

# **United Nations Environmental Programme**



**Agenda: Tackling the Global Impact of Fast Fashion on  
Climate and Waste Generation**

## **Letter from the Executive Board**

It is with immense enthusiasm that we welcome you to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) for JAMUN 2025 within the forum you will face the most critical challenges shaping our world today. As the Executive Board, we extend our heartfelt greetings and invite you to embark on a dynamic journey of global debate, negotiation, and insightful collaboration.

The purpose of Model United Nations (MUN) is not only to foster policy driven discussions and craft well informed solutions but also to cultivate empathy, critical thinking, and a spirit of intellectual curiosity. As you assume the role of your allotted country, we urge you to research thoroughly, challenge your own perspectives, and represent your nation's stance with authenticity and originality.

This background guide serves as the launchpad for your exploration, please treat it as a starting point. We encourage you to move beyond these pages and seek out diverse case studies, analyze relevant international developments, and synthesize viewpoints from multiple stakeholders. Remember, an effective delegate is one who both defends their position and remains open to new knowledge and unexpected insights.

Throughout this conference you should embrace the spirit of collaboration. Debate with passion, but also actively listen to those whose opinions are different from yours. This environment thrives on mutual respect and creative problem solving, helping everyone grow as both delegates and individuals.

In closing, if you have questions or require support, please know that the Executive Board is here to assist you at every step. Whether you are a seasoned MUN participant or preparing for your first conference, we aim to make this experience enriching, educational, and enjoyable.

Happy Researching!

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# Committee Introduction

## ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, established in 1972, is the leading global authority on the environment within the United Nations system. Its mission is to inspire, inform, and enable nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP coordinates international environmental efforts, develops global frameworks, and supports countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to climate action, responsible consumption, and sustainable production.

UNEP focuses on tackling the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution & waste, emphasising that these threats are interconnected and require coordinated global action.

### The following are the key roles of UNEP:

1. **Policy and Coordination:** UNEP leads environmental governance across the UN system, fostering cooperation between governments, NGOs, and the private sector.
2. **Science and Assessment:** It monitors global environmental trends and publishes reports like the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) to guide policy decisions.
3. **Capacity Building:** UNEP assists countries through funding, training, and technical expertise to strengthen environmental policies and sustainable practices.
4. **Global Campaigns and Initiatives:** UNEP drives initiatives such as the Clean Seas Campaign, Beat Plastic Pollution, and the Green Economy Initiative, promoting resource efficiency and sustainable production.

In recent years, UNEP has expanded its focus to the environmental cost of consumer industries, including the **fast fashion sector**, which contributes significantly to carbon emissions, textile waste, and water pollution. Through projects promoting a circular economy, eco-innovation, and sustainable textile practices, UNEP works to mitigate the fashion industry's impact on climate and waste generation which makes it a vital platform for discussions on building a more sustainable global economy.

## **Accepted Proofs**

Research is a crucial element for ensuring your effectiveness in Model United Nations conferences. Many participants often find it challenging to begin their research because there is an overwhelming amount of content available online. The trickiest part here is that not every information available on the internet is reliable. You are free to look at all types of sources for your reference or preparation and understand the agenda better. However, it is advised that you verify your research from a credible source, which are listed below for your reference.

### **1. Reuters**

Reuters is one of the world's most trusted providers of news and analysis. It is an independent, private news agency that primarily covers international events of importance.

### **2. State-Operated News Agencies**

Reports from state-run news organizations can be useful to support or criticize the positions of the government that owns the agency. If a report is credible or substantial, it may be used to support or challenge a country's stance, but such reports are susceptible to denial or dispute by other nations in the council.

Examples:

- IRNA (Iran): <http://www.irna.ir/ENIndex.htm>
- Xinhua News Agency and CCTV (China): <http://cctvnews.cntv.cn/>

### **3. Government Reports**

Government publications may be used similarly to state news agency reports. These documents can be referenced for or against a country's position but can always be contested by other member states.

Examples include:

- U.S. State Department: <http://www.state.gov/index.htm>
- Russian Ministry of Defence: <http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm>
- Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mea.gov.in/>

**Note: The following sources are not accepted as formal proof or evidence.**

**However, they can be helpful for developing a better understanding of any given issue:**

- Wikipedia: <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

- News outlets such as The Guardian and Times of India: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>
- ChatGPT or other AI tools: <https://chat.openai.com>

## **Introduction to the Agenda**

Fast fashion is a phenomenon in the clothing industry where clothes are produced quickly and at cheaper prices to meet the latest trends. Fast fashion is also referred to as “throwaway fashion”. It is a system where styles change rapidly, sometimes every few weeks instead of seasons, making trendy clothes cheaply and very easily available for consumers. This turnover encourages people to buy more clothes than they really need, simply because the designs are always new and affordable.

