC's policy space on this topic is about changing the incentive structure of the supply chain while respecting that member states have different capacities and development priorities. Delegates will have to grapple with the full chain: lead firm purchasing practices (prices, lead times, order volatility, last minute changes), supplier business models, subcontracting and unauthorized outsourcing, labor inspection capacity, occupational safety regimes, wage setting mechanisms, migration status vulnerabilities, and the role of unions and collective bargaining. They will also need to account for consumer market dynamics and waste streams that are often exported back to the Global South as secondhand clothing or textile waste, shifting disposal and pollution burdens across borders. ECOSOC is well placed to push coordinated solutions that combine labor standards, social protection, industrial upgrading, and responsible business conduct with measurable targets and reporting. The committee should think in terms of implementable levers: mandatory human rights due diligence, living wage pathways, binding safety protocols and transparent remediation, restrictions on unfair purchasing practices, supplier empowerment through longer term contracts, public procurement standards, support for labor inspectorates and complaint mechanisms, and international cooperation on traceability and data so reforms can be monitored rather than merely announced.

Because this is a senior level committee, the expectation is not vague calls to "be sustainable," but strategies that survive political economy. Many producing countries fear losing investment if standards rise too fast; many consuming countries face domestic pushback when clothing prices increase; brands resist obligations that expose them to liability; and small suppliers often lack capital to upgrade safety and wastewater treatment without financial support. ECOSOC delegates should therefore approach the agenda as a package design problem: combine accountability with capacity building, and pair higher standards with financing and technical assistance so compliance is feasible. The goal is to move fast fashion away from an exploitation and externalization model toward a decent work and resilient production model, where employment is safer, wages are fairer, rights are enforceable, and environmental impacts are reduced in ways that do not simply relocate harm to weaker jurisdictions or more invisible workers.

2. Introduction to the Agenda Item

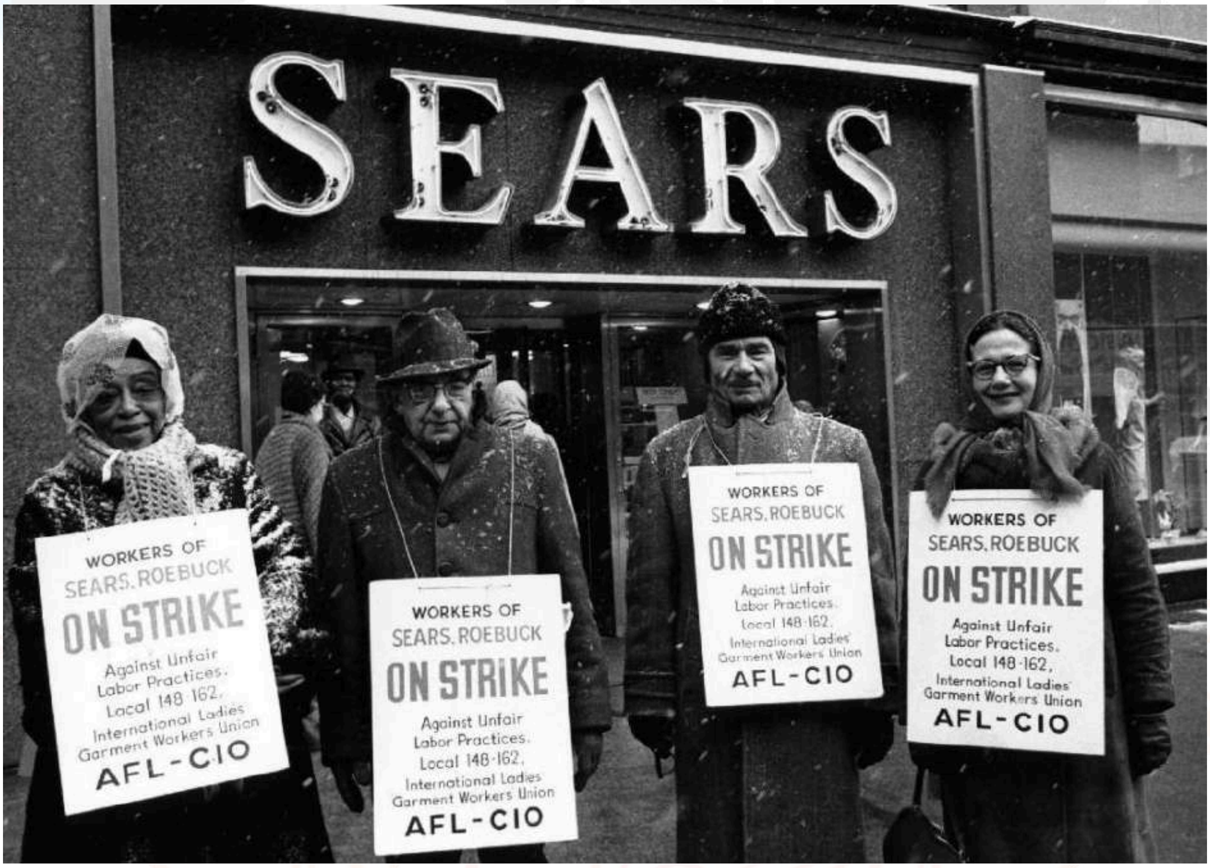
"Reducing the negative impact of fast fashion on workers and the planet (SDG 8)" focuses on the supply chain model that turns clothing from a basic consumer good into a high speed, high volume system of risk transfer. Fast fashion does not just "make more clothes." It compresses design-to-shelf timelines, amplifies price competition, and treats low margins as a justification to push costs outward. Those costs land on the least powerful actors: workers who absorb unstable orders, forced overtime, wage suppression, and unsafe conditions, and communities that absorb pollution, water depletion, and waste. The system is durable because it is repeatable. The same commercial logic travels across countries: short lead times, last minute changes, aggressive price negotiations, opaque subcontracting, and limited accountability for what happens beyond the first tier supplier.

