

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings delegates!

My name is Pranavi Senthil and I will be serving as the Chairperson of the United Nations Environment Programme at GWHMUN 2020. I am extremely honoured to be serving as the Chairperson of this committee and it brings me great joy to see so many of you willing to discuss an issue of such great importance. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chairperson, Jiya Charak, for helping me write this background guide.

So, a little bit about me. I study Mathematics, History, Economics and French at school. I am extremely passionate about language and can fluently speak six. Apart from that, I love playing chess and hockey.

Over the course of the committee two days, we will be discussing everything from the causes, legal frameworks, government policies and the impacts of climate change. Climate change is an issue that transcends international boundaries and hence I would like to see a lot of co-operation among delegates while trying to find solutions. At any point during committee, if delegates have any questions regarding the rules of procedure or working of the committee, please do not hesitate to reach out to any members of the Executive Board. My advice to the first timers and veterans alike would be to give it your best and be fearless!

All the best! Research well.

Regards,

Pranavi Senthil,

Chairperson of the UNEP.

Introduction to the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme, founded in 1972 and headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is a coordinating body responsible for setting the global environmental agenda with special assistance given to developing countries for coherently implementing environmentally sound policies. The UNEP is accepted as the authoritative advocate for the global environment. Its responsibilities include the assessment of global environmental conditions and trends, developing environmental instruments and working with institutions that partake in the sustainable care of the environment.

The Mandate of the UNEP has a vast coverage of areas which include climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency and environment under review along with provisions for the organisation of conventions to promote environmental science and information.

The Programme works towards the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is funded primarily by the Environment Fund maintained by the 193 member countries of the United Nations. As of 2019, the highest contributions came from the Netherlands, Germany, France, USA and Sweden.

The UNEP's working is guided by a number of policies put in place which include working along with the knowledge, systems and rights of Indigenous people who have harmonious relations with their environment and setting standards of sustainability for themselves thereby confirming the accountability of the UNEP to member states.

The UNEP has Eight Safeguard Standards:

- Biodiversity Conservation, Natural habitats and sustainable management of Living resources
- Climate change and disaster risks
- Pollution prevention and Resource efficiency
- Community Health, Safety and Security
- Cultural Heritage
- Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement
- Indigenous peoples
- Labour and Working Conditions

The UNEP, as a member of the United Nations Development Group, UNEP works towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. While its purpose becomes increasingly important everyday, during its conception in the 70s, many developing nations argued that environmental safety was not their foremost concern. It was the leadership and diplomacy of Maurice Strong that convinced governments to prioritise the issues of environmental emergencies.

Over the course of its existence, the UNEP established the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change along with the World Meteorological Organisation. It is also responsible for implementing the activities of the Global Environment Facility, the Montreal Protocol and the International Cyanide Management Code.

The UNEP has several accomplishments under its belt which include the Montreal Protocol, the Minamata Convention, a solar loan programme in India, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia and Mexico, the Marshlands project in the Middle East and a youth outreach programme called Tunza.

History of the Agenda

The agenda set for this committee- Discussing climate change with respect to economically backward countries. Evidently, climate change is a issue that plagues our world and the situation is more dire than it seems. While some countries have succeeded in doing their bit in reducing humanity's increasingly large carbon footprint, others fall behind owing simply to their low economic standing.

Global sustainability can be achieved only through the cooperation of every single nation. As it so happens to be, the countries that aren't able to reach the same environmental standard as others, cannot adopt the same policies and methods as more developed countries.

Between battling high poverty levels and large scale unemployment, where does Environmental protection fit in on the list of priorities of the governments of underdeveloped nations? Is it feasible to simply ask these countries to follow in the footsteps of the developed nations or do global environmentalists need to turn to an entirely new set of methods suitable especially for developing nations?

