

COMMISSION GUIDE

ECOSOC



CCBMUNXVII

Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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1. Presidents' Letter

Dear Delegates,

We would like to welcome you to the 17th version of the CCBMUN experience; we are thrilled to have you as a delegate in our Commission and to be able to guide you during this journey. ECOSOC is one of the six main organs in the United Nations, which deals with social, economic, and environmental concerns around the globe. Being a delegate in this Commission will open your eyes towards the current situation many nations are currently facing, and will encourage you to learn different points of view which, in the near future, will be extremely important in order to understand the modern world.

For the Model, we expect you to give your best when it comes to researching, debating and analyzing each delegate's intervention, as everything you say matters. We expect nothing less than respect and tolerance towards everyone in the Commission as it is a crucial part of being a delegate at CCBMUN. Throughout your time in the Commission, we will see a variety of current topics affecting areas all around the globe. We will discuss the importance of transportation and how can it be improved, mainly in African nations. We will debate about new and current projects, such as the "Silk Road", and take different points of view when looking at its benefits and repercussions. Finally, we will analyze the current situation that workers all around Southeast Asia are facing, as it is a problem that cannot be overlooked.

Our goal, as your Presidents, is to help you come closer to your ambition of creating solutions that contribute to the world's well-being. We want you to expand your knowledge about certain topics that are extremely important for the present day and for the future. We want you to have fun as you learn about and debate the topics. We will always be available to help you with your portfolios, and with the creation of great interventions, that will totally alter the course of the debate. Finally, our most important objective is to allow you to come to your own conclusions about the debate, and to develop your thoughts about the world itself. We were once delegates like you, we know that feeling before making an intervention, and we will do our best for you to enjoy, learn and remember CCBMUN as the magical experience it is.

Yours sincerely,

ECOSOC Chair

Daniel Pardo and Lucas Hernández

2. Commission Information

i. History

The United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC, is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. The UN Charter established it in 1945, with the goal of promoting dialogue to develop recommendations and solutions on economic, social and environmental issues, while implementing internationally agreed development goals. ECOSOC is guided by an issue-based approach; it has an annual theme, which is successfully followed in order to assure a focused discussion among the stakeholders. It is the central mechanism for the activities of the UN system and its specialized agencies; it also supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic and environmental fields. In 1965 and in 1975 the UN Charter was changed in order to expand the number of members from 18 to 54. ECOSOC was designed to be the UN's main place of discussion about international economic and social issues.

ECOSOC is responsible for promoting a higher standard of living, full employment, and economic and social progress. The Committee was able to identify solutions to international economic, social and health issues by facilitating international cooperation to do with topics of culture and education, therefore facilitating universal respect for human rights. ECOSOC has expanded over 70% of the all-financial resources of the United nations overall.

ii. Structure

This Council holds a four-week session every July, changing location every year between New York and Geneva. In these sessions, international agencies and other officials have to choose a theme of global significance. ECOSOC also consults with more than 2,500 non-governmental organizations and specialized experts; this helps it to receive accurate data in order to create a much more efficient resolution on certain topics. ECOSOC has 54 Council members that are elected by the General Assembly. They are members of the Council for a three-year term.

The presidency of ECOSOC rotates among the UN regional groups, in order to ensure equal representation. Currently, the president of ECOSOC is the ambassador, Inda Rhonda King, of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, who is the seventy-fourth President of the Commission.

These are some of the programmed cycles of ECOSOC that make up the structure of the Commission:

- **High- level Political Forum (HLPF)** provides political leaders with guidance and recommendations on how to acquire sustainable development.
- **ANNUAL MINISTRA REVIEW (AMR)** is held every year since 2007, with the primary goal of assessing progress in the implementation of the UN's development agenda.
- **Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)** reviews progress and development every two years.
- **Integration Segment** is held annually, and its primary goal is to accomplish a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions to accomplish sustainable development.
- **Humanitarian Affairs Segment** has the purpose of strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian actions.
- **Operational Activities for Development Segment** is held annually and provides the overall coordination and guidance of the UN's funds and programs.

The UN Economic and Social Council oversees several UN bodies, including:

- **Specialized agencies:** which include organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, WHO, the international fund for agricultural Development (IFAD) and many more.
- **Regional commissions:** the economic commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and many more.
- **Functional commissions:** these include the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Human Rights and many others.

iii. Special Procedures (if applicable)

It follows only the UN procedures.

3. **Simulation:** *Improvement of Transportation Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa*

i. **History/Context**

Taking into account that every single Sub-Saharan African nation gained independence, the first one been Liberia in the year 1847 and the last one been South Sudan in 2011, one of the government areas that needs serious improvements is transportation; it is important to highlight that this does not includes only public transport, but also the moving of goods within the borders of a country. Over the last three decades, Sub-Saharan African nations have faced rapid urban growth, accompanied by a lack of public transport, in both urban and rural areas, leaving hundreds of civilians across each nation with no means of transportation apart from their feet.

Most of these countries have not been able to develop in the transport sector as they have faced many internal conflicts over the years, which has delayed their development. Nations such as Chad, Central African Republic, and Somalia, among others, have a record of weak transportation systems for their national goods, such as oil or agricultural products, which are the base of most African nations' economy. This affects the countries' status around the globe.

The transportation of goods in Africa has always been a challenge, as it is the continent with the highest number of landlocked nations (no access to the sea), forcing them to transport all of their goods through neighboring countries via ground transit. This makes the African transportation systems some of the most expensive ones in the entire world. Transportation is even harder to accomplish in Africa due to the fact that many of their roads are of low quality, as most of them were built decades ago. For instance, some railroads date back to the times when Europe had African colonies, including international railroads, which do not receive proper maintenance nowadays.

The improvement of transportation in Sub-Saharan Africa must address various different aspects including public transportation, adequately equipped vehicles for the transportation of goods, and the maintenance and creation roads.

