

# UNEP 2022 Chair Letter

UNEP- United Nations Environmental Program

## *Committee overview*

*The effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on the environment*

*Soil degradation in South Asia*

*Loss of biodiversity in Indonesia*

*Improper disposal of chemical and municipal wastes in developing countries*

### **Committee description:**

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. In order to be eligible for an award, every delegate must write at least one position paper which must be emailed to the chairs two days prior to the start of the committee. Additionally, all delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As UNEP, this committee will discuss and focus on issues that impact the environment and find solutions as a global community that satisfy our mission of creating a green future for all. Just remember that Model UN is a time for fun as well as business. The best advice we can give is to have fun and don't sweat the small stuff, it will all work out.

### **About Us:**

Austin DeLorme

Hi delegates! My name is Austin DeLorme and I am a junior at Hilton High School. I am so honored to be chairing for the 1st time in my fourth year of Model UN! Outside of committee I am an Officer of my class student council, a member of debate club and a member of international club along with many other activities outside school. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to email Vinay or me for help. That's what we're here for!

Email: [24adelorme@ga.hiltoncsd.net](mailto:24adelorme@ga.hiltoncsd.net)

Vinay Pendri

I am a senior at Pittsford Mendon High School, this is my fourth year in MUN, and I am super excited to be chairing my all-time favorite committee! I enjoy playing the violin, participating in my school's MasterMinds team, and watching Netflix. Feel free to shoot me any emails with questions or concerns, and be prepared to have a good time in committee!

Email: [v2pendri@gmail.com](mailto:v2pendri@gmail.com)

**Topic one: The effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on the environment**

Ukraine is a nation with millions of acres of farmland, therefore it comes as no surprise that the negative impacts of the war on agriculture, wildlife and citizens are already being felt. This along with targeted airstrikes and attacks on factories and industry makes the situation even more dire.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Russia has made targeted efforts to damage as much infrastructure as possible in the hopes of crippling the nation's ability to function during war time. This though has come with a grave environmental cost, destroying the nation's production of fertilizers and energy, which has emitted toxins into the air, water and land of Ukraine. One such instance of this is the destruction of an ammonia plant in eastern Ukraine which forced people to stay indoors for days because of the toxic gas they risk inhaling by venturing outdoors.



In Ukraine, the fear of nuclear collapse from within is growing as Russians target nuclear facilities. One such facility was Zaporizhzhia, where Ukraine came close to nuclear disaster when Russian troops fired heavy artillery at the facility which produces 25 percent of Ukraine's energy. Nuclear incidents have been seen in the past, such as in Japan when a nuclear facility suffered damage due to the 2011 tsunami. Although there were few deaths caused by the incident, over 100,000,000 people were evacuated from the surrounding area, and subsequently many were left homeless. The international community needs to take steps so that incidents like this are avoided during conflict, so that people still have the security of a stable and sustainable environment.

According to the United Nations Environmental Program director, "The mapping and initial screening of environmental hazards only serves to confirm that war is quite literally toxic." The stress on the environment and people of Ukraine is unprecedented. While the war doesn't look like it will be ending soon, environmental can be implemented now.

*What solutions can UNEP use to stop or mitigate the negative impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war on the environment? What can be done to protect farmers and business owners whose property and fields are negatively impacted by war? How can UNEP protect the environment during conflicts and war in the future? What can UNEP do to ensure security of critical nuclear facilities?*

*Resources:*

***The pollution from Russia's war will poison Ukraine for decades***

<https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/6/2/23143250/ukraine-russia-war-pollution-emissions-environment>

*Video analysis reveals Russian attack on Ukrainian nuclear plant veered near disaster*

<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/11/1085427380/ukraine-nuclear-power-plant-zaporizhzhia>

*UN warns of toxic environmental legacy for Ukraine, region*

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-warns-toxic-environmental-legacy-ukraine-region>

*Picture link:*

<https://www.grid.news/story/climate/2022/03/15/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-shows-the-true-cost-of-fossil-fuels/>

## Topic two: Soil degradation in south asia

With tens of millions of hectares of land in south asia, the issue of soil degradation has been a challenge the region has faced for decades. Now more than ever with a rapidly growing population, the issue of soil degradation has been expanded to almost the whole of the south asian region. Areas such as India, Myanmar and Pakistan have borne the brunt of the damage thus far and continue to to this day.

With the south asian region reaching a population of almost 2 billion people, the damage soil degradation is having on the environment is having immediate effects on people in the region. As of 2021, some reports suggest that people who lived in rural areas, such as farmers, are now migrating to urban population centers to earn money and provide for their families. This change in job fields because of soil degradation not only negatively impacts other parts of the environment because of more densely populated urban centers, but also poses a new threat of geographical and tribal conflict between peoples who are moving and competing for jobs.

Not only is soil degradation causing environmental issues by destroying agricultural production requirements by not maintaining irrigation, or cultivation techniques, but the economic and political ramifications of not acting are creating risks by the day for South Asian communities. With more than half of the land in India that is degraded being farmland, any more substantial damage to the environment or land could cause the next regional catastrophe.

This is why as UNEP, a common solution needs to be found so that agriculture can flourish and continue being sustainable for all south asian peoples. This comes with another set of challenges as the problem of maintaining sustainable food sources comes into play while rehabilitating natural agricultural lands.

