

Delegation: Arab Republic of Egypt  
Delegate: John Doe  
Committee: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
Topic: China's Belt and Road Initiative

The Arab Republic of Egypt recognizes the importance of addressing the economic and social repercussions of China's Belt and Road Initiative as it is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (UNESCAP) responsibility to "make or initiate studies and reports concerning international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters"<sup>1</sup> and "make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all"<sup>2</sup>. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased income inequalities and reduced financial stability around the world, with many countries' debt-to-GDP ratios reaching all-time highs in 2022<sup>3</sup>. As different States work towards economic recovery – and potentially use China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to do so – they walk a fine line between promoting financial growth by establishing multilateral trade agreements with powerful nations to establish essential infrastructure projects and falling prey to debt diplomacy tactics that would threaten their political autonomy. China is often the largest investor in overseas projects associated with the BRI, and its economic presence should be maximized to increase financial development; however, such a presence should not impede on each State's national integrity either. Therefore, it is crucial that the ESCAP fosters a sustainable economic environment between its member States and consider both long and short-term approaches to issues regarding the weaponization of debt, military presence and territorial claims.

In 2023, Egypt reported a debt-to-GDP ratio of 85.58%<sup>4</sup>, well beyond the internationally accepted standard for debt sustainability. Therefore, it acknowledges the importance of building healthy economic partnerships and projects without encouraging the political leveraging of such practices. As a country with strong ties to the Maritime Silk Road due to its ownership of the Suez Canal, Egypt favors the BRI's growing role in the global trading system<sup>5</sup> and among the Arab League states. In fact, Egypt is committed to upholding the programs outlined in its 2030 Vision of Sustainable Development Strategy – which include promoting trade and economic cooperation, stimulating economic growth and industrialization, and increasing communication among peoples by promoting cultural exchange<sup>6</sup> – and carrying out in good faith the plan presented in the Declaration of Action on China-Arab States Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1945, 62 UNTS X, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1945, 62 UNTS X.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ayhan Kose, Peter Nagle, Franziska Ohnsorge, and Naotaka Sugawara, "Debt tsunami of the pandemic," last modified December 17, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/12/17/debt-tsunami-of-the-pandemic/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Egypt: National debt from 2017 to 2027 in relation to gross domestic product," *Statista*, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/377984/national-debt-of-egypt-in-relation-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Belt and Road Initiative," *The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency*, accessed January 17, 2023, <https://www.presidency.eg/en/-/الجزء-الافتتاحية-لقمة-منتدى-الحزام-والطريق>.

<sup>6</sup> "Egypt Vision 2030," *UNESCO*, accessed January 20, 2023, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/egypt-vision-2030-1>.

<sup>7</sup> "Declaration of Action on China-Arab States Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative," accessed on January 17, 2023, <http://www.chinaarabcf.org/lthyjwx/bzjhywj/dbjzbjhy/201807/P020210828263718115188.pdf>.

While Egypt is not a member State of the ESCAP, it recommends that the Commission analyze the economic potential and cooperation opportunities offered by the BRI as neutrally and comprehensively as possible, bearing in mind that internal political disputes should not overshadow the BRI's critical economic mission. For instance, the cases of regional instability in Xinjiang and Taiwan should be handled internally, which Egypt believes is being done appropriately<sup>8</sup>, or with the help of a third neutral party, similar to how Egypt has acted as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.

The delegation of Egypt sees multiple ways to address the issues at hand within the framework created by the ESCAP. It insists that the Commission's subcommittees focusing on Macroeconomic Policy and Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development should encourage countries to create multilateral treaties that solidify the BRI as a purely financial project. The embedding of anti-corruption and transparency provisions in bilateral trade agreements would also promote economic sustainability in participating states. That way, the cash flow required for major infrastructure projects can be more easily overseen by international organs such as the ESCAP and the Arab League. Moving forward, ESCAP States may also want to increase their environmentally sustainable economy programs within BRI projects (e.g., investing in electric transportation methods, green bonds, green loans, etc.)<sup>9</sup> and strengthen communication channels with non-member States that are involved in the modern Silk Road. While ESCAP must play a role in protecting human rights and civil liberties amidst rapid economic development, Egypt believes that it is essential for international bodies to respect every States' own sovereignty and give them the freedom to respond to their internal sources of social instability based on their customs and policies; as such, ESCAP can help maintain each State's political autonomy.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Advance Edited Version of the Letter to the Human Rights Council*: report of the Secretary-General, A/HRC/41/G/17 (9 August 2019), available from [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiT8NrF\\_-8AhUUmokEHUAlCwsQFnoECBIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fap.ohchr.org%2Fdocuments%2FE%2FHRC%2Fc\\_gov%2FA\\_HRC\\_41\\_G\\_17.DOCX&usg=AOvVaw3Jyhr\\_paC8ThIaQDTIYX2](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiT8NrF_-8AhUUmokEHUAlCwsQFnoECBIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fap.ohchr.org%2Fdocuments%2FE%2FHRC%2Fc_gov%2FA_HRC_41_G_17.DOCX&usg=AOvVaw3Jyhr_paC8ThIaQDTIYX2)

<sup>9</sup> "Advancing the Green Development of the Belt and Road Initiative: Harnessing Finance and Technology to Scale Up Low-Carbon Infrastructure," *Economic World Forum*, accessed January 20, 2023, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Advancing\\_the\\_Green\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_Belt\\_and\\_Road\\_Initiative\\_2022.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Advancing_the_Green_Development_of_the_Belt_and_Road_Initiative_2022.pdf).

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