

Environment Programme

MADMUN XIV



Letter to the Delegates

Dear Delegates,

We are so pleased to welcome you into MADMUN XIV! This is Melat Seyoum and Danny Itani, we will be your chairs for the Environmental Programme. We are looking forward to meeting and working with you all as you bring effective solutions to the table for our topics this year. This will be our first year as chairs and we hope this experience will bring lots of experience your way along with joy as you navigate your ways as delegates!

For this committee, the Environmental committee, there will be two topics that correlate with our main theme of challenging authority: Topic A: Preventing the Use of Environmental Pollutants Globally and Topic B: Combating the prevalent concern of deforestation in developing countries. These two topics were prioritized when we were considering options that align with our main theme. As they're not only prevalent concerns that every country, regardless of any status, has had to face but they're also issues that have been around for as long as centuries. It is time for them to have a proper address. We ask that with these two topics, you dive deep into the many layers that are contained within, and challenge yourselves and think of effective solutions.

Since this will be many of your first committees, we hope that this will be an enjoyable experience. We will keep the environment open minded and provide time and room for deep, respectful discussions. We please ask that respect is a staple throughout the many interactions you have with one another. Resolutions are best composed in good environments, and as your chairs we will uphold respect as an absolute staple as well.

We are looking forward to seeing you all, stay well,
Melat & Danny

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Chair Introductions:

Hi, my name is Danny Itani and I am one of the two chairs of your committee. I am a Senior at Madison Country Day School and this will be my first time chairing at MADMUN! I'm very excited to chair all of you and I'm excited about the conference as a whole. While I have never participated in MADMUN, I have done Model UN for three years and attended various conferences, so I do have a good amount of experience. While Model UN may seem stressful, it is a very fun experience and you all will have a great time! When I'm not participating in Model UN, I love to play basketball, listen to all types of music, and hang out with my friends. I look forward to meeting all of you at the start of this conference, and if you have any questions, don't be scared to reach out. Good luck to all of you!

Contact: danny.itani@madisoncountryday.org

Hi Delegates! My name is Melat Seyoum and I am so thrilled to say that I will be chairing the Environmental Programme this year. :) I am currently a senior at Verona Area High School, and this year will be my third in officially participating in Model UN. Model UN is something that I have participated in because I thoroughly enjoy the process of problem solving and collaborating with others in doing so. Model UN has helped me in so many aspects that I feel I would have had a hard time improving otherwise, like my public speaking and debating skills. I decided to chair the Environmental Committee because I have always been intrigued in attempting to solve the unique environmental complications and I would love to see and guide its process. I sincerely hope that MADMUN XIV will be an enjoyable and beneficial experience for you all, and I'm very excited to meet you.

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Topic A: Preventing the Use of Environmental Pollutants Globally

Pollution has become an extremely prevalent issue throughout the world, and while pollution can be natural, this current issue is largely due to pollutants released into the environment by humans. Examples of man-made pollution are the release of greenhouse gasses into the environment through the burning of fossil fuels as seen in factories or cars, or water pollution which can be observed through plastic or other trash being dumped into bodies of water. Pollution has been widely associated with government policies regarding the mining of fossil fuels, which has become an extremely controversial topic among political allegiances. Pollution has had various negative effects that affect not only the environment, but the economies and equality of various countries. First, pollution negatively affects ecosystems, taking habitats away and hurting different wildlife. This is largely due to the greenhouse effect which is caused by the release of environmental pollutants. Pollution also stunts economic growth of different countries, and increases poverty, affecting both rural and urban areas greatly. Pollution stunting economic growth leads to more countries relying on fossil fuels as their main industry, creating a loop that only increases the pollution in the environment. Air pollution also leads to disease among both wildlife and humans, and these diseases are mostly respiratory or heart issues.

History

Pollution's routes can be traced back to around 1000 CE, but the more significant starting date is the late 17th century, when fossil fuels were beginning to be utilized. With the spread of industrialization in the 19th century, pollution worldwide only began to grow and became a universal issue. Since industrialization was so important to the economies of countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan at the time, the environment was not really a factor as money was the more significant issue for these countries' governments.

In the 20th century, the world started to become conscious of the effect that pollution had on the environment, with different actions being taken to attempt to slow down pollution. Among multiple different countries, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act of 1970 and 1972 respectively were passed as an attempt to slow down pollution, with these having an effect but not a substantial one.

In the 20th century leading into the 21st century, fossil fuels also became more prevalent, and were used to power different countries' energy sources and economies. In the United States, oil currently constitutes one third of energy consumption, but a lot of this oil doesn't actually come from the US. As stated earlier, different countries rely on fossil fuels such as oil for their economy, which can be seen in the middle-east, as the US gets a substantial amount of their oil

from the countries in this region. This has only encouraged countries to frack and mine fossil fuels in order to support their economies.