The core of the problem is that responsibility is easy to outsource and enforcement is hard to scale across borders. Many of the worst labor and environmental outcomes happen in deeper tiers where visibility is lowest: subcontracted cut-make-trim units, informal workshops, home-based work, spinning mills, dyeing and finishing facilities, and logistics hubs. Brands may claim compliance at approved factories while production quietly shifts to unauthorized sites to meet deadlines. Wage and hour violations can be "legal" on paper through manipulated records, fake time sheets, or coerced signatures. Occupational safety failures persist when inspections are underfunded, penalties are low, and workers cannot report without retaliation. On the environmental side, discharge standards can be weak, monitoring can be sporadic, and pollution can be economically rational when treatment costs exceed the risk of being caught. The system functions because power and information are asymmetric: buyers have leverage and data, suppliers compete against each other, and workers have the least bargaining power.

Technology and market adaptation add new layers that accelerate harm rather than replacing old patterns. Ultra-fast production cycles and social media driven demand spikes increase order volatility, making suppliers rely on overtime and subcontracting to survive. Digital marketing can turn micro-trends into mass production within weeks, which magnifies waste when items are designed for short lifespans. Fiber choices shift environmental burden upstream. Synthetic textiles made from fossil fuels shed microfibers through washing and wear, creating persistent pollution that wastewater systems often cannot fully capture. At the same time, “recycling” narratives can mask downcycling into lower value products or exports of secondhand clothing that overwhelm receiving markets, undermining local textile industries and shifting disposal costs to countries with weaker waste infrastructure. These trends do not eliminate classic exploitation risks. They multiply them by increasing speed, opacity, and the replacement rate of suppliers and products.

Effective solutions treat fast fashion as a system, not a set of isolated factory scandals or consumer guilt campaigns. Factory audits and corporate pledges are necessary but insufficient if the upstream incentives remain intact. Prevention starts with purchasing practices: realistic lead times, stable forecasting, fair pricing that supports safe operations and decent wages, and contract terms that do not offload all risk onto suppliers. It continues with worker power and enforcement capacity: protections for freedom of association and collective bargaining, accessible grievance mechanisms, anti-retaliation safeguards, stronger labor inspectorates, and cross-border cooperation so violations are not hidden behind jurisdictional gaps. It also requires environmental governance that is measurable: wastewater and chemical management standards, transparent discharge reporting, investment in treatment infrastructure, and incentives for lower impact materials and longer product lifecycles. Without aligning finance and contracts to these goals, “sustainability” becomes a label while the operating model stays the same.

