**Forum:** Sustainable Development Sub-Commission 1  
**Issue:** Increasing the proportion of members and voting rights of LEDCs in international organizations  
**Student Officer:** Halil Cenker Camcı  
**Position:** Deputy President

### Introduction

Article 2(1) of the UN Charter states that “The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members”, meaning that equality is the basis on which United Nations was built on. Before the world wars, the international cooperation was achieved through bilateral consensus and agreements, making it not applicable to form international organizations. States simply preferred to follow their own interests and acted on them if any intersections were found with those of other states through bilateral consensus. However, with the World Wars, the context in which the world politics was being shaped in changed drastically. After World War 1, countries were convinced that stronger cooperation on the issues regarding politics and security were required, which gave birth to the first international organizations on a global scale. The League of Nations is an example of these organizations, which is often referred to as the predecessor of the United Nations.

International organizations are mediums through which countries are able to form connections and cooperate to overcome significant problems. They are international platforms on which problems are identified and solutions are developed, all with the participation of various countries. However, as international organizations formed, naturally some countries who were more developed began to dominate such institutions, using their money and influence to assert power on the decisions and workings of the organizations. This led to an underrepresentation of certain countries, most of them being LEDCs, that prevented from voicing their opinions and/or benefiting from the outcomes of the organization. This was a problem both rooted in the membership rights and the voting rights of such nations, meaning that they lacked the necessary membership to participate in some organizations and/or have the voting right to have a deciding factor on the issue. Moreover, “limited voting rights” also affected countries’ participation as the fact that they had the voting right does not always mean that they have an equal say on the issue.

As “every voice matters” and “securing democracy” can only be established through increasing the membership and voting rights of LEDCs, it is of upmost importance to consider the role and position of international organizations, and the way they are established to form symbiotic relationships with their member states.
Definition of Key Terms

Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)
Countries who have less economic development and are usually known to have low standards of social services (health, education, etc. services).

Sustainability
It is the ability to provide the needs of today’s generation without decreasing the quality of life for future generations.

Intergovernmental Organizations
The organizations created through signing treaties between various member states with the aim of facilitating cooperation to overcome significant problems.

Multilateralism
When at least three nations cooperate to overcome a significant problem.

Unilateralism
When a state acts only according to its own benefit without considering other states’ well-being.

Globalization
The process through which countries and organizations extend their influence over multiple countries and around the world in the forms of information, products, etc.

One Member One Vote Principle
It is the principle through which every member has only one single vote, regardless of their level of development. It is the principle used in the General Assembly of the United Nations, counting member states as equals.

Majority
Being greater in numbers, does not necessarily mean that all members should agree on something.

Unanimity
Being unanimous, for instance all member states supporting the same thing. If even one member state opposes, there is no longer unanimity as unanimity is only achieved when everyone involved has the same stance.

Quadratic Voting
A voting system proposed by the economist Glen Weyl, in which member states are able to buy votes by paying square of the number of votes they'd like to buy.
Background Information

Role and Mechanism of International Organizations

Most international organizations are solution suggesting, rather than decision making. This means that many of the international organizations are not binding to its member states. However, the suggestions proposed in such organizations are of vital importance for developing countries and they are mostly formed and passed by dominating nations with expanded voting rights. In other words, the solutions proposed are debated and passed with little or no influence by the very countries that will be implementing and making use of the solutions.

On the other hand, there are also organizations that are binding or effective in terms of taking action themselves. Nevertheless, these organizations also require equal representation of LEDCs. In both cases, international organizations are platforms for global recognition and initiative, however, it is important to keep these organizations global, meaning that they represent developing countries as much as they do developed countries.