Currently, policy makers are using science and data in order to find the most effective ways to slow down pollution and climate change, but as the use of fossil fuels stays high, global warming will only continue. Ways in which some improvements in this area have been made have been in electric automobiles, and finding alternative sources of energy (solar), but all countries still contribute to the pollution of the environment significantly.

Recent Actions Made by the UN

In 1988, a committee called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was formed by the UN Environmental Programme along with the help of the World Meteorological Organization. This panel serves to specifically focus on pollution and global warming through the use of science and other methods, and has made important scientific observations such as the fact that humans have been responsible for the large worldwide average temperature increase from 0.8 to 1.2 degrees celsius (study released in 2018).

The UN Environmental Programme itself has recently launched a number of campaigns and initiatives in order to slow down the release of pollutants. These initiatives include The International Day of Clean for Blue Skies, Clean Seas, New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, Global Partnership on Marine Litter, Climate and Clean Air Coalition, Breathe Life, and the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. These initiatives focus on air and water pollution and have been extremely important in raising awareness to both the public and the governments of countries of the large issue at hand affecting the entire globe.

Covid-19 Affect on Pollution

While the Covid-19 pandemic overall was one of the biggest global disasters in recent memory, it surprisingly did lead to a reduction in worldwide pollution. This was mainly due to the fact that everyone was in lockdown, so there was minimal driving, causing a reduction in the burning of fossil fuels. Commercial flights and transportation in general have been a large cause for air pollution in the last century, but during this pandemic with transportation being cut in half, this caused the concentration of nitrogen dioxide (a fossil fuel) in the atmosphere to be reduced by almost 60 percent across the world. Even though a pandemic of this magnitude is not likely to happen in the near future, this has given the world insight on how significantly transportation contributed to pollution and global warming, and this gives insight to organizations on how to slow down pollution in the future.

Guiding Questions

- How severe is air and water pollution in your country?
- What has your country done to combat pollution? What measures have been taken by your country?
- How involved is your country with the mining or burning of fossil fuels?
- What have the effects of pollution been on your country specifically?
- What is your country's stance on pollution and climate change?

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Topic B: Combating the prevalent concern of deforestation in developing countries

With the recent advancements to our modern day world, it is with certainty that our need for resources have become a staple priority. From our ways of operating towards fulfilling this need for abundant resources, many consequences have derived regarding the state of the world's environment. One very prevalent issue throughout the world, and especially so in developing countries, is the concern of **deforestation; the purposeful clearing of forested land for human use**. There are many ways deforestation can occur, whether it is done by the hands of man, through operations of mining, or for the purpose of agriculture, urbanization, raising livestock, or drilling. Its effects have caused the loss of half of the world's forests, the destruction of the world's land-based plants, animals, and birds. These complex ecosystems affect the environment in more ways than one can quantify, and even more so, forests have a major influence in the rainfall patterns, water, soil quality, and flood prevention, affecting the patterns of the world as well as humans. Whether directly or indirectly, there is this built interdependence between the sustainability of the earth and the many forests it harbors. As of today, there is no single direct cause for the increase in deforestation, but the two main causes of deforestation are agriculture and emerging infrastructure in urbanizing countries, especially through the illegal act of **logging; the corrupt gain in access to forests and the cutting of trees without permission**. This act is one that is single handedly responsible for much of the toxic emissions of greenhouse gasses, loss of biodiversity, and most evidently, forest degradation. Deforestation is a topic that is already impacting developed countries in more ways than one, and unfortunately so, it is impacting developing countries even more. Whether through the vulnerability of developing countries in the sense of increased corruption, high tenure costs, pressure of increasing population, or property rights, a weaker governance towards the security of forests paves a path for higher rates of deforestation to occur. This is only made worse by the fact that 1.6 billion people in the developing world depend on forests for basic survival needs such as food, fuel, and livelihoods. It is evident that the economic and or market value of forests, whether resource or land wise, is high and competitive. Developing countries may view deforestation as a means to boost economic growth and alleviate poverty. However, short-term economic gains can result in long-term economic instability due to the loss of ecosystem services, making this issue one that is deep rooted and impactful upon the livelihoods of many

Notable factors of deforestation & its impact in developing countries:

Agricultural Expansion: The need to feed growing populations and the global demand for commodities have driven agricultural expansion. Developing countries often resort to clearing forests to make way for large-scale farming, leading to extensive deforestation.

Timber Extraction: The timber industry remains a significant driver of deforestation in

developing countries. High demand for wood products, both domestically and for export, can lead to unsustainable logging practices.

Mining and Resource Extraction: The pursuit of valuable minerals and resources can result in forest destruction. Developing countries often rely on resource extraction as a source of revenue, which can come at the expense of their forests.

Infrastructure Development: Rapid urbanization and infrastructure projects necessitate land conversion, including deforestation. Roads, highways, and urban areas frequently encroach on forested regions.

