

RED CEDAR MODEL UNITED NATIONS SESSION IX



United Nations Environment Programme

Chair: Hugh McDonald
Assistant Chairs: Blake Lajiness, Xinyi You,
Rane Claypool

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Dear delegates,

Thank you for choosing to join the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for MSUMUN 20. My name is Hugh McDonald and I will be your chair this conference. I am a senior and am currently studying International Relations at James Madison College with a minor in History. In my free time, I enjoy watching the New England Patriots, working out, and hanging out with my friends. My past Model UN experience includes 3 years in high school, along with being an Assistant Chair my freshman year and then becoming a chair from sophomore year on.

My name is Blake Lajiness and I am currently a junior pursuing two degrees: Environmental Studies and Sustainability and Political Science: Public Policy. When I am not doing homework or hanging out with friends I am serving as the representative for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which is a position through the Associated Student of Michigan State University (ASMSU). I am also a member of the Spartan Marching Band Color Guard, which has kept me very busy during every one of my fall semesters. On another note, this is my first year experiencing Model UN, as my high school did not offer it. In high school, however, I did get the opportunity to visit the UN Headquarters building in New York City, which was amazing. I am most looking forward to being a part of your Model UN experience because it truly is something unique and irreplaceable.

I'm Xinyi You and I am currently a freshman at MSU. I am thinking about studying Journalism in the future. This is my very first year in MSU as well as in Model UN. I joined MSUMUN because I believe this is a place where we can develop a broader outlook on this world. I love watching figure skating and I'm a super fan of skaters like Yuna Kim and Carolina

Kostner. GOT is one of my favorite shows. You can also talk to me about Japanese which I am still learning. Using “techo” (planner) is one of my daily routines.

My name is Rane Claypool, and I am currently a freshman studying both History and Economics with a minor in Law, Justice, and Public Policy. In my free time, I am usually doing homework, working, or hanging out with friends. MSUMUN is my first experience with Model UN as my high school did not offer it. I am looking forward to meeting more people in Model UN and seeing what it has to offer!

We’re all very excited to see you and hear your ideas for improving the planet. This year we will be focused on Clean Water, Sustainable Food Growth, and Climate Change abatement! General common-sense rules for this committee include no racism, homophobia, and practice civility. While our political discourse is disappointing, there is no need to bring it in to our committee. We look forward to a successful conference with all of you!

Sincerely,

Hugh McDonald

Topic A: Climate Change Abatement

Introduction

At this point in history, climate change has become a fairly recognized term, both in the scientific and political sphere. Knowing the definition of Climate Change is the key to succeeding in understanding this topic. Definitions of Climate Change can vary slightly based on region, bias, and other factors, but for the purposes of this background guide we are going to define it as the long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns in a place.¹ This topic, however, focuses more specifically on Climate Change abatement. The word abatement just means the reduction, decrease, alleviation and mitigation of something.²

There are several definitive causes and effects that are associated with Climate Change. Two significant causes of Climate Change are pollution and deforestation that this committee will be discussing. Both point and nonpoint pollution are causal factors to Climate Change, so it is important to know the distinction between the two. Point source pollution is a discernible conveyance, like a pipe or a ditch, through which pollutants are or may be discharged.³ Non-point source pollution on the other hand comes from many diffuse sources, such as multiple farms, and is the result of precipitation or seepage.⁴ Deforestation, on the other hand, can be defined as the permanent destruction of forests for other purposes and uses such as turning forests into farmland, ranch and human habitats.⁵ Both types of pollution and deforestation can

¹ National Geographic Society. "Climate Change." National Geographic Society. March 27, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/climate-change/>.

² "Abatement." Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/abatement>.

³ "What Is Nonpoint Source?" EPA. Environmental Protection Agency, November 28, 2016. https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/nps/what-nonpoint-source_.html.

⁴ "What Is Nonpoint Source?"

⁵ "Deforestation: Facts, Causes & Effects." LiveScience. Purch. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.livescience.com/27692-deforestation.html>.

inadvertently help promote drought. Drought is a prolonged period with less-than-average amounts of rain or snow in a particular region.⁶

On another note, there are deeply embedded systems that are crucial to keeping global temperatures consistent. Due to the wide-spread nature of the carbon cycle and ecosystem services, these are two important systems to understand. These two systems can contribute to the potential effects of Climate Change and can also help mitigate these effects, situation depending. The carbon cycle generally refers to the recycling process of carbon atoms traveling between reservoirs, such as the biosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere.⁷ Additionally, ecosystem services can be defined as a set of direct and indirect contributors that support ecosystems as well as human well-being. There are four main ecosystem services: provisioning, regulating, habitat or supporting, and cultural. Provisioning services are products from ecosystems, such as food and fresh water. Regulating services are the benefits received from natural regulating processes, such as water purification. Furthermore, habitat services benefit migratory species in maintaining viability of the gene pool. Finally, cultural services are non-material benefits people collect from ecosystems, such as recreation.

