

MUN

UNEP BACKGROUND GUIDE

AUSMUN 2021



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH WELCOME LETTER



Dear Delegates and Faculty Advisors,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to the American University of Sharjah Model United Nations (AUSMUN) 2021. As an organization led by the students of AUS, AUSMUN has had the privilege of hosting some of the biggest and most diverse MUN conferences in this region. Our 2020 conference saw over 1000 delegate registrations from more than 45 national and international institutions!

Adapting to a New Normal, Promoting Resilience: given the turbulent year of 2020, there was no other theme which could have fit our present conditions better. A small outbreak in Wuhan exactly a year back has now trickled down into a global catastrophe which has two million dead, leaving a trail of broken lives in its wake. Looking at the severely distorted life that has become our 'new normal', some may question whether it could all have been avoided. Whether we could have been better prepared. And the broader goal of our conference is to do exactly that: teach the upcoming generation to question current policies in the hopes of preventing another similar global catastrophe.

This background guide has been formulated by your chairs along with the research team to provide you with a concise overview of the topics chosen.

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The guide is initially divided into two sections based on the two topics and is further split into logical components. Firstly, the Summary and History section acts as an introduction to the issue. Secondly, the Discourse on the Issue section establishes a link between the issue, its implications, significance, and the United Nations Charter. Lastly, the Past International Organization (IO) Actions and Latest Developments section elaborates on the previous actions that have been taken, which can be used by delegates as a stepping stone to come up with their own solutions to the issues. At the end of each topic, delegates will find sections of questions and suggestions that aim to guide the process of research.

Delegates are greatly encouraged to expand beyond the guide and research about their country and topics in order to construct well founded arguments during debate. The delegate handbook contains a number of tips on how to research and addresses a vast array of common concerns. Finally, let me use this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all those who have helped create the document you are reading right now: Your wonderful moderators, the AUSMUN Research Team, and not to mention the AUSMUN Media team who have done an incredible job in designing and formatting the Background Guides.

I wish you the very best in preparing for the conference. If you have any queries at all, or need any specific help in researching for your topics, do not hesitate to contact research@ausmun.com

Sincerely,
Julia Jose
Director of Research
AUSMUN 2021

MODERATORS



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MMXII
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HONOURABLE DELEGATES,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the UNEP.

We are thrilled to have you join our committee and look forward to having some interesting and insightful debates this year. Our committee is focused around issues of environmental protection and sustainability, topics that are increasingly relevant today. We encourage you to venture out of the background guide, go out and explore what these topics have to offer, that will ensure you are best prepared for the discussions we will be having very soon. We look forward to meeting each and every single one of you. In the meantime, get working! And if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via email. Good luck!

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Summary and History

The exploitation of nature by humans is no new phenomenon, over the years it has led to devastating consequences. Unfortunately, humans have been exploiting flora and fauna at alarming rates resulting to the point where scientists are calling today's age 'the 6th mass extinction'. Almost 6,000 different species of wildlife, both flora and fauna, have been confiscated between 1999 and 2018 (UNEP, 2020). Nearly every country is playing a role in the illicit wildlife trade, rendering it an international concern. The aforementioned comes to show the alarming nature of the current situation, to which the UNEP is working to alleviate. If anything, illicit trade of wild fauna and flora has grown in importance in the public consciousness and has been rising on the political agenda, both internationally and domestically; as it becomes clear that wildlife crime without a doubt has negative implications for the preservation of biodiversity, climate change and public health. Despite the efforts of the UNEP along with other organizations, the international community still remains far from victorious when it comes to eliminating illegal wildlife trade. For example, In September 2020, federal authorities in the United States uncovered a wildlife trafficking ring that had smuggled more than 10,000 pounds (4535.924 Kg) of shark fins into the US from Hong Kong. According to the WWF, in 2019, an estimated 195,000 pangolins were trafficked for their scales alone (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2020) and the number of elephants killed in Africa annually is about 20,000 per year (WWF, n.d.). Interestingly enough, the Pangolin is said to be the source of the COVID-19 virus, demonstrating that Illicit trade is not just an issue of biodiversity, but also one of health concerns. This claim is supported by the UNEP as it states; Three-quarters of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic. Today, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is said to be the most influential international agreement for

tackling the issue of illicit flora and fauna trade, however, despite its benefits, it has not successfully eliminated its core issues; weak domestic regulation, non-comprehensive legislation and lack of cooperation.