Global Trade Demands: The globalization of trade has increased demand for commodities like palm oil, soy, and beef, which are linked to deforestation. These products are often produced in developing countries and exported worldwide.

Population Pressure: Growing populations in developing countries require more land for housing and agriculture. This demographic pressure can lead to the encroachment of forests.

Environmental Impacts: Deforestation has severe consequences for developing countries. It contributes to biodiversity loss, disrupts ecosystems, and can lead to soil degradation and desertification. Deforestation also plays a role in climate change, as forests act as carbon sinks.

Social Impacts: Indigenous communities and local populations often bear the brunt of deforestation. They may lose their traditional lands and livelihoods, facing displacement and economic challenges.

Economic Impacts: While deforestation can bring short-term economic gains, it often leads to long-term economic instability. Loss of ecosystem services like clean water and climate regulation can harm agriculture and tourism, important sectors in many developing nations.

History

Historically, forests were cleared for agriculture, settlement expansion, and the extraction of valuable resources. This practice dates back to ancient civilizations and colonial eras when European powers exploited the natural wealth of their colonies. As time passed, industrialization, globalization, and population growth intensified deforestation in these regions.

Early history: The roots of farming and agriculture begin onwards from about 10,000 BC, where trees were cut down in order to provide more space for crops and livestock. The origins of deforestation may have had a good connotation to them, but in the excessiveness of our modern-day world, deforestation has become hand in hand with climate change. This is because forests absorb carbon dioxide and other heat trapping greenhouse gasses as they grow. The containment of these gasses prevents them from entering into the earth's atmosphere but the cutting down of trees releases these trapped gasses. The promise of abundance within agriculture has become the attraction to deforestation.

From 2 million years ago until about 12,000 years ago humans relied upon nomadic hunter gatherer groups, which oftentimes proved survival to be difficult. The quality of human life

increased through the innovative practices of agriculture. Although agriculture had composed a sharp incline in the quality of human life, this is the sprout that began deforestation. The temperate regions of Europe, North America, and Asia mainly practiced deforestation up until the early 20th century. But over thousands of years landscapes around the world became evidently altered. 2000 years ago 80% of Western Europe was covered in forests, but today only 35% of those forests remain. Developing countries in the east of America during the times of European colonization lost about half of its woodland. And it was after Europe's Industrial Revolution that the removal of forests was promoted even more. New inventions were created in order to make deforestation easier. This was what prompted the use of deforestation for the conventional reasons.

Notable time periods in history that correlate heavily with deforestation:

Ancient Civilizations: Deforestation can be traced back to early human societies where forests were cleared for agriculture and fuel. Ancient civilizations like the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Mayans practiced deforestation to varying degrees, often leading to soil erosion and reduced agricultural productivity.

Colonial Era: During the colonial period, European powers, such as Britain, Spain, and Portugal, heavily exploited the natural resources of their colonies, including forests. They extracted timber for shipbuilding and other purposes, contributing to deforestation in these regions.

Industrial Revolution: The 18th and 19th centuries marked the onset of the Industrial Revolution, leading to increased demand for timber, land, and resources. This era saw significant deforestation in developing countries as they were often suppliers of raw materials to industrialized nations.

20th Century: Deforestation accelerated in the 20th century due to population growth and increased agricultural and industrial activities. Developing countries faced pressure to clear forests for agriculture, resulting in habitat loss and environmental degradation.

Globalization: The globalization of trade further exacerbated deforestation in developing countries. Demand for commodities like palm oil, soy, and beef led to large-scale clearing of forests in regions like the Amazon, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

Recent actions made by the UN

With goal 15 being focused upon the conservation of life on land within the sustainable development goals of the United Nations:

The UNDP (launched in 2014) **the Forest Declaration** a setting where governments, companies, indigenous peoples, local committees, and non-governmental organizations were brought together in order to set 10 goals to stop natural forest loss by 2030, restore 350 million hectares of degraded landscapes and forestlands, improve governance and the rights of forest communities, increase financial flows to forests, and reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

The UNFCCC (1997-2011) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with its Kyoto Protocol and subsequent agreements, has recognized the critical role of forests in mitigating climate change. The REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) mechanism, established under the UNFCCC, aims to provide financial incentives to developing countries for forest conservation and sustainable management.

As of currently, despite conservation efforts, deforestation continues to be a pressing issue in many developing countries due to a variety of factors, including illegal logging, land conversion for agriculture, and infrastructure development.

Guiding Questions

- What is your country's history with deforestation?
- What is the root cause of the deforestation within your country?
 - Agricultural expansion
 - Timber extraction
 - Mining and resource extraction
 - Infrastructure development
 - Global trade demands
 - Population pressure
 - Any other reasoning
- What is your country's stance on deforestation?
- Has deforestation improved your country in any way?
- What are some consequences your country is facing due to deforestation?

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