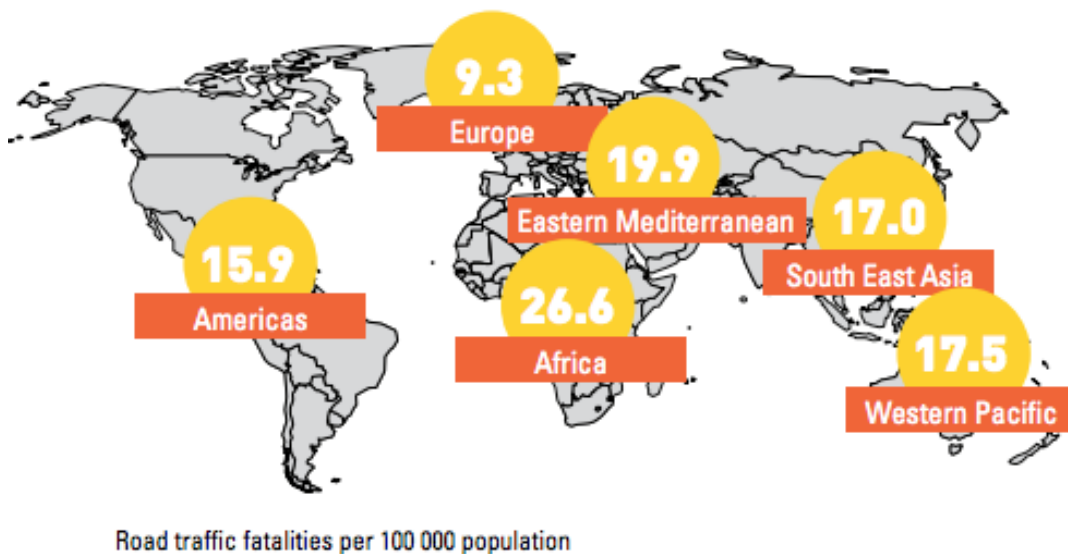


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<https://www.sajs.co.za/article/download/4332/6390>

Transportation in Sub-Saharan Africa has faced a wide set of challenges endemic to the continent. Challenges such as hostile weather conditions, low-quality roads, inadequate maintenance of vehicles, political conflicts, lack of education regarding transportation, engineering, moving of goods, among other problems, have delayed the development of the continent in the sector of transportation.

The chance of dying in a road traffic crash depends on where you live



Retrieved from <http://www.youthforroadsafety.org/news-blog/news-blog->

The first public transport systems in the continent were implemented around the year 1960. However, although public transportation was established several decades ago, it continues to have flaws that end up with the isolation of people within a nation, and also with high numbers of civilian casualties. Public transportation systems in most African nations do not follow safety standards when it comes to the maintenance of vehicles and driver training, resulting in thousands of deaths across the continent. In the year 2000, about 74% of transit accidents in Sub-Saharan Africa ended up with casualties/fatalities, making Africa one of the most dangerous continents for many decades regarding safety and transportation.

As well as the flaws in the African transportation industry in terms of roads and infrastructure, it has also been linked to major social issues such as sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape, making life even harder for the thousands of women who use public transport. Surveys taken almost every year reveal these major issues in the African public transportation systems, proving that over the years the problem has not gotten any better. In the year 2007, for example, studies showed that around 56% of women in Southern Africa experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment when using public transportation and those numbers are still rising. Similar issues are also seen

when using taxis in these nations, as they are also a significant part of African transportation.

With the purpose of discussing several issues on the continent, African nations gathered in the year 2001 and created the African Union (AU). The purpose of the organization was to unify the nations in order to discuss issues regarding the development of the continent itself. Despite the fact that transportation is a major need for the African population and that it has several flaws, the AU only started to organize meetings to discuss the topic a year ago, when the **African Union** Specialized Technical



AFRICAN UNION

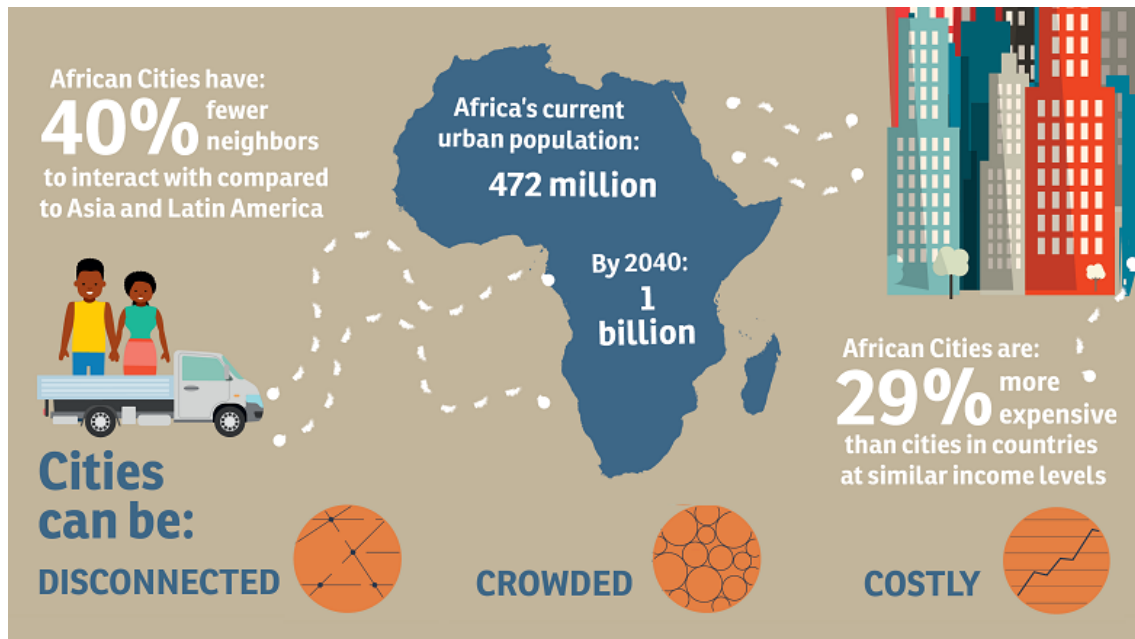
Committee on Transport, Transcontinental Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIET) was created. Unfortunately, almost all the resolutions the union has made haven't been enforced for a variety of reasons including lack of monetary resources/funding and lack of international help. The lack of monetary resources for the improvement of transportation is mostly caused by the fact that the Union doesn't count with enough nations with economic stability that are able to fund the Union, making it unable to achieve all of its goals.

