United Nations Environment Programme

President's Letter

Oakland University Model United Nations

March 27-28, 2020

Hello and welcome delegates to the Fifth Annual Oakland University Model United Nations conference! I am thrilled to be chairing the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for this conference and I am looking forward to seeing lively debate and diplomatic agreements. My name is Reese Van Houten. I am in my third and final year at Oakland University, and I will be graduating this coming May with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and a concentration in Urban Studies. I have participated in Model UN for the last three years, both as a delegate and staff member. I am very fortunate to have Patrick Henkel joining me as your co-chair for this conference. He is a freshman at OU, majoring in political science. This is his first time staffing OUMUN, after having been an OUMUN delegate during his time in high school.

In my experience as a MUN delegate, I have learned that having a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, being well versed in my country's stance and diplomatic relations, and frequent participation during session can lead to personal success during a conference. As such, it is my hope that each delegate considers these factors when preparing for OUMUN. Additionally, committee rules will be firmly enforced in order to ensure that debate is fair and productive; that being said, OUMUN is an interactive learning experience, and the dais will provide delegates with liberal guidance throughout the conference to ensure each delegate has an opportunity for improvement. Please do not be afraid to consult the rulebook, ask questions, or inquire about how or why something is done; the dais is here to guide and help delegates through the committee. I want to encourage each delegate to channel their creativity and think outside of the box in order to compose attainable solutions for the timely issues present in this committee. It is within the hands of the innovative minds of the United Nations Environment Programme to shape the future of our world through social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

More information about each committee, rules of procedure, and policies for the conference can be found at the conference website.

Introduction to the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the "leading global authority" in the promotion and implementation of the global environmental agenda and sustainable development. Through leadership and global partnership, the UNEP works to inspire, inform, and enable "nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of the future generations."

The work of the UNEP is categorized into seven areas: "climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, and environment under review."[1] In order to address each issue, the UNEP established the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG's were created with four primary principles in mind: universality, integration, human rights and equity, and innovation.[2]

Mitigating Climate Change Displacement

Environmental displacement has emerged as a pressing issue for the UN as increasing mobility has shown causation and correlation to the increasing presence of climate disasters caused by global climate change. Additionally, it is estimated that by 2050, "one in 45 people would be forced to leave their home for environmental reasons."[3] Though the term "environmental displacement" does not have universal acceptance or protections, the UNEP remains invested in addressing the problem as displacement in an effort to convey the sincerity of environmental disasters. It is to be noted that the UNEP has no power or purview over the legal protection people who have been displaced by the environment; however, the UNEP remains dedicated to environmental risk management, reduction, and recovery through SDG's 10 and 13.

Risk management, reduction, and recovery; and associated displacement are recognized in SDGs 10 and 13. Not only is environmental displacement a concern, but displacement as a whole has negative effects on the environment; "rapid urbanization or poorly managed refugee

---

[1] https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment

[2] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter

[3] https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/protecting-environment-humanitarian-responses-population-displacement

camps and IDPs [internally displaced persons] settlements can put pressure on scarce water, energy and food resources, and lead to uncontrolled waste disposal."[4] It is to be expected that an increase in conflict, environmental disasters, natural resource exploitation, and inadequate crisis management will only increase with the presence and growth of displacement.[5]

Loss of arable land and water is the primary cause for environmental displacement.[6] As such, protecting and reviving these areas is the most important objective to mitigate climate displacement. In the 2009 Report of the Secretary General titled "Climate change and its possible security implications," it is mentioned that small island states are "already increasing the rate of domestic migration and relocation." Due to the increase of population movements, countries must ensure they are able to increase their capacity to management migration. Additionally, countries that are losing their population due to displacement must ensure maintenance of social services despite the loss of human capital; otherwise, further migration will occur as a result of government service failure.[7] With the continuation and increase of climate change disasters countries at high risk have started future planning.

Scientists have predicted that the small Pacific island of Kiribati only has years until it is inhabitable due to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, tropical cyclones, and earthquakes. The island is comprised of thirty-three atolls, only six feet above sea level, leaving it highly susceptible to even the smallest disasters. With an increase in environmental threats, Kiribati is at a high risk for dengue fever and ciguatera poisoning. Additionally, the state is experiencing

---

[4] https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/displacement-and-environment-africa-what-relationship-0

[5] https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/protecting-environment-humanitarian-responses-population-displacement

[6] https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/environment/543e73f69/climate-change-its-possible-security-implications-report-secretary-general.html

[7] https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/environment/543e73f69/climate-change-its-possible-security-implications-report-secretary-general.html

increased erosion, and ground water shortage due to the infiltration of salt water. Due to the risks posed by climate change, Kiribati has promoted "migration with dignity," which urges "residents to consider moving abroad" in preparation for when all Kiribatians must flee the island for their welfare and safety. Additionally, the Kiribatian government purchased nearly 6,000 of land in Fiji for nearly $7 million. Though Kiribati bought land in Fiji as a risk reduction tactic, the problem of global climate change and environmental displacement remains a high priority internationally. If the problem of climate change and subsequent displacement remain untouched, Kiribati may need a second relocation for when Fiji is at risk for inhabitance.[8]

Questions to Consider:

- How does climate change displacement effect your country? (Does your country's citizens experience displacement? Does your country accept environmentally displaced peoples? Does your country legally recognize environmentally displaced peoples?)
- Is your country preparing for climate change related disasters? How?
- How can risk management, reduction, and recovery mitigate climate disasters in your country?