Finally, there are both policy and economic factors that play into Climate Change as a whole. For this topic, it is important to know what The Green New Deal is and also what carbon pricing is. The Green New Deal refers to a project pushed by many U.S. presidential candidates aiming to confront U.S. climate change. It is a ten-year national mobilization that would start in the U.S. and then continue to expand globally. It promises the realization of carbon neutrality by

⁶ “What Causes a Drought?” NOAA SciJinks – All About Weather. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://scijinks.gov/what-causes-a-drought/>.

⁷ US Department of Commerce, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “What Is the Carbon Cycle?” NOAA's National Ocean Service, April 2, 2019. <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/carbon-cycle.html>.

2050 by investing 16.3 trillion dollars in total in the development of clean energy and green infrastructure.⁸ Moreover, carbon pricing charges polluters based on the amount of greenhouse gases they emit. The benefits of this are two-fold: regulations are placed on the amount of permissible carbon emissions while also raising funds that can later be invested into the development of green technologies. Furthermore, carbon pricing can come in the form of a carbon tax or in the form of a cap-and-trade policy. A carbon tax is fixed and is applied to the distribution, sale or use of fossil fuels, based on their carbon content. And in cap-and-trade model, the total allowable carbon emissions are set in advance and distributed to firms in the form of permits, which can then be auctioned off or traded.⁹

Major Themes

Climate Change has been around for over a century, wreaking havoc on every corner of the globe. Science shows that since the Industrial Revolution, global temperatures have been rising consistently.¹⁰ There is no debating this. In recent decades, as more research is conducted and more data comes out, Climate Change has become much more of a pressing issue, especially for the generations that will live through it and for the generations that will feel the effects of it in the future.

The effects of climate change are already being felt on a global scale. Sea level rise caused by melting ice caps is affecting coastal cities, like Miami, Florida. The city of Miami is taking preventative measures against sea level rise, as it is expected to rise 14 to 26 inches higher

⁸ Irfan, Umair, and Tara Golshan. "Bernie Sanders's Green New Deal, Explained." Vox. Vox, August 22, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/2019/8/22/20827396/bernie-sanders-2020-climate-policy-green-new-deal>.

⁹ Clark, Duncan. "What Is a Carbon Price and Why Do We Need One?" The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, July 16, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jul/16/carbon-price-tax-cap>.

¹⁰ "World of Change: Global Temperatures." NASA, NASA, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/world-of-change/DecadalTemp>.

than its 1992 levels by 2060.¹¹ The entire state of California is expected to see more drastic fluctuations in wet and dry seasons in the coming decades. Increased flooding intensity and frequency virtually guarantees agricultural devastation in the state.¹² Harsher and more frequent droughts will create more opportunities for wildfires to spring up, costing California and other dry areas millions of dollars.¹³ Furthermore, increasingly intensifying hurricanes are potentially the result of Climate Change effects.¹⁴ The devastation of Hurricane Dorian is being blamed on increased levels of trapped heat in the atmosphere--a direct effect of Climate Change.¹⁵ These three Climate Change effects are only a few of many and are only the beginning of what is to come. Globally, we are seeing similar effects to those of Miami and California. Coastal cities and islands are feeling the effects of sea level rise and other countries are experiencing similar effects to those felt by California.¹⁶ The problem of Climate Change is far-reaching and devastating, but there is hope for the future through Climate Change abatement.

There are strategies, such as carbon pricing, that have been implemented in the past in order to combat the effects of Climate Change. Carbon pricing has been a part of US policy for years and is slowly spreading across the globe.¹⁷ The results of the carbon pricing strategy show a decrease in emissions in Sweden, who has the highest carbon pricing in the world.¹⁸ Moreover,

¹¹ Sea Level Rise and Flooding. <http://www.miamidade.gov/global/economy/resilience/sea-level-rise-flooding.page>.

¹² "Climate Change Will Make California's Drought-flood Cycle More Volatile, Study Finds." Los Angeles Times. April 24, 2018. <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-drought-flood-20180423-story.html>.

¹³ Mann, Michael E., and Peter H. Gleick. "Climate change and California drought in the 21st century." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 13 (2015): 3858-3859.

¹⁴ "Hurricanes and Climate Change." Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. October 20, 2019. <https://www.c2es.org/content/hurricanes-and-climate-change/>.

