

Background Guide

15th Annual AUSMUN



**United Nations Environment
Programme (UNEP)**

Welcome Letter from the Director of Research

Greetings fellow delegates,

It's a pleasure to see you attending the American University of Sharjah's 2022 Model United Nations Convention (AUSMUN 2022). As the age-old adage goes, "with great power comes great responsibility," as delegates of nations at the world's largest international forum, you have a heightened degree of power and responsibility. Not only do you have a say in shaping solutions for the world, and bringing glory to your country, but also the pressure of ensuring that those solutions are pragmatic, feasible, and effective in solving the issues you have set to resolve. Not only do you have a space at the international platform, but also the responsibility to ensure that you set an apt example of your nation for the world to see.

With that being said, I wish you all the best for your preparations and I am really excited to see what your wonderful minds and enthusiastic selves come up with in the committee rooms. Finally, also remember that your responsibilities include having fun and making the best of your time at AUSMUN 2022!

Best Regards,
Mohammad Amaan Siddiqui
Director of Research - AUSMUN 2022



Welcome Letter from the Dais

Dear Distinguished Delegates

With great pleasure, we would like to welcome you all to the UNEP committee of AUSMUN 2022. We are extremely excited to see the fruitful debates along with creative resolutions throughout the course of the committee. We highly recommend you go through the guide “Delegate Handbook” on the AUSMUN website to understand all the specific details about structure, procedure, and awards information.

The UNEP continues to be one of the most important committees of the UN as protecting the environment is a concern that knows no boundaries. The UNEP’s main focus is to protect the environment.

The current generation has the responsibility of ensuring the protection of the environment and taking a firm stand. MUN provides a great platform to learn adaptability and to understand the working of world politics. We are looking forward to meeting you excellent delegates.

Contact us on: unepausmun2022@gmail.com

Best Regards,
Salma Elbelbeci, Samuel Abishek, and Hoor Alansaari, Chairs
Namrah Mazher, Research Assistant

Special credit for contribution to the guide: Farida Gad

MUN

Overview of the Committee

History

Founded in June of 1972, The United Nations Environmental Programme was made to address all the United Nations environmental issues and responsibilities at a global and regional level. As a result of the Stockholm Conference, the Human Environment UNEP's mission was established as "to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations." Ever since its formation 49 years ago, It has played a significant role in identifying and analyzing global environmental problems, developing regional and international environmental programs and conventions, and promoting environmental science and information. Among its most important tasks is assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.

Relevance

The United Nations environmental programme is working to solve global environmental problems by developing international agreements and national environmental instruments; and strengthening institutions for wise environmental management. The UN is currently tackling global problems such as ozone layer depletion, toxic waste, loss of forests and species, and air and water pollution.

With a goal to support countries by ensuring integration of the environmental dimension in sustainable development and building country capacity to track progress. The UNEP is promoting environmental sustainability as a crucial enabling factor in implementing the SDGs and ensuring the health of our planet.

Some notable achievements of the committee are the Montreal Protocol, UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), and the provision of financial aid to implement Solar Power in Developing Countries. In order to close the gaps in basic services and infrastructure and to protect the environment, enhance energy efficiency and respond to climate change, the Asia-Pacific region needs an annual investment of US \$2.5 trillion, less than a third of US \$8.4 trillion saved by the region's citizens in 2012 alone, says the report entitled, "Aligning the Financial Systems in the Asia Pacific Region to Sustainable Development."

UNEP FI's governance bodies are: the Annual General Meeting, the Global Steering Committee, the Three Industry Committees (Banking, Investment and Insurance), the Thematic Advisory Groups and the Regional Advisory Groups. The Annual General Meeting is the ultimate decision-making forum for UNEP FI.

Voting

In order for a resolution to pass, a simple majority is needed. Each country has one vote, and is able to use it to vote in favor or against the resolution papers as they please.

Topic I: Combating, Preventing, and Regulating Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife, Forests, and Protected Flora

