Forum: Environmental Committee

Issue: Enhancing accessibility to responsible waste management systems

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Introduction

Earth in the 21st century grapples with an intricate environmental issue: accessibility to responsible waste management systems. Following technological developments and the population jumps, our consumption patterns quickly burgeoned which caused an unexpected trend of waste production. This newly occurrinweg obstacle in the modern world not only poses threats to existing systems of waste management systems for political stakeholders -especially the states- but also damages the sensitive ecological balance upon which our planet depends. From this perspective, the imperative to enhance the accessibility to responsible waste management systems not only serves as a duty for the United Nations, and specifically the Environmental Committee, but also for every single individual on Earth.

Fortunately, the issue of waste management, once ignored and skipped by the public consciousness, has started to be seen as the forefront of global disclosure. Nevertheless, this change was not dependent on the increased public awareness, but rather, it was dependent on the increased influence of the issue, creating globally effective problems such as but not limited to polluted oceans, contaminated soil, and toxic air.

At the heart of the issue lies the term accessibility, which is a concept enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The accessibility problem is not limited to physical infrastructure: it

also covers accessibility in terms of knowledge, resources, constitutional and political will.

Furthermore, access to sufficient waste management facilities is still an unattainable goal in many regions of the world, especially in countries with low or middle incomes. The health of people and the sustainability of the environment are greatly endangered by the abundance of improvised dumps in informal settlements, waterways clogged with plastic waste, and air filled with poisonous pollutants. As shown by the UN's previous reports and assessments, millions of people around the world still lack basic access to waste management services.

Moreover, the issue of accessing waste management systems is deeply connected with other key priorities of the United Nations: climate change mitigation, biodiversity conversation, and poverty alleviation. Ineffective waste management imposes threats to climate change by causing greenhouse gas propagation from landfills and incinerators, while plastic pollution threatens marine ecosystems and food security. Overcoming these interconnected obstacles requires a coordinated and holistic approach that benefits from the expertise and resources of states, civil society, NGOs, and the private sector.

Definition of Key Terms:

Waste Management: Waste management, also known as waste disposal, refers to the process and actions needed to manage waste from the step of inception to final disposal. These actions include collection, transport, treatment, and disposal of waste in the first step. Control, monitoring and regulation of the production, collection, transport, treatment, and disposal of waste in the second step. Prevention of waste production through in-process modifications, reuse, and recycling is the last step.

Waste Management Systems: A waste management system refers to the combined set of policies, infrastructure, technologies, and practices designed to manage and

control the steps of waste management (all mentioned above in the waste management definition). It encompasses a wide range of activities including waste sorting, recycling, composting, incineration and landfilling as well as public education and awareness campaigns.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a turning point regarding the fundamental human rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. It outlines the necessity rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled, including the right to a clean and healthy environment. Access to responsible waste management systems can be viewed as a fundamental part of the right to a healthy life – as enshrined in the UDHR.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive plan of action adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. It lays out 169 goals and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address global issues like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Targeting responsible consumption and production, including sustainable waste management techniques, is the focus of Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Background Information:

The challenge of enhancing accessibility to responsible waste management systems has emerged as a pressing global issue in recent years. Due to rapid expansion of urbanization and industrialization, coupled with increasing consumerism, the volume of waste generated worldwide has reached unpredictable levels. Insufficient waste management practices have resulted in environmental harm, pollution of land, water and air, and significant public health risks. Addressing this multifaceted challenge requires coordinated efforts at local, national, and international levels to develop sustainable waste management systems.

Global Recognition and Evolution of Waste Management:

Waste management has become a major topic of discussion on an international basis after previously being ignored. This paradigm change is caused by the growing impact of waste-related issues in addition to increased public awareness. These crises appear as widespread worldwide problems such as the increase of harmful pollutants in the atmosphere, the spread of dangerous chemicals on agricultural land, and an excessive amount of microplastics in the oceans.
In response to these challenges, governments, businesses, NGOs, and other stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the significance of implementing comprehensive waste management strategies. Action steps aimed at reducing waste generation, promoting recycling and resource recovery, and improving waste collection and disposal infrastructure are gaining importance worldwide. Nevertheless, various issues remain, such as the effectiveness of the political stakeholders, public awareness and the topic-related documents are still controversial. Solutions providing cooperation between different stakeholders while satisfying each side's demands and interests would be the effective way outs for global recognition and evaluation of the issue.

