

# CENMUN 2019



# UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

The threat posed to the environment due to various traditions and cultural practices

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations Environment Programme is an agency of the United Nations. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator, and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. Its main purpose is to coordinate environmental activities and serve as a platform for establishing fundamental policies and practices for the protection and sustenance of the environment. The agency's headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. The UNEP's mission and work covers a variety of areas including the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and environmental guidance among many other agendas.

The creation of UNEP was recommended at the UN Conference on Human Environment in Sweden in 1972. In December of the same year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2997 which established the UNEP and tasked the agency with monitoring the environmental issues of the United Nations. The Governing Council of UNEP was to "promote international cooperation in the field of the environment and to recommend, as appropriate, policies to this end, and to provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the UN system" In specific, UNEP's work consists of:

- Assessing global, regional, and national environmental conditions and trends
- Developing international and national environmental institutes
- Strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment

Upon the adoption of resolution 2997, the UNEP was mandated to promote international and regional environmental cooperation, help in establishing environmental policy, highlight global and regional problems, facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge, assist developing Member States in matters regarding the environment, and approve the annual program on the allocation of the UNEP's main source of funding the Environment Fund.

UNEP depends on cooperation amongst Member States and with NGOs and external agencies. The mandate of UNEP is implemented by raising awareness and by using environmental awareness to assist governments, the corporate sector and society to address threats to the environment. UNEP plays an instrumental role in collaborating with Member States by developing the regional framework required for environmental sustainability. On a more global scale, the agency works to develop international laws regarding the environment and is also called upon by fellow agencies of the UN to ensure that implementation of various activities is environmentally sound. UNEP has the power to establish task forces and other subsidiaries for the implementation of the agency's various environmental policies. However, any resolution that UNEP passes or the creation of a proposed body must first be approved either by the General Assembly or ECOSOC. If approval is given, the policies become the official policy of the UN itself and UNEP is then allowed to move forward with its implementation.

UNEP has multiple conventions which are overseen by separate secretariats:

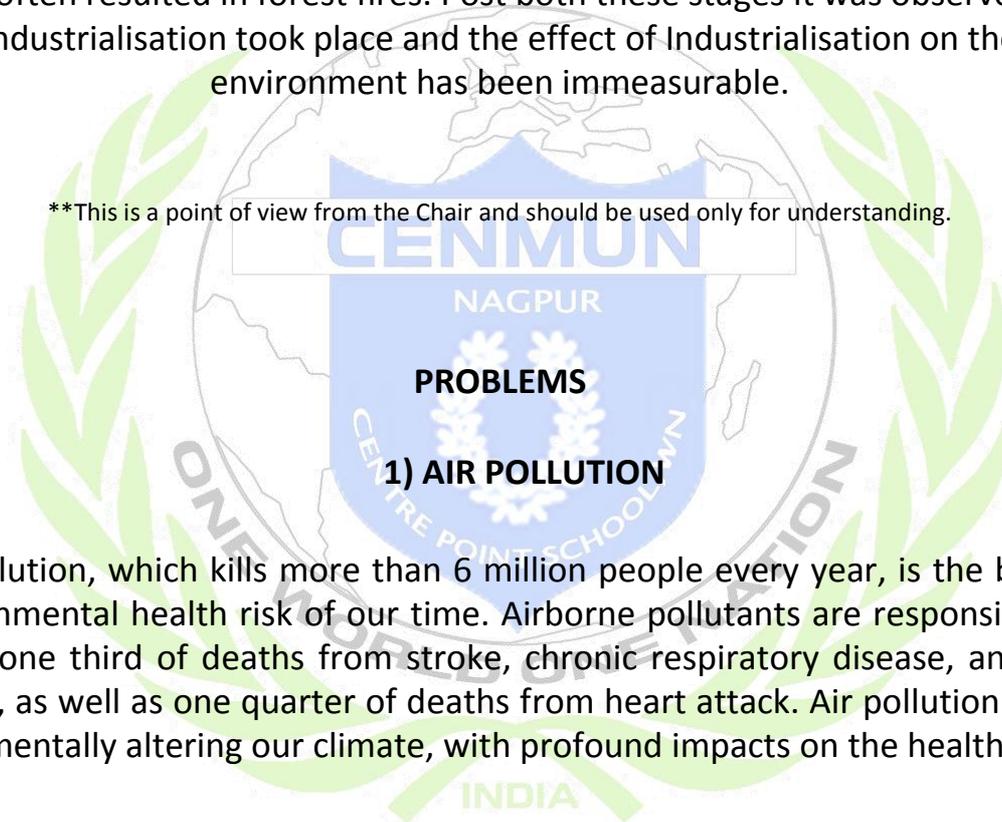
- The Convention on Biological Diversity
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- The Minamata Convention on Mercury
- The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
- The Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol
- The Convention on Migratory Species
- The Carpathian Convention
- The Bamako Convention
- The Tehran Convention

