

Forum: Environment Committee

Issue: Preventing the loss of biodiversity in the South American region

Chair: Jonathan Chen

Introduction

The South America region is rich with biodiversity, accounting for 40 percent of the world's plant and animal species. It also has 25 percent of the Earth's forests and 26 percent of the Earth's fresh water. The high demand for natural resources and crops creates extraction from the South America region which directly impacts the biodiversity on the continent. The growth of the economy over the past two decades are largely due to the increase of natural resource exports. However, countries in the South America region are developing countries that are trying to solve other pressing issues such as poverty as well as their economy. Therefore, nations in the South American region are conflicting between economic growth or prosperity in biodiversity. Each plant species and living organism play a crucial role in the ecosystem. The loss of biodiversity will harm the food chain which in turn will affect us.

Definition of Key Terms

Biodiversity

The variety of plants, animals, or other living organisms in an area or a region. It is also the abundance of different species in a region.

South American region

A subcontinent of the Americas that includes twelve sovereign states: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Perú, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Genetic resources

The genetic material of actual value, usually for medical purposes.

General Overview

Key Issues

Exploitation of natural resources

Habitat loss has been identified as the greatest threat to biodiversity today. Deforestation, logging, and farming take away the natural habitat of different species of animals and plants, which will decrease the population of the species. Often times illegally built roads are constructed in reserves for the use of logging. Other major types of natural-resource exploitation in Brazilian Amazonia include agriculture and cattle ranching; timber logging; mining, prospecting, and oil, and gas exploration. Small-scale and large-scale agriculture and cattle ranching are strongly concentrated in the eastern, southeastern, and southern belts of Amazonia.

Climate Change

Climate changes occurring in the natural habitat of plants and living organisms drastically lowers the population of those species. The amazon will be in a set of “feedback loops” which will speed up the loss of forests. A large amount of deforestation in the Amazon has already shifted the climate of the forests. By 2050 the temperatures will rise by 2–3°C. This will decrease the rainfall in South America and lead to the widespread of dryness. Research carried out under the auspices of INPE – Brazil's National Space Research Institute – shows that a warmer and drier environment for the region could convert 30% to 60% of the Amazon rainforest into a type of dry savanna.

Habitat loss

The loss of habitat because of deforestation, pollution, and climate change will decrease biodiversity. This decreases the amount living resources and species' natural habitat space. Species which are local, endemic, or which have specialized habitats are much more vulnerable to extinction since once their particular habitat is degraded or converted for human activity, they will disappear. The loss of land area would cause problems for larger mammals. Many large mammals have huge ranges and require extensive areas of intact forest to obtain sufficient food or to find suitable nesting sites. Without sufficient amount of land, they would not thrive and may cause the endangerment of the species.

Pollution

Pollution can act as a selective agent because those species that can survive under pollution live and those that cannot die off. Pollution of water in lakes and rivers has degraded waters so that many freshwater ecosystems are dying. Since almost 12% of animals species live in these ecosystems, and most others depend on them to some degree, this is a very serious matter. In developing countries, approximately 90% of wastewater is discharged, untreated, directly into waterways.

Decrease of Economic Opportunities

For example, global benefits from coral reefs include tourism, fisheries, and coastal protection are estimated at about \$30 billion per year. The international trade of medicinal plants is estimated to be worth around \$60 billion per year. Loss of biodiversity will take away the distinctive financial opportunities of the countries in South America.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Brazil

Brazil is the biggest country in South America with the largest rainforest- the Amazon rainforest. The Amazon, accounting 40 percent of South America, is the main area of focus on the issue of biodiversity. In recent years Brazil has been combating deforestation and other subjects that cause the decrease in biodiversity. Forestry companies, many of which are based outside of Brazil, still wish to be able to practice logging. However, the Brazilian government had promoted sustainable forestry policies for years. Brazil still has one of the highest rates of deforestation mainly for cattle ranchers and logging.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is also known as the Biodiversity Convention. It focuses on the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of their components, and the equitable sharing of benefits that arise from genetic sources. The convention has created National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) which requires countries to prepare a national biodiversity strategy and to ensure that

this strategy is mainstreamed into the planning the outcome, positive and negative acts, towards biodiversity of the country. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, also known as the Biosafety Protocol, was adopted in January 2000. The Biosafety Protocol seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.

Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy, a biodiversity preserving organization that strives to protect entire wildlife communities with the rich diversity of the nature. They work with people such as the locals, businesses and any individual dedicated to the protection of nature around the globe. The Nature Conservancy currently protects over 100 million acres, they believe in using the holistic approach preserving the entirety in what they believe in. One of their methods is debt for nature swaps, which by exchange for forgiveness of their debts in return they have the opportunity to maintain and protect biodiversity.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of Event |
|---------------|--|
| 1960s and 70s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Road construction during the military era in the 1960s and 70s to support colonization of Amazonia has strongly contributed to spatial shaping of these economic developments. |
| 1990s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since the new gold boom with rising gold prices started in the 1990s, the activity has increased strongly throughout many basins, rivers, and river beds. This holds true not only for Brazilian Amazonia but for other countries in the area as well. |
| 1992 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 was the first time to recognize that the conservation of biological conservation of biodiversity is "a common concern of humankind". |

| | |
|------|--|
| | |
| 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) in Johannesburg targets to be able to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss globally. - To ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs), resulting from modern biotechnology, that may have adverse effects on biological diversity, taking into account of the risks to human health. |
| 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt a new strategic plan from 2011 to 2020 - The mission stated by CBD is to <i>“take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services, thereby securing the planet's variety of life, and contributing to human well-being, and poverty eradication.”</i> |

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treatise and Events

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international legally binding treaty that focuses on the conservation of biodiversity. It also addresses the fact that natural resources are not infinite and promotes sustainable use of it as well as assures the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from genetic sources. Contracting Parties are required to create and enforce national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity.

- The Conference of the Parties (COP) makes amendments to the convention and meets every two years since 1994

Possible Solutions

A possible solution to the issue is to construct or expand national parks in order to preserve wildlife and natural resources as well as to create regulations or laws that condemn hunting certain species in certain areas. To prohibit construction projects near national parks or areas that wildlife exists will also solve the issue of industrialization and pollution. It is also important to set universal regulations and punishments that will ensure countries to follow agreements made by the UN or CBD.

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Forum: Environment 1

Issue: Combatting the destruction of marine ecosystems in the Oceania region

Chair: Si Yun Ee

Introduction

Habitat destruction has been one of the most pressing issues in the current global world as globalization and industrialization continues to leave its environmental impacts and footprint. Marine ecosystems in particular are affected by the destruction of marine life. By killing plants and animals in part of the marine ecosystem, it causes a breakdown in ecological function in regards to reproduction of these marine wildlife as well as common survival in search of food and remaining in the marine food chain. The ocean represents 71% percent of the world, and with the developing changes in our modern world, marine ecosystem begins to transform as well. This is caused by a number of issues caused by mankind, from runoff zones, development purposes, vegetation removal, dredging, bottom trawling and many more industrial processes. Runoff zones are when sewage and waste are placed in the oceans; development causes habitats to be removed; vegetation removal is caused when people log plants or trees, which causes the soil to loosen, and particularly in areas near shores and seas, the sediments and soil begin to pile in the ocean. Dredging is the process of extracting or drilling in the ocean, the trawling often occurs in fishing processes when nets are dragged across the ocean floor, injuring, catching and dragging many marine life, destroying the environmental safety.

Definition of Key Terms

Ecosystems

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an ecosystem is *a biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other.*

Oceania Region

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Oceania region consists of *the islands and island-groups of the Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, and sometimes also the Australasia and Malay Archipelago.*

General Overview

Causes and their Effects resulting in Marine Destruction

While there are multitudes of causes of Marine Destruction, nature's natural disasters are not the only factor playing a part in this destruction. Human industrialization and developments have also caused serious issues in the environment, causing marine life in particular to be endangered in recent years, and causing huge damage to sea beds and the marine environmental quality.

Destructive Fishing Techniques

Bottom Trawling is when a big net with heavy weights is dragged across the sea ground catching everything in its way. The problem with it is that it catches almost everything that it passes, and is unselective; hence items that are caught but unwanted like coral reefs that are significant food sources and shelters for many marine lives are thrown back into the sea, left to die. This technique also causes damage on the seafloor where many animals live and seek shelter for. This destroys their rates of survival and the environment of the seas.