*What solutions can UNEP implement to help slow soil degradation in south asia? How do we support local governments in their mission to preserve and sustain agricultural land? How do we respect national sovereignty while taking quick decisive action? How can UNEP create more sustainable food supplies while fighting soil degradation?*

*Resources:*

***Efforts on to stem land degradation***

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2054397/efforts-stem-land-degradation>

***Land degradation in South Asia***



<http://www.sacep.org/pdf/News-Letter/Top-Stories/2016/March/2016-03-30/Land-Degradation-in-South-Asia.pdf>

***Land degradation in India hurts farmers and forest dwellers the most***

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/environment/land-degradation-in-india-hurts-farmers-and-forest-dwellers-the-most-78701>

*Picture:*

<https://www.pbl.nl/en/news/2017/large-areas-around-the-world-are-under-pressure-from-land-degradation>

## Improper Disposal of Chemical and Municipal Wastes in Developing Countries

As third world nations across the world continue to develop their economies and grow their populations, chemical wastes produced as a result have sharply increased. Rapid industrial growth and a struggle to industrialize has created a critical gap in environmental safety regulation and governmental enforcement of proper waste disposal laws.

Industrial waste and municipal wastes are the main sources of chemical waste in most developing countries. Furthermore, cheap business practices like chemical waste disposal perpetuate poor environmental waste management habits that can severely impair countries' capacities for growth in the future. Although companies in sectors such as clothing and chemical manufacturing can be to blame, some governments are just as much to blame for waste in the environment. Poor regulation, bribed government officials, and a general lack of concern for environmental resources has caused developing countries' governments to fall behind in environmental regulation.



For instance, the Philippines government allowed the continued dumping of chemical and municipal wastes in landfills and civilian areas with no accurate system of recording waste disposal or removal of waste. As a result, shantytowns and waste scavenging people began to inhabit these areas due to poverty. This led to the death of 212 people when a deluge caused trash to collapse on homes.

In addition, chemical waste and municipal waste cause the buildup of trash in green spaces and major waterways. Chemicals mainly pervade waterways but can also infiltrate well water, causing cancers, illnesses, and poisonings among low-income groups with little access to adequate medical care. Another result of chemical waste water pollution is the impact on the health of local ecosystems. Animals—mainly marine life in the majority of developing countries—are heavily impacted by plastics, microplastics, and chemical waste in water, and serve as another conduit for wastes to find themselves back into civilian populations and in a position to cause severe health issues.

Without severe and immediate action, developing countries will be in a critical position where improper management of wastes have severely debilitated their populations, polluted essential natural resources, and stunted economic growth.

*How can the UN treat ill people and prevent further spreading of polluted resources? What ways can outside groups like NGOs spread awareness to low-income families about the importance of proper waste disposal? How can the governments of developing countries use limited resources to enforce necessary environmental protection laws?*

*Resources:*

***Waste Mismanagement in Developing Countries: A Review of Global Issues***

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6466021/>

***Garbage Challenges in Developing Countries***

<https://www.climate-policy-watcher.org/waste-management/garbage-challenges-in-developing-countries.html>

***How to Regulate Our Waste-Full World***

<https://www.iisd.org/articles/deep-dive/how-regulate-our-waste-full-world>

*Picture:*

<https://assets.change.org/photos/0/kx/pv/bfkXpvtYNeGhmkF-1600x900-noPad.jpg?1533814866>

## Loss of Biodiversity in Indonesia

An estimated 40 million Indonesians rely on biodiversity to fulfill their daily needs. Especially in ecosystems such as wetlands, mangrove forests, and coral reefs, local fisherman and low-income families find subsistence in the environment. This lifestyle is threatened by the ongoing issue of biodiversity loss in Indonesia.

Combined, Indonesia's thousands of islands and archipelagos have over 200 species in danger of extinction -and many hundreds highly threatened. In addition, only 275 mangrove forests remain in good condition and the rate of damage to coral reefs is 40% per year. These statistics paint a dangerous picture where Indonesia's environmental wellbeing is rapidly diminishing.

The main perpetrators of this issue are deforestation, landscape changes, overexploitation, alien species, and climate change. Particularly, in the case of deforestation, rainforest and jungle habitats are damaged by local farmers and large industrial groups alike. Furthermore, similar to the situation in many developing nations, government action is lacking and inefficient. For instance, when it comes to direct exploitation and trafficking of endangered wildlife, there are few programmes that are effectively combating the issue and even fewer programmes that seek to disincentivize the trade for Indonesian citizens.

Additionally, the mismanagement of forests by the government has allowed illegal logging and wildlife trafficking to flourish with little to no consequences. The lack of a comprehensive framework that monitors land and marine resources proves a continuing issue for the Indonesian government. The limited resources and aid received externally also plays a role in the capabilities of the Indonesian government to monitor such illicit activities.

As the numerous species disappear off the face of the planet due to human causes, it is of the utmost urgency that the loss of biodiversity in Indonesia is addressed for the continued wellbeing of its environment and its people.

*How can the UN aid the Indonesian government in monitoring illicit activities without infringing on national sovereignty? What methods can the Indonesian government employ to prevent citizen involvement in harmful or illicit activities? How should the UN aid Indonesia in combating larger causes of biodiversity loss like global warming and sea level rises?*

*Resources:*



*Indonesia - Main Details*

<https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=id>

*Deforestation in Indonesia: Palm Oil, Biodiversity Loss, and Global Warming*

<https://www.projectplanetid.com/post/deforestation-in-indonesia>

*Threats to the sustainability of biodiversity in Indonesia by the utilization of forest areas for national strategic projects: A normative review*

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/886/1/012071/pdf>

*Picture:*

<https://insideclimatenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GettyImages-623247602-scaled.jpg>