Every year, the problems regarding transportation increase as many governments are unable to deal with the situation due to the fact that they are not politically or socially stable. This is why there is an urgent need to improve public transport and the transportation of goods, as improving these will boost the economy and many other aspects of the countries in a positive way.

ii. Current Situation

Currently Sub-Saharan African nations are still in enormous need of safe and efficient ways of transporting themselves and their respective national goods. Cities in prominent African nations are witnessing a rapid rise in their population and urban growth, demanding a good-quality transportation for the 475 million Africans that live in all of these nations. However, due to the fact that transportation vehicles and roads are hard for these nations to maintain and create, it causes the cities to stay disconnected from

areas within the city or areas around the country. All of this causes transportation to be really expensive both for citizens to afford it and for governments to maintain it.



Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-regional-studies/publication/african-cities-opening-doors-to-the-world>

The high cost of transporting goods around the continent and the world for African nations are limiting the continent's economic and social potential, keeping it isolated from international trade. This discourages potential investors and companies that could help African countries to have a more complete society and economy.

Regardless of the fact that improving transportation can be costly, it comes with a wide range of social and economic benefits for any nation. Transportation brings efficiency to a city, creates economic opportunities, enables trade at a national and international level, creates jobs and helps cities to work in a more dynamic way. Also, something that needs to be discussed when thinking about African transportation is safety standards; Currently Africa has the highest fatality rates regarding transit deaths and one of the most inefficient transportation systems in the entire world. The main reasons African transportation is suffering this alarming situation are:

- **No maintenance of vehicles:** The lack of maintenance causes mechanical systems in a bus, taxi, etc. to fail, risking the lives of those who are on board.
- **Lack of driver training:** Drivers do not receive proper training, which makes violations to safety protocols even more usual on the continent and contributes to the rise in the fatality rates.

- **Lack of Traffic Management:** Traffic management is the logistics of planning and controlling transport services. The lack of management makes transportation inefficient and creates more accidents.
- **Absence of road rehabilitation and construction:** Unpaved roads and roads in bad state contribute to dozens of transit accidents in Sub-Saharan Africa, as most vehicles are not made to endure harsh conditions. Currently, in every single African region (central, west, south, north) there is no more than 45% of paved roads, most countries having only between 15% to 25%, making Africa the continent with the worst road quality, therefore increasing accidents and reducing safety.



Retrieved from <https://qz.com/africa/945724/african-countries-still-cant-raise-enough-capital-to-fix-their-poor-road-networks/>

- **Hostile weather conditions:** The harsh weather conditions Africa faces as a result of climate change, creates serious damages and defects in road infrastructure. The increase in heat waves, sea levels, droughts, and storms are likely to be more intense in Africa, therefore, creating damages, delays and disruptions in the land, air and marine transportation systems.
- **Political conflicts:** Political conflicts in many of these nations are currently a source of extreme violence, which delays a country's development, and makes it almost impossible to improve in areas such as transportation. Besides this, conflicts in Africa are currently creating serious refugee crises that can disrupt and destroy the infrastructure of transportation companies in any nation.
- **Lack of education:** As in most cases; education is the key of any nation. Engineering, transportation of goods, logistics, political science, administration, and mechanics, among others, are areas that are highly involved in the creation of efficient methods of transportation, and all of them are lacking in almost every single country of the Sub-Saharan region.

All of these problems cause a country's development to rise at an alarming low rate, as it is currently happening in most of Sub-Saharan nations. Poor transportation slows down their economy, and therefore their society and political environment is heavily affected. Nowadays, if African nations improved their transportation sectors, there would be dozens of benefits for the whole society, as it would ensure mobility within the cities and more efficient trade. Besides this, the transport sector is a huge source of employment, therefore if it were to be improved, the unemployment rates would fall, leading to an improvement in the economy. This is why it is also important to improve working conditions in this sector. It should be kept in mind that transportation needs to be treated with a sustainable approach, as Sub-Saharan Africa is not in a position to be able to afford expensive maintenance procedures for their vehicles and roads.

Transportation is one of Sub-Saharan Africa's main challenges and one of the most important areas that needs to improve in order to achieve sustainable development and to achieve the SDG's, which are development goals that are set by the UN to be solved by the year 2030. In order to achieve them, land, air and water transport must be improved, as most of them do not follow adequate standards.

Air transport in Africa is currently of low quality because of 4000 African airports, only 20% have paved runways, making the landings and the takeoff far more dangerous than it should be. Most of African airports do not follow the ICAO standards, which are the ones that ensure passenger safety during and after a flight.

We can also see that road transportation needs improvements. For example, railroads are an excellent way of transporting cargo shipments through really long distances, but this is not taken into so much consideration in Sub-Saharan Africa, as currently, the continent's railroad traffic accounts for only 1% of the world's railroads passenger traffic and 2% of the global goods traffic. If the railroad systems in the countries of the region were to be improved, it would boost the nation's economy.

To conclude, Sub-Saharan Africa is currently in great need of efficient and safe ways of transporting goods and of transporting people, but due to the lack of monetary resources, of international assistance and of the lack of education, the region is delaying its own development.

iii. Key points of the debate

- Improvement of public transportation
- Measures to reduce the cost of the transportation of goods
- Absence of road infrastructure
- Relationship between high quality transportation and economic growth
- Challenges for transportation to improve its efficiency and safety
- Impact of transportation in society



iv. Participating Organisms

- ILO - International Labour Organization
- African Union
- AU STC-TTIET - African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism
- World Bank

v. Guiding Questions

1. What is the main method your country uses to transport its goods?
2. What kind of public transportation does your country offer to its population? How much of your country's area does public transportation cover?
3. What percentage/how much of your country's population depends on public transport?
4. Are your country's rural and urban areas rightfully connected?
5. What are the requirements public transportation in your nation has to follow? What are the standards?
6. What is the current state of roads in your country?
7. What are the main causes transportation in your country is not advanced and efficient? If your country does have efficient transportation, what has it done to achieve it?
8. How could your country help to improve the transportation problems in Sub-Saharan Africa?