Dynamite fishing is the process in which dynamites are thrown to the bottom of the ocean grown, which will blast everything in that area, causing dead fishes to arise to the top of ocean, which are then easily caught. However, this practices severely harms

all marine life in the area targeted, leaving little to no possibility of quick recovery for the environment.

Ghost Fishing is when fishing equipment and gears are lost at sea. However, this still catches marine life on accident, entangling and causing them to be snagged in the ocean. This can lead to the deaths of these animals and eventually cause endangerment and more rubbish to pile up at the bottom of the seabed.

Tourism

Tourism leads to a lot of marine activities such as snorkeling, scuba diving, boating, especially in the Oceania region to cause direct contact between human to marine life. Often the carelessness of people or even boats and ships destroy coral reefs and marine ecosystems, another cause to the destruction of marine wildlife.

Industrialization and Development Pollution and Damage

Vegetation removal is an indirect issue deriving from industrialization and land claiming. When people log and remove habitats on land, the soil loosens and erodes, causing sediments in the soil to pile up and eventually collect in shores and areas near the ocean, overtime also increasing the level of the seabed.

Dredging and drilling are another form of human industrialization that cause marine destruction. Not only is it very loud and can affect forms of communication within animals like dolphins, but it is also very high risk for oil spills that can dramatically change the health level of the ocean. While these extractive operations disrupt natural life, it also harms, removes and sometimes also kill marine life as its operation hinders within passing by animals, and also with animals originally living in that area – forcing these animals to source for new food sources, safety and shelter.

Climate Change

Rising temperature due to the issue of global warming has caused sea levels to increase through the melting of glaciers and ice caps and also the acidity released into the ocean. Because of this, many of the foundational marine life are threatened, hence

causing a disruption in the foundation of the marine food chain, also causing threat to other marine organisms.

Timeline of Events

(I'm still looking into this because I don't want to repeat what has already been written below)

| Date | Description of event |
|--------------------|--|
| September 23, 2016 | |
| January 30th, 2016 | Chair reports due to presidents and DSGs |
| April 23rd, 2016 | TASMUN begins |

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, 23 September, 2016 (A/RES/70/303)
- Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments, 7 December, 2016, (A/RES/71/123)
- Oceans and the law of the sea, 23 December, 2016 (A/RES/71/257)

Possible Solutions

While the awareness of this issue must be raised, there are also many options to solve this issue. For instance, regulation of industrial projects that disrupt ocean life mentioned

previously with clearer measures and strong enforcement can help to ensure that while operations continue, marine life is minimally, if not, not disturbed by human intervention.

Also, methods of including the public to help on the issue, not in terms of funding, more efficiently, supporting sustainable seafood will also help with the issue of harmful fishing techniques that destruct marine ecosystems. By creating a sort of system for buyer and sellers to confirm this, will enable the public to participate in combatting the destruction of marine wildlife. Promoting the consumption of any other ocean friendly products and products that do not include turtle shell, coral jewelry, shark tooth will also help to minimize the threat to several species and the threat to the ecosystem.

Another possible solution for this issue is to call for measures and for the public to properly dispose hazardous materials. This simply means for the public to take measures to recycle, if not properly sort and dispose any waste materials to places when necessary, hence, it would help to avoid with the issue of rubbish disposal in unsuitable places like the ocean. A lot of rubbish and oil is dumped into the ocean which itself causes water pollution, poisons the environment for the marine wildlife there and causes the oceanic environment to be unsustainable for marine life. Those in the fishing industry can take more responsibility as well and ensure that fishing gear and materials are not thrown or lost at sea, catching marine animals and destructing the ecosystem accidentally. Setting measure of regulations especially within the fishing industry and techniques are ways of enforcement for such actions that will help to combat the issue of marine destruction.