This agenda sits directly inside SDG 8 because fast fashion is not only an environmental issue, it is a decent work issue with global economic implications. Decent work requires safe workplaces, fair pay, predictable hours, and enforceable rights, none of which can be secured if supply chains are engineered for maximum speed and minimum cost without shared responsibility. Fast fashion also tests whether growth can be inclusive. Jobs created through suppressed wages, forced overtime, and unsafe conditions are development in appearance but not in outcome. Delegates should aim for policies that make exploitation and pollution consistently harder, riskier, and less profitable by targeting the entire chain: brand purchasing practices and due diligence, supplier transparency and subcontracting controls, labor rights enforcement and worker voice, chemical and wastewater regulation, waste and extended producer responsibility, and international reporting systems that allow progress to be verified rather than advertised. The goal is not to "end fashion," but to redesign incentives so the industry competes on productivity, quality, and compliance instead of on how effectively it can externalize harm.



3. Keywords & Definitions

1. **Fast Fashion**

   A business model built on rapid trend turnover, high volume production, and low unit prices, supported by short design to retail cycles. It relies on speed, frequent product drops, and cost compression across the supply chain.

2. **Ultra Fast Fashion**

   A more accelerated version of fast fashion that uses real time trend detection and extremely short lead times to release new items within days. It increases order volatility and drives heavier reliance on subcontracting and overtime.

3. **Decent Work (SDG 8)**

   Work that is productive and fairly paid, carried out in safe conditions, with rights respected, including freedom of association, collective bargaining, and protection from discrimination and forced labor.

4. **Living Wage**

   A wage level that allows a worker and dependents to meet basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare, education, transport, and savings, in a specific location. It is different from the legal minimum wage, which can be far lower.

5. **Minimum Wage**

   A wage floor set by law. In many garment producing countries it may not match living costs, and compliance can be weak due to poor enforcement or informal employment.

6. **Wage Theft**

   Non payment or underpayment of wages owed, including unpaid overtime, illegal deductions, forced off the clock work, delayed pay, or falsified payroll records.

7. **Excessive Overtime**

   Working hours beyond legal limits or beyond what is safe, often driven by last minute orders, unrealistic lead times, and penalties for late delivery. It is frequently paired with coerced consent and fake timekeeping.

8. **Forced Labor**

   Work performed involuntarily under threat or coercion, including debt bondage, retention of identity documents, restriction of movement, threats of dismissal or reporting to authorities, and unpaid or underpaid work.

9. **Child Labor**

   Work that deprives children of education, is harmful to health or development, or is performed below legal working age. In textile supply chains it can appear in informal workshops, home based work, and raw material production.

10. **Freedom of Association**

    The right of workers to form and join unions and to organize collectively. In garment sectors, this is often restricted through intimidation, dismissals, blacklists, and legal barriers.

11. **Collective Bargaining**

    Negotiation between workers or unions and employers on wages, hours, safety, and conditions. It is one of the strongest mechanisms for improving wages and reducing workplace abuse at scale.

12. **Gender Based Workplace Exploitation**

    Patterns of harm disproportionately affect women, who make up a large share of garment workers. It includes harassment, discrimination, pregnancy penalties, unequal pay, and barriers to promotion or union participation.

13. **Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)**

    Policies and practices that prevent workplace injury, illness, and death. In garment manufacturing, key risks include fire safety failures, blocked exits, poor ventilation, heat stress, chemical exposure, and machinery accidents.

14. **Supply Chain**

    The network of activities and firms that produce a garment, from fiber production to spinning, weaving or knitting, dyeing, finishing, cut make trim, packing, shipping, retail, and end of life handling.

15. **Tier 1 Supplier**

    The factory that a brand directly contracts with, usually for final assembly. It is the most visible part of the chain and often the focus of audits, even though major risks can sit upstream.

16. **Tier 2 and Tier 3 Suppliers**

Upstream facilities such as mills, dye houses, and component makers, plus raw material processing. These tiers often have higher environmental impacts and lower transparency.

17. **Subcontracting**

When a contracted supplier passes work to another facility. It can be legitimate when declared and controlled, or abusive when hidden to meet deadlines and price targets.

18. **Unauthorized Subcontracting**

Production shifted to unapproved factories without disclosure to the buyer. It is a major pathway for labor abuse because the sites are outside monitoring and may rely on informal labor.

19. **Home Based Work**

Production done in homes rather than formal factories, including sewing, embellishment, or finishing. It is hard to regulate, often underpaid, and can conceal child labor and long working hours.

20. **Informal Employment**

Work without formal contracts, social security coverage, or enforceable protections. Informality weakens inspection, limits worker remedies, and increases vulnerability to exploitation.

21. **Lead Time**

The period from order placement to delivery. Short lead times increase pressure for overtime, speedups, and subcontracting, and they reduce the feasibility of safe scheduling.