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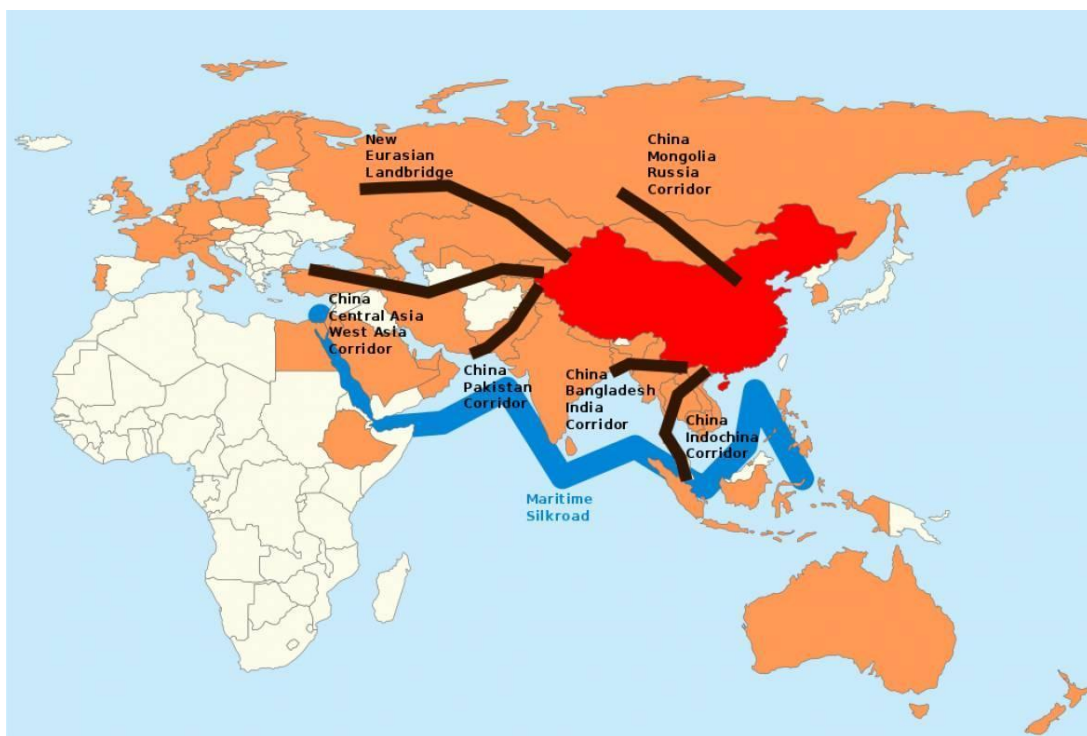
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4. Topic 1: Project “One Belt One Road” and its Repercussions

i. History/Context

The One Belt One Road initiative was mentioned for the first time in 2013 by the Chinese current President, Xi Jinping. His proposal was to establish an economic belt, using innovative approaches to achieve it. The main goal of the project is to reestablish the ancient Silk Road that connected China to a large number of different cultures and nations. The Silk Road was actually a network of trade routes that had radically expanded trade along its length, the most important product being silk. It was used extensively for hundreds of years from the second century BCE to the 18th century CE.

Along with the plan for the new silk route, China also proposed the creation of a new maritime road. The belt and road initiative has the main purpose of facilitating trade, infrastructure and investment links between China and an estimated 65 other nations. The combination of all these countries adds up to 30% of the global GDP, 62% of all the global population and 75% of all the energy reserves. The monetary resources that are committed to achieve this project are between 1 trillion and 8 trillion dollars.



(“Image retrieved from: <https://funpacifico.cl/one-belt-one-road-2/>”).

The economic belt includes six different corridors that would connect China to most of the nations in Asia and Europe. Ideas that have been put forward are: a new railroad that would connect China to the UK; a high-speed train network in south-east Asia; and gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea to China. The maritime silk road would go from the South China Sea to Africa, establishing different trade routes for different nations with seaports on the Indian Ocean. This massive infrastructure project is also being established on land with new oil refineries, power plants, mines and fiber optic networks, and by sea with shipping ports, hydrocarbon refineries and industrial parks.

The primary goal of this project is to facilitate trade with other nations. It is claimed to be the most ambitious geo-economic project in recent history, with more than 1,700 possible infrastructural projects. The maritime road will help the Chinese Government to reduce its dependency on the existing sea lanes that account for 90% of China's trade. It will also reduce the substantial impact the United States has on the Chinese trading system, due to the USA's influence over the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea. China is currently relying on the United States to secure their sea lane. The Belt and road initiative will serve as a way to maintain China's trade without it having to depend on the security given by the United States.

In order to achieve greater benefits from the belt and road initiative, the Chinese Government makes every infrastructural project different in order to fulfill that nation's goals, to achieve greater benefits from its investments and to suit the specific political and cultural situation of the nations involved. Every project is managed and achieved by the Chinese Government sending its own workers, managers, raw materials, equipment and soldiers for the construction of the project. According to China, this allows for a far more efficient workflow and prevents political dishonesty to interrupt the construction process.

The Pakistan Government has benefited from the belt and road project. Before the investments of China, Pakistan had a noticeable political dishonesty problem and a low level of investment. In 2001, China offered to build a small port in the city of Gwadar for Pakistan, and it later constructed a highway and railway network that allowed a connection between the economic belt and the maritime silk road. This led to Pakistan's highest economic growth in 8 years. Another example is a new alternative route that China secured for goods such as oil from the Middle East. This project stimulated a massive level of economic growth in construction organizations, and it means that 7 out of the 10 biggest construction firms in the world are now Chinese.



