

United Nations Environmental Programme

Welcome to UNEP 2009. My name is Aidan Dugan. I am a junior at FM, and this is my third year being involved with Model UN. This will be my fourth time chairing, in fact, I chaired this committee with Sophia at UNYMUN last year. Besides MUN, I am involved with Francis House and serve on the Vision Manlius Committee. UNYMUN is a resolution style conference, and therefore a resolution will be required in order to win an award. Please plan on bringing around 20 copies.

What is up delegates, my name is Sophia Higgins and I have the pleasure of chairing UNEP with my beautiful co-chair Aidan this year at UNYMUN 09 (new and improved). I've been involved with MUN since I was a baby page in 8th grade, and am currently serving my second and final term as JD's Vice President and Under-Secretary General. Besides flaunting my blatantly Republican and Conservative Party values, I enjoy awaiting college acceptances and thinking in Spanish, whenever possible. On a more serious note, recently I was fortunate enough to travel on a humanitarian aid trip to El Salvador, and it literally changed my life; the issues we discuss every conference in Model UN-extreme poverty, starvation, disease and a lack of education- are real, and I expect all delegates to respect them as such. Although (in case you weren't aware) our resolutions aren't put directly into action by the UN, they represent a legitimate attempt to better our world. Any delegate that reveals this same passion and knowledge while demonstrating elevated diplomacy will surely be rewarded for their efforts. Good luck researching, and I'm looking forward to seeing your lovely faces in committee!

Background

Established in 1972, UNEP was created to be an advocate for the protection and development of the environment. UNEP is in charge of assessing environmental trends for global and regional areas. It has 58 members, elected for four-year terms, who report through the Economic and Social Council. UNEP is charged with the responsibility of achieving international cooperation when dealing with topics involving the environment and to propose appropriate policies.

Environmental Change and its Effect on Coastal Inhabitants and Wildlife

A new threat is now endangering that of coastal inhabitants and future generations. As climate change continues, sea levels are rising and drastically affecting those who live in coastal regions. Rising sea levels are eventually expected to completely submerge low-lying coastal regions, destroying the habitat of almost every species in those regions. Some of the causes of rising sea levels are; the thermal expansion of warming oceans, and the melting of glaciers and polar ice.

Scientists predict water levels to rise at about half a centimeter per year, and while this may not seem significant, it is expected to place an unusual stress on coastal ecosystems. There are four major river deltas in the wider Caribbean region. Deltas are especially vulnerable erosion caused by sea level rise because the sediments are unconsolidated muds which tend towards compactions. It is possible that for every centimeter sea levels rise, that delta shores could retreat up to several meters. This results in thousands of acres of lost land, for both humans and wildlife.

Small Island states in particular are experiencing effects of rising sea levels. Most being flat, and extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels, they are at immediate danger. It is obvious that something needs to be done in order to protect those who face the dangers of rising levels, and prevent it from effecting future generations.

Questions to Consider

What are your nation's opinions/policies concerning climate change? How will rising sea levels affect your nation's coast (if it has one). What can be done to reduce rising sea levels? What can be done to protect both your nation's human and wildlife population from rising sea levels?

Further Research

<http://www.cep.unep.org/information-services/cep-technical-reports/plonearticlemultipage.2005-12-08.5507079143/plonearticle.2005-12-08.8387588771>
<http://www.unep.org/dewa/vitalwater/article142.html>

The Horrendous Environmental Aftermath of Hazardous Biochemical Waste

A largely unrecognized global health threat, the issue of hazardous biochemical waste must be fully addressed by this committee of the United Nations Environmental Programme. Despite the moderate revival of interest in the problem, member nations & the UN itself have yet to enact serious legislation sufficient enough to eliminate the concerns associated with toxic waste. It is up to the committee how to combat the social, economic, territorial and inherently political complications of hazardous biochemical excess.