Summary and History of the Issue

Illicit trafficking refers to the illegal trade, sale or exchange of goods acquired in unethical ways. Unlawful wildlife trading has been a problem around the world for decades, but the current increase in volume and shift in the character of this illegal activity has dramatically increased the severity of its consequences. Poaching elephants for ivory and tigers for their skins and bones are two well-known examples of illicit wildlife commerce. Many other species, from sea turtles to timber trees, are equally overexploited. Wildlife trade is sometimes legal. Thousands of species of wild plants and animals are trapped or harvested in the wild and then legally marketed as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist souvenirs, and medicine. Wildlife, animal parts, and plant trafficking have far-reaching consequences, not just for the species involved, but also for human livelihoods, biodiversity, and society. As a result, the protection of wildlife, forests, and fish “must be part of a comprehensive approach to achieving poverty eradication, food security, sustainable development, including the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, economic growth, social well-being, and sustainable livelihoods”(U.N., n.d.). The issue is more prevalent now than ever before because of two specific factors: An increase in demand and gaps in protection laws, and corruption, a weak judiciary system, where light penalties allow criminal networks to plunder wildlife regardless of the outcome. These factors make illegal wildlife trading a low-risk, high-profit business. Low-level local poachers are usually held accountable while the real masterminds and their networks are safe and thriving. Additionally, the products are considered exotic or remedial and the demand is constantly increasing. This is a significant issue as the mass killing not only alters the flow of nature by exploitation and disrupts the habitat which has far-reaching implications, it also causes harm to non-targeted species.

Topic I: Combating, Preventing, and Regulating Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife, Forests, and Protected Flora

Key Issues

Deforestation due to Trafficking

Primarily, deforestation is linked to climate change and environmental challenges. Trees are already being cut at a high rate, with unlawful activity accounting for 50 percent to 90 percent of all activity. Keep in mind that this is happening in a tropical hotspot like the Amazon jungles (World Wide Fund For Nature, n.d.). This data reveals how much logging and tree cutting is done illegally, which raises a lot of worries. For example, trees and plants contain the most important element known to mankind: oxygen, and chopping down the most important source of life at these rates puts humanity in a very difficult and hazardous situation. Deforestation also has a negative impact on our climate, as it is one of the primary causes of climate change and global warming. It is a well-known truth that plants and trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, both of which are equally important.

When sunlight strikes the Earth, heat waves are produced, which are then used to warm the planet's surfaces. The heat waves then leave the Earth's surface, some of which return to space while others are held by carbon dioxide. The 'greenhouse effect' is the name given to this phenomenon. Excess carbon dioxide holds a lot of the heat and hence accelerates global warming. It's vital to remember that the greenhouse effect is important and good, but only when it happens slowly and comfortably.

Another difficulty that arises, as a result, is the scarcity of crops. As a result of deforestation, there are fewer trees left, resulting in less water being returned to the soil. This has an impact not only on the ecosystem but also on animal habitats such as those of polar bears and penguins. Logging trees is a risky practice because it damages the habitats of animals that rely on trees for food and refuge. For example, animals conserve food by eating plants and trees that they inhabit in and around. Deforestation depletes the energy of animals and adds to the disturbance and change in the nature of the circle of life. In the long run, these acts have made many creatures' living conditions untenable, putting many of them in peril. The Amazon rainforest, for example, is home to 427 mammal species, 1,300 bird species, 378 reptile species, and more than 400 amphibian species (Word Atlas, n.d.). Finally, as deforestation occurs, animal-human interaction grows as humans begin to claim land that was previously owned by animals. Humans begin hunting and killing animals as a result of this interaction in order to protect the claimed land and remove animal species from it. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is a voluntary international agreement between governments to protect endangered floras and faunas by ensuring that international trade in wild animal and plant specimens does not jeopardize the species' survival. The problem, however, is the vast amount of unlawful commerce and activity that is not regulated by CITES.

Topic I: Combating, Preventing, and Regulating Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife, Forests, and Protected Flora

Spread of Diseases, Viruses, and Bacteria

Next, we'll look at the health dangers that flora trafficking poses to humans and other living things. Some bacteria and viruses, most notably *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which is a form of bacteria (germ) that is often found in the environment, such as soil and water, could be passed from plants to other living species. (CDC, 2019; *Pseudomonas Aeruginosa*). Transporting wildlife floras without proper health and security precautions could result in other ailments. By eluding biosecurity and sanitary procedures, illnesses are more likely to spread. This type of trafficking occurs on a global scale and at various times, posing a risk to any country it goes through.

Illegal Loss of Natural Resources

Last but not least, the grave consequences for governments and the rule of law. This most recent issue is divided into two parts. The first is that governments and countries suffer significant losses as a result of their inability to manage their natural resources when these acts occur. When done legitimately and in accordance with legislation, the high value of wildlife goods can have a positive impact on a country and society. Furthermore, well-managed wildlife commerce can help species and habitat conservation while also contributing to revenue and social development. That stated, it has an impact on the livelihoods of countries that mostly derive their high earnings from lawful transactions, both domestically and internationally.