22. **Purchasing Practices**

How buyers set prices, timelines, order volumes, penalties, quality requirements, and change requests. Harmful purchasing practices can drive violations even when factories “agree” to compliance.

23. **Order Volatility**

Unpredictable changes in order volume, style mix, or timing, including sudden cancellations. It destabilizes supplier finances and is linked to wage non payment, layoffs, and increased overtime.

24. **Order Cancellations and Non Payment**

Brand actions such as canceling finished goods, delaying payments, or refusing shipments. These shift financial shock onto suppliers and workers, often resulting in wage arrears and factory closures.

25. **Supplier Squeezing**

Downward pressure on supplier margins through price cuts and risk shifting. Low margins reduce investment in safety, wages, and wastewater treatment.

26. **Traceability**

The ability to track a product's materials and production steps across the supply chain. Strong traceability supports accountability, while weak traceability enables hidden subcontracting and greenwashing.

27. **Transparency**

Public disclosure of supplier lists, sourcing locations, risk assessments, and remediation progress. Transparency is not the same as compliance, but it is a prerequisite for credible oversight.

28. **Audit**

An inspection process, often by third parties, intended to evaluate labor and safety conditions. Audits can miss violations due to coaching, falsified records, brief visits, and fear of retaliation.

29. **Audit Fatigue**

The burden on factories of repeated buyer audits that do not align standards or provide resources for improvements. It can lead to box checking rather than sustained remediation.

30. **Remediation**

Actions taken to fix identified harms, such as paying back wages, improving fire exits, reducing chemical exposure, or reinstating workers. Effective remediation requires timelines, financing, verification, and worker participation.

31. **Grievance Mechanism**

A channel for workers or communities to report harms and seek remedies. Effective mechanisms must be accessible, confidential, protected from retaliation, and able to deliver enforceable outcomes.

32. **Retaliation**

Punishment for speaking up, organizing, or reporting abuses, including dismissal, threats, harassment, blacklisting, or reduced hours. Retaliation is a core reason violations remain hidden.

33. **Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD)**

A process to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for human rights harms in operations and supply chains. It includes risk mapping, action plans, tracking, and public reporting.

34. **Mandatory Due Diligence**

A legal requirement that companies conduct due diligence and can face penalties for failures. It is designed to move responsible sourcing from voluntary pledges to enforceable obligations.

35. **Responsible Business Conduct**

Expectations for companies to respect labor rights, protect the environment, and prevent harm across their value chains. It connects corporate governance, risk management, and accountability.

36. **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

A policy approach that makes producers financially or operationally responsible for products at end of life. In textiles, EPR can fund collection, sorting, reuse, and recycling, and discourage overproduction.

37. **Textile Waste**

Discarded clothing and textile materials from consumers, retailers, and manufacturers. High turnover fashion increases waste volumes, landfill pressure, and informal waste labor risks.

38. **Overproduction**

Producing more garments than can be sold or used. It drives discounting, destruction of unsold stock in some markets, and larger waste streams.

39. **Greenwashing**

Misleading claims that present products or companies as environmentally or socially responsible without real performance. It can include vague labels, selective reporting, and unverified “eco” collections.

40. **Circular Economy**

A model that keeps materials in use longer through durability, repair, reuse, resale, and recycling. In textiles, real circularity is constrained by blended fabrics, quality decline, and limited fiber to fiber capacity.

41. **Downcycling**

Reprocessing textiles into lower value products, such as insulation or rags, rather than turning them back into comparable garments. It reduces landfill pressure but does not fully address overproduction.

42. **Fiber to Fiber Recycling**

Recycling that turns old textiles into new fibers suitable for new garments. It is technically challenging, especially for blended materials and chemically treated fabrics, but it is central to scalable circularity.

43. **Synthetic Fibers**

Fibers made from fossil fuel based polymers, including polyester, nylon, and acrylic. They are durable and cheap but contribute to microplastic pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

44. **Microfiber Pollution**

Release of tiny synthetic fibers during washing and wear. These can pass through wastewater systems and accumulate in rivers, oceans, and food chains.

45. **Wet Processing**

Dyeing, washing, bleaching, and finishing steps that often use large volumes of water, energy, and chemicals. Wet processing is among the highest environmental impact stages of textile production.

46. **Hazardous Chemicals**

Substances used in dyeing and finishing that can harm workers and ecosystems when mishandled or discharged. Chemical management requires substitution, protective equipment, and wastewater treatment.

