

**Frederick S. Pardee Institute  
for International Futures**

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## **INTERNATIONAL FUTURES (IFs) COUNTRY GROUPINGS**

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## Abstract

Countries are grouped for various purposes, including research, forecasting, strategic planning, comparability, representation, advocacy, cultural identity, and policymaking. Regional, continental, strategic, and economic classifications of countries provide a valuable framework for understanding and analyzing global dynamics and play a critical role in economic and human development modeling used to forecast future outcomes. However, there is no universal agreement on how certain groups and their memberships should be defined. This lack of consensus has far-reaching implications, affecting development efforts, international cooperation, and policy decisions designed to address shared challenges and opportunities effectively.

To address this lack of standardization and the absence of published comprehensive justifications, the Pardee Institute for International Futures at the University of Denver has created its own set of country groupings for use in the International Futures (IFs) modeling tool. The Institute's classifications are based on the United Nations Statistical Division's (UNSD) M49 system but include additional research and justifications for specific country placements considered to be boundary cases. For countries where classifications have discrepancies or are controversial across multinational organizations, universities, or governments, we determine their grouping in IFs based on a thorough analysis of the country's geographical, historical, political, strategic, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics to justify their classification.

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Abstract.....                                    | 2  |
| Table of Contents.....                           | 3  |
| Table of Tables.....                             | 4  |
| Introduction.....                                | 5  |
| Groupings Methodology.....                       | 6  |
| Classification factors.....                      | 7  |
| Geography.....                                   | 7  |
| History and Politics.....                        | 8  |
| Ethnicity, Language and Culture, and Race.....   | 10 |
| IFs Country and Regional Groupings.....          | 11 |
| Africa.....                                      | 11 |
| Africa Boundary Cases and Reasoning.....         | 12 |
| Sudan.....                                       | 12 |
| Mauritania.....                                  | 12 |
| Asia.....  | 13 |
| Asia Boundary Cases and Reasoning.....           | 14 |
| Afghanistan.....                                 | 14 |
| Cyprus.....                                      | 15 |
| Türkiye.....                                     | 15 |
| Iraq.....  | 16 |
| Iran.....  | 16 |
| Georgia.....                                     | 17 |
| Russian Federation.....                          | 18 |
| Europe.....                                      | 18 |
| Europe Boundary Cases and Reasoning.....         | 19 |
| Iceland.....                                     | 19 |
| The United Kingdom.....                          | 19 |
| Ireland.....                                     | 20 |
| Spain.....                                       | 20 |
| Austria.....                                     | 21 |
| Kosovo.....                                      | 21 |
| Albania.....                                     | 22 |
| Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.....              | 22 |
| Georgia.....                                     | 23 |
| Russian Federation.....                          | 23 |
| Oceania.....                                     | 23 |
| Americas North.....                              | 24 |
| Americas North Boundary Cases and Reasoning..... | 24 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Mexico.....  | 24 |
| Puerto Rico.....   | 25 |
| Americas Central and Americas Caribbean.....                     | 26 |
| Americas Central and Caribbean Boundary Cases and Reasoning..... | 26 |
| Mexico.....  | 26 |
| Puerto Rico.....   | 26 |
| Belize.....  | 26 |
| Americas South.....  | 27 |
| Summary of Countries and their sub-regions.....                  | 27 |
| Economic and Developmental Groupings in IFs.....                 | 31 |
| Human Development Index (HDI).....                               | 31 |
| HDI Low.....   | 31 |
| HDI Medium.....  | 31 |
| HDI High.....  | 31 |
| HDI Very High.....   | 32 |
| Income Groups.....   | 37 |
| WB Low income.....   | 37 |
| WB Lower-Middle Income.....                                      | 37 |
| WB Upper-Middle Income.....                                      | 37 |
| WB High Income.....  | 37 |
| Conclusion.....  | 42 |
| References.....  | 44 |
| Annex.....   | 51 |

## Table of Tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Summary of IFs Countries and their Groupings.....        | 27 |
| Table 2: Summary of IFs Countries and their HDI Groupings.....    | 32 |
| Table 3: Summary of IFs Countries and their Income Groupings..... | 38 |
| Table 4: Summary of Boundary Cases.....                           | 51 |

## Introduction

Regional and continental country classifications hold considerable significance, but no international consensus exists on how countries should be grouped. Institutions often adopt their own methodologies without providing clear justifications for their choices, leading to discrepancies. Cyprus is a prime example of this issue, as it is categorized differently by major institutions. While geographically close to Asia, Cyprus is culturally and politically affiliated with Europe. This divergence has resulted in Cyprus being grouped as part of Asia West by some institutions and Europe South by others, depending on the criteria used. This inconsistency highlights how differences in history, politics, and strategic interests can lead to conflicting classifications (Ker-Lindsay 2011).

These varying classifications also influence data analysis and research interpretations by introducing inconsistencies in how regions are defined and compared. For example, grouping Cyprus as either Asia West or Europe South could alter economic forecasts that impact future policy. Similarly, including Sudan in Africa North or Africa East could impact analyses of development indicators like the Human Development Index (HDI), as Sudan's socio-economic conditions could significantly impact regional results depending on where it is grouped. Such inconsistencies affect the accuracy of forecasts, comparative studies, and global trend analyses, ultimately shaping how data is interpreted and applied in academic research and policymaking.

Moreover, the group a country is classified into can have tangible, material consequences. Sudan, for example, is strategically, historically, linguistically, and religiously more connected to North Africa. Yet, it is sometimes grouped with East Africa or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This inconsistency has real-world impacts, such as Sudan's exclusion from the OECD-MENA Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development, which limits its access to certain development opportunities (OECD 2022).

The Pardee Institute for International Futures is based at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver in Colorado. The Pardee Institute conducts research and uses data to analyze and forecast the long-term dynamics in human, social, and natural systems. We use the International Futures (IFs) model, a dynamic and integrated model consisting of 12 submodules: agriculture, demographics, economics, education, energy, environment, gender, governance, health, infrastructure, international politics, and technology. IFs includes 188 countries that can be grouped into regions within the model. IFs is open-source and publicly available at <https://korbel.du.edu/pardee>. The Pardee Institute has published high-profile research that relies on country groupings as a foundational framework for its modeling and forecasting efforts (Hanna et al. 2024; Moyer et al. 2023). These classifications are crucial for analyzing economic, political, and social trends and providing insights into global development scenarios. By grouping countries regionally and by key characteristics, the Institute enhances comparability, simplifies analysis, and ensures consistency in its IFs modeling tool. While many institutions define and standardize their own country groupings, those groupings are rarely explained or justified despite countries having multiple regional alternatives. This paper introduces the default core set of regional groupings in the IFs model and details the process and justification of those groupings.

Pardee's grouping framework primarily follows the groupings of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) publication "Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use" (UN M49 standard), to standardize the classification of countries, regions, and sub-regions worldwide. It is part

of the UNSD's efforts to organize global statistical data consistently and uniformly for use in research, analysis, and reporting. The Institute also investigates and compares classifications across institutions and evaluates boundary cases. The Pardee Institute identifies countries with significant classification variances or well-documented disputes as "boundary cases" and applies a comprehensive analysis based on historical, linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, political, and strategic factors. This method ensures transparency, reliability, and better-informed classifications, ultimately strengthening the credibility and utility of the IFs model for forecasting and decision-making.

## Groupings Methodology

The primary framework for groupings in this paper is founded on the UN's M49 standard which is a numerical coding system developed by the UNSD). This system contains the list of countries or areas in alphabetical order, their three-digit numerical codes used for statistical processing purposes by the UNSD Secretariat (UNSD 1999), and their three-digit alphabetical codes assigned by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (ISO 2006). The M49 standard is widely used by international organizations, governments, and researchers to consistently organize and compare global data. It ensures that countries and regions are classified in a universally accepted framework, facilitating harmonized statistical analysis across multiple datasets and sources. The M49 standard has the following key characteristics which make it suitable to use in our classification designations:

- **Numerical Codes:** Each country, territory, or region is assigned a unique three-digit numeric code. These codes are not tied to political designations or membership in the UN but are used for statistical purposes.
- **Hierarchical Structure:** The system categorizes entities into three levels: **countries or areas**, **geographic sub-regions**, and **macro-regions** (continents). For instance:
  - *Macro-region:* Africa
  - *Sub-region:* Eastern Africa
  - *Country/Area:* Kenya
- **Neutral and Consistent:** The classifications are based on geographic, statistical, and economic criteria, avoiding political or cultural biases.
- **Flexibility:** The M49 coding allows for updates and revisions to reflect changes in geopolitical realities, such as new countries or redefined regions.

The Pardee Institute then conducted a qualitative analysis of various published country, regional, and continental classifications to understand the underlying rationale for these classifications. This analysis aimed to develop a consistent and transparent framework for IFs modeling tool. The methodology involved reviewing a range of sources, including the UNSD M49 standard, classifications from international organizations (e.g., World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)), and academic and institutional groupings. Particular attention was paid to identifying "boundary cases," where there is significant disagreement or ambiguity regarding a country's placement.

For each boundary case, the Institute undertook a comprehensive, multi-faceted assessment, incorporating:

- **Geographical factors:** The physical location of a country, natural boundaries such as rivers and mountains, and its proximity to other regions.
- **Historical context and political dynamics:** The country's historical alliances, colonial past, and territorial boundaries established through treaties or conflicts. It also includes current and historical political affiliations, including membership in regional or global alliances like

the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

- ***Ethnic, cultural, language and racial considerations:*** The demographic composition of the country and its alignment with neighboring states or regions, the shared linguistic ties, and cultural practices that align a country with specific regions.

Determining thresholds for prioritizing these factors in country groupings requires a careful assessment of the unique attributes of each country. Each factor has therefore been assessed according to its relevance in deciding a country's grouping, ensuring that those decisions are well-reasoned and contextually appropriate. For instance, Cyprus's cultural and political history with Europe outweighs its geographic position in Asia. Belize's geographic location on the Central American isthmus supersedes its cultural ties to the Caribbean. Austria's geography and modern political alignment with Western Europe prevail, while historical ties to Eastern Europe are secondary. These examples underscore the importance of balancing multiple factors to make thoughtful and defensible classifications. The results of these assessments are documented to provide transparency and consistency in the IFs model. This systematic approach allows the Pardee Institute to resolve classification discrepancies effectively while establishing a robust and well-justified framework for country groupings. The following section details these factors and how they might inform application to boundary cases.