# ABOUT THE AGENDA

## BACKGROUND\*\*

In the early days Hunter-gatherers were considered a significant threat to the environment due to their dependency on animals for survival. Later it was observed that instead of killing animals, humans started cultivating but they possessed a threat as one of the methods used was slash and burn agriculture which often resulted in forest fires. Post both these stages it was observed that Industrialisation took place and the effect of Industrialisation on the environment has been immeasurable.

\*\*This is a point of view from the Chair and should be used only for understanding.



Air pollution, which kills more than 6 million people every year, is the biggest environmental health risk of our time. Airborne pollutants are responsible for about one third of deaths from stroke, chronic respiratory disease, and lung cancer, as well as one quarter of deaths from heart attack. Air pollution is also fundamentally altering our climate, with profound impacts on the health of the planet.

Air pollution comes from many sources – from cookstoves and kerosene lamps to coal-fired power plants, vehicle emissions, industrial furnaces, wildfires, and sand and dust storms. The problem is most acute in urban areas, particularly in Africa and Asia. In low- and middle-income countries, 98 per cent of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants fail to meet the World Health Organization's air quality guidelines.

\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/why-does-air-matter>

## 2) ENERGY

Energy drives economies and sustains societies. Energy production and use is also the single biggest contributor to global warming. The energy sector accounts for about two-thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions attributed to human activity.

More than a billion people still lack access to electricity, while 3 billion rely on dirty fuels like charcoal and animal waste for cooking and heating

\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/energy/why-does-energy-matter>



## 3) CHEMICALS AND WASTE

Chemicals and waste are integral to our everyday life, but they also have major impacts on the environment and human health. As the world's population approaches 8 billion, the sound management of chemicals and waste is becoming ever more important.

By 2025, the world's cities will produce 2.2 billion tonnes of waste every year, more than three times the amount produced in 2009. Countries continue to address challenges linked to air, soil and water pollution and exposure to toxic chemicals under the auspices of multilateral environmental agreements. But there is still much work to be done: From 2010 to 2014, only 57 per cent of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal had provided the requested data and information. The figure was 71 per cent for the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and 51 per cent for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/why-do-chemicals-and-waste-matter>

#### 4) EXTRACTIVES

The extractive industry – oil, gas and mining – drives economic growth across the world. However, these benefits come at a cost. Greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and biodiversity loss are just some of the threats that extraction poses to human health and the environment. Extractive activities can also fuel conflicts and threaten human rights if certain safeguards are not met or if they are poorly managed.

\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/extractives/why-does-extractives-matter>

#### 5) WATER POLLUTION

Water covers more than two-thirds of the surface of our planet. Nearly 98 per cent of Earth's water is found in oceans and other saltwater bodies, while the majority of the remaining freshwater is frozen in ice sheets and glaciers.

Readily accessible freshwater – which is found in rivers, lakes, wetlands and aquifers – accounts for less than one per cent of the world's water supply. But this precious resource supports an enormous diversity of life, and is essential for human survival.

As the global population grows, so too do the demands for water – for drinking, sanitation, farming and energy production, among many other uses. At the same time, human activity and climate change are disrupting natural water cycles, putting freshwater ecosystems under pressure. Pollution, infrastructure development and resource extraction pose additional challenges. We cannot afford to be careless with this vital resource.