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Forum: Environment Commission

Issue: Combating the illegal wildlife trade between East African and Southeast Asia

Chair: Bram van Keulen

Introduction

The poaching of animals has grown into an unsustainable and uncontrollable trade of the black market. Whilst the wildlife trade financial worth is hard to estimate, TRAFFIC calculated that about 160 US billion dollars' worth of wildlife was imported around the globe each year in the 1990s. The wildlife trade currently involves hundreds of millions of wild plants and animals from thousands of species. Whilst most of the wildlife trade is legal, populations of species on earth declined by an average of 70% between 1970 and 2000, making wildlife trade the second-biggest direct threat to the survival of species, after habitat destruction. The two animals that are most widely recognized for being targeted by poachers are elephants and tigers. Between 2007 and 2013, the poaching of Rhinos in South Africa increased by 7,700% from 13 to 1,003 and the number of wild tigers has gone to around 3,890. The wildlife crime is a big business, run by dangerous international networks. Wildlife and animal parts are traded like illegal drugs and arms. In 2011, more than 23 tons of ivory – equivalent to over 2,500 elephants – were confiscated. Although most of wildlife is traded legally in the form of pets, food, leather, and medicine, the trade of wildlife becomes a problem when it is illegal and unsustainable.

Definition of Key Terms

East Africa

The eastern part of Africa, including namely Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Zambia, Rwanda, and Burundi.

Southeast Asia

The region in Asia that is south of China, east of India, west of New Guinea, and north of Australia. Includes namely Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, and Thailand.

Wildlife Trade

Wildlife trade is the selling or exchanging of wild animals and plant resources. It may involve live animals and plants. The trade of wildlife is easiest to track when done internationally as the animals, plants, and resources must go through Customs checkpoints.

Poaching

The illegal capturing and hunting of species in violation of local, state, federal, or international law. Exceeding one's bag limit, killing an animal while trespassing, killing a protected species, using a prohibited weapon, and killing without a license are all considered to be poaching.

Ranger

A keeper of a (national) park, forest, area of countryside, or a private property. In this context, it refers to individuals who protect animals in their native habitats.

Invasive Species

Species which are introduced into a habitat with the objective to prey on, or compete with, native species. Many invasive species have been purposely introduced by wildlife traders. Examples include the American Mink, Red-eared terrapin and countless plant species.

History

The poaching of animals started in the 18th century as the poorer societies of Europe looked for means of food in order to survive. European governments allowed peasants to poach small game (animals including beavers, rabbits, quail, and the red fox) found on their land to be able to survive. The Lacey Act was passed in the United States by which the trading of wildlife between states with the objective to gain profits was deemed illegal. The Migratory Bird Treaty

was implemented between the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, Japan, and Russia with the goal to protect migrating birds from being killed, hunted, exported, or sold for a profit. In the 1940s, hunting and deforestation in Russia led to a forty percent decline of the Siberian tiger population. CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was formed during the 1960s as an international agreement to protect animals in trade so that their survival is not threatened. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 provided conservation for the threatened and endangered plants and animals. This was done in an effort to keep populations stable and protected in their respective habitats. The global ivory ban is created by CITES in 1989 in an effort to reduce poaching and stop the drastically decreasing number of elephant populations. In 2006, 120 carcasses are found in an African national park and elephant poaching spikes.

Key Issues

Effects on Local Communities

The extinction of species can have drastic effects on local communities. This is especially so if communities rely solely on the animals for their income through the community's tourism industry. Communities who rely on the tourism industry are at great risk for economic destruction if the illegal trade of wildlife continues to prevail. Tourism boycotting could have effects on the community's economy since restaurants, hotels, rentals, and other attractions would suffer.

Effects on Animals

Extinction of animals due to poaching is the greatest threat to animals. In 2011, the Western Black Rhino was declared extinct. As a subspecies of the Black Rhino, it was poached due to the belief that the horn contained healing properties for humans. Poaching is often a more lucrative job than others available in the region and hence offers more income for the communities. A Sumatran Tiger's parts can be sold for up to \$5,000.

Effects on the Environment

Extinction of animals can have a detrimental effect on the environment. The North American Gray Wolf, a natural predator of the elk, was nearly brought to extinction due to trophy hunting and poaching. As a direct result, the elk population went up excessively and there was

an increase of feeding on the aspen tree. Through this, the aspen tree was eaten to extinction. As the population of gray wolves are now increasing again, the elk population is balancing out and the aspen tree is recovering.

Poaching and hunting of species can lead to the endangerment and possible extinction of different species. Our environment has a naturally balanced out ecosystem. Poaching can have a knock-on effect on this balance.

