

United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) President's Letter

Chairing Style

Hello delegates and welcome to the St. Bonaventure University Model UN conference! We're excited to have you participate in the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). My name is Rachel Collins and I, along with Isabelle LaBarbera, will chair this committee. Elena Newfrock will be our rapporteur. Together, we'll be guiding you through the conference, but we can't succeed without your active participation and preparation. Thoroughly researching your country prior to the conference is not only a prerequisite for participation, but will make the conference more enjoyable and a better learning experience for each one of you! Here are our main expectations of each delegate:

1. Knowledge of procedure is critical to ensure committee runs smoothly. You are expected to know the basic Rules of Procedure, but we will assist whenever necessary.
2. Understanding your nation's policy will make the conference better for everyone. We recommend having a grasp on the past and current stances of your nation in order to better know the issues at hand.
3. Treating other delegations with respect and courtesy is required of all participants in the conference. As chairs, we will be noting how you interact with others and will reward courtesy and respect accordingly. Professionalism and punctuality will also be taken into consideration. We believe that respect breeds participation, collaboration, and fun, which are our ultimate goals for the conference.

Topics

Climate Change

Although Earth's climate naturally changes over time, it is currently changing in ways most scientists view as unnatural and precipitated by human activity. Modern climate change is seen through phenomena such as rising sea levels and global temperatures, warming oceans, shrinking ice sheets, declining Arctic sea ice, glacial retreat, and extreme weather events.

Climate change is a broad issue, and we should focus on solutions. UNEP's work on climate change encompasses science, policy, technology, and finance, so a basic understanding of your nation's level of development and environmental regulations is a good place to start. More broad solutions that may come up in committee include reforestation, ecosystem protection and rewilding.

UNEP is also working on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Knowing the parameters of the agreement and your nations' level of commitment to it will be important. Are the conditions of the Paris Agreement feasible? Are they strong enough? As delegates in UNEP, you will be discussing these issues and have the power to make any changes you feel necessary.

The Earth is a shared, collective good. Ultimately, depletion or destruction of the finite resources is an existential threat to humankind. As such, climate change is a global issue that could be addressed only through diplomacy and a united collective efforts of all nations.

Questions to consider

1. Did your country commit to the Paris Agreement? If so, what developments, reforms, and technologies will be necessary to support its implementation?
2. What types of environmental regulations does your nation currently have?
3. How will climate change impact your nation? Is your nation reliant on natural resources?
4. What are the main signs and effects of climate change? Are these observed in your country?
5. Do you think we need a new agreement?

Resources

1. Climate Change. Link:
<https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/>
2. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Link:
<https://www.ipcc.ch>
3. UN Climate Change Conference - December 2019. Link:
<https://unfccc.int>
4. Year-to-date global temperatures. Link:
<https://public.wmo.int/en>
5. Climate change: We face a global climate emergency. We work to support the world to transition to a low-carbon, sustainable future. Link:
<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/climate-change>
6. Paris Climate Agreement: Everything You Need to Know. Link:
<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/paris-climate-agreement-everything-you-need-know>

Pollution in Oceans

The oceans cover 72 percent of the Earth's surface and thus is a vital resource to human and animal life. Ocean plants account for the majority of oxygen produced in our atmosphere, therefore, if pollution in oceans continues at such a high rate, all living creatures will be affected greatly. Eighty percent of pollution to the marine environment comes from the land. Nonpoint source pollution causes most damages to the oceans and occurs through the daily use of motor vehicles. Millions of people each year have mobilized to address this issue, however, there still is much to be done before the damage becomes too great to fix. The United Nations Environment Programme acts to protect oceans and seas and promote sustainable use of marine resources.

Damages to our ocean ecosystems include the disruption of our coral reefs and algal blooms. These reefs are the habitat to many endangered species, and their destruction can have devastating effects

on their continuous existence. Marine debris is another major pollution problem as it interferes with navigation and kills marine life.

The United Nations is working to ensure the peaceful, cooperative, and legally defined uses of the seas and oceans for individuals, states and the benefit of humankind. The United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS) passed in 1982 was a groundbreaking work that resolved several issues related to ocean usage. This act established freedom-of-navigation rights, territorial sea boundaries, exclusive economic zones, extension of continental shelf rights, created International Seabed Authority, and created other conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Questions to consider

1. Does your country border the ocean?
2. Does your country have ocean policies? Do they financially contribute to fixing this issue? What does your country do to protect the oceans?
3. Does your country contribute to ocean pollution? In what ways? Nonpoint vs direct.
4. Does your country utilize/consume ocean resources?
5. How does pollution in oceans affect your country?

Resources

1. Sources of Pollution. Link:
<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/pollution.html>
2. Oceans and the Law of the Sea. Link:
<https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/oceans-and-law-sea/>
3. Facts and figures on marine pollution. Link:
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/ioc-oceans/focus-areas/rio-20-ocean/blueprint-for-the-future-we-want/marine-pollution/facts-and-figures-on-marine-pollution/>
4. Oceans and Seas. Link:
<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas>
5. Pollution in the Oceans. Link:
<https://www.statista.com/chart/12211/the-countries-polluting-the-oceans-the-most/>
6. Education on Ocean Pollution. Link:
<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/ocean-coasts-education-resources/ocean-pollution>
7. Marine pollution, explained. Link:
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/oceans/critical-issues-marine-pollution/>

Renewable Energy

Energy drives economies and societies. Yet, energy production and use is also the single biggest contributor to global warming. The disadvantages of increased energy usage include increased carbon footprint, increased risk of climate change, reduction in supply, and higher costs. Renewable energy is defined as the sources that are naturally replenishing but flow-limited. Renewable resources are virtually inexhaustible but limited in the amount of energy available at a certain time.

Renewable energy is on the rise, but much needs to be done in order to limit the use of fossil fuels which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change. Currently, around 3 billion people who lack access to clean solutions are exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution. Public and private investments in energy need to be increased and we need to work together to focus on more regulatory uses of energy—before it is too late.

Renewable energy forms include bioenergy, geothermal, hydroelectric, hydrogen, ocean, solar, and wind energy. Although a transition to cleaner forms of energy has already begun, the UNEP is tasked with reducing barriers to the uptake of renewable energy by raising awareness, working with the finance sector, and providing governments with information and advice.

The UNEP currently has Goal 7 targets to reach by 2030. These goals include universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, enhance international cooperation, and expand infrastructure and upgrade technology. Are these goals reasonable? How can we add to this discussion and adjust the goals accordingly?

Question to consider

1. What types of and how much energy does your country use?
2. What plans does your country have for renewable energy?
3. What steps has your country taken toward using renewable energy?
4. What are your country's attitudes toward global warming?
5. Is international cooperation conducive to better renewable energy?
6. Do we need additional international agreements or international organizations to deal with this matter?

Resources

1. [Renewable Energy - UNEP. Link:
https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/energy/what-we-do/renewable-energy](https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/energy/what-we-do/renewable-energy)
2. [Renewable Energy Explained. Link:
https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/renewable-sources/](https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/renewable-sources/)

3. [Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy. Link:](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/)
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/>
4. [Renewable Energy, Facts and Information. Link:](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/energy/reference/renewable-energy/)
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/energy/reference/renewable-energy/>
5. [Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. Link:](https://www.seforall.org/)
<https://www.seforall.org/>
6. [UNDP Environment and Energy. Link:](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/te/energy-environment.shtml)
<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/te/energy-environment.shtml>
7. [International Renewable Energy Agency. Link:](https://www.irena.org/)
<https://www.irena.org/>