



# United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Regulating the Management of Plastic Waste

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# Message from the Bureau

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Welcome to the United Nations Environment Programme. We are pleased to host the United Nations Environment Programme at the Bangalore Junior Model United Nations 2021. The executive board for this committee consists of the following, Co-Chairs Siddharth Satish and Siddharth Pendyala with our moderator Ashriya Sinha.

The entire executive board has had an immense amount of experience in the past MUNs. Despite last year being a virtual one, the Bangalore JMUN still created an enjoyable and fruitful committee session. We assure you that this year we will deliver yet another fulfilling experience. Please do not feel uncomfortable speaking in committee and we hope that this experience will help you overcome your hesitation. Knowing this, to all the delegates participating in the UNEP this year, do not let mishaps in your speech stop you from sharing your research with the committee. Even though the MUN is hosted through an online platform this year, the executive board will try their absolute best to make sure to run a successful and fruitful committee.

The United Nations Environment Programme handles everything related to environmental issues within the United Nations system. The UNEP in the past years has been an essential part of the UN general assembly, countering climate change and pollution. The delegates should know that the UNEP strives to build better resilience for countries so they do not face environmental crises in the future. All committee sessions must be regarding the agenda “Regulating the management of plastic waste”. Delegates should keep in mind that their participation in the conference should prioritize the committee’s goal and their foreign policy.

In conclusion, the executive board hopes that the committee is filled with active debate and every delegate participates. We promise to deliver a phenomenal committee session this year. We sincerely hope that this JMUN will be a huge milestone in your MUN journey.

Sincerely,

The executive board of the United Nations Environment Programme:

**Co-Chair:** Siddharth Satish  
**Co-Chair:** Siddharth Pendyala  
**Moderator:** Ashriya Sinha

# Introduction

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The United Nations Environment Programme is the highest environmental authority around the world. It is responsible for setting the global agenda for a sustainable environment within the United Nations system. Essentially the UNEP serves as a commanding representative for environments across nations. The committee includes 197 countries that want a sustainable future for them.

The UNEP is responsible for everything related to the environment. This could include climate change, disasters, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, environmental governance, and the environment under review.

The UNEP hosts many conventions for its overall goal. This goal is to bring together nations and the environmental community to tackle problems that significantly affect our generation.

To accomplish its goals, the UNEP analyses environmental conditions and trends at a regional level to an international level around the world. These environmental analyses cause the creation of the following.

- Environmental agreements
- Research Bodies
- Environmental Institutions
- International Policies

# About Plastic Waste

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Plastic is a material made of synthetic organic polymers used widely in different applications, from water bottles, clothing, food packaging, medical supplies, electronic goods, construction materials, etc.

Plastic waste has followed a trend that has only increased in the past several decades. Until the 1970's the world only had small amounts of plastic produced. After the industrialisation of many countries around the world, the number of plastic produced had tripled in two decades. By the early 2000s, the amount of plastic waste had been produced more in a single decade than it had in the previous 40 years.

Recently, the United Nations Environment Programme has made a statement saying that “we have become addicted to single-use or disposable plastic that causes severe environmental consequences”. Plastic waste is the accumulation of plastic products. The proliferation of these products affects the environment in many ways. The effects could include but are not limited to wildlife destruction, air pollution, global warming and air pollution.

Keeping up with the current statistics, there are at least 5.25 trillion macro and micro pieces of plastic traced back to the ocean, according to the organisation PlasticsEurope. Countries like the United States of America and the People's Republic of China have produced around 48 billion US dollars in plastic.

In recent times, scholars from the Indian department of environmental science, Joystu Dutta and Moharana Choudhary have published a case study of plastic usage in the Republic of India. The case study had brought up different perspectives of plastic usage such as “There will be more plastic in the sea than fish by the year 2050”. The case study stated that “99 per cent of the planet's seabirds would have consumed some amount of plastic”.

# Single-use or Disposable Plastic

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According to the UNEP, half of all the plastic produced is designed to be used only once and then thrown away. These plastics are called single-use or disposable plastics, and about 5 trillion of these plastics are used worldwide.

The UNEP and many other nations have made policies over the regulation of single-use plastics. These policies are either made for a single nation or multiple of them. A prime example would be the UNEP's roadmap for sustainability. This was a roadmap for countries involved to decrease the usage of disposable plastics. The roadmap had resulted in the ban of single-use styrofoam containers in New York City by early 2015.

