

Dear Delegates,

I am excited to meet you all in committee to discuss these dire issues prevalent in our environment! The cause of many of the problems the world faces today has come from industrialization and the recklessness of humans. It is our job to mitigate the accumulating detrimental effects and prevent any more from happening, which is why I hold this topic so dear to my heart.

While writing your position papers, remember to address all issues pertaining to your topics, minding the values of your respective countries as well as your relations with other countries. Remember that the following information and questions are the foundations you can build off of, but aren't necessarily the only aspects that your position paper should revolve around.

Additionally, remember to write positions for both of the topics since either topics can be chosen as subjects of discussion in committee. Although these papers do not need to be overly stylized, they should be neat and legible, as well as carefully checked for any errors, both factual and grammatical. Position papers will be collected before any committees have begun, so they should be finished before you arrive to the first session of this conference. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email SCIMUNC with "UNEP" in the subject line. Besides that, be ready to debate, discuss, and most importantly, have fun! See you all in committee!

Your chair,

Emily Pham

United Nations Environment Programme Background Guide

The UNEP was established at the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 in order to link social issues to environmental policies and programs. UNEP is led by a UN Undersecretary-General and Executive Director, and supported by a Deputy Director. The committee represents the UN's voice in terms of environmental issues. UNEP also acts as a catalyst, advocate educator, and facilitator for the purpose of promoting the sustainable development of the global environment. The primary work conducted by UNEP includes assessing global, regional, and national environmental trends and conditions, developing international environmental instruments, as well as strengthening institutions for a wiser management of the environment.

(<http://www.ccwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/UNEP-Background-Guide.pdf>)

Topic I: Waste Management

The topic of harmful substances and hazardous waste is of utmost importance since it affects different areas and therefore concerns adverse impacts on the environment as well as human health. Almost every industry uses or produces harmful substances and hazardous waste.¹⁰⁸ There are many different harmful substances such as heavy metals, pesticides or persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which can be pesticides or industrial chemicals.¹⁰⁹ This is one of the reasons why the management of harmful substances and hazardous waste is one of the six most important areas for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Sound management basically describes management of waste and substances that does not harm humans or the environment and includes chemical safety. Harmful substances can affect land, air, and water and, therefore, affect most people. Especially dangerous substances are mercury, lead, and cadmium. Aside from the risks that harmful substances pose, hazardous waste needs to be managed soundly as well. Hazardous waste is often produced industrially, and its disposal poses difficulties. The question is not only how to dispose of hazardous waste correctly but also where to dispose it. Many efforts have been undertaken to in this area already, but there are still steps to be taken. A good example for this is electronic waste considering the fact that once electronics such as computers or phones as well as TVs, cars, or other objects that consist of electronic parts cannot be used anymore they turn into electronic waste and need to be disposed of. Those are objects that are mostly used every day by most people and with advancing technologies more electronic objects are used and therefore more electronic waste exists.

Harmful substances and hazardous waste can affect the environment and human health in different ways. Humans can be exposed to harmful substances through air, land, and water. This can happen not just through direct contact with the substances, but also by consuming

contaminated food or drinking water. This exposure can lead to acute as well as long-term illnesses. Directly, most individuals are exposed to chemicals in the manufacturing sector. Chemicals and hazardous waste can also destroy ecosystems and gravely affect sensitive species. Different chemicals and wastes have different impacts on the environment or human health. Some of the most commonly known chemicals with an adverse impact on human health and the environment are mercury, lead, and cadmium. One of the most harmful substances is mercury because it is extremely toxic. It is dangerous for both human health and the environment because it can affect the nervous systems of animals and humans. This damage can be permanent. Mercury is especially dangerous because it can affect the unborn child through transfer by the mother. It is furthermore used in the production of products themselves such as light bulbs, blood-pressure machines, or thermometers that are used every day. Mercury can also persist in the environment for a very long time. The adverse impact is not only caused by the substance itself, but its disposal is similarly difficult. A national instrument concerning mercury that is legally binding is therefore indispensable. Lead and cadmium are also substances that can be extremely harmful but are frequently used. Lead is already toxic at a low rate of exposure.¹⁷⁰ The effects can be of a chronic or acute nature and can affect, among other things, neurological, reproductive, and cardiovascular health. Cadmium can after exposure persist in bones and affects the skeleton as well as the kidneys. Both substances are furthermore dangerous for the environment since they can affect animals and plants.

