Hilton 2021

ECOSOC

Committee Overview

Unethical Practices in the Green Energy Transition

Addressing Codeine Addiction In Africa

Addressing Famine in the Middle East and North Africa

Committee Description

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate write at least one position paper on a topic, as doing so will be necessary to be considered for an award.

All delegates are expected to come to the day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As the Economic and Social Council, one of the principal organs of the UN, we are responsible for creating solutions promoting sustainable economic and social progress. Above all, remember that Model UN is not a competition, so get to researching and try to have a little fun!

Chairs

Jenny Li | jennyznli@gmail.com

Hello delegates! My name is Jenny Li, and I'm a senior at Pittsford Mendon High School. This is my third time chairing, and I've done Model UN since freshman year. Aside from Model UN, I like making art, playing violin and piano, and practicing Tae Kwon Do. We're very excited to meet you all, and feel free to contact us with any questions!

David Xie | davidxie04@gmail.com

Hey! My name's David Xie, and I'm a Senior at Pittsford Mendon High School. I've been doing Model UN since 9th grade, but this is my first time chairing. Outside of Model UN, I'm winning sectionals with the Pittsford Swim Team, playing violin, or hanging out with friends. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions, and I can't wait to make my last year of Model UN a fun one!

Unethical Practices in the Green Energy Transition

Caused by unsustainable energy consumption, climate change remains one of the most serious threats to life on Earth. In recent years, massive efforts have been put into the green energy transition to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. As certain Western economies aim to address the climate crisis, the need for raw materials to create those green technologies increases; resources such as copper, lithium, and cobalt are mined from developing countries. Without regulations in place to ensure the integrity of green energy supply chains, resources are obtained at the expense of surrounding communities.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Battery Alliance, the demand for cobalt in batteries will quadruple by 2030 as the need for green technologies such as electric cars, computers, and cell phones increase. Currently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) supplies over 70% of the world's cobalt. However, child labor, fatal accidents, and conflicts between artisanal miners and the security of large firms are common in the DRC, as well as in other mines that supply minerals for green technology around the world.

Corruption in the green energy transition also has negative consequences for indigenous people and ethnic minorities least responsible for climate change. Toxic wastes resulting from mining are often dumped into the surrounding environment, harming the native communities living there. Another byproduct of the green energy transition is the toxic waste produced from manufacturing newer technologies such as solar panels. Often, this e-waste is sent to Asian or African countries' processing sites, causing toxic pollution that in turn, contributes to environmental and public health issues for the surrounding communities.

Additionally, mining for metals in remote and untouched places negatively affects the wildlife biodiversity there; if mitigating climate change is the ultimate goal, existing wildlife must remain protected along the way. In tackling the issue of unsustainable green energy development, delegates of ECOSOC must determine how to source resources needed for newer technologies ethically and sustainably.

What actions must be taken to ensure the transparency and visibility of mining supply chains? What can the UN do to ensure that economies of working people are not disrupted in the process? How can the UN ensure that actions taken are acted upon without infringing on national sovereignty?

Sources:

Foreign Policy: Green Energy's Dirty Side Effects
https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/18/green-energy-dirty-side-effects-renewable-transition-climate-change-cobalt-mining-human-rights-inequality/

Amnesty International: Corruption and Child Labor Have No Place in the Energy Transition
https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/corruption-and-child-labour-have-no-place-in-the-energy-transition/

Council on Foreign Relations: Why Cobalt Mining in the DRC Needs Urgent Attention
https://www.cfr.org/blog/why-cobalt-mining-drc-needs-urgent-attention

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Addressing Codeine Addiction In Africa

As the world continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries in Africa such as Zimbabwe and Nigeria are suffering from another epidemic: the Codeine cough syrup addiction that is currently ravaging through the youth of the population. The cough syrup, commonly under the brands Broncleer or Emozlyn, contains Codeine, an opioid that is highly addictive and can lead to respiratory failure and permanent damage to the brain, heart, and liver. Despite this, over 50% of the country's youth have fallen victim to the cycle of cough syrup dependency, and little is being done to help addicts recover and prevent the illegal import of the drug.