¹⁵ "Hurricane Dorian: Why It's so Destructive." EarthSky. <https://earthsky.org/earth/hurricane-dorian-why-its-so-destructive>.

¹⁶ Elsharkawy, Heba, Haitham Rashed, and I. Rached. "Climate change: the impacts of sea level rise on Egypt." (2009).

¹⁷ Project, The Climate Reality. "Carbon Pricing: Does It Work?" Climate Reality. November 06, 2019. <https://www.climateproject.org/blog/carbon-pricing-does-it-work>.

¹⁸ Project, The Climate Reality.

there are policies being discussed currently, like The Green New Deal. The Green New Deal states that the globe must reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and that the United States must take the initiative on this goal.¹⁹ As one could imagine, a radical policy like this would have profound effects in Climate Change Abatement.

To conclude, areas in the United States and across the world are feeling the effects of climate change. Solutions are needed from less radical, such as carbon pricing to massive changes, like the Green New Deal.

History

Progressing toward Climate Change abatement has been the work of numerous scientists, researchers, interest groups, non-profits, businesses, and government agencies for decades. The Clean Air Act of 1963 and the Clean Water Act of 1977 were both results of heightened awareness of human impact on the environment.²⁰ Additionally, much environmental policy has been passed worldwide through the years.²¹ In recent years, however, Climate Change has gained much more visibility. As more reports come out regarding the dire situation that Climate Change poses in the not-so-distant future, younger people are using their voice to push for change. The Paris Agreement is the first agreement to address Climate Change on a global scale, which promises to avert our course toward a catastrophe in the coming decades.²²

Moreover, on December 11, 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted as an extension of United Nation Framework Convention aiming to reduce global emissions and stabilize green-

¹⁹ Friedman, Lisa. "What Is the Green New Deal? A Climate Proposal, Explained." The New York Times. February 21, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/climate/green-new-deal-questions-answers.html>.

²⁰ "Environmental Law - Overview, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Resource Conservation And Recovery Act." Overview, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Resource Conservation And Recovery Act - JRank Articles. <https://law.jrank.org/pages/22712/Environmental-Law.html>.

²¹ "Environmental Policy in the United States." Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/Environmental_policy_in_the_United_States.

²² "What Is the Paris Agreement?" UNFCCC. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>.

house gas emissions. To achieve this goal, Kyoto Protocol requires that its member countries' carbon emissions be monitored and their trades carried out be recorded.²³ It not only acknowledges that developed countries are more responsible for climate change but also provide assistance to helping countries encountering adverse effects of climate change. Though it is controversial in setting low standards to regulate countries and increasing poverty all over the world due to partially emphasizing de-growth, Kyoto Protocol still has its significance as the first step towards a truly global emission reduction regime that will stabilize greenhouse gas emissions, and a model for the future international agreement on climate change.²⁴

Additionally, the Climate Change Act of 2008 aims to reduce green-house gas emissions at least 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 in the United Kingdom and provides a path of creating “carbon budgets” to get there for its government. Carbon budgets which are set at least 12 years in advance are the allowable emissions in a five-year period in the UK.²⁵

Finally, the Paris Agreement took effect on November 4, 2016, and aims to mitigate climate change “keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”²⁶ To achieve this goal every country except the United States will work together. With the Paris Agreement as guiding policy, the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Summit is held to further “challenge states, regions, cities, companies, investors and citizens to

²³“What Is the Kyoto Protocol?” UNFCCC. Accessed November 8, 2019. https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol.

²⁴“What Is the Kyoto Protocol?”

²⁵ “UK Regulations: the Climate Change Act.” Committee on Climate Change. Accessed November 8, 2019. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/the-legal-landscape/the-climate-change-act/>.

²⁶ “The Paris Agreement.” UNFCCC. Accessed November 8, 2019. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

step up action in six areas: energy transition, climate finance and carbon pricing, industry transition, nature-based solutions, cities and local action, and resilience.”²⁷

To conclude the United Nations must work to pursue the goal of not letting the world hit 2 degrees. It is a priority that the world take drastic actions that can cut our emissions immensely. The world as we have seen has tried in the past

A. Actions already taken to resolve issues

The sharing economy is propelled by awareness of environmental issues and by a general interest in reducing carbon footprints. Consumption is ever-increasing in the twenty-first century, but the sharing economy is a way of combating this. Indeed, the sharing economy promotes greener consumption by recirculating used and idle social resources such as cars and houses. Furthermore, sharing economy platforms like Uber, Airbnb, and Ebay are becoming more popular, thus increasing their greenhouse gas abatement effects. But there are also doubts about the sharing economy’s impacts on the environment, since most companies involved in this new area are highly privatized and profit-oriented. Therefore, the sharing economy is still a controversial method to mitigating climate change.