Exploring the Implications of Various Voting Methods

There are many procedures applied by different international organizations that shift the context in which the voting procedures are carried out in, which also changes the impact each country has on the decisions that are made. For instance, some organizations set certain numbers of in favor votes for a proposal or a resolution to incorporate and increase the importance of the developing countries’ votes. To give another example to such procedures, as a solution proposing UN organ, General Assembly uses a simple majority rule to pass any resolutions, meaning that the number of in favor votes exceeding the number of against votes is enough for a resolution to pass. Furthermore, General Assembly also uses a one-vote-for-one voting procedure in which each member state has one single vote. This is often regarded as a fair way of implementing the voting as each nation gets to share their views as equals. However, this method is also often criticized as it does not represent the populations accordingly. For instance, a country like PR China with a population over 1 billion having the same voting rights with a country with only a population of thousands does not seem right to some and argued that those Chinese citizens are lacking representation in such cases as their collective priorities and well-being are not in accordance with the number of individuals that country has. Nevertheless, it is also argued by others that if organizations were to give voting rights in accordance with their populations, those nations wouldn’t use those extra votes to safeguard the well-being of their citizens, but they would use them to assert their power and influence in such organizations to get what they want approved. In such a case, for example, China would have a huge proportion of votes, and China and India together can influence almost every decision simply by the amount of influence they receive due to their high populations.
Moreover, countries like United Kingdom and France would have less influence on decisions in contrast and this situation would create conflicts as such nations are considered developed nations and would not agree on a voting procedure in which their votes are not affecting the outcome of a proposal. The reason as to why developed countries abide by such voting methods in organizations like World Health Organization and organs like General Assembly is that they are decision-recommending rather than decision-making which makes their decision not legally binding to its member states. Some legally binding courts and organizations such as the World Trade Organization and International Court of Justice also use majority voting; however, states are able to not comply with the decisions of such organizations by simply refusing to consent to it, once again decreasing the efficiency of the majority decision on a basis of one-vote-one-member policy and at the same time making developed nations abide by the voting procedure itself.

Another voting method used by a different organ of United Nations is utilized by the Security Council. Apart from giving five countries the right to veto, the Security Council requires at least 9 of the member states to vote in favor of a proposal in order for it to pass. This means that even though five permanent members have the right to deny any solutions proposed, they still need at least 9 votes in total for their solution proposals to pass, making them also abide by the international law and the procedure of the Security Council. Regardless of the veto power's influence on their dominance in the council, permanent countries still require the support of non-permanent states. This is a regulation on the voting done with the aim of limiting the dominance and influence the permanent member states might have had on the council, which might have made it an insufficient organ that is only utilized as a tool for providing legal background for the workings of the permanent members.

Another voting method that is used by some organizations, including the IMF and the World Bank, is a weighted voting depending on the monetary contributions of the states to the organization itself. This means that countries who pay and contribute more money to the organization will have more votes and rights over its decisions. This may come across as a fair system, however, it is not for LEDCs as it literally makes their presence in the commissions and organizations unnecessary. Compared to developed countries, developing LEDCs cannot spare huge amounts of money to contribute to a single institution or an organization as they require that money to be used for improving the quality of life in their country. In a weighted voting system, many nations cannot even make up the 1% of the votes when they come together, meaning that their decisions on an issue are totally ineffective. Such voting systems under which countries with more money to give have more votes on the issues to be debated, prevent LEDC representation and the ways in which they can contribute to the problems at hand.
Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goal 10

Sustainable Development Goal 10 is “Reduced Inequalities” and it aims to reduce inequalities between different groups, including those in between countries. Specifically, target 10.6 of Sustainable Development Goal reads as “Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.” As one of the targets directly links with the issue at hand, Sustainable Development Goal 10 is an important initiative of the United Nations through which nations are informed and led to overcome the inequalities faced by the developing nations, both in terms of membership and voting rights.

Sustainable Development Goal 16

As an international organization, an institution, is as strong as its members, increasing member rights and memberships would strengthen the international organization itself. With this objective, Sustainable Development Goal 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” lead the nations and aim for strong and effective organizations that connect various countries on the basis of cooperation.

Sustainable Development Goal 17

As strong partnership derives its power from equal representation since developing countries’ support can only be achieved through increasing their membership and voting rights, Sustainable Development Goal 17 is of crucial importance. To achieve the other 16 goals and overcome other significant problems our world faces nowadays, partnership is essential as such problems require the support of more than a few developed nations.

Figure.1 Emblem of the SDG 10

Figure.2 Emblem of the SDG 16

Figure.3 Emblem of the SDG 17
Major Countries and Organizations Involved

International Monetary Fund (IMF):

International Monetary Fund is an intergovernmental organization that serves as a lender of money to countries who need financial assistance in the process of development or whilst facing economic crises. IMF has a special voting procedure, a procedure that consists of one-member-one-vote procedure and additional "special drawing rights (SDRs)". These additional SDRs’ amount is determined in proportion to the amount of money the nations contribute to the IMF, meaning that more money they give to IMF, more votes they have in it. The largest contributor, for example, is the United States and it has approximately 16.5% of all the votes while there are other countries that have tiny fractions of a 1%, as small as 0.03% for countries like Seychelles, Sao Tome and Principe, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, and Samoa. In case of a country borrowing extensive amounts of money from IMF, their votes are also subjected to reduction as they are benefiting from IMF more than they are contributing to it. There are certain percentages that need to be achieved specific to the type of decision. For instance, “investment” decisions require 70% in favor votes while amendments require 85%. This means that United State may use its votes as a veto, since 85% in favor votes cannot be achieved if the United States wishes to vote against a proposal. This kind of superiority overshadows many nations, especially developing LEDCs, and cast a shadow on their voting rights.