The second is that these illegally traded floras are frequently utilised in other criminal activities. Such activities are extremely difficult to carry out. As a result, they are frequently carried out by powerful criminal organizations, as they require extensive planning and pose significant dangers. The floras are then transformed into extremely uncommon and expensive products, sometimes in the form of artwork or decoration, once they have been acquired. Such items could be utilized for a variety of criminal purposes, including money laundering and tax evasion. It is evident, however, that laws and regulations are insufficient. As the demand for these "luxury" goods grows, so does the amount of illegal commerce needed to meet those wants.

Topic I: Combating, Preventing, and Regulating Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife, Forests, and Protected Flora

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Today, the UNEP collaborates with a variety of UN and non-UN organizations, including the UNDP, UNODC, ICCWC, Greenpeace, and the WWF, to build international and multilateral agreements to protect the environment from further degradation. In reality, the UNEP has teamed together with 23 other organizations to achieve a similar purpose. The UNEP presently collaborates with the UNODC, documenting cases of illegal wildlife trading and collating data in the World Wildlife Crime Publication, a yearly report. This database has evolved to include just around 180,000 seizures from 149 different nations and territories. The UNEP has also teamed up with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to raise awareness and aid communities in protecting their natural resources. After being ratified by 80 nations, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) entered into force in 1975. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Animals and Flora (CITES), administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is widely recognized as one of the world's most powerful weapons for biodiversity conservation through trade regulation of wild fauna and flora. Articles XIII and XIV of the Convention highlight international and domestic actions that members of the convention must take to aid the cause.

UNEP has also used the internet to raise awareness about wildlife protection, which should assist to lower the demand for illegal animal products.

Despite these efforts, recent news has revealed that illegal wildlife trafficking remains a problem that must be addressed with intentional and coordinated actions from all member states

Topic I: Combating, Preventing, and Regulating Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife, Forests, and Protected Flora

Questions a Resolution Should Address

- 1: How can countries more effectively collaborate to put an end to these practices?
- 2: What makes a forest a hotspot for these kinds of activities?
- 3: What policy changes are required to help prevent such practices?
- 4: What are the flora trafficking figures for 2021?

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Topic II: Tackling the Environmental Impact by Primary Sector Industries

Summary and History of the Issue

Biodiversity is an important element of our natural capital. The ongoing loss of biodiversity as a result of a short-term focus has to be halted in view of long-term responsibilities and benefits. A focus on the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in primary sectors will help to realize this halt. In order to support the environmental preservation and sustainable program, there are key things that primary sectors should address and try to tackle to reach this point of environmental sustainability.

Agriculture, oil and gas extraction, logging and forestry, mining, fishing, and trapping are examples of primary industries that collect or extract raw materials from nature. Primary activities are vital to most economies and cannot be stopped. As primary activities depend entirely on nature, the increase in primary activities to keep up with the demand of the increasing population has led to the degradation of the environment.

Climate change will have considerable and complicated impacts on the Nordic Primary Industries. The Nordic countries are very much aware that although climate change is a global issue it has local consequences and the impacts need to be addressed locally. The Nordic countries have been among the leaders in addressing adaptation and mitigation of climate change in all its complexity both locally and globally.

This topic is of vital importance as drastic measures have to be taken quickly in order to continue the economic growth of the primary sector with proper environmental protection. Many developed countries have been able to battle this issue but many developing and underdeveloped countries struggle to find solutions to the problem of the environmental impact by the primary sector.

Topic II: Tackling the Environmental Impact by Primary Sector Industries

Key Issues

Environmental Impact due to Agriculture

Throughout history, mankind has always depended on the primary sector to provide for society. The primary sector are all those activities that rely on exploiting natural resources to produce an output, such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, and hunting. These activities may directly use wildlife, agriculture, or the earth's natural sources. Throughout its history, the primary sector has heavily relied on the environment to provide outputs and with the increase in population, there is an essential debate to learn the importance of its impact on the environment.