## Classification factors

The following sections describe the three main factors considered when making decisions about the regional categorization of boundary cases:

### Geography

Geography plays a fundamental role in classifying countries by providing clear and tangible criteria for grouping based on physical proximity and natural boundaries. The following factors often determine the framework for geographical classifications:

#### Physical Location

*Continental Placement:* Geography determines a country's location within a continent, such as Africa, Asia, or Europe, forming the basis for large-scale regional groupings. Countries within a continent are further classified into sub-regions (e.g., Southern Africa, Southeast Asia) based on their geographic proximity to one another.

#### Natural Boundaries

*Landforms:* Features such as mountains, rivers, and deserts often serve as natural dividing lines. For example, the Pyrenees separate France from Spain (Calafell and Bertranpetit 1994), and the Sahara Desert distinguishes North Africa from Sub-Saharan Africa.

*Bodies of Water:* Oceans, seas, and rivers create clear boundaries, such as the Mediterranean Sea separating Europe from Africa (Gilmore 1982).

## Climate Zones

Similar climatic conditions can influence regional classifications, grouping countries that share ecosystems or environmental challenges. For example, the Sahel region in Africa is classified by its semi-arid climate and unique geographical conditions (Brovkin et al. 1998; Lopez-Lucia and Mattheis 2020).

In analyzing the boundary cases, we therefore consider geographic proximity because it often fosters shared interests or challenges, such as trade routes or shared natural resources, influencing regional classifications. For instance, the Caribbean region groups island nations based on their proximity and interconnected maritime geography. Geography also influences strategic importance, such as access to waterways or borders with neighboring regions, which can affect classifications. For example, Turkey is geographically in both Europe and Asia, making it a boundary case influenced by its location at the crossroads of continents.

## History and Politics

History and politics significantly influence how countries are grouped by shaping their boundaries, affiliations, and regional identities. We describe some of the historical and political factors that inform country classifications:

### Historical Events and Territorial Boundaries

*Colonial Legacies:* Many country groupings reflect borders established during colonial rule, which often disregarded ethnic or cultural lines e.g., the division of Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. This period saw the partition of Africa into spheres of influence, protectorates, and colonial boundaries which have endured post-independence. In the Horn of Africa, for example, Somalia was split into Italian Somalia, British Somalia, Ethiopian Somalia, French Somaliland, and the Somali region of northern Kenya (Gashaw 2017; Griffiths 1986).

*Empire and Nation-State Formation:* Historical empires, such as the Ottoman Empire or the Austro-Hungarian Empire, influence current political and cultural alignments, grouping countries with shared histories. Countries like Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Balkans (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Albania) share cultural, political, and historical ties rooted in their Ottoman past (Quataert 2005). Countries like Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina share historical connections to the Austro-Hungarian empire. The empire's collapse after World War I influenced the redrawing of borders and the creation of new states, leading to political and cultural ties that endure today (Mason 2014; Monticone 1968).

### Political Systems and Alliances

*Cold War Alignments:* During the Cold War, countries were grouped as part of the Eastern or Western Bloc, shaping regional affiliations that persist today. The Eastern Bloc was composed of countries aligned with the Soviet Union under communist governance. Soviet-aligned states in Eastern Europe included Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Asian communist states included China (initially), North Korea, and Vietnam. The Western Bloc comprised of countries aligned with the United States, promoting capitalism and liberal democracy and they included (NATO) member states namely the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Italy, and Canada. Key allies in other regions include Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Turkey. In addition,



there was a Non-Aligned Movement, and some countries, particularly in the Global South, refused to align explicitly with either bloc and formed the Non-Aligned Movement e.g., India, Yugoslavia, and Egypt. These Cold War alignments established political and economic relationships that influence regional groupings today, such as NATO's continuation and the enduring legacy of the former Soviet Union on countries like Belarus and Ukraine (Kramer 1999; Rothstein 1966).

*Multilateral Organizations:* Membership in organizations like NATO, the AU, or ASEAN, the latter of which was formed in 1967 to promote regional stability and peace (ASEAN Secretariat 2020). ASEAN reflects political ties that often influence regional classifications.

## **Shared Conflicts and Cooperation**

*Wars and Treaties:* Shared histories of conflict or cooperation, such as European countries' integration post-World War II, create a basis for political and regional groupings e.g., the European Union (EU) (Cini and Borragán 2016).

*Boundary Disputes:* The Kashmir dispute or conflict between India and Pakistan nearly eight decades old, having originated in 1947, due to the partition of British India between India and Pakistan along the religious lines (Adhikari and Kamle 2010). Ongoing or historical territorial disputes, such as those between India and Pakistan, can affect how countries are perceived and grouped.

## **National Identity and Governance**

*Independence Movements:* Countries grouped together often share histories of decolonization or struggles for sovereignty, like many nations in Africa and Asia. Countries like South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique share a legacy of liberation struggles against colonial rule or apartheid systems (Dubow 2014; Müller-Friedman 2008; Seegers 1986). These nations have often collaborated within regional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (SADC 2023) and even the AU, to promote post-independence development and stability. Furthermore, many newly independent states in Asia joined the Non-Aligned Movement to assert their sovereignty and avoid alignment with Cold War superpowers.

*Political and Governance Structures:* Similar governance systems, such as democratic nations or monarchies, can inform regional groupings. The Community of Democracies (CoD), an intergovernmental organization of democratic nations, including India, Japan, and South Korea, was formed to promote democratic governance and human rights (CoD n.d.). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is composed of absolute and constitutional monarchies in the Gulf region, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait. Their shared governance systems facilitate cooperation on regional security, economics, and culture (Ramazani and Kechichian 1988; Sturm et al. 2008). Commonwealth Realms including countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand recognize the British monarch as their head of state, linking them through constitutional monarchy systems (Boyce 2008).

## **Strategic and Geopolitical Importance**

*Geopolitical Location:* Countries strategically located at crossroads (e.g., Turkey, bridging Europe and Asia) are sometimes grouped into multiple regions based on their historical and political roles. Turkey is a member of NATO and ASEAN, for example.

History and politics offer context and depth to country groupings, beyond geographical proximity. These factors help explain why countries with shared historical experiences or political goals are grouped together, providing insights into their strategic relationships and regional dynamics.

## Ethnicity, Language and Culture, and Race

Ethnicity, language, and race foster connections and alignments between countries, influencing regional groupings, cultural alliances, and policy collaborations. These shared identities have helped countries build stronger regional cohesion and mutual understanding in global forums.

### Ethnicity

*Shared Ancestry:* Countries with populations sharing ethnic roots or traditions are often grouped together. The Sahel region in Africa for example groups countries like Mali, Niger, and Chad due to shared ethnic groups such as the Tuareg and Fulani.

Many African countries are grouped based on ethnic divisions during or after colonial rule, although these often led to boundary conflicts e.g., the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi. In the Horn of Africa, for example, Somalia was split into Italian Somalia, British Somalia, Ethiopian Somalia, French Somaliland, and the Somali region of northern Kenya (Gashaw 2017). Although these people share a common culture, their lives and identities have been separated as citizens of Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. These artificial designations of land not only split ethnic communities but have partly contributed to boundary (and civil) conflicts and ongoing socio-economic hardships in parts of the continent (Boyd 1979; Gashaw 2017).

### Language

*Linguistic Families and Heritage:* Language is a key factor in regional and cultural alignment. Latin America groups Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries due to their shared linguistic heritage from colonial powers. Francophone Africa groups countries like Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cameroon based on their use of French, a colonial legacy that continues to shape diplomacy and education (Chumbow and Bobda 2000).

Linguistic similarities also promote collaboration within regions. The Arab League groups Arabic-speaking nations in the Middle East and North Africa, have created a shared identity based on language and culture. The Organization of Turkic States for example includes countries like Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan, which share Turkic ethnic roots and linguistic similarities (Organization of Turkic States n.d.). The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) groups nations like Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, and Angola are based on their shared use of Portuguese (Mormul 2020).

### Race

*Historical Identity and Migration:* Shared racial or ethnic heritage influences groupings by fostering a sense of unity. The AU emphasizes the shared African racial and cultural heritage of its member states, reinforcing continental solidarity (African Union 2023).

Countries with significant populations of the same racial group can also form alliances or maintain ties. The Commonwealth Caribbean includes nations like Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and

Tobago, with predominantly Afro-Caribbean populations influenced by a history of the transatlantic slave trade (Sutton 1991; Thomas-Hope 1986).

These factors are considered in the regional placement of countries that are considered to be boundary cases. Furthermore, we identify the deciding factor in each case for transparency in the IFs groupings framework and how it may differ from the UNSD in particular.

## IFs Country and Regional Groupings

This section will show the core regional groupings by continent for 188 countries in the IFs system. We also show groupings related to the Economic and Development indices category groupings for these countries. The IFs model includes territories that are semi-sovereign including Kosovo, Taiwan, Puerto Rico, and Palestine.

In this analysis, we will also highlight countries that are considered to be boundary cases. This section identifies how the UNSD, and other political, academic, and private sectors classify these countries into continents and their regions. In doing so, we identify which UNSD groupings vary from our groupings in IFs justified through this research process. The regional and/or continental placement for boundary cases is justified, assessing the previously explained factors in order of importance in deciding a country's grouping across five continental regions.

## Africa

Africa is comprised of 55 countries in IFs. They include: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Africa is split into North, South, East, Central (UNSD also refers to Africa Central as “Middle” Africa), and West.

- **Africa North:** Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sudan, and Tunisia.
- **Africa South:** Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- **Africa East:** Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- **Africa Central:** Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe.

- **Africa West:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

## Africa Boundary Cases and Reasoning

Africa's boundary countries are *Sudan* and *Mauritania*.

### Sudan

***Sudan*** is sometimes considered either Africa East or Africa North, and occasionally a part of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). UNSD classifies Sudan as Africa North, while the OECD, African Union, and (World Bank) WB exclude Sudan from Africa North. In IFs, we classify Sudan as Africa North because of the following reasons:

*Geographical proximity:* Sudan is located geographically in the northern part of the African continent, directly south of Egypt. It is often grouped with North African nations due to its physical adjacency to other North African countries like Egypt and Libya.

*Historical, cultural, and linguistic connections:* Sudan has deep historical ties to Egypt, including periods of shared governance under the Ottoman Empire and later British-Egyptian rule during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899–1956). The influence of North African Arab culture has historically shaped Sudan's identity, particularly in the northern part of the country (Powell 2012; Walz 2018). Additionally, the majority of Sudan's population speaks Arabic, the dominant language in North Africa. Sudan shares cultural traditions, including cuisine, attire, and social customs, with other Arabic-speaking North African nations. Moreover, the widespread practice of Islam, which is the predominant religion in North Africa, further solidifies this connection (Al-Raḥīm 1970).