Did you know fast fashion is the second largest polluter in the world, just after oil and gas? Globally, fast fashion became popular because it made it possible for everyone to keep up with trendy items without spending much money. It transformed fashion from a carefully planned seasonal activity into a relentless race to produce and consume as many clothes as possible. Bins are overflowing with discarded clothes most of which are made of synthetic fibers like polyester, which do not decompose easily. First, the production of textiles, especially cotton, requires massive amounts of water for say 700 gallons for a single cotton shirt which eventually depletes local freshwater sources.

During textile manufacturing, the dyeing and finishing processes generate about 20 percent of global industrial wastewater. Even washing clothes releases 500,000 tons of microfibers into the ocean each year, equivalent to 50 billion plastic bottles. An estimated 92 million tons of textile waste are produced annually in the world.

On land, some fast fashion companies burn unsold clothes to reduce landfill space, but this releases toxic pollutants into the air and soil contaminating the environment. Additionally, the rise of “ultra-fast fashion,” where trends change weekly, further accelerates textile waste generation. Consumers discard clothes at an unprecedented rate, leading to an estimated 85% of textiles ending up in landfills or incinerators, adding to soil contamination and greenhouse gas emissions from waste decomposition or burning.

Beyond environmental harm, fast fashion often exploits cheap labor in developing countries, with poor working conditions, low wages, and insufficient labor rights protection. This raises ethical concerns alongside environmental sustainability challenges.

Tackling this agenda involves addressing environmental degradation and social justice issues as well as promoting sustainable production, consumption and waste management practices, while encouraging responsible consumer behaviour to reduce impacts of fast fashion on our planet’s climate and ecosystems.



## Fashion Brands - Accountability, Transparency, Morality

Transparency in the fashion industry is still low, but some brands are starting to share more about how their clothes are made. Being transparent means telling where factories are, how workers are treated, what materials are used, and how much the clothes affect the environment. According to the Fashion Transparency Index 2024, the average score for 250 brands is only 26%, showing most companies hide important information. About 80% of brands do not disclose any data about worker wages, and less than 30% report full environmental impact. Consumers, governments, and organizations are pushing for honesty so clothes are made more ethically and sustainably.

Some brands are leading the way. Patagonia shares factory lists, worker conditions, and carbon reports. H&M Group lists over 1,600 suppliers and plans to use 100% recycled or sustainable materials by 2030. Levi's saved over 4 billion liters of water through its Water Less program. Adidas and Reformation track product environmental impacts, while Eileen Fisher uses recycled and organic materials and reports progress publicly. Some brands also report on chemicals used, energy saved, and greenhouse gas emissions. This push is driven by consumers, NGOs, and laws like the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Still, many luxury and fast fashion brands hide supply chain data, so real transparency across the industry is rare.



## **Government's take on fast fashion**

Government regulation of the fast fashion industry remains weak and highly fragmented despite its severe environmental consequences. The industry accounts for nearly 10% of global carbon emissions and produces over 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually (UNEP, 2023). Yet, fewer than 15 countries have comprehensive laws addressing textile waste or sustainable production. Most governments rely on voluntary sustainability initiatives, which allow brands to make unverified claims about eco-friendly practices without facing accountability. As a result, large corporations continue mass production at low costs, contributing heavily to pollution and landfill overflow.

In recent years, some governments have taken steps to strengthen oversight. The European Union's Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022) aims to make all textile products recyclable, repairable, and durable by 2030. Similarly, France's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme holds brands financially accountable for waste, though only 35% of collected textiles are reused or recycled (ADEME, 2023). However, these policies remain limited in scope and slow in execution, often overshadowed by rapid industry growth and consumer demand.

Developing nations such as Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam, which serve as global textile hubs, suffer the most due to weak environmental regulation and enforcement. The World Bank (2022) estimates that textile dyeing and finishing contribute up to 20% of global industrial water pollution. Without global cooperation, unified standards, and stronger enforcement mechanisms, the fast fashion industry will continue to outpace regulation, worsening climate and waste challenges.