47. **Wastewater Treatment**

Processes that remove pollutants from industrial water before discharge. Insufficient treatment contributes to water contamination and community health risks, and it often reflects cost avoidance and weak regulation.

48. **Scope 3 Emissions**

Indirect greenhouse gas emissions across a company's value chain, including raw materials, manufacturing, transport, and product use and disposal. In fashion, Scope 3 is often the dominant share of emissions.

49. **Just Transition**

A shift toward sustainable production that protects workers through training, income support, and labor rights. It aims to prevent environmental policy from causing job losses and deeper inequality.

50. **Social Protection**

Systems such as unemployment insurance, healthcare, pensions, and paid leave that reduce vulnerability to shocks. In garment hubs, weak social protection increases harm during cancellations, downturns, and disasters.

51. **Trade and Tariff Incentives**

Policy tools that can encourage compliance through market access benefits or penalties. They can link labor and environmental standards to trade preferences, procurement rules, or customs controls.

52. **Import Bans and Withhold Release Orders**

Border measures that restrict goods linked to forced labor or severe violations. They are powerful but require strong evidence and can shift impacts onto workers if not paired with remediation and wage protection.

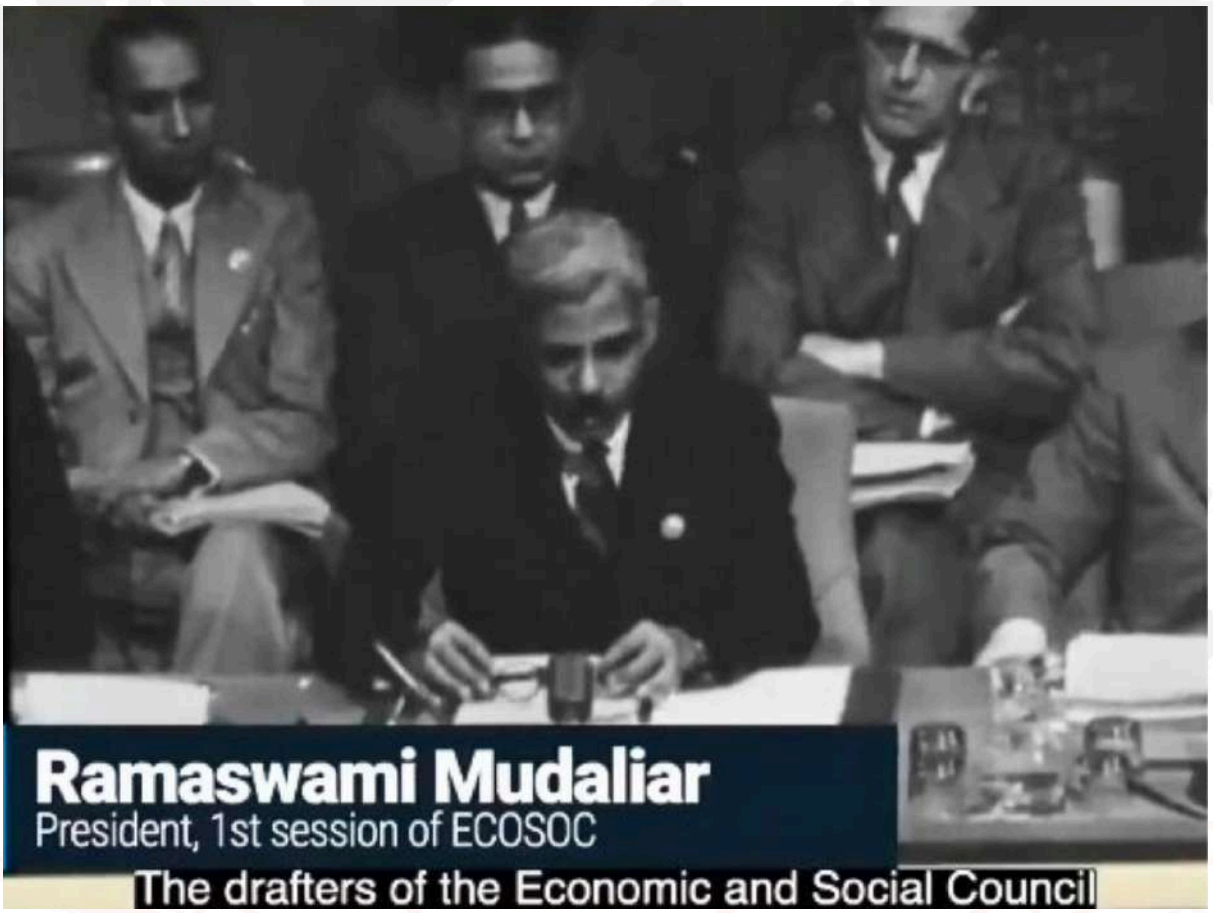
4. Historical Background

After World War II, clothing and textiles were treated mainly as an industrial development sector: jobs, exports, and domestic manufacturing capacity. Production in many high income countries was relatively regulated through national labor laws, unions, and safety enforcement, while international trade in garments was smaller and less geographically fragmented. As postwar consumption expanded and synthetic fibers and mass production improved productivity, apparel became a high volume consumer market. Over time, cost competition pushed brands to search for lower production costs abroad, setting the foundation for globalized supply chains where the consumer market and the production workforce increasingly lived in different countries.

ECOSOC-70: Taking Action to Improve Lives

"While the Security Council exists primarily for settling conflicts [...] the Economic and Social Council exists primarily to eliminate the causes of conflicts." – Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld

From the 1970s through the 1990s, a key structural force was trade governance. The Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA), starting in 1974, imposed quota systems that shaped where production grew and how exports were allocated across developing countries. In the 1990s, the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) replaced the MFA and set a timetable to eliminate many quota based restrictions over ten years, integrating textiles more fully into general WTO rules. This period mattered because it normalized a world where apparel production could relocate quickly in response to trade rules, cost structures, and buyer sourcing decisions. It also encouraged the rise of specialized export oriented garment hubs whose competitiveness often relied on low labor costs and flexible production rather than high value upgrading.



The early 2000s were a turning point for acceleration. As the ATC phaseout concluded on January 1, 2005, sourcing became more consolidated and competition intensified among producing countries. With fewer quota constraints, large buyers could concentrate orders where speed, price, and scale aligned. This amplified two dynamics that still define the fast fashion problem. First, buyer power increased relative to suppliers, pushing down prices while demanding shorter lead times. Second, supply chains became more layered and opaque, with subcontracting used to meet deadlines and absorb volatility. The labor side effect was predictable: higher pressure for overtime, wage suppression, and weaker bargaining power. The environmental side effect was also predictable: cost minimization made wastewater treatment, chemical controls, and cleaner processes easier to delay, especially in upstream wet processing.