World Bank:

World Bank is an intergovernmental organization that was established to fund the reconstruction of Europe after World War 2, and now serves as an international bank that funds development projects all over the world. Similar to IMF, World Bank also uses a combination of basic and weighted voting rights. The number of weighted votes come proportionally to the amount of money they are contributing to the World Bank’s budget. This situation once again overshadows the developing nations who are actually benefiting and taking loans from the World Bank, which makes them abide to the rules and decisions of the organization on which they have no or little impact on.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Development Programme is a programme under the United Nations that takes the lead when it comes to sustainable development. It is the leading UN agency that promotes Sustainable Development Goals and works in more than 170 countries to implement them. It is an organization of upmost importance due to its stance in the SDG agenda and how it promotes the goals in general and works towards achieving them. Since increasing the membership and voting rights of LEDCs is also included in and related to the Sustainable Development Goals as discussed in the background information section, UNDP is a crucial organization to consider requesting assistance from as it is a leading agency in this issue that might help developing countries gain equal representation in
international organizations with its constant commitment to development. Any and all issues related to sustainable development and its goals and targets require assistance from UNDP as their extensive applications and presence around the world can help countries establish sustainable means of overcoming the problems they are facing.

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Event</th>
<th>Description of Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 11th, 1918</td>
<td>World War 1 ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 10th, 1920</td>
<td>League of Nations was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1st, 1939</td>
<td>World War 2 begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 1944</td>
<td>World Bank was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2nd, 1945</td>
<td>World War 2 ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24th, 1945</td>
<td>United Nations was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 27th, 1945</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20th, 1946</td>
<td>League of Nations stops operating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 22nd, 1965</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1st, 1995</td>
<td>World Trade Organization is established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2000</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals were established during the Millenium Summit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals were adopted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, July 2nd 2001 (A/CONF.191/12)
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, October 21st 2015 (A/RES/70/1)
- Political Economy of International Organizations Conferences
These conferences are held to review the international organizations, the way they are governed and the way the solutions are put into effect. Organizations such as United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, etc. are all topics of discussion during the conference in which they are evaluated in terms of effectiveness. These conferences, however, do not explicitly focus on LEDC representation and thus, fail to improve their voting rights and representation.

**Possible Solutions**

In order to increase LEDC membership and voting rights in international organizations, the essential thing to do is to reform the voting procedures and membership criterions for specific organizations. The key issue here is to find and develop an appropriate voting system for that specific international organization while taking into consideration the needs of both the LEDCs and that specific international organization. With this in mind, delegates should be developing new voting systems inclusive of LEDCs and also those that would be agreed by the developed countries. In order to find these intersections, international organizations can hold conventions and supervise treaties that are going to be signed by member states with the sole purpose of developing and forming a new reform for the voting system of that particular organization. During these processes, UNDP can be asked for assistance as it is the leading agency in terms of sustainable development. In these new reform, new quotas, vote floors (just like price floors) for developed countries, new fractions of in favor votes needed to pass a proposal, etc. can be altered so that LEDC representation is achieved and their voices are heard. If applicable, a specific quota can be established which will require a specific number of in favor votes from countries classified as “LEDCs” to pass a resolution. Other solutions may be generated depending on the organization and the situation the countries in; however, both LEDCs, MEDCs and international organizations’ rights and benefits should be taken into consideration without putting one in disadvantage while giving more privileges to the others.

**Bibliography**


**Appendix or Appendices**

I. **Voting Rules in International Organizations**
   https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/public_law_and_legal_theory/449/

II. **The Role of International Organisms in the Globalization Process**

III. **SDG 10**
    https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10

IV. **International Organizations are Tools for Powerful Countries**
    https://geopoliticalfutures.com/international-organizations-tools-powerful-countries/