(BRI PROJECT: METRO LINE IN LAHORE)

("Image retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-pushes-china-to-realign-goals-in-its-belt-and-road-initiative-1536773665> ")

However, the Belt and Road Program is also considered to be extremely risky by many experts, such as the CNBC group, which claims that this project could be the next major risk to the global financial system. China is currently investing in sixty different countries; it has signed agreements with authoritarian governments and military regimes. Many of the countries that are part of this project have serious levels of political dishonesty, and the project has been affiliated with some of the most politically dishonest nations in the world. Some of the countries are extremely vulnerable, and eight of them have a significant chance of not being able to pay back the loans they have taken from the Chinese. China also united this project with countries such as Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Iraq and Uzbekistan, which are currently involved in violent conflicts; it is believed that, as the infrastructure such as roads and other transportation methods improve through the One Belt One Road initiative, it may also allow the conflict to spread on a larger scale.

Some of the investments have already been notable failures for the nations that received those infrastructure constructions. In Kenya, a high-speed 3.2-billion-dollar railway was built connecting Mombasa with Nairobi - it was a highly successful transportation system because it took one third of the time the old railway took. One

year later, however, this BRI project faces serious and significant damages. The Chinese also funded Mattala International Airport in Sri Lanka; first opened in 2013, it is now considered the world's emptiest international airport. 270 BRI projects in South and Southeast Asia have been left on hold due to financial viability and impractical proposals, and this makes experts question the success of the One Belt One Road initiative.



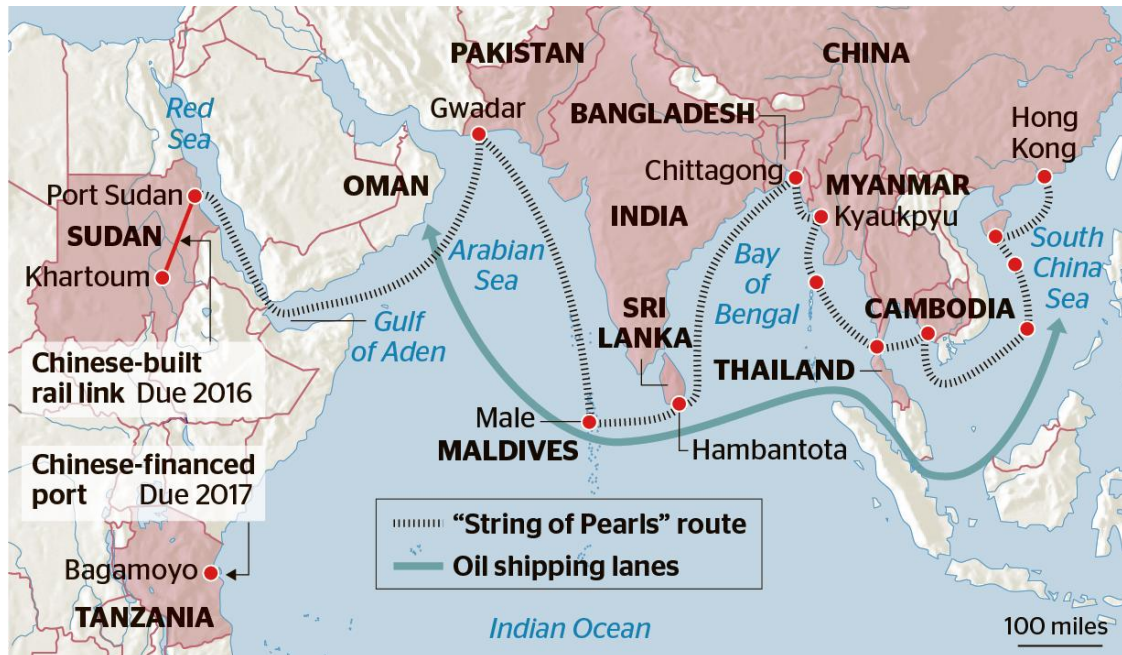
(“Image retrieved from: <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/files/2018/07/SGR-EXPRESS.jpg>”)

Although Xi Jinping claims that the BRI’s main goal is to achieve economic and infrastructural growth for smaller nations, it has been accused of using “debt-trap diplomacy” on some of the most politically and economically unstable countries. When a small country receives the loan to build the “required” infrastructure by China but then can’t pay back the loan, China uses its position to acquire other benefits. Some examples are: Angola has pay China with its oil; Sri Lanka, after being unable to pay for a Chinese-built seaport, gave China a 99-year lease to use it; and Djibouti allowed China to have its first overseas military base in their country.

ii. **Current Situation**

Currently, the One Belt One Road Project has shown no signs of slowing down, as it is still expanding and creating new infrastructure projects. Although China may gain economic benefits after the construction of a project, such as the railway network located in Pakistan that allows countries to transport goods from the Middle East to China, there is a high chance many projects will continue failing, and it may cause significant debt risks, governance risks, environmental risks, social risks and the likely possibility that many nations will be unable to pay their debt back to China. Currently, China is accused of using the political and economic struggles of countries affiliated to the BRI to apply debt-trap diplomacy, in the case of a country being unable to accomplish

the initial agreement. This method is currently being used by China either to benefit from another nation's natural resources or to expand China's influence in those territories.