The Versatile Concept of Accessibility:

The complex concept of accessibility, which is included in significant instruments like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is at the center of the problem. Accessibility includes more than just physical infrastructure; it also includes political will, resource availability, and cognitive accessibility. Unfortunately, many areas still lack access to sufficient waste management facilities, especially in low- and middle-income nations. The detrimental effects of this deficiency are immediately apparent, as the prevalence of

improvised landfills, water bodies permeated with plastic debris, and air filled with harmful pollutants endanger both human health and environmental sustainability. The detrimental effects of this insufficiency are immediately apparent, as the increasing number of improvised landfills, water bodies dominated with garbage made of plastic, and air filled with harmful pollutants endanger both human health and environmental sustainability. A holistic approach which covers the involvement of civil societies and the state parties at the same time would be the suitable method for overcoming the harmful effects of such problems.

Economic and Socio-Cultural Implications:

The economic and socio-cultural implications of inadequate waste management are profound and interrelated. Economically, inefficient waste management systems have catastrophic results for governments, businesses, and communities. These costs cover the waste collection, disposal, and remediation of environmental damage. Moreover, the disused economic potential of waste recycling and resource recovery represents a missed opportunity for job creation, income generation, and economic growth.

Socia-culturally, inadequate waste management continues social inequalities and fosters health disparities, particularly among marginalized communities living in proximity to disposal sites. In addition, cultural attitudes towards waste and consumption play a crucial role in shaping waste management behaviors and practices. Furthermore, the economic consequences extend beyond abrupt financial burdens, as improper waste management can also damage economic development by decreasing investment and tourism and diminishing the quality of life in the affected area. Also, socio-culturally, perceptions of waste and its management are deeply tied with cultural norms, traditions, and practices. In many societies, waste is ignored or overlooked, leading to resistance towards waste reduction initiatives. Therefore, addressing these economic and socio-cultural subparts of waste management is essential for promoting sustainable development, fostering social

equity, and safeguarding human health and well-being, and it requires in-depth knowledge on both social and economic aspects of the issue.

Interconnectedness with United Nations:

The interconnectedness between the challenge of accessing waste management systems and the core priorities of the United Nations emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues from a collective perspective. Ineffective waste management systems foster climate change by perpetuating the spread of greenhouse gases from landfills and incinerators. Furthermore, plastic pollution poses a huge threat to marine ecosystems and jeopardizes global food security while also exacerbating poverty in vulnerable communities reliant on fisheries.

Reducing the influences of such interconnected problems requires a concerted, holistic approach, harnessing collaborative expertise and resources of states, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. This includes implementing sustainable waste management practices, promoting circular economy actions, and investing in innovative technologies for waste reduction and recycling. Clearly, these efforts require collaboration between different organs such as governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. This is essential to develop and implement effective policies and strategies that address waste management in tie with broad sustainability goals outlined by the United Nations.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

World Bank: The World Bank provides financial and technical assistance to countries seeking to improve their waste management infrastructure and practices. Through its projects and programs, the World Bank supports investments related to waste management systems such as waste collection, recycling facilities, landfill management, and pollution control measures. Furthermore, the World Bank works with the agreed governments to develop policy frameworks and regulatory mechanisms to improve the waste management systems and promote sustainable practices. The appropriate involvement of the World Bank in the offered solutions and resolutions might be a way-out for the underdeveloped countries who seek to put effort into solving the problem of accessing waste management systems. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the World Bank and the real-life practice of it is still controversial, and therefore, these arguments should not be overlooked while debating the topic.

Greenpeace: Greenpeace is a well-known environmental group that advocates legislation that reduces plastic pollution and encourages recycling, as well as improved waste management techniques. To put pressure on businesses and governments to act on waste-related issues, Greenpeace conducts research, raises awareness, and takes direct action. To foster consumer behavior, change and promote other garbage disposal methods, the group also collaborates with grassroots movements and communities. As an effective international environmental NGO, Greenpeace can be used in the solutions which involve raising awareness amongst the communities. However, concerns related to state sovereignty by the countries might arise during the discussions.

Brazil: Brazil has made great efforts to solve the problems associated with waste management, mainly because of its enormous population and fast urbanization. The

country has focused on enhancing the infrastructure for waste disposal and collection, especially in densely populated areas. To reduce pollution to the environment, government programs have expanded landfill capacity, adopted appropriate waste disposal techniques, and offered effective waste collection services to homes and businesses. To try to encourage its residents to break down recyclable items, Brazil has also made recycling programs a priority. Waste separation and recycling campaigns are being promoted. These efforts highlight Brazil's dedication to improving waste management procedures and incorporating unofficial garbage collectors into official systems as well as promoting environmental sustainability and benefiting public health.