Furthermore, to promote renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, governments around the world fund programs by reducing taxes or granting loans to renewable energy companies in an effort to get them to build more renewable energy infrastructure. The use of energy subsidies is effective in keeping energy prices low for consumers and revenue rates high for producers if the state has power in the electricity market. It is worth noting that some parts of the world are better suited for different types of renewable energy. For example, Iceland is very thermal so, geothermal energy is best suited there. In places it is very windy windmills

²⁷ “UN 2019 Climate Summit.” UCLG. Accessed November 8, 2019. <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/events/un-2019-climate-summit>.

are effective, but they can be quite costly if there is not a lot wind because the batteries can only hold energy for around a day. Likewise, Saudi Arabia is best suited for solar because of the intense heat from the sun.

B. Country-specific policies

Most previous environmental policies in Germany are encompassed in national laws, government programmes, EU regulations and international agreements.²⁸ In 2019 the German government released its very first climate major law.²⁹ Minister for the Environment Svenja Schulze said Germany's climate action needs to become "more binding, so that we actually implement what we have committed to internationally." The minister thus aimed to draft the law in such a way that the targets would be reached in a plannable, reliable, and fair way. This law is built upon the Paris Agreement's target to limit planetary warmth to well below 2 degrees Celsius and possibly to 1.5 degrees Celsius. To ensure this happens, the law stipulates that annual greenhouse gas emissions stay below a target amount. If Germany fails to accomplish stay within this limit, the federal government can buy emission allocations from other countries in help.³⁰

On other note, Japan has released its new long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with business innovation. This long term strategy requires Japanese private companies to respond to the international climate program "Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)" more actively. New Zealand has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2020 and generates 80% of it's

²⁸ <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/germanys-climate-action-law-begins-take-shape>

²⁹ "German Parliament Approves Climate Protection Law." U.S. News & World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2019-11-15/german-parliament-enshrines-climate-protection-in-law>.

³⁰

energy from renewables. They have also committed to plant 1 billion trees by 2028³¹. France specifically has been fighting climate change by building off shore windfarms and moving government vehicles to electric.

On the other hand some countries have been sliding back from meeting their goals. Russia has done away with Climate Change emissions goals and is one the largest polluters in the world³². Australia which has failed to put forth a plan to meet any climate targets continues to be ravaged by fires and has been overall very lackluster³³. The country's also exports large amount and is mostly run on fossil fuels.

C. Relevant events leading up to the focus of the committee

Drafted in 2015, The Paris Agreement was the first ever of its type. The agreement brought together all countries in order to combat climate change and adjust to its effects. The main goal of the agreement is to keep global temperatures from rising 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to possibly go even further and to prevent temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius, altogether. One of the main focuses of the agreement is to assist developing in achieving these goals, as most lack the resources to fully achieve these climate goals.³⁴

Global warming has been one of the most discussed climate change issues in recent years. Although there are still people holding doubts against it, evidence is clear that global warming is affecting mostly caused by human activities. Scientists have been closely measuring

³¹ Laurel Wamsley, "New Zealand Commits To Being Carbon Neutral By 2050 - With A Big Loophole," NPR (NPR, November 7, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/07/777259573/new-zealand-commits-to-being-carbon-neutral-by-2050-with-a-big-loophole>.

³² Natasha Doff, "Russia Slashes Climate Change Goals," Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg), accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-07/russia-scrap-sets-climate-change-goals-for-businesses>.

³³ Sarah Martin, "Australia Ranked Worst of 57 Countries on Climate Change Policy," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, December 11, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/dec/11/australia-ranked-worst-of-57-countries-on-climate-change-policy>.

³⁴ "The Paris Agreement." UNFCCC. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

carbon dioxide levels since the 1950s, and their results show that the current atmospheric carbon dioxide level is the highest it has ever been.³⁵ At the same time, many people are suffering from the consequences brought about by global warming. Disasters like drought, wildfires, and flood risk related to rising sea level are causing problems in every part of the globe.

D. Current Issues

Climate refugees refer to those who are driven out of their homes by the effects of Climate Change.³⁶ In fact, climate refugees have become more pervasive in the modern world. According to World Bank Report in 2018, by 2050, approximately 143 million people in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia alone will migrate due to factors relating to climate change.³⁷ The majority of the climate refugees relocate within their countries. However, to those who have no choice but only migrate to other countries, situations get complicated.