*Political affiliations and organizations:* Sudan is a member of the Arab League, like other North African countries such as Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia. Sudan's participation in regional North African alliances and forums also reinforces its identification with the region (Arab Org n.d.).

Sudan's classification in North Africa reflects its geographical placement, Arabic linguistic and cultural ties, Islamic heritage, and historical connections to the region. These factors collectively outweigh its affiliations with Sub-Saharan Africa and specifically Africa East. Moreover, the MENA region is not strictly defined and often shifts based on the context. In some analyses, Sudan is included because of its Arab and Islamic identity; in others, it is excluded due to its African geography and affiliations. In IFs, we don't classify it in MENA because its geographical position makes it more peripheral to the core Middle Eastern countries.

### Mauritania

***Mauritania*** is considered either Africa West or Africa North. UNSD classifies Mauritania as West Africa. In IFs, Mauritania is also classified as West Africa because of the following reasons:

*Geographical proximity:* Mauritania is located in the westernmost part of the African continent and shares borders with several core West African countries, including Mali and Senegal. A significant portion of Mauritania lies in the Sahel region, a transitional zone between the Sahara Desert to the

north and the savanna regions of Sub-Saharan Africa to the south, geographically linking it to West Africa (James 2002; Yebouk et al. 2024).

*Historical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic connections:* Historically, Mauritania was part of the powerful West African empires, such as the Ghana Empire and later the Mali Empire, which shaped the region's cultural and trade networks. Despite later Arabization, Mauritania has retained significant socio-cultural ties to its West African neighbors (Choplin and Lombard 2014). Mauritania also has strong cultural ties to the West African region, with mixed Arab-Berber and Sub-Saharan African influences. Ethnic groups such as the Fulani and Wolof are present in Mauritania and other West African countries, fostering cultural cohesion across borders (James 2002). While Arabic is the official language, many Mauritaniens also speak Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof, which are widely spoken across West Africa. These linguistic ties further integrate Mauritania into the broader West African cultural and communication networks (James 2002).

*Economic and regional integration:* Mauritania is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), aligning it economically and politically with other West African countries. The country participates in West African trade routes and markets, and much of its economic activity, particularly in agriculture and livestock, is tied to the region (Choplin and Lombard 2014; ECOWAS 2023).

While Mauritania shares some cultural and linguistic traits with North Africa due to its Arab-Berber population and membership in the Arab League, its socio-economic and historical context aligns more strongly with Africa West. Geographically, most of Mauritania lies south of the Sahara, unlike the core countries of North Africa, which are concentrated along the Mediterranean coast. Therefore, Mauritania's geographical location, ethnic and linguistic ties, historical integration into West African empires, and economic affiliations with the region collectively outweigh its connections to North Africa, placing it within the Africa West grouping in IFs.

## Asia

Asia is comprised of 49 countries in IFs. They include: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.

Regionally Asia is split into Asia Central, East, West, South, Southeast.

In IFs, the Asia region is classified as follows:

- **Asia Central:** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Asia East:** China, Hong Kong, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Republic. of Korea, Taiwan.

- **Asia West:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Georgia, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.
- **Asia South:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.
- **Asia Southeast:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam.

## Asia Boundary Cases and Reasoning

Asia's regional and continental boundary countries are *Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Georgia, and the Russian Federation*.

### Afghanistan

*Afghanistan* is considered either Asia Central, Asia East, or Asia South. UNSD, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and WB group it under Asia South. The OECD classifies Afghanistan as Asia East, while some geography textbooks commonly include it in Central Asia.

We classify Afghanistan as Asia South in IFs because of the following reasons:

*Geographical proximity:* Afghanistan is situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. However, its southern and eastern borders with Pakistan and close proximity to India position it geographically within the South Asian region. In addition, the rugged Hindu Kush mountains naturally connect Afghanistan to South Asia's geographic and cultural landscapes (Lee 2022).

*Historical ties, cultural and linguistic links:* Historically, Afghanistan has been intertwined with South Asia through ancient trade routes like the Silk Road and conquests. Empires such as the Mauryan Empire, the Kushan Empire, and the Mughal Empire connected Afghanistan to the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire, which ruled much of South Asia, originated in present-day Afghanistan. Afghanistan was also never a part of the former Soviet Union unlike Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, classified as Asia Central. Afghanistan separated from Asia Central during the 19th century conquests of the Russian and British empires. Afghanistan's history as a buffer state between British India and the Russian Empire further ties it to South Asia's colonial legacy (Lee 2022; Mccauley 2016; Rasanayagam 2003).

Afghanistan shares significant cultural and linguistic connections with South Asia. Pashtu and Dari (Persian dialects spoken in Afghanistan) share similarities with South Asian languages, especially Urdu in Pakistan. Shared cultural practices, such as cuisine, music, and art, reflect a South Asian influence. Furthermore, Islam, as practiced in Afghanistan, often aligns with the traditions and practices found in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan (Lee 2022; Rasanayagam 2003).

*Political and economic integration:* Afghanistan is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), alongside countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This formal inclusion reflects its regional alignment with South Asia (SAARC Secretariat 2025). In addition, trade and migration patterns historically and presently connect Afghanistan with South Asia, especially Pakistan (Lee 2022).



## Cyprus

**Cyprus** is considered either Asia West or Europe South. The UNSD regionalizes Cyprus in Asia West, but the OECD regionalizes Cyprus in Europe South. In IFs, we classify it as Europe South for the following reasons:

*Political and institutional affiliations:* Cyprus is a member of the European Union (EU), aligning it politically and economically with Europe. It has adopted the Euro as its official currency, further integrating it into the European framework. Cyprus also participates in European regional organizations and initiatives, aligning it with the political and economic strategies of Southern European countries like Greece and Italy (EU countries | European Union n.d.). The country's exclusion from Middle Eastern alliances, like the Arab League, reflects its stronger identification with Europe.

*Cultural and historical connections:* Cyprus shares strong cultural and historical ties with Greece, including language (Greek is an official language of Cyprus), religion (predominantly Greek Orthodox Christianity), and historical alliances. Cyprus has been influenced by ancient and medieval European civilizations, including the Roman and Byzantine Empires, both of which shaped the region's culture and governance. As a former British colony, Cyprus developed administrative and political structures that are more European in character than those of its Asian and Middle Eastern neighbors. Furthermore, its position in the eastern Mediterranean places it within the maritime and trade networks historically dominated by Southern European powers like Greece and Italy (Kazamias, Petrides, and Koumas 2012).

Although geographically closer to Asia, and the Middle East, Cyprus is grouped with Europe because of its cultural and political orientation.

## Türkiye

**Türkiye** is considered either Europe West or Asia West. UNSD groups Turkey in Asia West. In IFs, Turkey is also grouped as Asia West for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Although Türkiye is a transcontinental country, approximately 97% of its landmass (Anatolia) lies in Asia, with only the smaller Thrace region in Europe. The Bosphorus Strait, which divides Istanbul, also separates the European and Asian continents. The majority of Türkiye's territory, including its capital Ankara, as well as its population, is therefore geographically situated in Asia, specifically in West Asia (Howard 2016).

*Cultural and historical connections:* Türkiye shares deep historical ties with neighboring Western Asian countries, as it was the heart of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region for centuries. Turkish culture also has significant Islamic and cultural influences, aligning it with Western Asian countries in terms of traditions, cuisine, and social norms (Howard 2016).

*Political affiliations and economic and strategic factors:* Türkiye often serves as a regional power in Western Asia, engaging in diplomacy, trade, and military activity with neighboring Asian countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Iran (Aksu 2014; Ertekin 2012). Türkiye is also an active member of organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and engages in significant political and economic relationships with Middle Eastern and Asia west countries (OIC n.d.). In addition, Türkiye's economic partnerships and trade routes are closely tied to Western Asia, with significant

energy resources like oil and gas flowing from Middle Eastern neighbors. Türkiye's position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia allows it to act as a strategic bridge, particularly for Western Asia (Antonucci and Manzocchi 2006; Habibi n.d.).

While Türkiye has cultural and political connections to Europe (e.g., membership in NATO and as a candidate for EU accession), its geographical and historical ties to Asia outweigh its European affiliations.

## Iraq

**Iraq** is considered either Asia South or Asia West. UNSD, OECD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) all classify Iraq as Asia West. In IFs, Iraq is classified as Asia West because of the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Iraq is geographically situated in Western Asia, bordered by other West Asian countries such as Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. Iraq's location at the crossroads of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant gives it significant strategic relevance within West Asia (Fattah and Caso 2009).

*Historical ties, cultural and religious connections:* Iraq is home to Mesopotamia, one of the cradles of civilization, which historically connected it to other parts of West Asia through trade, culture, and conquest. Baghdad, Iraq's capital, was a center of the Islamic world during the Abbasid Caliphate, further integrating it into the historical fabric of West Asia (Fattah and Caso 2009).

Iraq shares religious, linguistic, and cultural traditions with neighboring West Asian countries. The majority of Iraq's population is Muslim, with shared Islamic practices and holidays tying it to the broader West Asian and Middle Eastern Islamic communities. Arabic is the dominant language, connecting Iraq linguistically to other countries in the region. Kurdish, spoken in northern Iraq, also links it to neighboring countries like Turkey and Iran (Longrigg 1925).

*Political and economic affiliation:* Iraq is a member of several West Asian and Middle Eastern organizations, such as the Arab League and the OIC, reflecting its regional alignment. Iraq's oil resources and trade routes are deeply tied to the economies of neighboring West Asian countries, reinforcing its classification within this region (Arab Org n.d.; OIC n.d.).

## Iran

**Iran** is considered either Asia South or Asia West. UNSD places it in South Asia, while the OECD and FAO, amongst other organizations, classify Iran as Asia West. In IFs, we classify Iran as Asia West for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Iran is situated in the eastern part of Western Asia, bordered by other West Asian countries such as Iraq, Turkey, and Armenia to the west. Iran's strategic position on the Persian Gulf and its proximity to critical waterways like the Strait of Hormuz solidify its importance within Western Asia (Daniel 2012).



*Historical ties and cultural identity:* Iran has been a central figure in the history of Western Asia, particularly through the Achaemenid Empire and subsequent Persian empires, which dominated much of the region. While maintaining its unique Persian identity, Iran was integrated into the Islamic world, further solidifying its ties to neighboring West Asian countries (Amanat 2017). Iran also has a distinct Persian cultural identity, which sets it apart from many Arab countries but ties it closely to its West Asian neighbors. Shared religious practices, particularly Shia Islam, connect Iran to other countries in the region, such as Iraq, where there is a significant Shia population (Amanat 2017; Daniel 2012).