One of the biggest impacts on the environment by the primary sector is the effect on the environment due to agriculture. Primary activities, such as agriculture, have rapidly increased with the increase in population. 38% of the global land surface is being used for agricultural activities and more than 1 billion work in the agriculture sector. Many agricultural practices have had negative impacts on the environment including deforestation, depletion of soil, overuse of natural water, and increased pollution due to high chemical use. From the years 2000 to 2010, over 7 million hectares of forest were cleared in tropical countries for agriculture. Commercial agriculture accounts for 70% of deforestation in Latin countries (FAO, 2016). However, from 2010 to 2015, deforestation was offset by unused agricultural land (2.2 million hectares per year) and planned forestation (3.3 million hectares). The continued agricultural practices since time immemorial has led to 33% of Earth's soil already being degraded and studies expect over 90% soil degradation by 2050 (Betge, 2019). Soil erosion is important, as it could lead to over 50% crop loss. Another environmental impact due to agriculture is the impact on groundwater. Over 40% of irrigation and irrigated land-use groundwater, which leads to a quick decline in stored underground water (OCED, 2016). Though there are many negative impacts of agriculture, it continues to be the most important occupation, as it is required to sustain humanity. In recent years, developed countries have managed to battle the impacts of agriculture, but poorer countries do not have the necessary tools to sustain environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

Topic II: Tackling the Environmental Impact by Primary Sector Industries

Use of Renewable Sources

Renewable sources are sources that can regenerate after being used. This regeneration can only be sustainable when the rate of extraction equals the rate of renewal. If the rate of renewal is lower than the rate of extraction, the resource will decline. The earth's crust is filled with resources that are generated through years of natural processes. Activities, such as mining and quarrying, have started to affect the environment through rapid extraction at a rate faster than the rate of restoration. Mining involves finding certain required metals from the earth's core. The mined substances, such as ores, coal, evaporites and precious stones, and metals are usually mixed. Mining activities are mainly used to mine metals, such as copper, aluminum, nickel, manganese, and chromium, as these metals are widely used by various secondary sectors. Mining affects the environment as the extractions cause the landscape to become disfigured and people experience extensive habitat loss. Mining also affects the environment by blocking or burying nearby bodies of water; thereby, affecting water flow and water quality. With a growing population, there is a need to increase mining to keep up with the required inflow of metals. Just as agriculture, mining is still required and should be done with environmental precaution.

Effects of Oil Production

One of the primary activities that causes the biggest impact on the environment is drilling for oil. The atmospheric impacts include the release of fugitive gases through operations and combustion processes needed to run machinery, release of airborne particulates, such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, etc. (Oil Industry, 1997). The aquatic impacts include leakage of oil into the oceans and spills from oil tankers. From 1970 to 2020, there was an average of 1.8 large oil spills per year. Oil drilling also leads to leakage of toxic chemicals into the ocean and affects aquatic life as fishes face reduced growth, enlarged livers, fin erosion and reproduction impairment (FAO, 2021). Though there is a moment towards the use of other types of resources, oil continues to be extracted at a high rate. There has been a decline in the amount of oil entering the environment, but there is a need for better methods and regulations for oil extraction.

Economic Growth vs Environment

Many developing countries use environmentally harmful methods for cost efficient economic growth. A lot of developing countries depend on natural sources and the environment to provide for society as importing products can be expensive. Pollution in developed countries is lower than in underdeveloped countries (WHO, 2016), which is due to developed countries being able to use environmentally friendly methods for primary sector activities and due to developed countries being able to use better and efficient tools. Developing countries need to be able to focus on using environmental methods for primary activities without sacrificing growth.

Topic II: Tackling the Environmental Impact by Primary Sector Industries

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Since the establishment of the UNEP, it has strived to protect the environment by finding environmental conditions and trends, helping institutions make wise decisions on environmental management and by creating international agreements and environmental instruments. Although there were no direct actions taken to resolve the issue of the environmental impact by the primary sector, there have been actions taken to combat each problem individually. There have been multiple Multilateral Environmental Agreements to protect the environment from oil spills and lead to the creation of the Caribbean Environment Programme. This program aims to decrease the environmental impact of hydrocarbons by promoting regional collaboration to help protect the environment. The UNEP also initiated the Green Economy Initiative (GEI), which helps governments improve their economy by helping them invest in green sectors. Such investments include renewable energies, waste management, clean technologies, etc (Resource Efficiency and Green Economy, 2017). GEI helps countries that are dependent on primary activities to maintain growth by using more environmentally friendly practices. The International Resource Panel (IRP) was established by the UNEP in 2007 to help ensure the sustainability of resources, prevent the overuse of resources and help countries maintain the sustainable development of their resources.

Topic II: Tackling the Environmental Impact by Primary Sector Industries

Questions a Resolution Should Address

1. What are the major reasons for countries not valuing the protection of the environment?
2. How does dependence on resources for primary activities differ between developed and undeveloped countries?
3. How can underdeveloped countries depend on the primary focus on protecting the environment without sacrificing growth?
4. What are regulations and policies that can be amended or implemented to decrease the damage to the environment by the primary sector?
5. Can countries decrease the number of primary sector activities without affecting the employment rate?

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