Discourse on the issue

Sustainable Development Goal 14 highlights this issue as it targets international preservation of life below water and life on land with a relevant target being “urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity, and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species by 2020” (UNEP, 2020). Which makes the prohibition of wildlife trade an important goal in order to accomplish the SDGs set by the UN. The CITES agreement is by far the most influential agreement of its kind, as it lists endangered species and sets the standard for wildlife trade. Today, the agreement is considered to be the primary legal framework for regulating international trade in species of wild animals and plants as well as combating illicit trafficking in wildlife. CITES is a convention, where member states have agreed to contribute to the cause, however the first resolution targeting this illicit trafficking was passed on the 31st of July; fairly recently. This resolution calls for wildlife crime to be treated as a serious crime, both nationally and across borders, and has been passed by the UN General Assembly with much assistance coming from the UNEP. Other resolutions have been drafted as well such as one in 2017 titled “tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife” (Document A/71.L.88) where the Assembly urged its member states to amend national legislation so that crimes connected to the illegal wildlife trade were treated as predicate offences to allow related assets to be seized, confiscated and disposed. Another resolution under the same name in 2019 (Document A/73/L.120) also called upon member states to take steps nationally to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trade in wildlife. Though there may be small scale successes, we are yet to see an end to this issue as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services stresses the urgent need to address the unprecedented global decline in biodiversity.

The CITES itself has many shortcomings; there are millions of species that are not listed by CITES that may be illegally harvested and traded. Second, it is limited to regulating international trade so it has no influence over domestic markets. Though there is increased awareness on the matter, there is still plenty that the international community is in desperate need of alleviating; words are void if not practiced. Upon debating this topic, we hope to address the shortcoming of current agreements and suggest potential solutions to such inadequacies.

Past actions by the UN

Today, The UNEP works with many organizations; both UN and non-UN entities; such as the UNDP, UNODC, ICCWC, Greenpeace and WWF in order to establish international and multilateral agreements to safeguard nature from further deterioration. In fact, the UNEP has partnered with 23 organizations working towards a common goal. The UNEP currently works with the UNODC, reporting instances of illicit trade in wildlife, and compiling development in a yearly report called the World Wildlife Crime Report. This database has grown, currently containing just under 180,000 seizures from 149 countries and territories. The UNEP has also partnered with WWF with the aim to spread awareness and assist communities to protect their natural resources.

A major development occurred 1975, when CITES came into effect after being ratified by 80 states (178 states today). CITES, which is administered by the UNEP, is considered to be one of the world's most powerful tools for biodiversity conservation through the regulation of trade in wild fauna and flora. Articles XIII and XIV of the Convention highlight international and domestic measures that members of the convention must take in order to contribute to the cause.

UNEP has also leveraged online platforms to raise awareness about wildlife conservation, which would aid in reducing demand for illegal wildlife products. An example of this is the UNEP's 'Wild for Life' campaign which partnered with social media influencers and reached out to almost 1 billion people across the world via a multitude of social media

channels (UNEP, 2020). Despite these efforts, recent news have shown that illicit wildlife trade is a problem far from solved, and overcoming it requires the concerted and coordinated efforts of all member nations.

Questions and suggestions for further research

1. Look into governmental policy of different countries to answer the following; do their laws and regulations promote or inhibit wildlife trafficking? And in what ways?
2. How can countries better cooperate in order to put an end to such practices?
3. What does the world wildlife report say about developments in wildlife trafficking for 2020?
4. Should all states contribute equally to the cause? Why or why not?
5. What is meant by the terms legally binding and self-executing in relevance to CITES?
6. Where are the Wildlife trade 'hotspots' and why are they so? Hint: explore the reasons why they are so; economic importance, weak domestic policy, lack of awareness etc.

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Summary and History

As many may know, global warming currently is, and has been for several decades, one of, if not the most taxing and imminent dangers to planet Earth. Mostly in place due to the greenhouse effect, global warming is hugely affected by the emissions and production of greenhouse gases, which theoretically 'speed up' the process of depleting the ozone layer. Notwithstanding many nations' great efforts, the catastrophe of higher temperatures and increased chances of natural disasters is getting worse by the second. Despite the magnitude of its threat, many companies and industries have found an economic quarry within the caves of greenhouse gas emission, the most potent of which being carbon dioxide, or CO₂ in chemical terms.

Originally, the idea of the 'Carbon Market' originated as a way to encourage companies to emit as little CO₂ as possible, and allow the government to monetize any other emission. When developing strategies for carbon pricing, policy makers have three options. The first is to set a certain limit that companies can't exceed, which is not as effective due to the different types of companies within national business, as large-scale companies that mass-produce would not be able to supply demand. The second option is to introduce a carbon tax where the company pays for the amount of CO₂ they produce, and the third option, the basis of the 'Carbon Market', is to implement an emission trading scheme. In this scenario, companies buy and sell the 'right to pollute' from each other.