*Political and economic affiliations:* Iran is a major regional power in Western Asia and plays a central role in the politics and security dynamics of the Middle East. As one of the largest producers of oil and natural gas, Iran is deeply integrated into the economic networks of Western Asia.

Iran is a member of organizations like the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the OIC, which align it with Western Asia's political and economic systems (ECO n.d.; OIC n.d.).

## Georgia

**Georgia** is considered either Europe East or Asia West. UNSD classifies Georgia as Asia West. In IFs we classify it as Europe East for the following reasons:

*Historical and cultural ties, and political and institutional affiliations:* Over centuries, Georgia has maintained strong ties with European empires and cultures, including interactions with Byzantine, Roman, and later European states. Georgia also has a long-standing Christian heritage that aligns it with the cultural and religious traditions of Europe. It was one of the earliest nations to adopt Christianity as its state religion in the 4th century, linking it culturally to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which is prominent in parts of Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Gasimov n.d.; Georgian Arts and Culture 2011; Ghambashidze 1918; University of Oradea 2013).

Georgia's aspiration to join the European Union and NATO, as well as its alignment with democratic and European governance standards, reinforce its identification with Eastern Europe. It is a member of the Council of Europe and has signed an Association Agreement with the EU, reflecting its strategic and political alignment with European institutions. Its active participation in European-oriented organizations and frameworks, like the Eastern Partnership under the EU, reinforces its identification with Europe rather than Asia (Coffey 2018; Kapanadze 2004; Kipiani 2016).

*Geographic Location:* Georgia is situated at the intersection of Europe and Asia, in the South Caucasus region. While geographically the Caucasus Mountains are often considered a natural boundary between Europe and Asia, the delineation is not universally agreed upon. Georgia lies to the south of this range, which places it within Western Asia geographically. However, its political and cultural orientation often aligns more closely with Europe (Georgian Arts and Culture 2011).

Although Georgia is geographically in Asia, its political and cultural orientation often aligns more closely with Europe. Its strong ties to Eastern European political and cultural systems make this grouping the most appropriate within the IFs framework.

## Russian Federation

Russian Federation (**Russia**) spans both Europe and Asia, making it a transcontinental country. It is often categorized as Europe East or North Asia. UNSD categorizes Russia as Europe East. In IFs, we categorize it as Europe East for the following reasons:

*Geographic context:* Approximately 23% of Russia's territory is west of the Ural Mountains, traditionally considered the geographic boundary between Europe and Asia. This region, known as European Russia, includes major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, where most of Russia's population resides. The western part of Russia is geographically contiguous with other Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states, reinforcing its classification as part of Europe East (Baranovsky 2000; Bushkovitch 2011).

*Historical and cultural ties:* Russia has deep historical and cultural connections to Eastern Europe. Russia's historical roots in the Kievan Rus', a medieval polity considered a precursor to modern Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, tie it to Eastern Europe. Over centuries, Russia interacted extensively with Eastern and Western European powers, such as during the Byzantine Empire's influence, the Romanov dynasty's European alliances, and its involvement in European wars and diplomacy (Baranovsky 2000).

Russia's political, cultural, and intellectual traditions align more closely with Europe. Examples include its role as the leading state of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, its adoption of Western-style governance structures under Peter the Great and the European cultural influences on Russian art, literature, and architecture. Russia also shares linguistic, cultural, and historical connections with other Slavic countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Serbia, which are also classified in Europe East (Baranovsky 2000; Ziegler 2009).

## Europe

Europe has 41 countries in IFs. They include Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom (UK).

Regionally, Europe is divided into North, South, East, and West in IFs as follows:

- **Europe North:** Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden.
- **Europe South:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Kosovo, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain.
- **Europe East:** Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine.
- **Europe West:** Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

## Europe Boundary Cases and Reasoning

Most of Europe's country classifications are disputed. Historically, Europe was mainly divided between Eastern and Western Europe, with Eastern Europe consisting of countries east of Germany, Austria, and Italy. The creation of the EU, economic, and political relationships have been integral in connecting Europe. Cultural differences, shared history, and political and economic ties then support and reinforce regional identities.

The boundary countries for Europe are *Albania, Cyprus, Iceland, Ireland, Kosovo, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Georgia, and the Russian Federation*.

### Iceland

***Iceland*** is considered either Europe North or Europe West. UNSD classifies it as Europe North. In IFs, Iceland is classified as Europe North for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Iceland is geographically situated in the North Atlantic Ocean, closer to Northern Europe than any other region. Its nearest neighbors are Scandinavia (Norway, Denmark, and Sweden) and Greenland, aligning it with Northern Europe in terms of location. Iceland's position near the Arctic Circle further connects it to the Northern European geographical context (Magnússon and Oddsdóttir 2014).

*Cultural and historical ties:* Iceland was settled by Norse Vikings from Scandinavia in the late 9th century. This heritage is reflected in Iceland's language, culture, and traditions, which are closely tied to those of Norway and other Nordic countries. Additionally, Icelandic, a North Germanic language, is closely related to Old Norse and other Scandinavian languages (Gjerset 1924; Karlsson 2000).

*Political and economic affiliations and regional cooperation:* Iceland is part of the Nordic region, which includes Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Greenland. These countries share strong cultural and political ties, often collaborating on regional issues. Iceland actively participates in Nordic cooperation, which includes cultural, political, and economic collaboration among Northern European nations. Organizations like the Nordic Council (The Nordic Council | Nordic cooperation n.d.) and the Arctic Council (The Arctic Council n.d.) reflect Iceland's integration with Europe North.

### The United Kingdom

The **UK** is considered either Europe West or Europe North. UNSD classifies the UK in Europe North and OECD groups it in Europe West. In IFs, the UK is classified as Europe West because of the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* The UK is situated on islands off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe, geographically aligning it with the western part of Europe. Its proximity to countries like France, Belgium, and Ireland reinforces its position within Europe West (Kearney 2012; Welsh 2003).

*Historical, Cultural, and linguistic connections:* The UK shares cultural similarities with other Western European countries, including language roots (Germanic and Romance influences) and shared

intellectual and artistic movements, such as the Enlightenment. English, the primary language of the UK, has Germanic roots and developed heavily under the influence of Norman French, linking the UK linguistically and culturally to Western Europe (Kearney 2012; Trudgill 1984).

## Ireland

**Ireland** is considered either Europe West or Europe North. UNSD classifies Ireland in Europe North and OECD groups it in Europe West. In IFs, Ireland is classified as Europe West for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Ireland is an island located in the North Atlantic Ocean, just west of the United Kingdom. Its position firmly places it within the westernmost part of Europe. Geographically, Ireland is closer to Western European countries such as France, Belgium, and Germany than to other European regions like Eastern or Southern Europe (Cronin and O’Callaghan 2018).

*Historical context and cultural identity:* Ireland has deep historical ties to Western Europe, including its Celtic origins and its connection to Christianity, which was introduced from mainland Europe. Its history includes interactions with Norman, English, and Viking rulers, aligning it culturally and historically with Western Europe. Ireland shares cultural characteristics typical of Western Europe, such as linguistic ties through the widespread use of English and shared cultural practices, including literature, music, and arts. While Irish Gaelic is an official language and reflects Ireland's unique heritage, the influence of Western European cultural movements is evident in Irish society (Bartlett 2010; Cronin and O’Callaghan 2018).

## Spain

**Spain** is considered either Europe South or Europe West. UNSD groups it in Europe South, and in IFs it is classified as Europe South for the following reasons:

*Geographical Location:* Spain is located in the southwestern part of Europe, forming a significant portion of the Iberian Peninsula, a defining feature of Southern Europe. Its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea further solidifies its connection to Southern Europe, a region often characterized by Mediterranean countries (Tapiador 2019).

*Historical ties and cultural identity:* Spain’s history is deeply tied to the Roman Empire, which unified much of Southern Europe under a shared political and cultural framework. During the medieval period, Spain played a central role in Southern European affairs, including the Reconquista and its interactions with the Mediterranean world. Spain shares key cultural traits with other Southern European countries, such as Italy, Portugal, and Greece. These include traditions rooted in Roman and Mediterranean civilizations, such as cuisine, art, and social customs. Spain’s religious identity is predominantly Catholic and consistent with the broader Southern European cultural context (Chapman 2017; Payne n.d.).

## Portugal

**Portugal** is considered either Europe South or Europe West. UNSD classifies it in Europe South, and in IFs it is classified as Europe South for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Portugal is situated on the Iberian Peninsula, in the southwestern corner of Europe, making it geographically a part of Southern Europe. Its extensive Atlantic coastline and proximity to the Mediterranean Sea also connect it to the broader Southern European maritime region (Picklesimer 1938).

*Historical ties and cultural identity:* Portugal's history as part of the Roman Empire aligns it with the shared heritage of Southern Europe, where Roman influence shaped governance, infrastructure, and culture. Portugal was also long united with modern-day Spain and main other Southern European (and Middle Eastern and North African) territories under the Moors. During the Age of Exploration, Portugal played a pivotal role as a maritime power, much like other Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy, fostering connections within the region and beyond. Portugal shares cultural traits with other Southern European countries, such as Spain, Italy, and Greece. These include Mediterranean-inspired cuisine and music traditions like Fado (which echo Southern European emotional and artistic styles). The country's Catholic heritage is also consistent with the religious identity of much of Southern Europe (Birmingham 2018; Payne n.d.).

## Austria

**Austria** is considered either Europe East or Europe West. UNSD classifies it as Europe West. In IFs, Austria is classified as Europe West for the following reasons:

*Cultural and historical connections:* Austria's history, particularly as the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, integrated it with Western European powers through trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange (Beller 2006; Jelavich 1987). The German language, widely spoken in Austria, connects it culturally and linguistically to Germany and other Western European nations. Moreover, Austria's contributions to Western European culture, including classical music, philosophy, and art, align it with the broader Western European tradition.

While geographically close to Eastern Europe, Austria's post-World War II alignment with Western Europe during the Cold War reinforced its identification with the West. Austria also avoided Soviet influence, maintaining its independence and fostering strong relationships with Western European countries instead (Royal Berglee 2016). Moreover, Austria is often considered part of Central Europe (we don't have a Central Europe classification in IFs) but culturally and geographically, its stronger historical, economic, and political connections with Western Europe influence its classification in Europe West in IFs.