Every day, more than 10 million bottles of cough syrup are sold on the black market and consumed by the masses. The root cause of this alarming number is idleness. In Zimbabwe, the economic state of the country is still struggling to recover from the four-decade rule of dictator Robert Mugabe. With the economy in ruin, 90% of the population is without formal employment, and the vast majority of students are unable to afford college. Another major reason for the extremely high rate of consumption is the cost and accessibility. In the streets of Zimbabwe, bottles can be sold for as little as $3 and be found on every corner store, as common as Coca-Cola. With these factors in place, there is an entire generation to lose if the government does not step up.

Moreover, the government has made little effort to help addicts recover from their addiction. Addicts are considered criminals and are treated as such through the legal system, faced with long prison sentences and no way to receive proper treatment. There have been NGOs that have attempted to implement proper treatment, but due to the high cost of proper psychiatric reform and the sheer amount of youth in need, it would be years before any meaningful change is implemented. Considering the large demographic that is affected by the issue, the UN should take the necessary actions as soon as possible.

What measures can the UN take to help in stopping the import of illegal drugs into Africa? How can the UN help support NGOs in their effort in improving rehabilitation conditions? In what ways can the African government address the root problems of idleness in the youth?

Sources:

This is Africa: Politics and Society Codeine syrup addiction is an opioid epidemic that is sweeping the African continent
https://thisisafrica.me/politics-and-society/codeine-addiction-opioid-epidemic-sweeping-africa/

VICE: Zimbabwe's Codeine Cough Syrup Epidemic
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1yUKfvngRQ&ab_channel=VICE

Addressing Famine in the Middle East and North Africa

In the last couple of years, fear of famine has taken the front seat in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political strife, nearly 30 million people are facing emergency levels of acute hunger, and as the planting seasons of these countries are approaching, solutions to the food shortages must be found quickly.

MENA countries are among the world's largest importers of food, depending on imports for over half of their needs. These countries are the most water-stressed regions in the world, with massive subsidies as MENA countries pursue self-sufficiency in cereal grains production rather than focusing on sustainability, given the region's water scarcity. However, this reliance became a major issue when countries began closing their borders in order to contain the spread of COVID-19, leaving hundreds of millions of people in a potential famine. Closed borders have also left thousands stranded, as almost all flights are cancelled. In addition to the restricted trade, COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on the economies of MENA countries. In Lebanon and Yemen, 70% of the population are informally employed, meaning that their source of income is much more volatile in the face of a crisis, and in context of the COVID-19 crisis, the restrictions and confinement measures have put an even bigger strain on the activity of informal workers.

However, COVID-19 is just a single factor in the very widespread issue of famine. MENA also faces conflicts in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, as sustained political protests have spiked the price of food as the conflict continues to escalate. The wars and conflicts have killed thousands and displaced millions of others, and without the support of the UN, millions will continue to suffer. As the planting seasons for MENA countries approach, there is hope for a solution in solving the famine, but record high temperatures and locust outbreaks have also decimated the yield of crops, further straining the food supply in "hunger hotspots."

While the UN is well aware of the crisis at hand and attempts have been made to alleviate some of the suffering, the amount of financial support needed to properly address the issues at hand has increased substantially. Considering the large humanitarian crisis at hand and the limited time window, the UN should prioritize this issue and address it in a timely manner.

In addition to monetary support, how else can the UN help prevent the famine in MENA countries? Should the governments of MENA countries be held responsible for the crisis? What systems should be implemented to prevent another famine in the future?

Sources:

Doctors of the World: Famine Threatens Millions Across Africa and the Middle East
https://doctorsoftheworld.org/blog/famine-threatens-millions-across-africa-and-the-middle-east/

Brookings: Middle East food security amid the COVID-19 pandemic
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/07/14/middle-east-food-security-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/#cancel

UN: UN agencies call for urgent action to avert famine risk in 20 'hunger hotspots'
https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088022