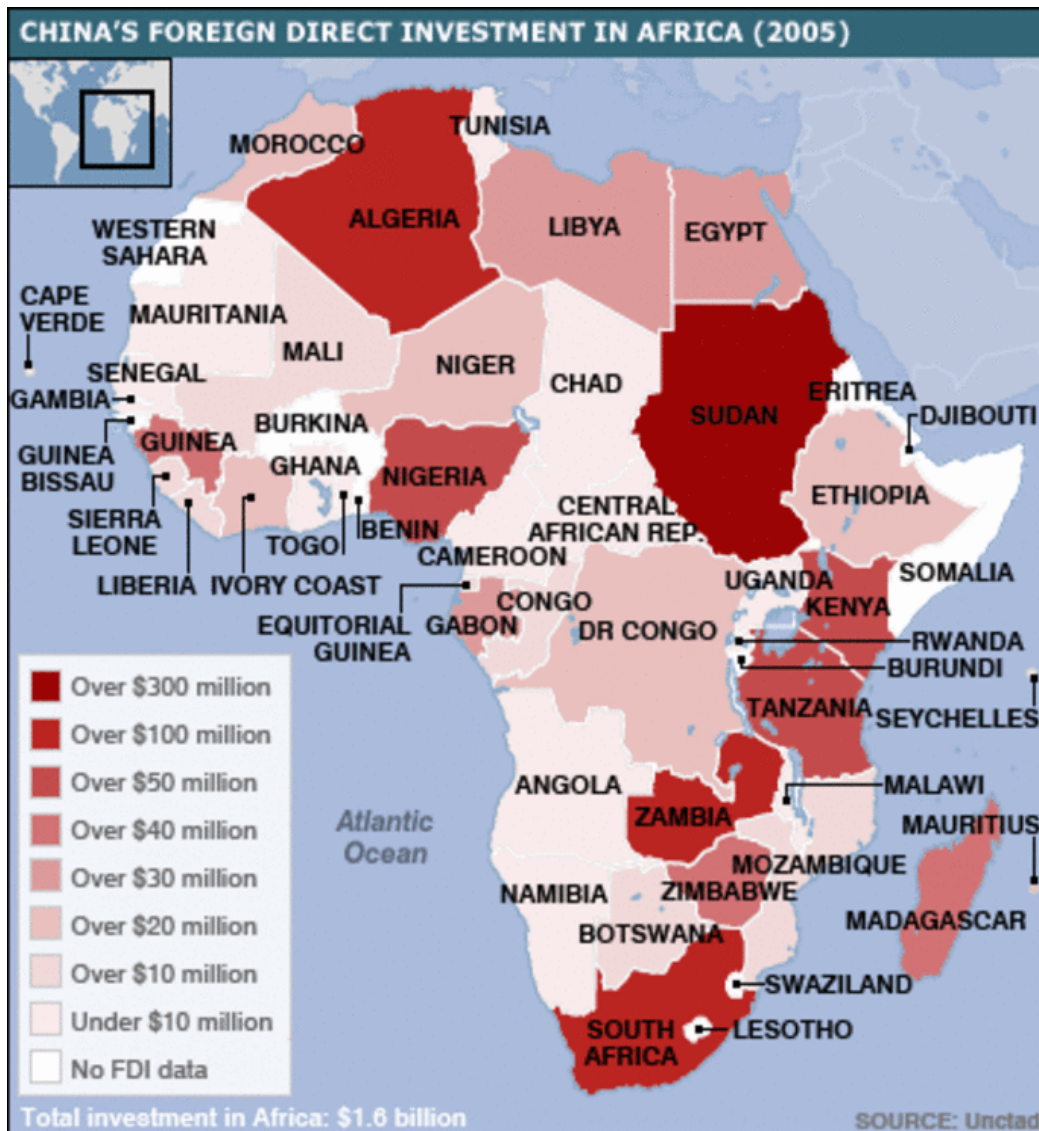


(Image retrieved from: <http://voiceofdjibouti.com/chinas-drive-integrate-africa-maritime-silk-road/>).

It is believed that nations such as China are using debt-trap diplomacy on countries that are mainly part of the Indian ocean. The Chinese Government negotiates with these nations in order to have control over one of the seaports that they have built or that the nation had before. This is known as the “string of pearls theory”, which proposes that China is trying to establish a line of naval bases in the Indian Ocean. China has ports in countries such as Djibouti, Sri Lanka (with a 99-year lease), Myanmar, Pakistan (with a 40-year lease) and it is currently aiming to achieve something similar in Bangladesh. Although countries such as China are not getting their payments back, they are gaining high amounts of political, economic and military benefits.

China is also using this highly ambitious project to build a higher influence over the African nations. China is investing in infrastructure in the African continent, charging no interest on loans and do not expect to get their investments back. This allows private Chinese companies to expand from the Chinese mainland and set themselves up in several African nations; it is estimated that 10,000 companies are expanding into Africa. As more infrastructure is being produced on the continent of Africa, it allows these nations to have better tools and to use their natural resources for economic growth, creating new jobs and businesses. It has also been shown that when an African country finds itself against Chinese political decisions, it receives 2.7 fewer infrastructure

projects than those countries in favour; this means that essentially China is gaining a considerable amount of political power due to these investments.



("Image retrieved from: <https://apijf.org/-Barry-Sautman/3278/article.html>").

Nations such as India and the United States are some of the most vocal opponents to the BRI. They are completely skeptical about their true intentions of this project, and expect that it may cause more harm than good to developing nations. Additionally, one of the six economic belts that goes across the Asian continent passes through a long-claimed Indian territory, with no previous consent having been given by the Indian Government to build there. The Indian Government is also really concerned about the environmental impact this project may cause.

iii. Key points of the debate

- The Environmental impact the BRI may cause.
- The *string of pearls* and how it should be treated.
- The treatment of debt-trap diplomacy in developing nations.
- The economic impact in both developed and developing nations.
- How the infrastructure of the BRI project may or may not bring benefits.

iv. Participating Organisms

- Asian infrastructure investment Bank
- Silk Road Fund
- China Development Bank
- Exim Bank of China
- Sovereign Wealth Funds
- International Labor Organization

v. Guiding Questions

- What are the possible benefits and consequences of this project?
- What is your country's point of view towards this project?
- What are your country's future major infrastructure projects? Can the "One Belt One Road" project benefit these projects?
- Is your country suffering from debt trap diplomacy? If so, explain your country's situation.
- How will this project affect China's military and economic influence around the world? How will it affect your country?
- If your country finds itself in favour of this project, what can be done to ensure that it is done in a way that benefits your nation?
- What should be done, if anything, to help the developing nations that cannot afford to pay back loans to China for infrastructure projects that have not brought the expected benefits?

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5. Topic 2: Workers' Rights as a Setback for Economic Growth in South-east Asia

i. History/Context

Workers' rights are a group of legal and human rights related to labour. Labour standards are set in two different ways. The first way is when a country has existing national laws and rules to ensure these rights are protected. The second way is through the International Labour Organization (ILO) which is the organization that sets up these standards. ILO does this by having international conventions in which the nations that are part of it, gather to discuss a specific topic regarding work. The first convention took place in 1919; here they discussed the proposal to *limit the hours of work in the industrial area to eight hours a day*, which was a groundbreaking advance for workers worldwide during that period of time.