India: India's fast urbanization and population growth offer major waste management concerns. Because of the nation's poor garbage collection and disposal infrastructures, open dumping, excessive littering, and mismanaged landfills are all common. Unauthorized waste pickers frequently dig through landfills, and therefore they increase the hazards to their health and the environment. The issue is further compounded by low public awareness and inadequate government initiatives. Inadequate waste management not only contaminates the environment but also puts populations' health at serious risk by causing illnesses, diseases, and the devastation of ecosystems. To tackle these obstacles, multifaceted approaches are necessary, such as enhancing the infrastructure, putting in place efficient waste management regulations, encouraging recycling and composting, and educating the public about appropriate garbage disposal techniques.

Timeline of Events

June 26, 2002	Launch of the Johannesburg Summit where sustainable development goals including waste management, were discussed.
February 16, 2005	Introduction of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism, which promotes waste management projects in developing countries.
June 3, 2010	Establishment of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), advocating for waste reduction and sustainable alternatives.
June 20, 2012	Rio+20 Summit emphasizes the importance of sustainable waste management for achieving sustainable development goals.
September 25, 2015	Adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It highlights responsible consumption and production including sustainable waste management.
May 25, 2016	UN Environment Assembly's Resolution on Marine Litter and Microplastics underscores the need for effective waste management to prevent marine pollution.

April 1, 2017	Launch of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), emphasizing waste reduction for food security.
December 5, 2018	UN Environment Assembly discusses strategies for combating marine plastic pollution which is linked to waste management accessibility.
September 23, 2019	UN Climate Action Summit addresses waste management as part of climate change mitigation efforts
January 1, 2020	COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of effective waste management for public health and safety.
January 11, 2021	One Planet Summit announces significant investment in the Great Green Wall initiative, linking waste management to biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- **Adoption of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:** This international treaty aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between nations and promote environmentally sound management of waste.
- **UN Resolution on Sustainable Waste Management:** This resolution, adopted by the UN General Assembly, calls upon member states to prioritize

sustainable waste management practices, including improving accessibility to waste management services for all communities**.**

- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** Although it is not specifically focused on waste management, this convention addresses the global issue of hazardous chemicals which are also found in waste. Enhancing accessibility to responsible waste management systems can contribute to the reduction of POPs and their adverse effects on human health and the environment.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The problem of enhancing accessibility to responsible waste management systems has garnered attention from various stakeholders globally. This recognition led to several attempts by different stakeholders. Previous efforts by the United Nations, member nations, and other organizations have focused on tackling the multifaceted aspects of insufficient waste management. These efforts have involved various actions such as awareness campaigns, capacity-building programs, and policy reforms to improve waste collection, recycling infrastructure, and disposal practices. Furthermore, international agreements and treaties have been established to improve cooperation and coordination among nations in addressing waste management challenges. Despite these efforts by different actors, the issue still exists due to various factors such as insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, and limited political will. Still, these previous attempts play as valuable lessons and provide a foundation for future to enhance accessibility to responsible waste management systems. Collaborative efforts involving governments, civil society, private sector entities, and international organizations will be essential in effectively addressing the issue and achieving sustainable waste management practices globally. Therefore, while producing solutions related to the topic, past endeavors and attempts which could not be successful are extremely crucial as they serve as paths to learn from the mistakes and create better way-outs.

Possible Solutions

Delegates should focus on proposing the establishment of comprehensive waste management systems which involve multifaceted cooperation from various stakeholders as the problem is influential on a global scale. The most important thing to keep in mind is the issue of "accessibility" in the topic, meaning that the main objects of the discussions will be the less and middle developed countries. Thinking from unipolar perspectives would be the mistake here, as it was shown from the past attempts, since there is interdependence between states, civil societies, private sector, and the UN. The solutions should both focus on economic and social aspects of the issue as they both depend on each other to develop. Social scale solutions may involve raising public awareness (but keep in mind that they might be unique and realistic), national and international education on waste management systems and NGO involvements in the issue with the consent of the states. Economic and financial solutions, which will mainly be provided towards the less-developed countries, might involve incentives for the countries who suffer from accessing the waste management systems. The involvement of IMF and World Bank might be effective, but keep in mind that the conditions in which they could benefit might be researched in detail as they have strict standards. At the end, clauses and resolutions which acknowledge the past mistakes and propose effective collaboration between the political actors will be the sufficient way-outs for overcoming the issue of enhancing accessibility to responsible waste management system.

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