



Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2016 Montessori Model United Nations Conference.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated at MMUN 2016 in committee sessions. Please note this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information necessary on the topics and how they relate to the country you represent. Such information should help you write your Position Paper, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

The more information and understanding you acquire on the two topics, the more you will be able to influence the Resolution writing process through debates [formal and informal caucuses], and the MMUN experience as a whole. Please feel free to contact us if and when you face challenges in your research or formatting your Position Papers.

We encourage you to learn all you can about your topics first and then study your country with regard to the two selected topics. Please remember that both committee members need to be well versed and ready to debate both topics.

Enjoy researching and writing your Position Papers.

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UN refugee agency emerged in the wake of World War II to help Europeans displaced by that conflict. Optimistically, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly with a three-year mandate to complete its work and then disband. The following year, on July 28, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees - the legal foundation of helping refugees and the basic statute guiding UNHCR's work - was adopted.

The UN refugee agency is governed by the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UNHCR Executive Committee approves the agency's biennial programmes and the corresponding budget. These are presented by the High Commissioner (currently António Guterres), who is appointed by the UN General Assembly. The UN refugee agency's mandate is defined by the 1950 UNHCR Statute. In 2003, the General Assembly extended the organization's mandate "until the refugee problem is solved." The High Commissioner reports annually to ECOSOC and the General Assembly on the work of UNHCR.

As head of the organization, the High Commissioner is responsible for the direction and control of UNHCR. He/she directs the work of UNHCR with the assistance of a Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioners for Protection and Operations. The agency has a national and international staff of more than 9,300 working in 123 countries.

Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c80.html>

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Climate Change Related Natural Disasters

Topic Background

Climate change occurs when there is an increase in greenhouse gases within the atmosphere. Two main contributing factors include deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels such as coal. This leads to the increase or decrease of regional temperatures due to the trapped greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. An increase in the overall global temperature can provoke natural disasters such as droughts, tropical cyclones, and floods.¹

Natural disasters affect people around the world. These natural disasters occur usually when regional temperatures increase, causing the number of intense storms to be more frequent. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that the number of recorded natural disasters doubled from 200 to 400 annually. Due to climate change, the increased frequencies of floods, droughts, and other natural disasters led to 36 million people being displaced in 2008.² In addition, many people are internally displaced because of other slow-paced environmental degradation circumstances such as desertification and the submersion of islands.

Climate change related natural disasters have both prior and immediate impacts on people globally. As the global temperature increases, people have been subjected to heat waves and droughts. Farmers struggle with failed crops, water dependent industries struggle with producing because a reduced water supply causes a high demand. Heat wave victims suffered from heat stroke, asthma, and other illnesses.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 10,236,722 people were displaced due to floods only in 2011. 403,000 were displaced because of landslides and wildfires led to 4,300 displacements. Thus, these statistics prove that climate change related disasters caused an influx of internally displaced people that have lost their homes. Other natural disasters led to violent conflict over supplies, poverty, and health deterioration.³

Guatemala:

Guatemala has suffered from an annual coffee rust since 2012. Due to the temperature rising, a type of fungus grows and thrives on coffee trees. As a result, the fungus consumes the nutrients of the coffee beans and coffee tree leaves fall off. The coffee rust spread to higher altitude plantations due to rising temperatures. Guatemalan farmers turn to other plantations in search of jobs or attempt to focus on other crops or animals. Guatemala records 100,000

¹ “Effects of Climate Change” NASA.

<http://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

² “Climate Change” United Nations.

<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/climatechange/>

³ “Refugees” UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>

job losses and constantly struggles economically as coffee beans are its major export.⁴ Non-profit organizations (NGOs) such as Catholic Relief Services and businesses such as Starbucks currently provide rust-resistant tree seeds, economic aid for bigger agricultural projects, and a variety of fruit trees for Guatemalan farmers to diversify their salaries while battling coffee rust.