The standards set by the ILO need to be followed by the 183 countries that are part of the organization, but over the years many sectors in Southeast Asia, such as the fishing industry, the garment industry, and the industrial sector haven't respected these rights and standards. This puts workers' safety and wellbeing at risk, and puts them in a vulnerable position due to their dependence on the work to provide for their families.

The working conditions in nations such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia, often violate the legal and human rights that workers are entitled to. Many of the nations and companies in the area do not respect and uphold labour rights, as it is believed that doing so will harm a nation's economy; this is made worse by the fact that monetary resources are needed in order to fix the damage already created by the companies who did not respect workers' rights in the first place.

This belief became more widespread in the year 2008, when the world was facing the peak of a global financial crisis; due to this many countries (mainly in Europe) made legislative changes to reduce all areas of protection for workers, as they believed that cutting back on worker protection would boost the economy and stimulate job creation. However, studies carried out by the ILO proved this is not true as it concluded that changing labour legislation does not affect a nation's economy negatively or positively, as can be seen in the following link:



Retrieved from:

http://geneva.mfa.gov.by/en/interorg/BLR_ILO/



([https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_383849/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_383849/lang-en/index.htm))

This has led to a crisis in living conditions for many workers, who have faced many human rights' violations such as: forced labour; low or non- payments for work done; human trafficking; prohibitions on strike action; no freedom of association; no pay for overtime; no resources; no or poor representation in government; and exploitation, amongst others. This makes Southeast Asia one of the places where workers are in a constant state of vulnerability. Even though they are illegal, these breaches of worker security are seen in high levels in countries such as Thailand which, even though it formed part of the 1930's convention on forced labour, still demonstrates several cases of forced labour, mainly in Thailand's fishing industry, in which there is a longstanding lack of respect for the basic rights of workers in the sector.



Retrieved from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/11/asia/freedom-project-thailand-fishing-slave-ships/index.html>

There have also been vulnerable situations and violations to workers' rights in nations such as Cambodia, where women in the garment industry made more than 985 million US dollars in garment exports in the year 2001, but despite this, were not allowed to have freedom of association (which is the right to join or leave a group voluntarily). They were also receiving extremely low and incorrect payments, over-time work was not taken in a voluntary manner, and workers were unable to strike, as they did not have the resources they needed from the government, and they were facing over-long hours of work. Throughout history, this has been seen in nations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, and Thailand, amongst others, making it a longstanding crisis for workers of Southeast Asia, who are the base of their nations' economy.

	<i>DAILY MINIMUM WAGE (in USD)</i>	<i>MONTHLY MINIMUM WAGE (in USD)</i>
Philippines	5.75-10.05	172.58-301.57
Thailand	9.02-9.32	270.71-279.74
Malaysia	7.27-7.90	218.16-237.13
Vietnam	4.92-5.55	147.47-166.57
Cambodia	4.67	140
Indonesia	3.33-8.35	99.91-250.63
Laos	3.68	110.34
Myanmar	2.68	80.28

Retrieved from: <http://apmigration.ilo.org/news/minimum-wage-in-asean-countries>

The situation of workers in the region has not shown any improvement over the years, as companies and organizations do not take into account everything workers are entitled to, which leads to widespread exploitation. Transforming the state of workers in these countries to a legal and just one is a hard process, in which a considerable amount of monetary resources, logistics and partnerships will be needed if it is to be achieved. This is an expense that not many companies and governments are willing to take, but it is urgent to ensure that these people are protected with proper labour regulations.

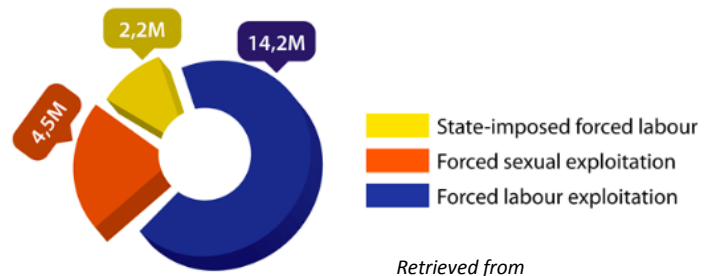
Most of violations to these rights are currently happening in factories where many products from different economic sectors are made. This is partly because government revision and supervision of factories is almost non-existent, as it is believed that closing down factories will harm the nation's economy. All of this leads to the suffering of thousands of workers, as not only are their economic needs not being met, but they are also at risk when it comes to safety, as many factories do not follow structural safety measures or proper sanitary standards. as it will be costly to fix it for the companies who reside in these nations.

ii. Current Situation

Nowadays, working conditions are not any better, exploitation and violations of legal and human rights still happen to a great extent. Even nowadays, nations such as the United States, lower national wages when inflation occurs, but as has already been said, lowering workers' protection does not affect in any positive or negative way a nation's economy.

When making legislative changes in countries in Southeast Asia, there is usually no social dialogue between the government, employers and workers, which leads to weak laws that are often not correctly enforced by the government, making a worker's life not only complicated, but also abusive.

In Southeast Asia, workers face many daily challenges as they have extremely harsh working conditions. Many industries in Southeast Asia have recruitment processes that are outdated, terms of employment that are not legal and complete, and industry practices which can be abusive and unsafe for workers,



putting them in an abusive and vulnerable situation. For example, workers in the Thailand fishing industry face massive abuses and violations, in which it is mainly the migrants who are the most vulnerable victims of these abuses. Workers in the fishing industry face violations such as involuntary work, excessive overtime and withholding of wages; but all of this is not currently being solved by the government, as it means that the fishing industry will be at risk of losing revenue. All of this means that the solution to the problem will have to come with an economic aspect as both workers and economy are mutually dependent. Even when Thailand created laws for the issue, the problem was not solved, as the laws were not enforced; for example, a law was created, and it stated that all boats in the fishing industry needed to be inspected, but these inspections were of bad quality, as they were made in a quick and cursory way, which did not help to solve the problem at all.