## Kosovo

**Kosovo** is considered either Europe South or Europe East. UNSD does not include classifications for Kosovo. In IFs, Kosovo is classified as Europe South for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Kosovo is situated in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, a region that is geographically part of Southern Europe. Its proximity to other Southern European countries, such as Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, reinforces its placement within this region (Iliev, Odzakov, and Glavinov 2019; Judah 2008).

*Historical and cultural ties:* Kosovo has been part of the historical and cultural fabric of the Balkans, aligning it with the shared traditions of Southern Europe. For centuries, Kosovo was under Ottoman

rule, similar to other Balkan countries in Southern Europe, shaping its cultural and historical identity (Judah 2008). Additionally, the majority of Kosovo's population is ethnically Albanian and shares strong cultural and linguistic ties with Albania, a Southern European country (Judah 2008).

In conclusion, Kosovo is not geographically east enough to be part of Eastern Europe, nor does it share the Slavic linguistic and cultural identity typical of many Eastern European countries. While some Balkan countries (e.g., Slovenia) are occasionally associated with Central Europe due to historical Austro-Hungarian influence, Kosovo's history and cultural ties position it in South Europe in IFs.

## Albania

**Albania** is often considered Europe South, Europe East, or Europe North. UNSD classifies it in Europe South. In IFs, Albania is classified as Europe South for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Albania is located on the western edge of the Balkan Peninsula, bordering the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, which are part of the Mediterranean region. Its proximity to other Southern European countries, such as Greece, Italy (across the Adriatic Sea), and North Macedonia, places it firmly in Europe South (Jazexhi 2018).

*Cultural and historical ties:* Albania shares cultural traits typical of South Europe, such as Mediterranean cuisine, traditions, and social structures. Albania has been historically influenced by Southern European powers, including the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and later the Venetians and Ottomans, which shaped its cultural and political identity. Although Albania is religiously diverse, its historical ties to Orthodox Christianity (common in Southern Europe) and its geographical and cultural proximity to Greece reinforce its Southern European identity (Chekrezi 1919; Gloyer 2018; Jazexhi 2018).

Albania is geographically farther west than countries traditionally classified as East Europe, such as Bulgaria or Romania. It also lacks strong cultural or linguistic ties to Slavic Eastern European countries. While Albania shares some historical ties with Central Europe through its Ottoman past, its geography and Mediterranean cultural influences align it more with Europe South.

## Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia

**Latvia**, **Lithuania**, and **Estonia** are often considered Europe South, Europe East, or Europe North. UNSD groups them in Europe North. In IFs, *Latvia*, *Lithuania*, and *Estonia* are grouped as Europe North for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* The Baltic States—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—are located along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in the northern part of Europe. Their proximity to other Northern European countries, such as Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, strengthens their identification with Europe North (Smith 2002).

*Cultural and historical ties:* Historically, the Baltic States have been influenced by the Nordic countries, particularly Sweden and Denmark, through trade, governance, and cultural exchange during the Hanseatic League era and Scandinavian rule over parts of the region. Like other Northern European countries, the Baltic States share a history rooted in Christian traditions introduced during the



Northern Crusades. Despite some linguistic and cultural differences (e.g., Estonian is Finno-Ugric, while Latvian and Lithuanian are Baltic languages), the three countries share a regional identity that aligns them culturally with Northern Europe (Kalnins 2015).

*Political and economic affiliations:* Their historical resistance to Soviet influence and focus on integration with the West align them more with Northern Europe than Eastern Europe, despite their proximity to Russia (Lane et al. 2013). Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia also participate in the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8), a political and economic cooperation framework with Northern European countries like Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Their participation in NATO further ties them to the Northern European security framework, emphasizing defense cooperation with Nordic and Western European countries (Lašas and Galbreath 2013).

While the Baltic States were part of the Soviet Union, they have distinct linguistic, cultural, and historical identities that separate them from Slavic Eastern European countries like Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. In addition, since regaining independence in the early 1990s, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have emphasized integration with Western and Northern Europe, distancing themselves from Eastern European classifications.

## Georgia

**Georgia** is considered either Europe East or Asia West. UNSD classifies Georgia as Asia West. In IFs we classify it as Europe East. In IFs, we classify it as Europe East.

Although Georgia's geographic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia creates some ambiguity, its cultural and political aspirations strongly lean toward Europe. Georgia's classification as part of Europe East is, therefore, largely driven by its historical ties to European culture, its geopolitical alignment with European institutions, and its Soviet past.

## Russian Federation

**Russia** spans both Europe and Asia, making it a transcontinental country. It is often categorized as Europe East or North Asia. UNSD categorizes Russia as Europe East. In IFs, we categorize it as Europe East because although it's a transcontinental country with an Asian presence, its heartland and historical development firmly roots it in Europe's eastern sphere.

## Oceania

The Oceania region is a geographical area that encompasses the islands and countries located in the Pacific Ocean, primarily between Asia, the Americas, and Antarctica. It is a diverse region composed of an array of islands, varying in size, culture, and geography, and has the smallest continent by land mass, Australia. The boundary between Asia and Australia is disputed, with differing suggestions based on the continental shelf boundaries. A continental shelf is a gently sloping area that extends into the ocean and can signify continental boundary lines (Beron 2015; Whitmore 1982). Although there are various ways of splitting the two continents, international consensus maintains the sub-regional grouping as defined by the UNSD.

The key features of Oceania include:

*Geographical divisions:* Oceania is traditionally divided into four main subregions by UNSD:

***Australia and New Zealand:*** Includes the large landmasses of Australia and New Zealand.

***Melanesia:*** Includes islands to the north and northeast of Australia, such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands.

***Micronesia:*** A region of smaller islands in the northwestern Pacific, including Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, and Guam.

***Polynesia:*** A region of widely scattered islands across the central and southern Pacific, including Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, and French Polynesia.

*Cultural diversity:* Oceania is home to a variety of indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions. Many islands have Polynesian, Micronesian, or Melanesian cultural influences, with distinct customs and social structures. European colonial history has also shaped the region, with influences from the UK, France, the US, and other colonial powers.

*Economic and political characteristics:* Economies in Oceania vary widely, from the resource-driven economy of Australia to the tourism-reliant economies of Fiji, and subsistence-based economies in smaller island nations.

Politically, Oceania includes both independent countries (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, Fiji) and territories associated with other nations (e.g., French Polynesia governed by France, and American Samoa governed by the United States). Regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum promote political and economic cooperation among member countries.

The Oceania region in IFs includes the following ten countries: Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu follow the leadership of the UNSD.

## Americas North

In IFs, Americas North includes four countries namely the United States of America, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

### Americas North Boundary Cases and Reasoning

Americas North's main boundary cases are *Mexico* and *Puerto Rico*.

## Mexico

***Mexico*** is considered either Americas North or Americas Central and Americas Caribbean. UNSD groups Mexico in Americas Central but in IFs it is classified as Americas North for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Geographically, Mexico is located on the North American continent, sharing borders with the United States to the north and Belize and Guatemala to the south. It is part of the North American Plate, the geological foundation for defining the continent (Kirkwood 2009).



*Historical and cultural ties:* Like many parts of Central and South America, Mexico was colonized by Spain. However, after independence in 1821, its political and economic interactions aligned more closely with North America due to proximity and trade (Coe, Urcid, and Koontz 2019).

*Political and economic integration:* Mexico is a member of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), previously known as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which reflects its economic integration with North America (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement n.d.). Mexico also participates in North American political and economic initiatives such as the North American Leaders Summit (NALS) (The 2023 North American Leaders Summit 2025), North American Energy Cooperation (North American Energy Cooperation n.d.), Border Security and Migration initiatives (Mazza 2017), etc. alongside the U.S. and Canada.

While culturally linked to Latin America, Mexico is geographically distinct from Central America's countries, such as Guatemala and Honduras. The southern boundary of North America is often defined as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and is located entirely within Mexico, separating it from the Central American region.

## Puerto Rico

**Puerto Rico** is considered either Americas North, Americas South, Americas Central and/or Americas Caribbean. UNSD classifies it in Latin America and the Caribbean but in IFs it is classified as Americas North.

*Historical context, political and economic status:* Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony until 1898 when it was ceded to the United States following the Spanish-American War (Ayala and Bernabe 2009). Since then, its political and economic ties have been with the U.S., aligning it with North America rather than Central or South America. Consequently, Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States, a key country in North America. This political association ties Puerto Rico directly to the North American region. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, and the island is governed under the U.S. federal system, further integrating it into North America's political and legal framework. Furthermore, Puerto Rico's economy is closely tied to that of the U.S., with significant trade, tourism, and financial transactions occurring between the island and mainland U.S. The U.S. dollar is the official currency of Puerto Rico, further embedding it in the North American economic system (Malavet 2004).

*Geographical location:* Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean Sea, which is geographically considered part of the larger North American region. Puerto Rico also lies on the Caribbean Plate, adjacent to the North American tectonic plate, placing it within the geographical boundaries of North America (Appeldoorn et al. 2019).

In conclusion, Puerto Rico is geographically part of the Caribbean and not the isthmus of Central America. It is also geographically and culturally distinct from South America, with no direct historical or political ties to that region. Puerto Rico's political status as a U.S. territory and its strong economic and historical ties to the United States therefore align it with North America rather than other regions.

## Americas Central and Americas Caribbean

In IFs, the member countries to this region are as follows:

- **Americas Central:** Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.
- **Americas Caribbean:** Cuba, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

## Americas Central and Caribbean Boundary Cases and Reasoning

Americas Central and Americas Caribbean boundary cases *are Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Belize.*

### Mexico

Americas Central's boundary country is ***Mexico***, as some organizations including the UNSD place it into Americas Central instead of Americas North. In IFs, Mexico is classified as Americas North. Its positioning on the North American Continental Plate influences its placement in Americas North. In addition, its membership in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) alongside other political and economic cooperation initiatives with the United States and Canada influences its grouping.

### Puerto Rico

***Puerto Rico's*** relationship with the United States influences its placement in Americas North in IFs. In addition, Puerto Rico lies in a dynamic plate-boundary zone between the North American Plate and the Caribbean Plate.

### Belize

***Belize*** is often grouped in either Americas Central or the Caribbean. UNSD groups Belize in Americas Central. In IFs, we group Belize in Americas Central for the following reasons:

*Geographical location:* Belize is located on the eastern coast of the Central American isthmus, bordered by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Its location places it within the narrow strip of land connecting North America and South America, which is defined as Central America (Bolland 2019; Young 2023).

