



## **Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN 2010) United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Background Guide**

Honorable delegates,

It's with great pleasure we welcome you to the United Nations Environmental Programme in the Montessori Model United Nations 2010.

You will find a brief description of the history and functions of the U.N. Environmental Programme. These documents may help you understand the scope and breadth of what the Environmental Programme can and cannot do. Furthermore, there is some general information on the two agenda topics which you will be researching for the upcoming MMUN conference in 2010.

Please remember, the primary purpose of all the information provided is to "strike your imagination". You will spend most of your time researching and preparing your topics, particularly related to your country. Finally, the third part of this work will be writing the position paper, familiarizing yourself with committee rules and procedures, and participating in the United Nations Environmental Program Committee in New York.

We look forward to meeting you in February.

Montessori Model United Nations 2010 Secretariat

## The Birth of the United Nations



The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is remembered as a period of change and turmoil. After the First World War many people believed that it was necessary to create a world organization capable of keeping peace and preventing the horrors of war. The League of Nations was founded immediately, consisting of 42 countries, 58 at its largest point. Its goal was to preserve peace by solving international conflicts peacefully and promoting cooperation between nations in economic and international affairs. However, the Second World War unfolded and proved that the League had not accomplished its goal.

In 1944 representatives of China, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Russian Federation (In that moment USSR) meeting at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, prepared a blueprint for a new and stronger international organization. Towards the end of the war, representatives of 51 countries gathered in San Francisco in 1945 to prepare the final text that would lay the foundations of international cooperation. Most of the ideals and structure of this new organization were the same as the League's. The difference was that now, the organization had the support of the most powerful countries of the world. The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, when the UN Charter had been ratified by a majority of the original 51 Member States. The purpose of the United Nations is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well being of all people. It affords the opportunity for countries to balance global interdependence and national interests while addressing international problems. Currently, 192 countries are United

Nations Member States. Representatives from these nations meet in the General Assembly, which is the closest event to a world parliament. Each country, large or small, rich or poor, has a single vote.

### **About the United Nations Environmental Programme**



The **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** coordinates the United Nations environmental activities, assisting developing countries create and put into action environmental solutions and encourages sustainable development through good environmental practices. It was founded as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in June 1972 and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. UNEP also has six regional offices and various country offices.

UNEP is the authority of the United Nations system in environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its work is to coordinate the creation of environmental agreements and treaties. It also brings important issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action.

Its activities cover a large number of issues regarding the air, water and land-based ecosystems. It has played an important role in developing international environmental conventions, and promoting environmental science. The UNEP also provides information and helps create action points related to the environment. In addition, UNEP supports and coordinates projects together with environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

UNEP has aided in the development of guidelines and treaties on issues such as the international trade in potentially harmful chemicals, international air pollution, and contamination of international waterways.



### **Structure of UNEP**

UNEP's Governing Council has a total of 58 member states which serve three-year terms. These seats are assigned according to geographical regions. The Governing Council promotes guidelines for UN environmental programs and plays a diplomatic role in promoting cooperation between UN member states on environmental issues.

The UNEP secretariat consists of 890 staff members, roughly 500 of which are international staff while the remaining are hired locally. The UNEP Secretariat is the body which oversees the UNEP policies and programs. It is also responsible for the annual budget which totals around \$105 million (US).

UNEP's work is done by the following 7 Divisions:

1. Early Warning and Assessment
2. Environmental Policy Implementation
3. Technology, Industry and Economics
4. Regional Cooperation

5. Environmental Law and Conventions
6. Global Environment Facility Coordination
7. Communications and Public Information



### **Famous World projects and successes**

UNEP has sponsored the development of solar loan programs to encourage people to purchase solar PV systems. The most famous example is the solar loan program sponsored by UNEP helping 100,000 people finance solar power systems in India. Success in India's solar program has led to similar projects in other parts of developing world like Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, and Mexico.

### **UNEP Executive Director**

UNEP's current Executive Director is Achim Steiner, who succeeded previous director Klaus Topfer in 2006. Mr. Steiner is also a United Nations Under-Secretary-General working with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.



## Glacier shrinking

Glaciers are shrinking at record rates and many could disappear within decades, the U.N. Environment Program has warned the international community. The scientists measuring the health of almost 30 glaciers around the world found that ice loss reached record levels in 2006. On average, the glaciers shrank by 4.9 feet in 2006, the most recent year for which data are available. The most severe loss was recorded at Norway's Breidalblikkbrea glacier, which shrank 10.2 feet in 2006. Glaciers lost an average of about a foot of ice a year between 1980 and 1999.



At MMUN 2010

### Topic 1: The Impact of Climate Change on Economic and Social Activities

The impact of climate change has already been felt in many countries around the world. In fact, the Polar Ice cap has been shrinking steadily in the past 40 years. Every year since 1979, the North Pole Ice Cap has lost an area of ice about the size of Texas. Polar bear populations are suffering and decreasing.

In Africa, the area of the southern Sahara (called the Sahel region) has been receiving less rainfall and shorter rainy seasons. In the 1950s only 16 million people lived there, in the 2020s about 195

million will live in the Sahel grasslands. What will people do with not enough rain to grow crops and give to animals, or clean water to drink?