Harmful substances and hazardous waste is a topic that becomes more and more important because of the possible adverse impact on the environment and humans. It concerns different areas such as production in industries, trade, and economic development and growth; therefore every country is affected. These substances can have an adverse impact on the environment and human health. New challenges arise with for example new forms of hazardous waste such as e-waste. UNEP works on this topic separately but also cooperates with many other organizations to combine efforts and further their successes. With growing trade and economy the topic becomes transboundary. This can concern the movement of hazardous waste from one country to another or the use of harmful substances in the production of goods, which are then available in different countries. There are some questions that delegates should keep in mind during their research: Is my country party to a convention or agreement concerning this topic? Which harmful substances are used or produced in my country? How is hazardous waste managed and disposed? Are there projects or legal national and regional frameworks concerning the adverse impact of harmful substances and hazardous waste?

https://ccnymun.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/ny2014_bgg_unep.pdf

Topic II: Conservation and Rehabilitation of Endangered Animals and Vulnerable Animals

Species extinction is a natural phenomenon, which is always happening. There have been five extinction waves in the last half-billion year, so the current extinction of species might not be very alarming to some. However, scientists have now built a case that we are now in the middle of a sixth extinction wave, which is why extinction is becoming a more prominent issue. The natural rate of extinction is about five species per year. However, extinction is becoming an issue on a global scale, since we're experiencing the worst 'epidemic' of die-offs since the loss of dinosaurs – the current rate of extinction is estimated to be between 1000-10000 times the background rate. This presents a scary future, with projections stating the potentially 30 to 50 percent of all species could be extinct by mid-century, and sets us on the trail for a completely changed planet in only a decades time. The main cause of the sixth mass extinction is humans – specifically our behavior with regards to habitats. The continuing human intervention on natural habitats proves to be extremely damaging for biodiversity. Forests, swamps, plains, lakes and other habitats disappear at an alarming rate, so as to serve human's purposes, thus depriving species from their homes. Habitat loss is identified as a main threat to 85% of all species described in the IUCN's Red List (those species officially classified as "Threatened" and "Endangered"). There are three categories of habitat loss:

1. Habitat destruction: removing trees and plants and instantly changing the landscape, e.g. mass deforestation. The aim of this behaviour is industrialisation and urbanisation
2. Habitat fragmentation: altering the land in a way that confuses the animals and disrupts their natural way of living. E.g. creating roads or attractions in the middle of natural areas. Habitat fragmentation has often been carried out for the purpose of development □
3. Habitat Degradation: pollution that causes habitats to be destroyed because it changes the quality of air, water, and land while becoming a breeding ground for toxins.

WWF's 2014 Living Planet Report found wildlife populations of vertebrate species—mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish—have declined by 52 per cent over the last 40 years.³⁹ Animal extinctions are mainly due to four factors: human activity, biological pollution, trade & trafficking and climate change. We will now look at what these factors entail. Human activities: the planet's constant demographic increase leads to phenomena that constitute a peril to the most vulnerable species of animals. These activities include urbanization, industrialization and exploitation of natural resources (deforestation etc.) and lead to the destruction of fragile ecosystems. Human buildings have also impacted the repartition and meeting of species. For example the digging of the Suez and Panama canals put in contact species that had lived in separated areas for millions of years.

Biological pollution: it is the artificial bringing of species that are foreign to a natural environment. For example, introduction of the Asian hornet in Europe, probably through containers from China, and its proliferation have had devastating consequences on beehives. This kind of hornet eats bees, which are known as the main pollinator insect, hindering the growth of crops and other plants. Another example is the carnivorous snail *Euglandina rosea* brought to Hawaii to control the population of invasive snails like the giant African snail. Instead, it became a predator to some other vulnerable species, leading to the extinction of 50 to 75% of Hawaiian land snails.

Trade and trafficking: this category refers to more 'famous' animals such as elephants, rhinos, parrots, gorillas etc. Trade of wild animals is authorised under certain conditions and supervised by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which will be further explained later on. However, poaching and trafficking of endangered species still continue for different reasons. As long as there are clients who can buy with impunity, the traffics will keep going. For example, in Vietnam it is a widely spread belief that rhino horn powder helps curing cancer and even hangovers. Consequently, it makes rhino powder a very lucrative business, and a rhino horn is now worth more than its weight in gold. Tackling such beliefs could help with a progressive decrease in the demand of rare animal products.

Climate change: global warming has and will continue to have an impact on the animals' environment. It triggers some changes in the abundance and repartition of species on the planet. In Canada, the earlier than usual arrival of spring made the ice floe melt earlier, pushing polar bears to go on the land where it is harder for them to find food. This has led to a decrease in the polar bear population.

Questions a Resolution Should Answer:

The protection and conservation of wildlife is a very broad topic, and a resolution could address many different aspects of the problem. The following points should act as a rough guide of the different aspects to consider when debating and writing a resolution:

- Ensuring a better control of nature reserves to avoid poaching, and creating more reserves in places where species are threatened of extinction;

- Deciding of a framework to limit the impact of human activities on ecosystems;

- Enforcing a better control of containers to avoid biological pollution (foreign species invading an ecosystem);

- Raising awareness on the cases of less well-known animals nonetheless essential to some ecosystems;

- Applying the existing international agreements aiming at reducing global warming

(https://limun.org.uk/FCKfiles/File/LIMUN_2017_STUDY_GUIDES/LIMUN_2017_Study_Guide-__UNEP.pdf)