Major Countries and Parties Involved

Kenya

Kenya's President staged the largest ivory burn in history, in which ivory tusks of some 6,700 elephants were burned. During the ceremony, over a hundred tons of poached elephant tusks were burned as a symbol to show Kenya's dedication and commitment to end the illegal wildlife trade. The Kenyan government has taken a bold and modest approach to the problem by appealing to the media through the use of the hashtag #worthmorealive. The government illustrates its endorsement of the protection of elephants. The government believes that the poaching of elephants can and will have a detrimental effect on the development of the African economy.

China

China has allowed the elephant conservation to gain a big win as it made its game-changing decision to end domestic ivory trade by 2017. China is currently one of the world's largest consumers of wildlife products, from shark fin and tiger bone to elephant ivory and rhino horn. Chinese search engine Baidu has deleted more than 34,000 postings of animal products. In China, wealth is increasingly overtaking health as the demand driver for many endangered species. In 2011, a smuggling ring trafficked 7.7 tons of ivory from Africa to China.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

As the world's leading conservation organization, WWF operates in over a hundred countries and is supported by close to five million people globally. It is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1961. It works both at local and global areas and uses science as its basis for action. By using public education and supporting regulations, the World Wildlife Fund

works to help eliminate the illegal wildlife trade. It also works with the communities to combat poverty and help locals to preserve, manage, and care for the wildlife in a sustainable way.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
|-------------------|---|
| January 1880 | Peasants are allowed to hunt small game that is on their farms as a means of survival in Europe. |
| June 1900 | Lacey Act passed in the United States making it illegal to sell a poached animal in one state to someone in another state for a profit. |
| January 1918 | Migratory Bird Treaty Act implemented between United States, Great Britain, Mexico, Japan, and Russia, protecting birds from being killed, hunted, exported or sold for a profit. |
| July 1940 | Hunting and deforestation in Russia leads to a 40% decline in the Siberian tiger population. |
| March 3, 1973 | CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is formed as an international agreement to protect animals in trade so that their survival is not threatened. |
| December 28, 1973 | Endangered Species Act provides conservation for threatened and endangered plants and animals in their respective habitats in an effort to keep populations stable and protected. |
| July 1, 1975 | CITES became effective. A ban on the international commercial trade in Asian elephant ivory was placed. |
| 1989 | African Elephant Conservation Act was passed which banned the import of African elephant ivory into the United States for commercial purposes. |

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|--------------|--|
| March 1989 | Global Ivory Ban is created by CITES in an effort to reduce poaching and stop the decreasing number of elephant populations. |
| January 2006 | Elephant poaching spikes and 120 carcasses are found in a national park in Africa. |
| 2013 | African elephant poaching is (again) threatening the survival of the species, with 25,000 elephants being poached in 2011 and more than 30,000 estimated to have been poached in 2013. |
| January 2013 | Around 2,000 dead pangolins are seized from a fishing vessel headed towards China. |

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Although governments have attempted to combat the issue individually, the UN has only recently begun to address the issue. It was only in 2014, that the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) passed a resolution. General Assembly did so as well in 2015 with resolution A/69/L.80, recognizing the negative impact of the illegal trade and illicit criminal networks on the world. It is vital that the UN come together to implement stricter measures to be taken in comparison to previous attempts by both nations (such as the members of East African Community) and countries that are major destinations for the illegal wildlife trade products, as well as organizations such as the WWF.

Possible Solutions

Whilst public awareness is already very widespread, the potential to increase the awareness of people around the world is greater than ever. By setting aside money for the use of television advertisements, posters, and promotion videos of organizations, through ways such as budgets and funds, public awareness can be greatly increased. Implementations of trading sanctions on countries not willing to cooperate with regulations set by the creations of treaties, acts and resolutions, as well as creating incentives for cooperating countries, will drastically

decrease the illegal wildlife trade. Governments will thereby be more inclined to tighten and enforce regulations.

The creation of investigation teams to track down poachers, smugglers, and other individuals involved with the wildlife trade to prosecute and severely punish those deemed guilty could also decrease the amount of people willing to sacrifice their freedom. By increasing the judicial systems of the many LEDCs in East Africa, solving the issue can also become far simpler.

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