In addition, ocean water levels are rising up yearly. Because the Earth's rising average temperature is melting the polar caps, the polar melt water is raising ocean water levels. What is causing these higher temperatures? Scientists say that natural occurring volcanoes, dust storms and the sun's changes can affect the global temperature.

Humans are also causing the Earth to warm up. Human activity on the Earth has affected the whole world's average temperature. Our use of coal, oil and other carbon based fuels creates pollution and that pollution works as a warm blanket over the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and heating up our atmosphere. We also burn forests to create new farmland which causes smoke to rise into the air and adds to the warm blanket of pollution around the Earth. In addition, we log forests for furniture, houses and fuel for stoves. But when we log the forests, the trees, (which help cool the planet and use carbon dioxide) aren't there to do their work of keeping the Earth cooler.

It is our work to find solutions to the limit the impact of climate change on national and international economic and social activities.

### **What is the economy?**

Anything that is created and traded, bought, or sold. Also any service that is bought, traded or sold is an economic activity. Every time you go to the supermarket, and buy something, this money goes to someone. Then this money is used to buy more products and produce more food and items that are sold in supermarkets again.

### **What economic activities will be impacted by the climate change?**

In smaller island nations, rising water levels may cause people to build houses and industry on higher ground, away from the beach. In countries with winter sports industries it may mean that the ski slopes will have less time in winter to ski, and have to change their activities to warmer weather sports. In countries with water shortages or in arid climates, it may mean your crop growing season is shorter because of rising temperatures and shorter rainy seasons. How does your country feed its population on less food, and less water? How will fishing communities be impacted in your

country? With rising ocean temperatures, the fish population often declines or moves to colder waters. Will that impact your nation's food supply?

**Consider this questions in the preparation to MMUN 2010:**

1. What are the main challenges in your country for your people in relation to climate change?
2. How does your government propose to lessen the impact of climate change on the economic activity of your country?
3. Does your country have the tools, resources, trained people, and time to deal with these changes?
4. What help does your country need? What resources does your country have already?
5. What aid and resources can your country provide for other countries which need help to deal with this crisis?
6. What technologies can we use to help slow and hopefully reverse the global warming?



## **Topic 2: The Efficient and Sustainable use of Water and Land**

### **What does “sustainable use” mean?**

It means that the environment is capable of existing continually with minimal harmful effect for future generations to use.

### **What does efficient mean?**

It means that something is being used producing a minimum of waste or unnecessary expense.

When humans are using land and water in efficient and sustainable ways, the environment is impacted very little. However, in the past 150 years of human development, we have been increasing our ability to produce more goods, more cheaply, for more people. We have been able to send humans to the moon. We have created gasoline engine cars, trucks, motorcycles, and scooters to get us and our products where we want to go. We have been able to control the land to grow more food, and control the water to produce more food and energy. We have controlled the use of nuclear power for energy production. We have created huge cities that allow most people to live away from farms and countryside. The thing we haven't done so well in the past 150 years is live in a sustainable way without poisoning our land, water and air. We have lots of technology but we don't use and reuse things so efficiently. The end result is the Earth has 6.8 billion humans on it, but we can not continue to live this way on the planet. There is a limited amount of gas, coal, metals, plastics, and all the materials that make modern life possible right now. These materials will run out. The only question is, what are we going to do about this problem?

### **Consider these questions when preparing for MMUN 2010:**

1. How can we reduce the amount of water we all use in our daily lives?
2. Can we use water in a more sustainable way?
3. How is our water used in your country today? Do we use a lot or a little?
4. Can we keep our fresh drinking water cleaner, and less polluted ?
5. How is land used now in your country?
6. Can we use the land in a more efficient way? Can we use it in a more sustainable way?

7. Can we keep more land as natural parks, green farms, and nature preserves in my country?
8. How can we preserve the beauty and health of the earth for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren and still have prosperity in the future?
9. What can we teach other countries about our positive "green" ideas?
10. What could my country do better in sustainable use of land and water resources?
11. Does my country support environmental policies and solutions to protect the water and land?
12. Does my country have statements on the official government website about sustainable land and water use?

### **In depth questions to help you prepare for the UNEP committee**

1. What is the Kyoto Protocol?
2. Did your country sign the Kyoto Protocol?
3. What did your country promise to do in reference to the Kyoto Protocol?
4. Did your country sign any other international agreement that relate to the environment, global warming and sustainable land and water use?
5. Did your government pass laws to improve land or water sustainability?
6. Follow your country's progress during the Copenhagen Global Climate Summit Meeting in December 2009.
7. Learn whether your country will support the upcoming Copenhagen Agreements or oppose them.
8. If your country has opposed Kyoto or other international environmental or global warming treaties, find out why.

## References for the UNEP Committee

The United Nations Environment Programme website:

<http://www.unep.org/>

Unite for Climate Kids website and online community:

<http://my.uniteforclimate.org>

United Nations Climate Change Conference –Copenhagen 2009:

<http://en.cop15.dk/news>

The CIA World Fact book to learn about your MMUN country:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-fact>

The U.N. website for general U.N. information:

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

The U.N. website for children:

<http://www.un.org/works/goingon/goinghome.html>

The UN Cyberschool Bus

<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/>