

InterMUN 2025

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

**Promoting the regulation of
Fast-Fashion and addressing its
negative environmental impact.**



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Moderator: Sofia Cantú

Welcoming message from the chair:

Dear delegates,

We chairs are so excited to have you here in what is likely your first ever MUN! We'll be learning together through what I hope is a remarkable experience for you. If you have any questions regarding the vocabulary used within this paper, the topic, or the committee as a whole, please don't hesitate to email latinmun@latin.edu.mx. I warmly welcome you to ECOSOC and look forward to meeting you at the event!

Kind regards,

Ximena Garza

Committee's Background:

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is considered to be a vital council within the United Nations, as it helps in three areas, economic, social, and environmental. ECOSOC fosters debate and innovative thinking, paving ways forward and planting coordination to achieve international goals.

The committee was established by the UN Charter in 1945, instantly being one of the six main organs within the organization. Each year, the committee structures its work around a worldwide theme regarding sustainable development. This ensures that ECOSOC's partners and the UN development system have focused attention.

ECOSOC links various UN entities and minor organs that prioritize sustainable development, ensuring guidance and coordination for them, as well as giving regional socioeconomical commissions, facilitating intergovernmental issues, and establishing formative frameworks, agencies, and programs at work worldwide to create significant change in people's lives.

Reforms with UNGA have strengthened the committee's leading role in identifying challenges, promoting innovation, and achieving a balance of the afore-mentioned three pillars. A 2021 review made ECOSOC's Charter dictate as a coordinator, organizer, and specialized body for policy dialogue, which includes policy-making and forger of conclusions regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as other major UN conferences/summits under its view.

Expanding on its coordination role, ECOSOC is a pathway for UN partnerships and worldwide, as it offers unique global meeting points for dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, and many other NGOs.

Topic Background:

The term “fast fashion” has become more mainstream within conversations regarding fashion, sustainability, and the environmental implications. This term refers to the cheaply produced/priced garments that mimic the latest styles and are distributed quickly to maximize on trends. Fast fashion includes the rapid-design, production, distribution, and marketing of such clothing, meaning that retailers can make large numbers of various products for consumers at a cheap price.

Fashion production makes 10% of total worldwide carbon emissions, which is as much as the entire European Union. This industry pollutes rivers/streams while drying up water, and 85% of these textiles go to dumpsters each year. Washing clothes releases 500,000 tons of microfibers into the ocean each year, which is as much as 50B plastic bottles.

Three main points of the fast fashion industry’s pollution lies in dyeing and finishing (36%), yarn preparation (28%), and fiber production (15%), with the later being the most impactful on freshwater withdrawal and ecosystem quality due to cotton cultivation, while all these three combined have impacts on resource depletion, thanks to the high-energy processes that use fossil fuels.

Impacts on water: This industry is the second-largest user of water, as it requires about 700 gallons to make one cotton shirt and 2,000 gallons to make a pair of jeans. Textile dying is the second-largest polluter of water, as the leftover water from the dyeing process is usually dumped in streams, ditches, or rivers.

Microplastics: Brands use synthetic fibers that take centuries to biodegrade, with about 35% of all microplastics in the ocean coming from the laundering of synthetic textiles like polyester. According to a 2015 documentary, 80B new pieces of clothing are used every year worldwide, which is 400% than 20 years ago. The average American now

creates 82lbs of textile waste each year. Leather production needs large quantities of food, land, water, and fossil fuels just raise the livestock, and the tanning process is one of the most toxic in all of the fashion industry because the chemicals used include mineral salts, formaldehyde, derivatives of coal-tar, and many oils and dyes, which aren't biodegradable and also contaminate water.

Energy: The production of making plastic fibers into textiles uses a lot of energy that needs large amounts of petroleum and releases unstable matter and acids. Cotton is also not environmentally friendly to manufacture, and the pesticides necessary for cotton growth is a health risk for farmers. To counter this waste, sustainable fabrics can be used to make clothing, such as those of hemp and lyocell.

Current Situation:

United States: California pioneered the nation's first Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for textiles through the Responsible Textile Recovery Act, signed in September 2024. The law requires apparel manufacturers earning over \$1M annually to join producer responsibility organizations that oversee the complete lifecycle of textile products, including collection, repair, and recycling. Companies can face fines up to \$10,000 per day for violations, or \$50,000 per day for intentional violations.

European Union: EU countries have been required to collect textiles separately for reuse and recycling since January 2025. In September 2025, new rules were approved requiring producers to cover costs for collecting, sorting, and recycling their products.

A ban on destroying unsold clothing and footwear will take effect in July 2026 for large enterprises and July 2030 for medium-sized companies, prohibiting disposal through incineration or landfilling.

France: France's parliament unanimously passed ground banning fast fashion advertising and imposing economic penalties of up to €10 per item sold on fashion items harming the planet and people. Advertising violations can result in fines up to €20,000 for individuals and €100,000 for legal entities.

On the Industry: New regulations are expected to increase retail prices of fast fashion items due to heightened labor and recycling standards. The major appeal of fast fashion, cheap pricing, will be mitigated, potentially leveling the playing field for small and local businesses.

The EU's regulations, which cover nearly three-quarters of textiles imported into the bloc, will have a trickle-down effect on fast fashion suppliers in developing nations, potentially reshaping international supply chains.

Competitive Landscape: Despite regulatory pressure, ultra-fast fashion players like SHEIN and Temu continue to disrupt the market. SHEIN's average SKU price of \$14 significantly undercuts H&M's \$26 and Zara's \$34, with 40% of US consumers having shopped at SHEIN or Temu in the past year.

The regulatory landscape represents a fundamental shift from voluntary corporate sustainability commitment to legally binding requirements, with enforcement mechanisms and significant penalties designed to hold the fashion industry accountable for its environmental and social impacts.

Chair/Moderator Conclusion:

Fast fashion is growing quickly and is part of our daily lives, as it has taken over the mainstream market and is quite popular among consumers. But this industry also comes with its consequences, such as water pollution, the use of fossil fuels, and the waste of these cheap items.

Even though several countries have been trying to fight back against fast and ultra-fast fashion, the industry is too large to tackle at once and the world is simply not ready to take on such a task.

Fast fashion companies like SHEIN and Temu have taken the world by storm with their extra-cheap pricing thanks to loopholes they've found in laws, and companies like Zara, while fashionable and certainly mainstream, produce large quantities of clothing items that, if not sold, will end up in landfills or get incinerated. These manufacturing volumes create a ton of waste and carbon emissions for our planet, not to mention the other various consequences this industry has on the environment.

Fast fashion regulations, while existent, aren't effective enough when put in action. Meaningful change needs awareness from people and a shift in the consumers' minds, prioritizing quality over quantity and embracing the reuse of clothing items, and recognizing that the value of a piece of clothing doesn't come down to price, but its impact on the environment and the quality of the item. While the regulatory framework is in place, whether it creates meaningful change or simply redistributes costs without altering consumer behavior whatsoever is a key question for the upcoming years.

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