In the 2010s, the agenda shifted from being discussed as "bad conditions in some factories" to being recognized as a systemic governance failure tied to a specific business model. The Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh in 2013, which killed more than 1,100 people, became a global inflection point because it exposed how brand driven cost and speed pressures interact with weak building safety enforcement and fragmented responsibility. The same year, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was signed as a legally binding program between brands and unions to improve safety conditions in supplier factories, marking one of the most concrete attempts to create enforceable buyer responsibility for safety in a major sourcing country. The long arc here is that factory tragedies moved the debate from voluntary ethics and auditing toward binding commitments, remediation, and independent inspection models, even if coverage remained uneven and many risks persisted beyond the monitored factories and beyond Bangladesh.

THE FIRST MEETING of the Council was convened in London from 23 January to 18 February 1946 under its first president Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar (India). The Council's membership has grown from 18 in 1945 to 27 in 1965 to 54 since 1974.

From the late 2010s into the 2020s, the international response broadened beyond worker safety to include environmental impacts and the combined “workers and planet” framing. In 2015, the SDGs made decent work an explicit global target, creating a shared language for linking wages, safety, labor rights, and inclusive growth to broader sustainability objectives. In 2019, the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion was launched at the UN Environment Assembly to address the sector’s environmental and social damage, reflecting a shift toward coordinated, UN system level attention rather than isolated corporate initiatives. In parallel, major consumer markets began building policy architecture that targets product design, greenwashing, and lifecycle impacts, including the European Commission’s 2022 strategy for sustainable and circular textiles. These moves matter historically because they signal a transition from treating fast fashion as a reputational issue to treating it as a regulated market and value chain governance issue.

Recent events show why this history is not a closed chapter. Even after years of global scrutiny and safety programs, deadly factory incidents continue, including a reported garment factory related fire in Dhaka on October 14, 2025, highlighting ongoing risks tied to hazardous materials, weak enforcement, and the gap between formal rules and operational reality. The overall lesson for this agenda is the same pattern repeated across decades: reforms that focus only on the visible end of the chain do not hold if the commercial incentives that drive speed, cost cutting, and opacity remain intact. The historical trajectory moves from national industry to globalized outsourcing, from trade quota management to hyper competitive liberalized sourcing, from voluntary audits to binding safety models in some contexts, and now toward broader due diligence and product lifecycle regulation. Delegates should use that arc to design solutions that do not depend on perfect behavior, but instead make harm harder to hide and less profitable to repeat across borders.