Though the United Nations Refugee Agency has been dedicating itself to dealing with the recent influx of climate refugees, their achievements do not come without battles. Indeed, many places that accept refugees displaced by persecution do not accept refugees displaced by Climate Change. And resources for “typical” refugees are usually not available to them. At the same time, the nationalist, anti-immigrant, and xenophobic atmosphere around the world (mostly in Europe and U.S.) has made climate refugee protection even harder.³⁸ To solve this entirely new issue, it not only requires a series of legal framework to provide more feasible procedures in

³⁵ "Climate Science." Union of Concerned Scientists. <https://www.ucsusa.org/climate/science>

³⁶ Andrews, Eve. "What Is a 'climate Refugee' and How Many Are There?" Grist. June 20, 2019. <https://grist.org/article/climate-refugee-number-definition/>.

³⁷ Andrews, Eve

³⁸ McDonnell, Tim. "The Refugees The World Barely Pays Attention To." NPR. June 20, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/20/621782275/the-refugees-that-the-world-barely-pays-attention-to>.

settling those migrants, but also joint efforts of international society on mitigating climate change.³⁹

Moreover, wildfires in the Amazon Rainforest is common during the summer time due to dry weather. In August 2019, however, the number of wildfires in the Amazon Rainforest increased drastically.* The cause of this is thought to be linked to human activities such as clearing the land for pasture, farming use, and logging. This increase in the number of wildfires raises concerns among environmentalists; particularly because the Amazon Rainforest is the largest rainforest on Earth. In fact, the Amazon Rainforest is so massive that it absorbs 20% of Earth's carbon outputs, which is a critical element in combating climate change.⁴⁰

*2019 data up to October 7, 2019

Source: INPE

³⁹ Mcdonnell, Tim

⁴⁰ Ortiz, Jorge L. "The Amazon Hasn't Stopped Burning. There Were 19,925 Fire Outbreaks Last Month, and 'more Fires' Are in the Future." USA Today. October 18, 2019.
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/10/18/amazon-rainforest-still-burning-more-fires-future/4011238002/>.

During the summer of 2019, President of Brazil Jair Messias Bolsonaro was under pressure from both domestic and international protests regarding the wildfires. In response, President Bolsonaro ordered a 60-day ban on setting fires to clear land in the Amazon in late August.⁴¹ However, this does not mark the end of the deforestation of the Amazon rainforests. It is important to note that the surge in the number of wildfires in the Amazon has been associated with the approval from president Jair Messias Bolsonaro on logging and burning for economic use by indigenous people. Many people worry that without pressure from its international Partners, Brazil may continue to destroy one of the Earth's most treasured assets.

Opinions on the relationships between economic development and protecting the environment vary. Those who assume that the protection of the environment can not coexist with economic growth adopt solutions like work time reduction (WTR), which is especially common in European Countries⁴². In the United States, however, the appearance of Green New Deal indicates the public's desire to balance both economic growth and Climate Change mitigation. Furthermore, there is consensus that unregulated economic development takes a heavy toll on the environment. The development of the Bakkan Shale brought fracking to North Dakota brought millions of jobs and the state has seen the lowest unemployment in the country⁴³.

⁴¹ Hughes, Roland. "Amazon Fires: What's the Latest in Brazil?" BBC News. BBC, October 12, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49971563>.

⁴² Coote, Anna, and Aurélie Maréchal. "When Time Isn't Money: The Case for Working Time Reduction." Green European Journal, May 17, 2018. <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/when-time-isnt-money-the-case-for-working-time-reduction/>.

⁴³ "How Many Jobs Has the Oil and Natural Gas Industry Created?" Energy API. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.api.org/oil-and-natural-gas/energy-primers/hydraulic-fracturing/how-many-jobs-has-the-oil-and-natural-gas-industry-created>.

Current Positions

1. Major players: United States, Russia, Germany, Nigeria, France, Austria, Italy, Russia, UK, India, China, Kenya, Costa Rica
2. Bloc positions EU, regional cooperation
3. What other organizations are currently working on and who is involved
4. Non government organization Climate Reality Project, UNIPCC

Resolution

- a. How to transition away from carbon emissions/toward green energy
- b. How to fund the solutions to climate change
- c. Who sets regulations and who follows them
- d. Countries' incentives to abate climate change
- e. Recommend regulations for multinational corporations

Questions to Consider

1. How do we balance economic development and Climate Change abatement in developing countries?
2. How do you change the minds of people to care about Climate Change?
3. Which institutions, policies, and methods would need to be changed both inside and outside of the United States to ensure Climate Change abatement goals are met?

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