Sustainable development is proving to be an expensive undertaking, a task that economically poorer countries prefer not to undertake. The very conception of this committee was once debated over, owing to the lack of priority given to environmental issues by developing nations

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Countries most vulnerable to climate change

Climate risk is a concept that reflects countries' vulnerability to the direct consequences — deaths and economic losses — of extreme weather events and is measured annually by the German watch observatory via the Global Climate Risk Index.

Climate change affects development of all nations, regardless of location or size of economy. Yet, no other group of nations is more vulnerable to its devastating effects than the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). With one-third of their population living on land, that is less than five meters below sea level, the threat of sea level rise, storm surges, and coastal destruction pose existential risks to SIDS. Islands like Kiribati and Tuvalu will be completely wiped out due to rising sea levels.

While contributing less than 1 per cent to the world's greenhouse gas emissions, these countries are among the first to experience the worst and most devastating impacts of climate change with greater risks to economies, livelihoods, and food security.

The places with the least level of economic development are certainly in line to feel the impacts with the greatest degree, partially just due to their geographic fate but more so based on the socio-economic and governance factors.

The IPCC states that due to climate change, drought prone areas will become drier and flooded areas will become wetter. East Africa can expect to experience increased short rains, while West Africa should expect heavier monsoons. Economies with poorer infrastructure and less skilled populations will suffer most. Agriculture, tourism and health are some sectors that suffer most due to climate change.

Sustainable sources of energy have proven to be expensive, requiring a lot of initial capital investment. Many under developed and developing countries lack the infrastructural capability, economic capacity and feasible terrain for such undertakings. It is evident that this committee will have to work towards new solutions or decisively modify old solutions in order to present a conclusive and effective resolutions.

It would be unfair to solely blame the backwardness of underdeveloped economies for their inability to grow along with the rising standard of environmentally conscious policies. It thus, becomes essential to pin-point problems faced by these countries at the hands of more developed countries which are keeping them from working in the best interests of the environment. These includes the problems of mass dumping of numerous industrial and manufactural wastes in under developed countries by the more developed ones.

Another issue that is in desperate need of attention is the autonomy given to private enterprises in many market economies. The regulations these firms are compelled to follow often exclude environmental safety regulations, or deeply neglect them at the very least. This may seem like an issue that plagues only the pre-dominantly capitalist economies, but with the spread of Multi-national corporations, certain uniformity must be concluded upon when dealing with environmental regulations.

When dealing with any sort of reform in developing countries, certain things must be kept in mind at all times. Creative solutions are greatly encouraged, but at the end of the day, they must be feasible enough to be implemented in countries that are plagued with unemployment, poverty, low infrastructural development and an increased dependency on agriculture.

Social approaches must also be looked at. The target countries have low literacy rates and the impoverished people have to face too many day-to-day hardships to be aware of economic damage unless they are specifically educated in the matter. How does one get an impoverished majority of the population change its priorities?

The UNEP has always worked towards protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. The committee is urged to explore how the natives and tribal people that are found in most developing countries can help the civilised population give back to the environment.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The ultimate objective of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system." (article 2) The convention calls upon developed and industrialized countries to cut emissions on home ground. Since they are the source of most past and current greenhouse gas emissions, industrialized countries are expected to do the most.

They are called Annex I countries and belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They include 12 countries with "economies in transition" from Central and Eastern Europe. Annex I countries were expected by the year 2000 to reduce emissions to 1990 levels. Many of them have taken strong action to do so, and some have already succeeded.

Montreal Protocol

The Montreal Protocol, finalized in 1987, is a global agreement to protect the stratospheric ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS). The stratospheric ozone layer filters out harmful ultraviolet radiation, which is associated with an increased prevalence of skin cancer and cataracts, reduced agricultural productivity, and disruption of marine ecosystems. The Montreal Protocol has proven to be innovative and successful, and is the first treaty to achieve universal ratification by all countries in the world. Leveraging worldwide participation, the Montreal Protocol has sent clear signals to the global market and placed the ozone layer, which was in peril, on a path to repair.

On October 15, 2016, Parties to the Montreal Protocol adopted the Kigali amendment to phase down production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) worldwide.