*Historical context and cultural identity:* While most Central American countries were colonized by Spain, Belize was a British colony known as British Honduras until it gained independence in 1981. Belize's location and interactions with neighboring Spanish-speaking countries tie it historically to the broader Central American region. Furthermore, Belize has a unique cultural identity that combines Caribbean influences (due to its coastal location and British colonial history) with Central American traditions. While English is the official language (a legacy of British rule), Spanish is widely spoken due to proximity to Spanish-speaking Central American neighbors like Guatemala and Mexico (Grant 1974; Schneider 2017; Tarkinton n.d.).

*Political and economic regional associations:* Belize is a member of the Central American Integration System (SICA) (Home - SICA Portal n.d.), which fosters political and economic cooperation among Central American nations.

While Belize has significant cultural and economic ties to the Caribbean, particularly through its coastal identity and membership in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), its geographical placement and integration with Central American systems classify it as part of Central America.

## Americas South

Americas South does not have any boundary cases, nor is it commonly divided into its cardinal directions for study. IFs classifies Americas South to consist of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Suriname, and Venezuela.

## Summary of Countries and their sub-regions

Below is a summary table of 188 countries in IFs and their regional and sub-regional classification.

*Table 1: Summary of IFs Countries and their Groupings*

| Country                | Grouping | Sub-grouping       |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Afghanistan            | Asia     | Asia South         |
| Albania                | Europe   | Europe South       |
| Algeria                | Africa   | Africa North       |
| Angola                 | Africa   | Africa Central     |
| Argentina              | America  | Americas South     |
| Armenia                | Asia     | Asia West          |
| Australia              | Oceania  | Australia          |
| Austria                | Europe   | Europe West        |
| Azerbaijan             | Asia     | Asia West          |
| Bahamas                | America  | Americas Caribbean |
| Bahrain                | Asia     | Asia West          |
| Bangladesh             | Asia     | Asia South         |
| Barbados               | America  | Americas Caribbean |
| Belarus                | Europe   | Europe East        |
| Belgium                | Europe   | Europe West        |
| Belize                 | America  | Americas Central   |
| Benin                  | Africa   | Africa West        |
| Bhutan                 | Asia     | Asia South         |
| Bolivia                | America  | Americas South     |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Europe   | Europe South       |
| Botswana               | Africa   | Africa South       |
| Brazil                 | America  | Americas South     |
| Brunei Darussalam      | Asia     | Asia South East    |
| Bulgaria               | Europe   | Europe East        |
| Burkina Faso           | Africa   | Africa West        |
| Burundi                | Africa   | Africa East        |
| Cabo Verde             | Africa   | Africa West        |
| Cambodia               | Asia     | Asia South East    |
| Cameroon               | Africa   | Africa Central     |

| <b>Country</b>              | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Sub-grouping</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Canada                      | America         | Americas North      |
| Central African Republic    | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Chad                        | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Chile                       | America         | Americas South      |
| China                       | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Colombia                    | America         | Americas South      |
| Comoros                     | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Congo                       | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Congo, Dem. Republic of the | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Costa Rica                  | America         | Americas Central    |
| Côte D'Ivoire               | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Croatia                     | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Cuba                        | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Cyprus                      | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Czech Republic              | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Denmark                     | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Djibouti                    | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Dominican Republic          | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Ecuador                     | America         | Americas South      |
| Egypt                       | Africa          | Africa North        |
| El Salvador                 | America         | Americas Central    |
| Equatorial Guinea           | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Eritrea                     | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Estonia                     | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Eswatini                    | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Ethiopia                    | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Fiji                        | Oceania         |                     |
| Finland                     | Europe          | Europe North        |
| France                      | Europe          | Europe West         |
| Gabon                       | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Gambia                      | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Georgia                     | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Germany                     | Europe          | Europe West         |
| Ghana                       | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Greece                      | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Grenada                     | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Guatemala                   | America         | Americas Central    |
| Guinea                      | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Guinea Bissau               | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Guyana                      | America         | Americas South      |
| Haiti                       | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Honduras                    | America         | Americas Central    |
| Hong Kong                   | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Hungary                     | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Iceland                     | Europe          | Europe North        |
| India                       | Asia            | Asia South          |
| Indonesia                   | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Iran                        | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Iraq                        | Asia            | Asia West           |

| <b>Country</b>                | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Sub-grouping</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Ireland                       | Europe          | Europe West         |
| Israel                        | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Italy                         | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Jamaica                       | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Japan                         | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Jordan                        | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Kazakhstan                    | Asia            | Asia Central        |
| Kenya                         | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Kiribati                      | Oceania         |                     |
| Korea, Dem. People's Republic | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Korea, Republic of            | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Kosovo                        | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Kuwait                        | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Kyrgyzstan                    | Asia            | Asia Central        |
| Lao People's Dem. Republic    | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Latvia                        | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Lebanon                       | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Lesotho                       | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Liberia                       | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Libya                         | Africa          | Africa North        |
| Lithuania                     | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Luxembourg                    | Europe          | Europe West         |
| Macedonia, North              | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Madagascar                    | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Malawi                        | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Malaysia                      | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Maldives                      | Asia            | Asia South          |
| Mali                          | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Malta                         | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Mauritania                    | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Mauritius                     | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Mexico                        | America         | Americas North      |
| Micronesia                    | Oceania         |                     |
| Moldova, Republic of          | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Mongolia                      | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Montenegro                    | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Morocco                       | Africa          | Africa North        |
| Mozambique                    | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Myanmar                       | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Namibia                       | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Nepal                         | Asia            | Asia South          |
| Netherlands                   | Europe          | Europe West         |
| New Zealand                   | Oceania         |                     |
| Nicaragua                     | America         | Americas Central    |
| Niger                         | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Nigeria                       | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Norway                        | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Oman                          | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Pakistan                      | Asia            | Asia South          |

| <b>Country</b>                 | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Sub-grouping</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Palestine                      | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Panama                         | America         | Americas Central    |
| Papua New Guinea               | Oceania         |                     |
| Paraguay                       | America         | Americas South      |
| Peru                           | America         | Americas South      |
| Philippines                    | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Poland                         | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Portugal                       | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Puerto Rico                    | America         | Americas North      |
| Qatar                          | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Romania                        | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Russian Federation             | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Rwanda                         | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Sahrawi Arab Dem Republic      | Africa          | Africa North        |
| Samoa                          | Oceania         |                     |
| Sao Tome and Principe          | Africa          | Africa Central      |
| Saudi Arabia                   | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Senegal                        | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Serbia                         | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Seychelles                     | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Sierra Leone                   | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Singapore                      | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Slovakia                       | Europe          | Europe East         |
| Slovenia                       | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Solomon Islands                | Oceania         |                     |
| Somalia                        | Africa          | Africa East         |
| South Africa                   | Africa          | Africa South        |
| Spain                          | Europe          | Europe South        |
| Sri Lanka                      | Asia            | Asia South          |
| St. Lucia                      | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Sudan                          | Africa          | Africa North        |
| Sudan South                    | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Suriname                       | America         | Americas South      |
| Sweden                         | Europe          | Europe North        |
| Switzerland                    | Europe          | Europe West         |
| Syrian Arab Republic           | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Taiwan                         | Asia            | Asia East           |
| Tajikistan                     | Asia            | Asia Central        |
| Tanzania                       | Africa          | Africa East         |
| Thailand                       | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Timor-Leste                    | Asia            | Asia South East     |
| Togo                           | Africa          | Africa West         |
| Tonga                          | Oceania         |                     |
| Trinidad and Tobago            | America         | Americas Caribbean  |
| Tunisia                        | Africa          | Africa North        |
| Türkiye                        | Asia            | Asia West           |
| Turkmenistan                   | Asia            | Asia Central        |
| Uganda                         | Africa          | Africa East         |

| Country                        | Grouping | Sub-grouping    |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Ukraine                        | Europe   | Europe East     |
| United Arab Emirates           | Asia     | Asia West       |
| United Kingdom                 | Europe   | Europe West     |
| United States of America       | America  | Americas North  |
| Uruguay                        | America  | Americas South  |
| Uzbekistan                     | Asia     | Asia Central    |
| Vanuatu                        | Oceania  |                 |
| Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic | America  | Americas South  |
| Viet Nam                       | Asia     | Asia South East |
| Yemen                          | Asia     | Asia West       |
| Zambia                         | Africa   | Africa South    |
| Zimbabwe                       | Africa   | Africa South    |

## Economic and Developmental Groupings in IFs

In IFs, we also include groupings that measure human and economic development across countries. Specifically, we include the human development index and income group classifications. The classifications for these groups follow the ranking tiers as measured and published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank, respectively.

### Human Development Index (HDI)

The HDI measures the average achievement in dimensions of human development. It is a composite index of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators. HDI is ranked into four tiers and countries are ranked according to their level of HDI index score (United Nations Development Program 2023). The four tiers are low (below 0.550), medium (0.550-.6999), high (0.700-0.799), and very high (0.800 and above).

#### HDI Low

The IFs countries in this category include Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Yemen.

#### HDI Medium

The IFs countries in this category include Angola, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bhutan, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Eswatini, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea, Dem. People's Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Micronesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

#### HDI High

The IFs countries include Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Dominican Republic,

Ecuador, Arab Republic of Egypt, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, North Macedonia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

### HDI Very High

The IFs countries in this category include Argentina, Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kosovo, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Türkiye, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay.

The table below summarizes the 188 countries in IFs according to their HDI grouping.