The United States' Environment, Health and Safety (EH&S) Chemical Waste Management Program defines hazardous waste as "a substance which poses a hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed." Further categorized into 4 sectors of noxious excess- ignitable, corrosive, reactive and toxic- biochemical surplus requires significant infrastructure and methodology to sanitarly dispose of it, of which many afflicted countries lack. As recently as 2006, toxic waste was illegally dumped in the waters and landfills of Cote D'Ivoire, resulting in 17 allegedly related deaths and some 40,000 patient complaints. Topographically, both the surrounding waters and land was poisoned and similarly the wildlife and humans of the area suffered the consequences of depleted health, natural resources and many economic opportunities presented by pure land. Soil fertility and irrigation were severely damaged, and bodies of water experienced extreme toxicity levels; even the air was so polluted by the spills that masks were necessary for citizens when outdoors, for weeks. Ultimately, this incident displays the dire need for reform throughout the methods of transporting, protecting, legislating and disposing hazardous wastes on both an international and federal level. Accurately described as the 'unwitting yet equally dangerous cousin to biochemical terrorism' by the Environmental Disaster Support Organization, it is up to you, delegates, to resolve this issue.

Keep in mind, delegates, that although the Cote D'Ivoire's toxic waste clearance was granted enormous media coverage, this amount of concern was unfortunately unprecedented. Many minor accidents occur each day, all of which harm the environment, and the vast majority of which could

be prevented with the proper legislation and application of law. The ecological aftermath of these accidents is devastating, and must be resolved with all due alacrity and precision.

Questions to Consider

- Does your nation suffer from an excess of biochemical wastes harming the environment?
- Are there sufficient national and international procedures and facilities to adequately resolve this issue? If not, what needs to change to better the situation?
- What can be done to aid those areas currently afflicted or struggling with the environmental detriment of toxic waste?
- Who is responsible for environmental remediation after a biochemical spill, legally and economically: The nation, the UN or the organization? How can this committee take action to prevent further hazardous action on the part of all the above listed confederations?

Further Research

<http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/misc/ehk04/textonly/english/waste/06.html>

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580689/hazardous_wastes.html

<http://www.rapid-response-consulting.com/rst-ryg.html>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tvh->

[HIryCy4C&pg=PA125&lpg=PA125&dq=hazardous+biochemical+waste+environmental+effects+UN&source=bl&ots=XvP7rNa_1&sig=pc7wizExSzoNKX4JQwzgSQBBB4&hl=en&ei=k6CoSafnLaWmNaqg2boC&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=9&ct=result#PPA126,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=tvh-HIryCy4C&pg=PA125&lpg=PA125&dq=hazardous+biochemical+waste+environmental+effects+UN&source=bl&ots=XvP7rNa_1&sig=pc7wizExSzoNKX4JQwzgSQBBB4&hl=en&ei=k6CoSafnLaWmNaqg2boC&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=9&ct=result#PPA126,M1)

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

The newest frontier of preserving the environment and bettering society is controversially testing the boundaries of Mother Nature. Genetically Modified Organisms are the result of biotechnologically altering the genetic makeup of living beings, in this case crops, to produce more nutritionally viable foods with improved resistance to detrimental environmental factors such as insects and herbicides. Crops subjected to these experiments in the recent past have displayed obvious short-term ecological benefits, including the conservation of energy and soil, and the development of green insecticides. In 2006, 10.3 million farmers, for the purpose of providing a credible food staple for the world's growing population, planted a total of 252 million acres of transgenic crops in 22 countries. Nevertheless, the production and consumption of GMOs are under attack from the international community, striking harsh chords with religious groups and states. Many scientists insist that our lack of intensive knowledge as to the long-term environmental impact of these revolutionary crops present a serious issue for the future. The significant loss of flora biodiversity and threat of compromising ecosystems compounds the issue, along with the economical plausibility of establishing GMOs on a larger scale.

The United Nations has yet to fully and formally address this subject. Traditionally a topic of WHO, the delegates of UNEP must specifically seek resolution pertaining to environmental crisis', all while acknowledging the debatable morality of producing, labeling and trading GMOs. Delegates must prepare a stable plan to represent their nation's stance on GMOs, and how to combat any environmental damage that results as a consequence of their position.

Questions to Consider

- Does your country approve of the use of GMOs? Do they produce, consume or trade in them?
- What environmental impacts support your argument of pro or con?
- How can the negative ecological effects be safely contained and eradicated?
- What sort of UNEP and biotechnological precedent would your nation set for the future?

Further Research

http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/elsi/gmfood.shtml
<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/biotech/20questions/en/>
<http://www.csa.com/discoveryguides/gmfood/overview.php>