Another serious scenario we see in Southeast Asia is that of workers in the garment industry in several countries. There are also violations in the industrial sector, the health industry, agriculture, the textile industry and so on. The most serious violations of labour standards which need to be addressed, are:

- **Forced Labour:** Many workers, mainly in the fishing industry face forced labour as they have to work long hours in an involuntary way. Workers that are victims of forced labour do not receive any payment from the company. Most of the workers that are victims of forced labour are undocumented immigrants, which means a company doesn't feel any obligation to fulfill their legal rights.
- **Unpaid extra hours:** Workers may have to work long extra hours with no extra payment, which leads to the exploitation of workers. These extra hours are usually not paid as it would cost too much for a companies to do so.

- Pregnancy-based discrimination: During pregnancy, a woman will not receive paid leave as it will cost too much for a company, and if they do not resign from work they will still not receive the benefits a pregnant woman is entitled to at work.
- Anti-Union practice: Governments can be hostile towards labour unions which protect workers' rights.
- No law enforcement: Most of these nations have existing laws and rules to fulfill workers' rights, but the problem is that they do not enforce them, which is the same as if they didn't exist. For example, in Thailand to have a control of how many workers were in the seafood industry, they created the Pink Card, which was supposed to help keep track of each worker, but the law was enforced in a weak way, making it inefficient.

Retrieved from:
<https://forum.thaivisa.com/topic/1096809-thai-id-card-for-aliens-do-you-have-one/page/11/>



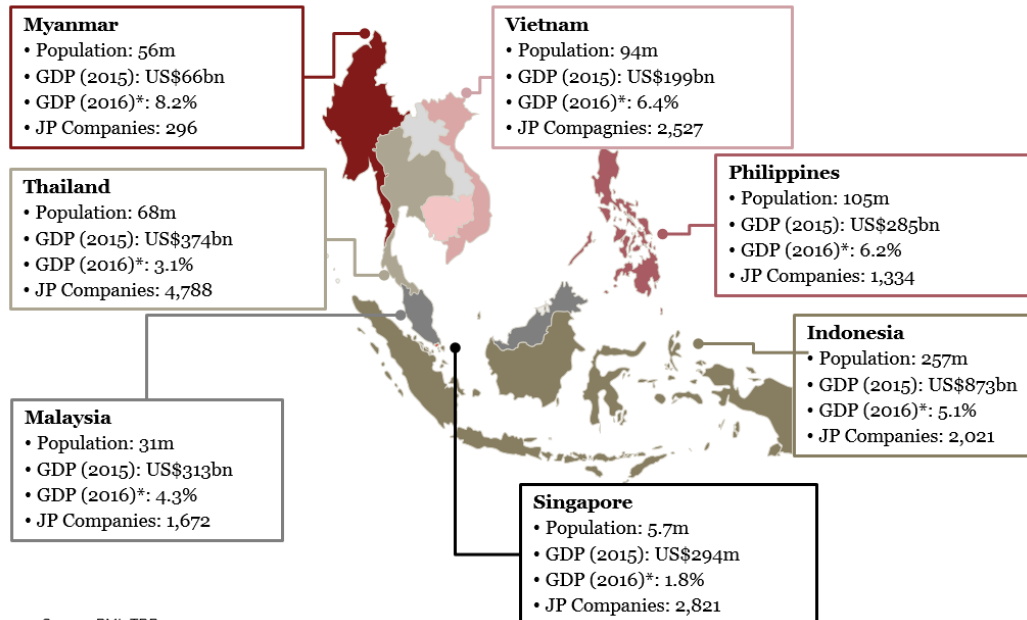
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 Expiry date วันบัตรหมดอายุ
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- No structural safety: Structural safety means that a building, in this case a factory, has a well-maintained structure that gets at least annual revisions. This is completely lacking in the nations of the region, making the work environment a potentially dangerous place.

All of these are just some of the inhumane conditions workers face in their daily life. These issues are seen on such a big scale in Southeast Asia that there are often scandals that drag international attention towards these countries. One recent example, after it was discovered that there were major labour violations in the Thai seafood industry, is that the European Union stopped receiving seafood from Thailand. It urged the country to solve the situation, but sadly workers in the area are still in great suffering, especially because if countries stop buying their products, the economic situation of that country will worsen, which directly affects the workers. The ILO has proved that upholding workers' rights does not necessarily mean there will be negative effects on the economy, so it is important to find a way of improving these conditions in Southeast Asia whilst protecting the economy.



As of 2015, there were 11,328 of Japanese companies that have expanded to SEA



Source: BMI, TDB

Retrieved from: https://pwc.blogs.com/growth_markets/2017/08/the-continuous-expansion-of-japanese-companies-in-southeast-asia-.html

When coming up with solutions, many aspects need to be taken into consideration, not only communication between workers and government, but serious reforms when it comes to global influential brands that manufacture their products in the factories of Southeast Asian countries. Many labour violations take place in textile and garment factories that ship clothing and shoes to North America and Europe, brands that do not take into consideration the situation of workers in these countries as they do not have to do so. We can see, for example, how multinationals such as Nike take a blind eye towards these issues by forcing its employees in Southeast Asia to work overtime without pay or by limiting their access to water during work. Workers will continue to suffer if solutions are not created and put into action.

iii. Key points of the debate

- Violations of labour rights in Southeast Asia.
- Tactics to ensure workers' rights.
- Impact of enforcing labour rights on a nation's economy.
- Impact of global influential brands on working practices in these nations.
- Non-intervention of governments regarding labour rights violations.
- The impact of these violations on the workers' economic and social safety.

iv. Participating Organisms

- ILO - International Labour Organization
- European Union
- ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- Multinationals (Nike, Adidas, etc.)

v. Guiding Questions

1. What are the workers' rights according to your nation's labour law?
2. How does your nation enforce labour laws? Are these laws effective?
3. What is the work area in your country that faces the biggest challenges in terms of working conditions and worker rights?
4. Has your nation ever reduced worker protection?
5. What is the minimum wage in your country? (dollar equivalent) Do all workers in the country receive this minimum wage?
6. Do foreign/migrant workers face discrimination at work in your country?
7. Is there any system in your country to ensure workers rights are being respected that could be used as an example for countries in Southeast Asia?

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