Australia:

Australian wildfires are getting worse each year. “Black Saturday Wildfires” was a tragic example of this. “Black Saturday Wildfires” were a series of wildfires which spread throughout Australia on February 7th, 2009.⁵ Australian temperatures increased to 114.8 Fahrenheit degrees on that day and 400 fires started. According to Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology, since 1950, the number of hot days has doubled and temperatures increased by 33.8 Fahrenheit due to the burning of land for agriculture. The wildfires killed 173 people and 414 were injured. As a result, Black Saturday survivors were awarded 500 million dollars for compensation and the Australian government vowed to focus on fire fighting methods. In addition, the Australian government created buffer zones to protect towns.⁶

Jamaica:

Jamaica suffers from frequent floods, droughts, and intense hurricanes annually. Due to its geographical location and climate change, these natural disasters will be more frequent and intense. According to the UNEP, between 2004 and 2008, 1.2 billion US dollars was needed to repair Jamaica’s infrastructure after five major storms. The government of Jamaica already conducts environmental assessment tools and will collaborate with the UNEP to publish its findings on climate change.

Past International Actions

The nature of this topic is definitely relevant to MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.⁷ This millennium goal emphasizes the need for sustainable development and prevention of loss of environmental resources through the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the deployment of UN Environment Units.

⁴ “Rust devastates Guatemala’s Prime Coffee Crop” National Public Radio.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/07/28/335293974/rust-devastates-guatemalas-prime-coffee-crop-and-its-farmers>

⁵ “Black Saturday Bush Fires” Australian Government.

<http://www.blacksaturdaybushfires.com.au/bushfire-preparation/>

⁶ “Disaster Risk Reduction” UNEP.

<http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/Introduction/DisasterRiskReduction/Capacitydevelopmentandtechnicalassistance/RiVAMPinJamaica/tabid/105927/Default.aspx>

⁷ “United Nations Millennium Development Goals” United Nations.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/enviro.html>

The UNFCCC is an intergovernmental treaty focusing on climate change.⁸ Ratified by 192 countries since 1994, the UNFCCC addresses the issue through implementing subsidiary departments with the Conference of the Parties (COP) which are regular meetings concerning the convention. For example, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism that provides financial aid for LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) in order for the LEDCs to uphold the convention's requirements. An addition to the treaty is the Kyoto Protocol, this protocol focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to fight climate change.⁹

In 1994, the joint UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) and OCHA (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Environment Unit is responsible for preparation and humanitarian response coordination efforts in environmental disasters. This unit develops long term strategies for natural disaster recovery and raises awareness about environmental topics such as climate change. The environment unit does disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities with local governments such as improving early warnings for environmental disasters. In addition, the unit coordinates response efforts through implementing procedures for emergency volunteers. Also, there are non-governmental organizations which provide humanitarian aid and response efforts for climate change related natural disasters.¹⁰

One example of such and NGO is AmeriCares. This NGO conducts immediate response efforts by deploying emergency response teams (the teams are responsible for providing aid and shelter for survivors) in disaster stricken areas. Besides immediate response efforts, AmeriCares provides preparation for future natural disasters through community based disaster risk reduction activities. Such activities include developing global partnerships and evaluations of public health facilities in countries prone to natural disasters.

Overall, the United Nations is making progress to ensure MDG 7 can be accomplished. The UN states that more than 2.1 billion gained access to clean water since 1990, exceeding one of the targets. However, carbon dioxide emission increased by 46 percent. Thus, the creation of sustainable development goal 13 conveys the need to still combat climate change.

Possible Solutions

The issue of climate change related natural disasters is relevant to sustainable development goal 13: to combat climate change. It is acknowledged by the United Nations that climate change will destroy the Earth. Already, there are three major sub issues with climate change

⁸ "Climate Change Newsroom" UN Convention on Climate Change.

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int>

⁹ "Environmental Emergencies" UN OCHA.

<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/environmental-emergencies>

¹⁰ "Disaster Preparedness" Americares.