The EU's emissions trading systems (ETS) is the world's first and largest international carbon market, functioning in all EU countries and covering over 40% of greenhouse gas (GHG) production in Europe. The ETS adopts a policy named the 'cap and trade system', where

companies can buy and sell allowances which allow them to emit CO₂. One allowance is the right to produce 1 tonne of CO₂. According to reports, the ETS has been effective in reducing emissions, the emissions covered from power and heat generation have declined by 4.1% between 2017 and 2018, and total emissions since 2005 have decreased by 29% (Lohmann, 2006).

Despite its apparent efficacy, the carbon trading system has its downsides. An effect called 'carbon leakage' is initiated as companies at risk of relocating business outside of the EU are given free allowances in order to cover their financial emission costs, and some companies have taken advantage of this, formulating fake financial reports and engaging in fraud and embezzlement in order to receive the 'right to pollute'. There have been no documented cases that specifically mention fraud in the CDM, yet a survey conducted in March 2010 by 'Point Carbon', a data provider for the carbon market, shows that over 15% out of the 890 respondents involved with the CDM report that they have seen fraud, embezzlement and corruption within CDM or JI projects, with China being the country mentioned most frequently (PWC, 2011). In addition, companies that no longer require their carbon emission allowances are entitled to sell them, and though it is a monetary gain, this concept reduces the incentive of going green, as financially stable companies could easily purchase pollution rights.

Discourse on Issue

The Kyoto Protocol has been the main area of focus when it comes to UN involvement with carbon trading. Though it is an official protocol launched by the UN, it has several shortcomings and includes loopholes that companies could easily exploit. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), is the focal point of the Kyoto Protocol, and it has caused a lot of controversy as it has not been as effective as planned, in other words, it has been a failed scheme.

The CDM takes the form of carbon "offsetting," which allows companies, international financial institutions and Governments to finance "emissions-saving projects". Despite carbon offsets being presented as emissions

reductions, they are usually ineffective at doing so. At best, they move reductions to where it is cheapest to make them, which usually indicates a shift from Northern to Southern countries. Greenhouse gases continue to be produced at one location on the assumption that equivalent savings will happen elsewhere. The projects that are defined as "emissions saving" range from building hydro-electric dams to capturing methane from industrial livestock facilities.

As Michael Wara (2009) of Stanford University puts it, "The CDM market is not a subsidy implemented by means of a market mechanism by which CO₂ reductions that would have taken place in the developed world take place in the developing world. Rather, most CDM funds are paying for the substitution of CO₂ reductions in the developed world for emissions reductions in the developing world of industrial gases and methane.". In fact, most of these 'savings' don't happen in the developed world, where manufacturers have been forced to reduce hydrofluorocarbon emissions.

The 'key players' of the discussion include most nations with an industrially dense sector, as the companies that are situated there will actively partake in the CDM market, and actively exploit it, completely disavowing the sole purpose of the mechanism being implemented; the reduction of GHGs.

Past actions by international organizations

The UN, after the failed mechanisms and schemes of the Kyoto Protocol, have attempted to locate a 'fix' in the Paris Agreement. Article 6 of the Paris agreement states that it "aims at promoting integrated, holistic and balanced approaches that will assist governments in implementing their NDCs through voluntary international cooperation." (United Nations, 2015, p. 8). Under this mechanism, countries with low GHG emissions would be permitted to sell them to other countries, with a net limit of emissions being set, to reduce any issues such as carbon leakages.

NGOs have also contributed to the matter. Greenpeace has issued a statement suggesting that a carbon tax is not enough to resolve the ongoing crisis of global warming, in addition to regularly speaking out against the current system in regards to carbon pricing. The WWF, on the other hand, has praised the concept of carbon pricing, but not without acknowledging its downfalls and the issue of 'shadow carbon pricing'.

Though the UN has tried to fix the issues of carbon tax and the carbon market in itself, it has not been successful so far. The Paris Agreement had only been adopted in 2016, and it will take time to successfully enforce and implement its rules and mechanisms. It is also apparent that despite any changes and subversions, the carbon market is an incredibly volatile business that is easy to exploit and will always have loopholes that companies around the world can indulge in to raise their profits and lower their spending, all at the cost of the wellbeing of the planet. It is the responsibility of the UNEP to solve and manage this crisis, to come up with major changes or overall alternative solutions in order to satisfy all parties and make the looming threat of global warming a little easier to manage for the rest of the world.

Tips for research

- Evaluate whether the CDM is an effective mechanism that needs to be reworked, or completely replaced.
- Does your nation/NGO have any previous involvement with the CDM?
- Is the CDM within your nation's interests?
- Is the CDM a right step towards improved sustainability across the world, or just a mechanism developed for monetary gain of certain parties?
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Important areas of research

- History of fraud regarding CDM and JI projects within your nation.
- Your nation's carbon emissions; the magnitude of the carbon market within your nation.
- Previous UN and NGO solutions towards the setbacks of the CDM.
- Is carbon offsetting viable towards the general goal of 'going green'?

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