Additional Resources:

Climate Action Tracker: Home

Think Hazard

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery: Homepage

Disaster Risk Management Overview

Meet the Human Faces of Climate Migration

[8] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/world/asia/climate-change-kiribati.html

Resource Inefficiency

Resource inefficiency has a strong impact on four of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Sustainable Cities and Communities; and Sustainable Consumption and Production.[9] Additionally, twelve of the goals are directly dependent on natural resources.[10] Currently, the world has primarily focused on clean energy to mitigate environmental degradation; however such focus has neglected to address the mass of resources we consume. While clean energy is lethal to reaching all of the SDGs, it is important to recognize the harmful effect of degrading our resources, and the potential we have to improve our habits to ensure future sustainability.[11] In order to reach all of the goals included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, immediate action must be taken to increase global resource efficiency now and in our future. In order to have success in policy development it is critical to understand and address the causes, conditions, and consequences of resource inefficiency. As such, there are three primary causes of resource inefficiency is urbanization, inefficient industry practices, and mass production and consumption.

By 2050, it is expected that the world population will increase by two and a half billion people, in addition to 66 percent of the world populace living in cities. In order to accommodate expanding population growth at this rate, the integration of sustainable urban development practices into city planning are essential. Without such policies, the demand for raw materials, food, water, and other associated resources will increase. Without direct action addressing the sustainability of cities, there is no way SDG 11, "make cities and human settlements inclusive,

[9] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/why-does-resource-efficiency-matter
[10] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/weight-cities
[11] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/resource-efficiency-and-climate-change

safe, resilient and sustainable" will ever be achieved.[12] In order to address resource inefficiency to achieve all 17 SDGs, the relationship between resources and urbanization must be accounted for. As such, it is important to understand the weight of environmental degradation associated with each city, spatial awareness, emergence of sustainable technologies, what kind of resources are used and how, as well as how support long term planning and sustainability.[13] In correlation to urbanization, the rapid increase of production and consumption.

Industry and production are closely tied to the economy of a nation, but even more so tied to consumption. As we continue to live by a "consume and throw away" model of production, the ongoing degradation of our environment is devastating.[14] Building a sustainable future requires implementation of policies that will shift our market economies and production practices to be sustainable, and increase the support for corporate accountability to the environment.[15] Without sustainable production policies, our air, water, and food sources will continue to be polluted and increase in toxicity. Between 1995 and 2015, "greenhouse gas emissions from the production of materials have more than doubled" and "the share of material production in [total] global greenhouse gas has increased from 15% to 23%."[16] In order to preserve resources, it is important to "decouple" the exploitation of resources and capital gain, recognize the consequences of unequal use of resources, and ensure we have the tools to improve sustainability by addressing our addiction to disposable consumption.[17] As a member of the Switch-Asia project, the Philippines has made substantial progress in resource efficiency.

---

[12] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/weight-cities
[13] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/weight-cities
[14] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/global-resources-outlook
[15] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/responsible-industry
[16] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/resource-efficiency-and-climate-change
[17] https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/global-resources-outlook

The Switch-Asia project is supported and funded by the European Commission and the UNEP to improve resource efficiency in Asia[18] The Philippines with the help of the Switch project, the Philippines has been able to develop and implement policies to improve sustainable production and consumption. As such, the country is beginning to implement policies to promote energy efficiency in commercial and industrial buildings and promote efficient products. Additionally, the Philippines has been campaigning for life cycle assessments and environment impact reports for products. Lastly, the Philippines has strengthened marketing for eco-certified products. Through the policy initiatives supported by Switch-Asia, the Philippines' progressive effort and sustainable policy correlated with a decrease in total natural resources rents from 3.173% to 1.208% GDP, demonstrating a decrease in economic reliance on natural resources.[19]

Questions to Consider:

- What urbanization and production/consumption trends are present in your country?
- What primary modes of development are used in your country's cities?
- What resources and products does your country produce?
- How can your country feasibly make production and consumption more efficient?

Additional Resources:

World Development Indicators: Sustainable Development Goals

International Resource Panel (IRP)

Emissions Gap Report 2019

Innovative Solutions for the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

[18] https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/sustainable-consumption-and-production-policies

[19] http://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgs/index.html