## **Case Study 1: Ghana**

Ghana has emerged as an important hub for second-hand clothing used in places like Europe, North America, and Asia. Each week, the Kantamanto Market in Accra, the Capital of Ghana, receives approximately 15,000,000 items of clothing. Many of these items are sourced from the fast fashion industry (which produces low-cost clothing in bulk and rapidly)

Therefore, nearly 40% of the clothing cannot be sold due to being torn, dirty, or of low quality. Unwanted clothing in Ghana either ends up in landfills, is burned in open burn sites, or is washed into rivers and drains, posing significant consequences for humans and the environment, including air pollutant emissions, microplastic pollution, soil pollution, and clogging waterways.

Ghana has seen the emergence of several grassroots initiatives tackling the environmental effects of fast fashion. The Or Foundation and The Revival work repair, recycle, and upcycle unwanted clothes, turning them into new and useful products instead of letting them go to waste. Trashy Bags Ghana upcycles plastic waste into useful products, while the Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO) promotes waste reduction and awareness among the people. Fair African Movement and Eco-Fashion GH support ethical cloth production and sustainable usage of fabric, and Ghana Fashion & Design Week now promotes eco-fashion designers. Efforts like Sustainably Yours Africa and We Craft Africa further encourage sustainable fashion and fair trade.

To support these efforts, the Government of Ghana is introducing a policy called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). This policy ensures that fashion companies and exporting countries take responsibility for what happens to their clothes after people throw them away.



## **Case Study 2: United Kingdom**

Following rising awareness about the environmental impact of fast fashion, the United Kingdom has emerged as one of the leading examples of how consumerism and textile waste intersect with sustainability challenges. The UK is the fourth-largest producer of textile waste in Europe, generating over 1 million tonnes of clothing waste annually, with an estimated 300,000 tonnes ending up in landfills each year. According to a 2023 WRAP report, the average UK citizen purchases around 27 kilograms of clothing per year, twice the global average. The rise of ultra-fast fashion brands and online retail has intensified this pattern, resulting in overproduction and unsustainable consumption cycles.

### **Government and Policy Response**



The UK government has introduced several initiatives to tackle textile waste and encourage circularity in fashion. The “Textiles 2030” program, launched by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), engages over 100 major fashion brands and retailers in reducing carbon and water footprints by 50% by 2030. Additionally, the Environment Act 2021 empowers local councils to improve waste management and promote extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes for textiles. However, the Environmental Audit Committee’s 2024 report criticizes the lack of binding legislation and slow progress on industry accountability.

## Public Involvement



Grassroots movements like Love Your Clothes, Fashion Revolution UK, and Oxfam’s Second Hand September have played a key role in shifting consumer attitudes. These initiatives promote recycling, clothing swaps, and resale culture, while encouraging consumers to prioritize quality over quantity. Universities and local councils are also piloting textile collection schemes to reduce landfill dependency.

## Questions to Consider

1. What policies and regulations can governments and international bodies introduce to ensure that the fashion industry adopts sustainable and ethical practices worldwide?
2. What eco-friendly practices can be promoted throughout the clothing production process and among consumers to reduce environmental harm?
3. How can recycling, reuse of fabric scraps, and better textile waste management help reduce the environmental impact of the fashion industry?
4. How can the fashion industry reduce its carbon footprint by transitioning to cleaner and more efficient energy sources?
5. What international safety standards can be enforced to control the use of harmful chemicals and prevent their buildup in the environment and living organisms?
6. What economically sustainable and responsible practices can global fashion companies adopt to minimise waste and promote long-term environmental protection?
7. How can international cooperation and public awareness encourage the growth of “slow fashion” and make sustainability a global priority?

### **Reference Links**

<https://earth.org/fast-fashions-detrimental-effect-on-the-environment/>

[https://unosd.un.org/sites/unosd.un.org/files/5th\\_sdgs\\_youth\\_summer\\_camp\\_group\\_2\\_econowledge\\_final\\_ppt.pdf](https://unosd.un.org/sites/unosd.un.org/files/5th_sdgs_youth_summer_camp_group_2_econowledge_final_ppt.pdf)

[https://changingmarkets.org/press-releases/faster-fashion-growing-use-of-polluting-textiles-revealed-2/?utm\\_](https://changingmarkets.org/press-releases/faster-fashion-growing-use-of-polluting-textiles-revealed-2/?utm_)

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035161>

<https://www.uniformmarket.com/statistics/fast-fashion-statistics>

[https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/UNEP\\_Sustainability%20and%20Circularity%20in%20the%20Textile%20Value%20Chain%20-%20A%20Global%20Roadmap%202023.pdf?](https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/UNEP_Sustainability%20and%20Circularity%20in%20the%20Textile%20Value%20Chain%20-%20A%20Global%20Roadmap%202023.pdf?)