*Table 2: Summary of IFs Countries and their HDI Groupings*

| Country                | Grouping | HDI level |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Afghanistan            | Asia     | Low       |
| Albania                | Europe   | High      |
| Algeria                | Africa   | High      |
| Angola                 | Africa   | Medium    |
| Argentina              | America  | Very High |
| Armenia                | Asia     | High      |
| Australia              | Oceania  | Very High |
| Austria                | Europe   | Very High |
| Azerbaijan             | Asia     | High      |
| Bahamas                | America  | Very High |
| Bahrain                | Asia     | Very High |
| Bangladesh             | Asia     | Medium    |
| Barbados               | America  | Very High |
| Belarus                | Europe   | Very High |
| Belgium                | Europe   | Very High |
| Belize                 | America  | High      |
| Benin                  | Africa   | Low       |
| Bhutan                 | Asia     | Medium    |
| Bolivia                | America  | Medium    |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Europe   | High      |
| Botswana               | Africa   | High      |
| Brazil                 | America  | High      |
| Brunei Darussalam      | Asia     | Very High |
| Bulgaria               | Europe   | High      |
| Burkina Faso           | Africa   | Low       |
| Burundi                | Africa   | Low       |



| <b>Country</b>              | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>HDI level</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Cabo Verde                  | Africa          | Medium           |
| Cambodia                    | Asia            | Medium           |
| Cameroon                    | Africa          | Medium           |
| Canada                      | America         | Very High        |
| Central African Republic    | Africa          | Low              |
| Chad                        | Africa          | Low              |
| Chile                       | America         | Very High        |
| China                       | Asia            | High             |
| Colombia                    | America         | High             |
| Comoros                     | Africa          | Medium           |
| Congo                       | Africa          | Medium           |
| Congo, Dem. Republic of the | Africa          | Low              |
| Costa Rica                  | America         | Very High        |
| Côte D'Ivoire               | Africa          | Low              |
| Croatia                     | Europe          | Very High        |
| Cuba                        | America         | High             |
| Cyprus                      | Europe          | Very High        |
| Czech Republic              | Europe          | Very High        |
| Denmark                     | Europe          | Very High        |
| Djibouti                    | Africa          | Low              |
| Dominican Republic          | America         | High             |
| Ecuador                     | America         | High             |
| Egypt                       | Africa          | High             |
| El Salvador                 | America         | Medium           |
| Equatorial Guinea           | Africa          | Medium           |
| Eritrea                     | Africa          | Low              |
| Estonia                     | Europe          | Very High        |
| Eswatini                    | Africa          | Medium           |
| Ethiopia                    | Africa          | Low              |
| Fiji                        | Oceania         | Very High        |
| Finland                     | Europe          | Very High        |
| France                      | Europe          | Very High        |
| Gabon                       | Africa          | Medium           |
| Gambia                      | Africa          | Low              |
| Georgia                     | Asia            | Very High        |
| Germany                     | Europe          | Very High        |
| Ghana                       | Africa          | Medium           |
| Greece                      | Europe          | Very High        |
| Grenada                     | America         | High             |
| Guatemala                   | America         | Medium           |
| Guinea                      | Africa          | Low              |

| Country                       | Grouping | HDI level                    |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| Guinea Bissau                 | Africa   | Low                          |
| Guyana                        | America  | Medium                       |
| Haiti                         | America  | Medium                       |
| Honduras                      | America  | Medium                       |
| Hong Kong                     | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Hungary                       | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Iceland                       | Europe   | Very High                    |
| India                         | Asia     | Medium                       |
| Indonesia                     | Asia     | High                         |
| Iran                          | Asia     | High                         |
| Iraq                          | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Ireland                       | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Israel                        | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Italy                         | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Jamaica                       | America  | High                         |
| Japan                         | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Jordan                        | Asia     | High                         |
| Kazakhstan                    | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Kenya                         | Africa   | Medium                       |
| Kiribati                      | Oceania  | Medium                       |
| Korea, Dem. People's Republic | Asia     | Medium                       |
| Korea, Republic of            | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Kosovo                        | Europe   | Very High (according to IFs) |
| Kuwait                        | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Kyrgyzstan                    | Asia     | High                         |
| Lao People's Dem. Republic    | Asia     | Medium                       |
| Latvia                        | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Lebanon                       | Asia     | High                         |
| Lesotho                       | Africa   | Low                          |
| Liberia                       | Africa   | Low                          |
| Libya                         | Africa   | High                         |
| Lithuania                     | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Luxembourg                    | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Macedonia, North              | Europe   | High                         |
| Madagascar                    | Africa   | Low                          |
| Malawi                        | Africa   | Low                          |
| Malaysia                      | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Maldives                      | Asia     | High                         |
| Mali                          | Africa   | Low                          |
| Malta                         | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Mauritania                    | Africa   | Low                          |

| Country                   | Grouping | HDI level                    |
|---------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| Mauritius                 | Africa   | High                         |
| Mexico                    | America  | High                         |
| Micronesia                | Oceania  | Medium                       |
| Moldova, Republic of      | Europe   | High                         |
| Mongolia                  | Asia     | High                         |
| Montenegro                | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Morocco                   | Africa   | Medium                       |
| Mozambique                | Africa   | Low                          |
| Myanmar                   | Asia     | Medium                       |
| Namibia                   | Africa   | Medium                       |
| Nepal                     | Asia     | Medium                       |
| Netherlands               | Europe   | Very High                    |
| New Zealand               | Oceania  | Very High                    |
| Nicaragua                 | America  | Medium                       |
| Niger                     | Africa   | Low                          |
| Nigeria                   | Africa   | Low                          |
| Norway                    | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Oman                      | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Pakistan                  | Asia     | Low                          |
| Palestine                 | Asia     | High                         |
| Panama                    | America  | Very High                    |
| Papua New Guinea          | Oceania  | Medium                       |
| Paraguay                  | America  | High                         |
| Peru                      | America  | Medium                       |
| Philippines               | Asia     | High                         |
| Poland                    | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Portugal                  | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Puerto Rico               | America  | Very High (according to IFs) |
| Qatar                     | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Romania                   | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Russian Federation        | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Rwanda                    | Africa   | Low                          |
| Sahrawi Arab Dem Republic | Africa   | Medium                       |
| Samoa                     | Oceania  | High                         |
| Sao Tome and Principe     | Africa   | Medium                       |
| Saudi Arabia              | Asia     | Very High                    |
| Senegal                   | Africa   | Low                          |
| Serbia                    | Europe   | Very High                    |
| Seychelles                | Africa   | High                         |
| Sierra Leone              | Africa   | Low                          |
| Singapore                 | Asia     | Very High                    |

| Country                        | Grouping | HDI level |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Slovakia                       | Europe   | Very High |
| Slovenia                       | Europe   | Very High |
| Solomon Islands                | Oceania  | Medium    |
| Somalia                        | Africa   | Low       |
| South Africa                   | Africa   | High      |
| Spain                          | Europe   | Very High |
| Sri Lanka                      | Asia     | High      |
| St. Lucia                      | America  | High      |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | America  | High      |
| Sudan                          | Africa   | Low       |
| Sudan South                    | Africa   | Low       |
| Suriname                       | America  | High      |
| Sweden                         | Europe   | Very High |
| Switzerland                    | Europe   | Very High |
| Syrian Arab Republic           | Asia     | Medium    |
| Taiwan                         | Asia     | Very High |
| Tajikistan                     | Asia     | Medium    |
| Tanzania                       | Africa   | Low       |
| Thailand                       | Asia     | Very High |
| Timor-Leste                    | Asia     | Medium    |
| Togo                           | Africa   | Low       |
| Tonga                          | Oceania  | High      |
| Trinidad and Tobago            | America  | High      |
| Tunisia                        | Africa   | High      |
| Türkiye                        | Asia     | Very High |
| Turkmenistan                   | Asia     | High      |
| Uganda                         | Africa   | Low       |
| Ukraine                        | Europe   | High      |
| United Arab Emirates           | Asia     | Very High |
| United Kingdom                 | Europe   | Very High |
| United States of America       | America  | Very High |
| Uruguay                        | America  | Very High |
| Uzbekistan                     | Asia     | High      |
| Vanuatu                        | Oceania  | Medium    |
| Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic | America  | Medium    |
| Viet Nam                       | Asia     | High      |
| Yemen                          | Asia     | Low       |
| Zambia                         | Africa   | Medium    |
| Zimbabwe                       | Africa   | Medium    |

## Income Groups

The WB groups countries into four groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle- and high-income countries. The income groupings use gross national income (GNI) per capita measured in current dollars at market exchange rates (MER), with low income being US\$1,135 and below, lower-middle between US\$1,136-4,465, upper-middle between US\$4,466-13,845 and high income at US\$13,846 and over (World Bank Group 2023). IFs measures economic activity and income using gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 US\$ fixed currency at market exchange rates (MER). GDP and GNI are similar measures of overall economic activity and income—a linear relationship between historical data has an  $R^2$  of 0.95. GDP per capita is calculated from this.

The income classifications are updated each year on July 1, based on the GNI per capita of the previous calendar year (although in IFs, the groups are locked in at the base year once an update is made). Country classifications can therefore change depending on the growth or decline of a country's GNI per capita.

### WB Low income

The IFs countries in this category are 26 and include Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, North Korea, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Togo, Uganda, and Yemen.

### WB Lower-Middle Income

The IFs countries in this category are 53 and include Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People's Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mauritania, Micronesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, West Bank and Gaza (Palestine), Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sahrawi Arab Dem Republic, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

### WB Upper-Middle Income

The IFs Countries in this category are 51 and include Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Grenada, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Serbia, South Africa, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine.

### WB High Income

The IFs countries are 58 and include Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi

Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

The table below summarizes the 188 countries in IFs according to their income grouping.

*Table 3: Summary of IFs Countries and their Income Groupings*

| <b>Country</b>           | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Income grouping</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Afghanistan              | Asia            | Low                    |
| Albania                  | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Algeria                  | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Angola                   | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Argentina                | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Armenia                  | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Australia                | Oceania         | High                   |
| Austria                  | Europe          | High                   |
| Azerbaijan               | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Bahamas                  | America         | High                   |
| Bahrain                  | Asia            | High                   |
| Bangladesh               | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Barbados                 | America         | High                   |
| Belarus                  | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Belgium                  | Europe          | High                   |
| Belize                   | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Benin                    | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Bhutan                   | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Bolivia                  | America         | Lower-Middle           |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina   | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Botswana                 | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Brazil                   | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Brunei Darussalam        | Asia            | High                   |
| Bulgaria                 | Europe          | High                   |
| Burkina Faso             | Africa          | Low                    |
| Burundi                  | Africa          | Low                    |
| Cabo Verde               | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Cambodia                 | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Cameroon                 | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Canada                   | America         | High                   |
| Central African Republic | Africa          | Low                    |
| Chad                     | Africa          | Low                    |
| Chile                    | America         | High                   |
| China                    | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Colombia                 | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Comoros                  | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |

| <b>Country</b>              | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Income grouping</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Congo                       | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Congo, Dem. Republic of the | Africa          | Low                    |
| Costa Rica                  | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Côte D'Ivoire               | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Croatia                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Cuba                        | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Cyprus                      | Europe          | High                   |
| Czech Republic              | Europe          | High                   |
| Denmark                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Djibouti                    | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Dominican Republic          | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Ecuador                     | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Egypt                       | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| El Salvador                 | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Equatorial Guinea           | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Eritrea                     | Africa          | Low                    |
| Estonia                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Eswatini                    | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Ethiopia                    | Africa          | Low                    |
| Fiji                        | Oceania         | Upper-Middle           |
| Finland                     | Europe          | High                   |
| France                      | Europe          | High                   |
| Gabon                       | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Gambia                      | Africa          | Low                    |
| Georgia                     | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Germany                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Ghana                       | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Greece                      | Europe          | High                   |
| Grenada                     | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Guatemala                   | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Guinea                      | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Guinea Bissau               | Africa          | Low                    |
| Guyana                      | America         | High                   |
| Haiti                       | America         | Lower-Middle           |
| Honduras                    | America         | Lower-Middle           |
| Hong Kong                   | Asia            | High                   |
| Hungary                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Iceland                     | Europe          | High                   |
| India                       | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Indonesia                   | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Iran                        | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |

| <b>Country</b>                | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Income grouping</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Iraq                          | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Ireland                       | Europe          | High                   |
| Israel                        | Asia            | High                   |
| Italy                         | Europe          | High                   |
| Jamaica                       | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Japan                         | Asia            | High                   |
| Jordan                        | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Kazakhstan                    | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Kenya                         | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Kiribati                      | Oceania         | Lower-Middle           |
| Korea, Dem. People's Republic | Asia            | Low                    |
| Korea, Republic of            | Asia            | High                   |
| Kosovo                        | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Kuwait                        | Asia            | High                   |
| Kyrgyzstan                    | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Lao People's Dem. Republic    | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Latvia                        | Europe          | High                   |
| Lebanon                       | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Lesotho                       | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Liberia                       | Africa          | Low                    |
| Libya                         | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Lithuania                     | Europe          | High                   |
| Luxembourg                    | Europe          | High                   |
| Macedonia, North              | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Madagascar                    | Africa          | Low                    |
| Malawi                        | Africa          | Low                    |
| Malaysia                      | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Maldives                      | Asia            | Upper-Middle           |
| Mali                          | Africa          | Low                    |
| Malta                         | Europe          | High                   |
| Mauritania                    | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Mauritius                     | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Mexico                        | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Micronesia                    | Oceania         | Lower-Middle           |
| Moldova, Republic of          | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Mongolia                      | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Montenegro                    | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Morocco                       | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Mozambique                    | Africa          | Low                    |
| Myanmar                       | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Namibia                       | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |



| <b>Country</b>                 | <b>Grouping</b> | <b>Income grouping</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Nepal                          | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Netherlands                    | Europe          | High                   |
| New Zealand                    | Oceania         | High                   |
| Nicaragua                      | America         | Lower-Middle           |
| Niger                          | Africa          | Low                    |
| Nigeria                        | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Norway                         | Europe          | High                   |
| Oman                           | Asia            | High                   |
| Pakistan                       | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Palestine                      | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Panama                         | America         | High                   |
| Papua New Guinea               | Oceania         | Lower-Middle           |
| Paraguay                       | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Peru                           | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Philippines                    | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| Poland                         | Europe          | High                   |
| Portugal                       | Europe          | High                   |
| Puerto Rico                    | America         | High                   |
| Qatar                          | Asia            | High                   |
| Romania                        | Europe          | High                   |
| Russian Federation             | Europe          | High                   |
| Rwanda                         | Africa          | Low                    |
| Sahrawi Arab Dem Republic      | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Samoa                          | Oceania         | Lower-Middle           |
| Sao Tome and Principe          | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Saudi Arabia                   | Asia            | High                   |
| Senegal                        | Africa          | Lower-Middle           |
| Serbia                         | Europe          | Upper-Middle           |
| Seychelles                     | Africa          | High                   |
| Sierra Leone                   | Africa          | Low                    |
| Singapore                      | Asia            | High                   |
| Slovakia                       | Europe          | High                   |
| Slovenia                       | Europe          | High                   |
| Solomon Islands                | Oceania         | Lower-Middle           |
| Somalia                        | Africa          | Low                    |
| South Africa                   | Africa          | Upper-Middle           |
| Spain                          | Europe          | High                   |
| Sri Lanka                      | Asia            | Lower-Middle           |
| St. Lucia                      | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | America         | Upper-Middle           |
| Sudan                          | Africa          | Low                    |

| Country                        | Grouping | Income grouping                 |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| Sudan South                    | Africa   | Low                             |
| Suriname                       | America  | Upper-Middle                    |
| Sweden                         | Europe   | High                            |
| Switzerland                    | Europe   | High                            |
| Syrian Arab Republic           | Asia     | Low                             |
| Taiwan                         | Asia     | High                            |
| Tajikistan                     | Asia     | Lower-Middle                    |
| Tanzania                       | Africa   | Lower-Middle                    |
| Thailand                       | Asia     | Upper-Middle                    |
| Timor-Leste                    | Asia     | Lower-Middle                    |
| Togo                           | Africa   | Low                             |
| Tonga                          | Oceania  | Upper-Middle                    |
| Trinidad and Tobago            | America  | High                            |
| Tunisia                        | Africa   | Lower-Middle                    |
| Türkiye                        | Asia     | Upper-Middle                    |
| Turkmenistan                   | Asia     | Upper-Middle                    |
| Uganda                         | Africa   | Low                             |
| Ukraine                        | Europe   | Upper-Middle                    |
| United Arab Emirates           | Asia     | High                            |
| United Kingdom                 | Europe   | High                            |
| United States of America       | America  | High                            |
| Uruguay                        | America  | High                            |
| Uzbekistan                     | Asia     | Lower-Middle                    |
| Vanuatu                        | Oceania  | Lower-Middle                    |
| Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic | America  | Lower-Middle (according to IFs) |
| Viet Nam                       | Asia     | Lower-Middle                    |
| Yemen                          | Asia     | Low                             |
| Zambia                         | Africa   | Lower-Middle                    |
| Zimbabwe                       | Africa   | Lower-Middle                    |

## Conclusion

The classification of countries into regional, economic, and developmental groupings is an important but complex endeavor. By building upon the United Nations M49 standard and incorporating additional considerations such as historical, political, cultural, linguistic, and geographic factors, the Pardee Institute has created a transparent and justifiable framework for country groupings. These groupings enhance the analytical capabilities of IFs, providing a robust foundation for forecasting and comparative analyses across global contexts. In addition, addressing boundary cases highlights the decision-making process undertaken to reconcile divergent categorizations used by various organizations. Whether placing Sudan in Africa North or considering Belize as part of Americas Central, the IFs model reflects the importance of

contextualized analysis that prioritizes assessment relevance and consistency in groupings. Furthermore, the integration of developmental and economic indices, such as the Human Development Index and income group classifications, underscores the model's ability to capture the multifaceted nature of global development dynamics. By incorporating these dimensions, IFs offers a comprehensive tool for evaluating long-term trends, enabling policymakers, researchers, and advocates to better understand and address shared global challenges.

While the model provides a robust foundation, regional groupings will remain a topic of ongoing discussion and evolution. The Pardee Institute recognizes that alternative perspectives exist regarding classifications, and to accommodate these, IFs users are empowered to adjust the default groupings as needed. This flexibility ensures the model remains adaptable and relevant to diverse analytical needs.

By advancing the understanding of regional and developmental contexts, this work establishes a pathway for refining and improving classification systems. The Pardee Institute's commitment to transparency and rigorous analysis ensures that its groupings remain relevant, fostering insights that support effective decision-making and international cooperation.

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## Annex

Table 4: Summary of Boundary Cases

| Boundary cases |              |              |                                     |   |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Country        | Region       |              |                                     | IFs Placement Factors   |
|                | UNSD         | IFs          | All Alternative regions             |   |
| Sudan          | Africa North | Africa North | Africa North, Africa East, MENA     | Geographical location, history, culture, and linguistic ties  |
| Mauritania     | Africa West  | Africa West  | Africa West, Africa North           | Geographical location, history, culture, and linguistic ties  |
| Afghanistan    | Asia South   | Asia South   | Asia Central, Asia East, Asia South | Geographical location, history, culture and linguistic ties, and political and economic integration             |
| Cyprus         | Asia West    | Europe South | Asia West, Europe South             | Political and institutional affiliations, cultural and historical connections                                   |
| Türkiye        | Asia West    | Asia West    | Europe West, Asia West              | Geographical location, history and cultural ties, and political and economic strategic factors                  |
| Iraq           | Asia West    | Asia West    | Asia South, Asia West               | Geographical location, history, culture, linguistic and religious ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Iran           | Asia South   | Asia West    | Asia South, Asia West               | Geographical location, history, culture, linguistic and religious ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Georgia        | Asia West    | Europe East  | Europe East, Asia West              | History, cultural, political and affiliations, geographical location  |
| Russia         | Europe East  | Europe East  | Europe East, North Asia             | Geographical location, Historical and cultural ties   |
| Iceland        | Europe North | Europe North | Europe North, Europe West           | Geographical location, history, culture, and linguistic ties, and political and economic affiliations           |
| United Kingdom | Europe North | Europe West  | Europe West, Europe North           | Geographical location, History, culture, and linguistic ties  |
| Ireland        | Europe North | Europe West  | Europe West, Europe North           | Geographical location, history, culture, and linguistic ties  |
| Spain          | Europe South | Europe South | Europe South, Europe West           | Geographical location, history, and cultural ties   |
| Portugal       | Europe South | Europe South | Europe South, Europe West           | Geographical location, history, and cultural ties   |

| Boundary cases |                                 |                  |  |  |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|--|
| Country        | Region                          |                  |  | IFs Placement Factors  |
|                | UNSD                            | IFs              | All Alternative regions  |  |
| Austria        | Europe West                     | Europe West      | Europe East, Europe West   | Historical, cultural, and political ties   |
| Kosovo         | N/A                             | Europe South     | Europe South, Europe East  | Geographical location, cultural, historical, and political ties                              |
| Albania        | Europe South                    | Europe South     | Europe South, Europe East, Europe North                                    | Geographical location, cultural and historical ties  |
| Latvia         | Europe North                    | Europe North     | Europe South, Europe East, Europe North                                    | Geographical location, cultural and historical ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Lithuania      | Europe North                    | Europe North     | Europe South, Europe East, Europe North                                    | Geographical location, cultural and historical ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Estonia        | Europe North                    | Europe North     | Europe South, Europe East, Europe North                                    | Geographical location, cultural and historical ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Mexico         | Americas Central                | Americas North   | Americas North, Americas Central, and Americas Caribbean                   | Geographical location, cultural and historical ties, and political and economic affiliations |
| Puerto Rico    | Latin America and the Caribbean | Americas North   | Americas North, Americas South, Americas Central and/or Americas Caribbean | History, political and economic affiliations, geographical location                          |
| Belize         | Americas Central                | Americas Central | Americas Central, the Caribbean  | Geographical location, history, and cultural identity  |