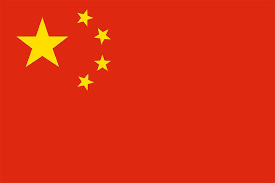
**Committee**: United Nations Environmental Programme

(UNEP)

**Country**: China

**Topic**: Addressing the Environmental Impact Of The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

**School**: British International School of Houston

**Delegate**: Faizaan Syed

**The Great Pacific Garbage Patch and its Influence on China**

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was first established in June 1972 to aid the identification and analysis of worldwide environmental issues. Not only accomplishing that, the UNEP has also strived to eradicate plastic from our planet- especially from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. First of all, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is developing exponentially; and it’s negatively impacting certain species and oceanic wildlife. It is taking the lives of over 1 million seabirds annually. Ever since being discovered by Charles Moore in 1997, it has carried on increasing in size and density. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is estimated to contain a whopping 79,000 tons of plastic. That last study was taken in 2018 by Mongabay News. The effect of so much plastic is devastating. As mentioned before, not only is it diminishing marine animal population, but also ours. On an international level, many seafood animals in our diet digest tiny pieces of plastic; they are then caught and sold in our supermarkets. We buy the plastic-infested animal, eat it, and now we’re plastic infested animals. It’s also diminishing the oceanic food chain by altering animals' lifestyles, habitats, and niches. This heavily affects China. Chinese culture is diverse and unique- it’s all across the world. One significant component of that diverse and unique culture is the food, more specifically seafood. 90% of all ocean pollution comes from 10 rivers; 6 of which are in China. A lot of the Chinese seafood diet comes from these rivers, however, since they are so polluted it’s limiting the nutrition of the Chinese population. The vast magnitude of debris often causes entanglement with the species that occupy the areas. Creatures are often strangled to death by rogue fishing nets, or suffocated by plastic bags encasing their gills because we refuse to cut down on our plastic waste. Often compared to Texas, or even Alaska, the vortex of trash has accumulated so much waste. How? Because of the Pacific gyres, a tidal clockwise rotation which interrupts ocean currents. Of course, all the plastic that gets thrown into the ocean naturally finds a current; and in our case, according to Britannica, something like California, North Equatorial, North Pacific or Kuroshio currents would trap the plastic in the West or East gyres. Since both gyres harness an immense amount of kinetic energy, plastic is often flung between both, crossing the subtropical convergence zone in the middle. This could help us develop some solutions. However, it’s more than meets the eye. Literally. Yes, images of the garbage patch do make us understand the sheer massiveness of the vortex, but all those large objects on the surface are just a fraction of the real thing. National Geographic along with their oceanographers and ecologists state that 70% of the plastic is underwater. However, that’s not all. When plastic is floating through the currents, due to wind up in the garbage patch, it undergoes a process called photodegradation. In a depressing nutshell, it causes the plastic to break down into miniature, invisible pieces. We can’t even see 80% of all the plastic with our naked eyes, and that’s just being conservative.

“China is the biggest producer and exporter of plastic products, accounting for about 30% of the world’s total, but that doesn’t mean China is a major marine plastic polluting country,” Huo Chuanlin stated; the former deputy director of China’s Ministry of Ecology and Environment. One occasion supporting that assertion is China’s involvement in UNEP. While enforcing the overall modernization programme, China has also regarded sustainable solutions to prevent pollution and has made environmental protection a basic national policy. China has promulgated various laws that encourage the preservation of our environment such as the Law on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, which is valid for the topic of the garbage patch. On January 1st 2021, China banned the use of single-use plastic straws and bags in public restaurants that are in large cities. This positively affected the state of the Garbage Patch. All the coastal countries involved in the UNEP programme are included in cleaning up our oceans in some sort of way; since many of the countries have played a part in poisoning them. China certainly has its contributions to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. China along with some various Asian countries close to the patch were massive patrons in developing the Garbage Patch in the first place and still are to this day. However, you have to recognise the fact that China is a growing nation with over 1.4 billion individuals, the most in our world. Plastic is manufactured in China but it is to supply our population with the materials and comfort that they need. If not, it used to trade with various other nations economically to do the same thing- provide for the Chinese populace. Not doing so will dissatisfy our people and our great community- that is not an option for the delegation of China. Furthermore, no matter how detrimental plastic is to our environment, it does not change the fact that the Chinese production of plastic provides jobs for 1.8 million people. It might not seem like an excessive amount, but it certainly is. Picture working your whole life for a job, everything you’ve done- school, college, university, pulling all-nighters, studying hard and then realising that your world is crumbling around you just because of a couple of words. Now picture that nearly two million times. That’s one of the things that will happen if we stop manufacturing plastic in China. Another inevitable effect that will come into action if plastic production is halted in China is a recession. If all these people get fired and lose their jobs, they will not have a source of income. They will start spending less and furtherly, no more plastic will mean fewer clients from the Western world supplying China’s economy- which will crash. Yes, that does mean that China will stop being a polluter, but plastic can be valuable to an individual. An average European citizen generates 31kg of plastic annually. That’s around 5,500 plastic bags. Furtherly, we have somewhat of an excuse. Compare the overall pollution of a small country like China used to be a huge importer of American waste, but since we have started developing so quickly we have halted the flow of plastic coming from abroad. The plastic could be divided between countries proportionate to their size and it would not take up so much space, however, all the plastic was going to China. We are a considerably-sized country, yes, but with so many people we cannot afford to accommodate such large portions of materials, recyclable or not.

With the sole purpose of acknowledging this colossal issue, the delegation of China proposes that the various manufacturing factories littered across our nation could shift their focus to the production of biodegradable plastics, such as ones filled with plastic-consuming enzymes activated when exposed to specific conditions. This will make recycling an action of ease and can revolutionize the problem of plastic. The delegation of China also suggests the supplementation of faculty and funding to the company Ocean Cleanup which is devoted to eliminating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. China’s up and coming generation are filled with bright individuals who could suggest or construct solutions to save our oceans. Other countries could mirror this effort and development can take place on a global scale. One innovative remedy to this disease could be adapting the huge sea net called “Jenny” designed by the Ocean Cleanup. The West and East gyres are separated and the area in between- the subtropical convergence zone is constantly brimming with plastic flying between both gyres. Of course, this horizontal net between both gyres would only be a couple of feet deep, allowing for fish to swim directly under it. Utilising the same design as the original, there will be a “retention zone” in the middle. The plastic will slowly drift towards this compartment in the middle of the net, so all the waste is in one place. This net could be anchored to the ground, catching plastic by facing whichever direction the wind, current, and waves are flowing. This way it could operate without being supervised 24/7, at least until the net is filled- which is when a ship could retrieve the plastic. These resolutions would support the cleansing of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in an environmentally friendly way and change our oceans for good.

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