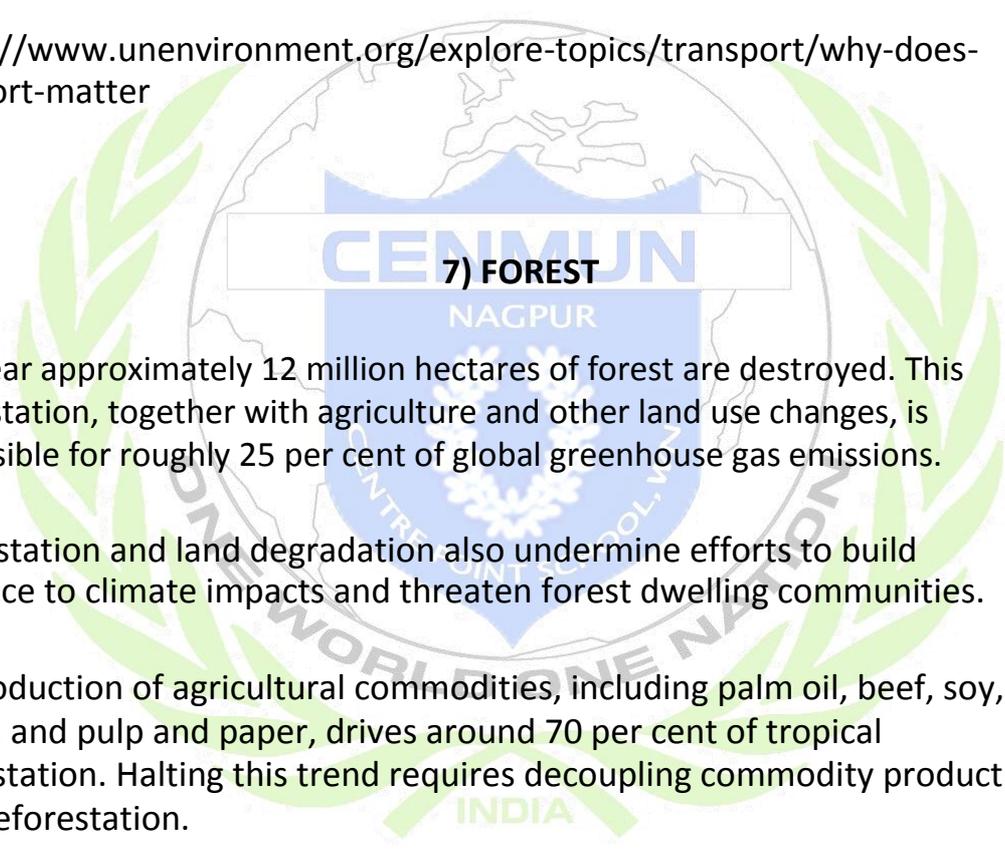
\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/water/why-does-water-matter>

## 6) TRANSPORT

Transport drives economic activity and is fundamental to human welfare, but the sector is also a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution, with significant impacts on the environment and human health.

Transport activity is increasing around the world as economies grow, which means that the sector's emissions are also on the rise. That's largely because 95 per cent of the world's transport energy still comes from fossil fuels.

\*<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/transport/why-does-transport-matter>



## 7) FOREST

Each year approximately 12 million hectares of forest are destroyed. This deforestation, together with agriculture and other land use changes, is responsible for roughly 25 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Deforestation and land degradation also undermine efforts to build resilience to climate impacts and threaten forest dwelling communities.

The production of agricultural commodities, including palm oil, beef, soy, timber, and pulp and paper, drives around 70 per cent of tropical deforestation. Halting this trend requires decoupling commodity production from deforestation.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/forests/why-do-forests-matter>

# UNDERSTANDING THE TOPIC

\*\*Traditions and Cultures has had adverse effects on the environment. Some examples for the same are listed below:

Use of Firecrackers is one such phenomenon which is present in most of the cultures across countries and has resulted in high emissions of Carbon dioxide and other harmful gases thus causing Air Pollution.

Similarly, In India it is considered holy to submerge dead body remains in the river Ganga which in turn has resulted in excess nutrient increase in Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) of water thus making it less available for the aquatic life. This also leads to water pollution

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2015/01/dead-bodies-found-floating-indian-river-201511451522850586.html>

\*\* The above-mentioned information is for better understanding of the delegates. Delegates are expected to do a detailed research on such instances in various countries and continents where cultural practices and traditions harm the environment.

In the United States People buy Natural and Artificial Christmas Trees during the festive season. Natural Christmas trees have been argued to be one of the major cause of deforestation whereas artificial trees take a lot of time to decompose and often do not decompose and are non-recyclable thus causing harm to the environment.

It is not necessary that traditions or cultural practices have negative effects on the environment. The Bishnoi community (a tribal community in India) started with the Chipkoo movement where they hugged trees and pledged to protect them. This has been a cultural practice amongst many tribal communities in India to protect or coexist in the environment they are living in. It has been observed that in these areas the wildlife has improved significantly and has also resulted in rich flora and fauna.

\*\*Individual Countries will have different traditional or Cultural practices that affects the environment. Identifying them and finding solutions for the problem at the national and the international level should be a priority for the delegates.

\*\*The above-mentioned information is only for the better understanding of the delegates.

# SOLUTIONS

- ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE
- RESOURCE EFFICIENCY
- EDUCATION
- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## SUB TOPICS

- Role of NGO'S and Pressure Groups
- Need of Technology to help shape the future of Environment
- Disasters and Conflicts effect on the Environment

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