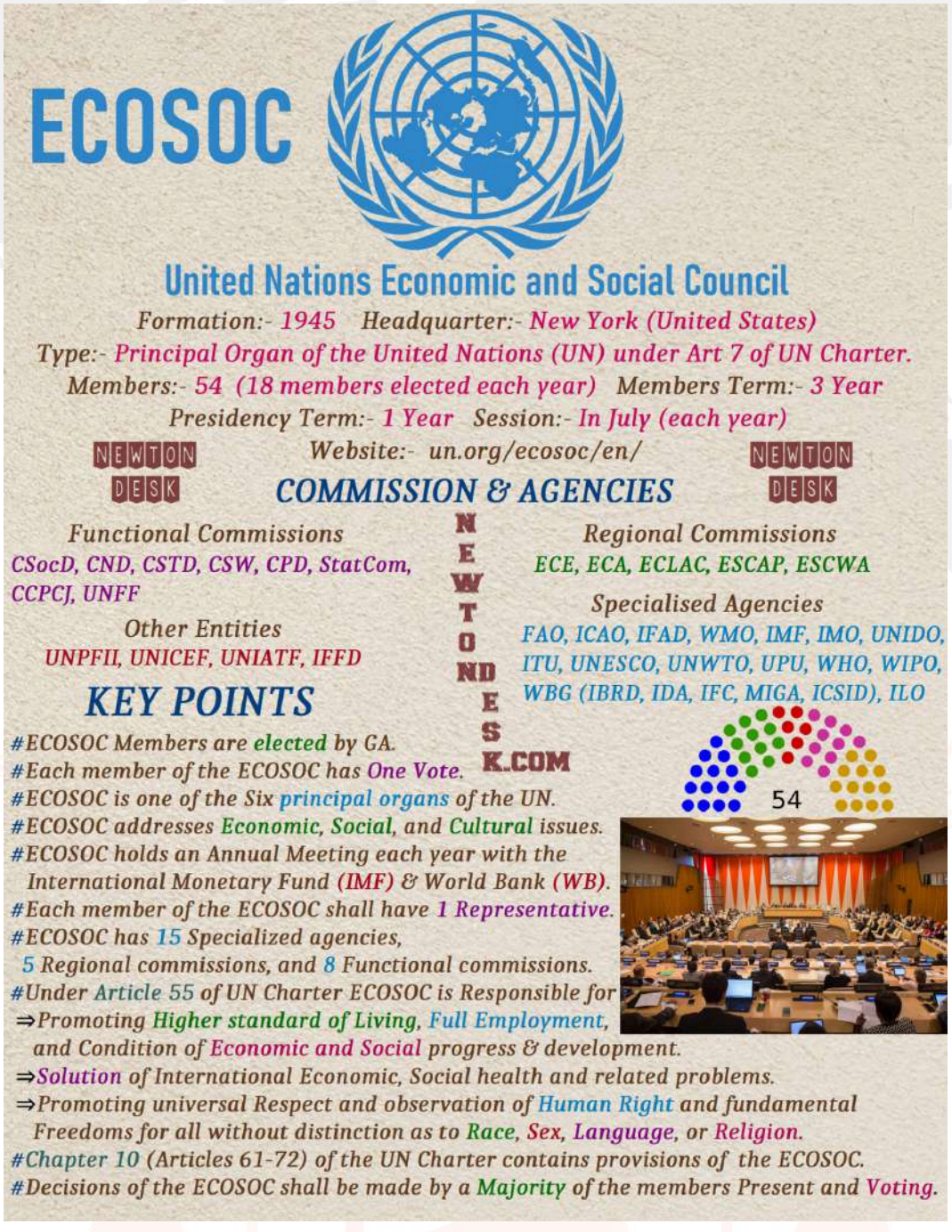
5. Examples of the Topic

States, cities, and institutions use different approaches to reduce fast fashion's harm, combining binding safety systems, labor enforcement reforms, due diligence and import controls, chemical and wastewater standards, and waste and product design regulation so "ethical sourcing" becomes operational reality rather than marketing.