<http://www.americares.org/global-health/health-initiatives/disaster-preparedness.html>

related natural disasters such as economic development, increased risk of droughts and floods, and combatting higher temperatures.

Firstly, economic development is needed in countries which have suffered from natural disasters. Financial aid is needed in LEDCs to rebuild long term assets such as businesses and to provide humanitarian aid for survivors. An example would be Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. According to the post 2015 development framework for the United Nations, annual typhoons caused the poverty rate in Rizal, a poor province, to double from 5.5 percent to 9.5 percent in 2009. Furthermore, regional development banks provide financial loans for the Philippines in order to rebuild infrastructure.¹¹ After Typhoon Haiyan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) offered various grants and loans to the Filipino government. Besides providing loans, the ADB also is involved in mitigation efforts. The ADB opened an office in the Philippines to coordinate the usage of loans and provide strategic advice on the reconstruction of infrastructure.

Also, mitigation efforts have been conducted through assessment tools developed by the UNEP in climate change related disasters such as floods in Jamaica. The creation of disaster risk reduction tools can possibly prevent future impacts of both climate change and natural disasters. Jamaica suffers from frequent floods and tropical cyclones due to higher temperatures, as a result, Jamaica uses the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Methodology Development Project (RiVAMP) by UNEP.¹² The RiVAMP initiative led to the Government of Jamaica publishing a scientific report detailing the importance of the environment and climate related hazards. In fact, the UNEP provides training on RiVAMP methodology throughout the world where the RiVAMP tool is used. The tool has aided the assessment and evaluation of climate change factors such as higher temperatures, while highlighting the environmental impacts of such future climate change related disasters.

Climate change itself is a major problem. One of UNEP's projects is the Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN).¹³ The CTCN provides low carbon and climate friendly solutions in both MEDCs and LEDCs. For example, the CTCN offers three main services: technical assistance, developing access to knowledge on low carbon technology, and establishing a network for environmental experts in both private and public institutions. While providing technical assistance, the CTCN conducts assessments on technology efficiency and implements planning documents such as energy strategies. Also, the CTCN provides webinars and workshops to help identify suitable technology options in LEDCs. Within the network, members coordinate workshops and tutorials among stakeholders and other environmental experts. Thus, the CTCN works hard to reduce greenhouse gas

¹¹ "Typhoon Haiyan" Asian Development Bank (ADB).

<http://www.adb.org/countries/philippines/typhoon-haiyan-adbs-response>

¹² "Disaster Risk Reduction" UNEP.

<http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/Introduction/DisasterRiskReduction/Capacitydevelopmentandtechnicalassistance/RiVAMPinJamaica/tabid/105927/Default.aspx>

¹³ "About CTCN" CTCN.

<http://www.ctc-n.org/about-ctcn>

emissions around the world through improving capacity building and increasing investments in climate technology initiatives.

Overall, delegates should focus on implementing mitigation and adaptation efforts towards the issue of climate change related natural disasters. Delegates could focus on creating assessment tools tailored for climate change in order to evaluate the status of their countries' ecosystems and the efficiency of natural disaster emergency services. Besides UNEP programs, delegates could propose the idea of independent research institutions to conduct further research on climate resilient technology.

Further Research

<http://www.unep.org/climatechange/> United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)

<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/environmental-emergencies>
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Environmental Unit

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/gti.htm#goal7>
Millennium Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/urgentissues/global-warming-climate-change/index.htm?intc=nature.tnav.how.list> Nature Conservancy Organization

Questions:

1. What is the name of the first environmental treaty created by the United Nations?
2. Name the disaster risk reduction tool created by the UNEP and used by the Government of Jamaica
3. Name the two United Nations departments involved in climate change related natural disasters.
4. What is the Millennium Goal 7?
5. What is the purpose of the joint UNEP-OCHA environmental unit?

Answers:

1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
2. RiVAMP (Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Methodology Development Project)
3. UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) and OCHA (UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
4. Ensure environmental sustainability
5. To respond to environmental emergencies through international humanitarian efforts

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