In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Accord model evolved into the International Accord, built around independent safety inspections, remediation, training, and a worker complaints mechanism tied to brand commitments. The lesson is that factory safety improves fastest when brands have enforceable obligations and remediation is financed and verified, not left to voluntary audits that can be gamed or ignored.

In ILO and IFC Better Work countries, a different model links factory assessments and advisory services with worker management dialogue and industry competitiveness goals, pulling governments, factories, and buyers into a shared improvement framework. The lesson is that compliance rises when transparency, worker voice, and continuous improvement are built into routine operations, not treated as a one time "pass or fail" audit event.

In California, the Garment Worker Protection Act targets wage theft mechanics directly by limiting piece rate pay in garment manufacturing and creating stronger liability pathways for wage violations tied to contracting structures. The lesson is that exploitation can be structurally reduced when the law attacks the payment system and the buyer contractor distance that lets brands benefit from stolen wages while claiming ignorance.



In the United States, forced labor enforcement has increasingly been pushed through trade controls, especially under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which sets a rebuttable presumption for goods tied to Xinjiang connected supply chains and publishes enforcement statistics that show detentions and exclusions. The lesson is that import regimes can force traceability upgrades because the commercial risk shifts from "maybe reputational damage later" to "your goods do not enter the market unless you can prove the chain."

In the European Union, the policy direction is to regulate the product and waste system, not just factories. The EU's textiles strategy links future ecodesign requirements and tools like digital product passports with anti-greenwashing rules, while EU level moves toward extended producer responsibility shift textile waste costs onto producers, including online sellers. The lesson is that overproduction and short lifecycles do not change at scale unless rules change what can be sold, how it must be documented, and who pays for end of life impacts.

In France, textiles have long been under extended producer responsibility, and the system is operationalized through a producer responsibility organization model (Refashion) that coordinates compliance for a large share of the market. The lesson is that waste policy

becomes real when the state defines producer obligations clearly and the market has a working compliance infrastructure, instead of relying on voluntary collection schemes.

On chemicals and water, industry wide approaches like ZDHC focus on eliminating hazardous substances and standardizing chemical management expectations across suppliers through shared tools and guidelines. The lesson is that wet processing pollution is hard to solve factory by factory if every buyer imposes a different rulebook, so harmonized standards can reduce duplication, improve implementation, and make compliance measurable across regions.

On wages, ACT's model explicitly targets the missing link between living wages and buyer behavior by tying purchasing practices commitments to collectively bargained wage outcomes. The lesson is that "pay more" slogans fail if pricing and lead times stay predatory, but wage gains become more feasible when bargaining is scaled at industry level and buyer contracts are designed to cover negotiated labor costs.

6. Questions to be Addressed

1. **How can states align definitions and enforcement standards for labor exploitation in garment supply chains so brands and suppliers cannot exploit legal gaps between jurisdictions?**
2. **How can purchasing practices be regulated or guided so lead times, prices, and contract terms do not structurally force excessive overtime, wage theft, and unsafe work?**
3. **Which wage mechanisms are most realistic for advancing toward living wages: strengthened minimum wage systems, sectoral collective bargaining, buyer pricing commitments, or mixed models?**
4. **What protections and enforcement tools best safeguard freedom of association and collective bargaining in high pressure export industries?**
5. **How can grievance mechanisms be made accessible and safe for workers, including migrant workers and home based workers, with real protection from retaliation?**
6. **How should states address informality and home based work in garment production without pushing workers further underground or destroying livelihoods?**
7. **What minimum occupational safety and health standards should be required in garment factories, and how can independent inspections and remediation financing be structured at scale?**
8. **How can chemical safety be enforced for workers and communities, including restrictions on hazardous substances, mandatory chemical inventories, and protective equipment requirements?**
9. **What wastewater and discharge monitoring systems are most credible in textile wet processing, including independent testing, public reporting, and penalties that exceed the cost of dumping?**
10. **How can states cut microfiber pollution and broader plastics impacts from synthetic textiles through product standards, filtration requirements, and materials innovation incentives?**
11. **How should extended producer responsibility for textiles be designed so it discourages overproduction rather than simply funding waste collection?**
12. **What measures can curb overproduction and destruction of unsold goods, including transparency mandates, disposal bans, and inventory reporting?**
13. **How can trade policy and public procurement be used to reward decent work and lower environmental impact, without becoming disguised protectionism that harms developing country exporters?**
14. **What role should import controls play for severe labor abuses, and how can they be paired with remediation so workers are not punished through job loss and unpaid wages?**

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