One of the most notable policies made regarding single-use plastics in recent years was the Republic of India's rules on plastic waste management, which was notified in 2016. The legislative policy was later updated and amended in 2018 to stop selling and distributing certain single-use plastics by 2022. Other nations, such as the United Kingdom's Parliament announcing their briefing paper on plastic waste. This paper included their target of eliminating avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042.

However, despite various efforts of each country and the United Nations Environment Programme, single-use plastics have still been rising in production, causing more harm to our environment. The global community produces 381 million tonnes of plastic waste per year, and more than half of that is on single-use plastics.

The background guide until now has covered consumer plastics, and the policies several governments or third-party organizations have made. The plastic industry far expands to even the Industrial field. The industrial use of plastics consumes about an average of 120 million tonnes of plastic yearly.

The packaging industry leads in consuming plastic compared to other sectors. A report made in 2015 by "Our World in Data" states that the packaging industry consumed 146 million tonnes of plastic that year. These plastics are usually used for the packaging of pharmaceuticals and food items that are being transported.

Construction and the textile industry are also major plastic consumers of industrial plastic. The same report made by "Our World in Data" had stated the textile industry had used 59 million tonnes of plastic, and the building industry had used 65 million tonnes.

# Plastic Pollution

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Plastic pollution is no new phenomenon. Plastic pollution dates back to the 1950s and has rapidly increased ever since then. According to UNEP statistics, one million single-use plastic drinking bottles are bought every minute around the world. In contrast, 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide and are thrown away, causing pollution.

Most of the plastic pollution is driven towards the ocean, and through that, plastic travels all over the world. These then go on land, mostly landing on beaches. Plastics often contain additives, which make them stronger and more durable. These additives primarily extend the life of these plastics, estimated to be around 400 years of life increased in these plastics.

Ten rivers, including River Nile, Yangtze River, Indus River, and the Ganges, account for more than 90% of plastic waste in the oceans. If this continues, our oceans are estimated to contain more plastic than fish by 2050. Nearly 700 species of wildlife are estimated to be affected by plastic, which includes endangered species.

There are a vast number of countries that have taken action against plastic pollution. Notable policies to curb plastic pollution, especially in natural and culturally protected areas, are in Peru. In November 2018, Environment Minister Fabiola Muñoz announced a Supreme Decree that President Martín Vizcarra signed that visitors to Peru's 76 natural and cultural sites would not carry single-use plastics. This step has been taken as Peru throws out 75 per cent of the 947 thousand tons of plastic it uses per year and aims to protect its natural sites for the future.

An important policy made by the USA, signed by President George Bush in 2006, is the Marine Debris Act, later amended in 2012, 2018, and 2020. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Act requires the establishment of the Marine Debris Program. The program is required to “identify, determine sources of, assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris and address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the economy of the United States, marine environment, and navigation safety”. This has been later supported by the Trump administration, which has funded the program through 2022.

# Checklist before the Event

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- 1. Knowing your committee** - It will be helpful for the delegates to have a basic understanding of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). This could include information like:
  - a. What is your committee?
  - b. What does your committee do on the agenda?
  - c. Past actions of your committee on the agenda.
  - d. Plans of your committee on the agenda.
- 2. Understanding your agenda** - The delegate must know what your agenda addresses. This could include:
  - a. What your agenda discusses.
  - b. The fundamental basics of your agenda.
- 3. Your country on the agenda** - It is a crucial part of your research to know:
  - a. Effects and causes of this issue in your country.
  - b. What are your countries policies on the agenda?
  - c. What does your government do about this issue?
  - d. What is your government planning to do in the future?
  - e. Has your government approached the issue at a national/international level? If yes, then how?
- 4. Cite credibility** - While researching, knowing how trustworthy the information you find is essential.
  - a. Recheck the information you find with different sources to make sure the information is accurate.
  - b. Make sure that the information is correct with today's date.



# Suggestions For Further Research

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1. Research more on the single-use/disposable plastics policies and actions taken previously by the UNEP or governments.
2. Research on the policies made for the private sector and civil sector uses of plastics.
3. Research on the subcategories of plastics such as microplastics and many others.
4. Look into plastic pollution policies and recovering plans proposed by the nations and the UNEP.
5. Find out more about possible materials countries used to replace plastic and reduce its usage.
6. Research more on the Nationwide action plan that targets plastic restrictions for specific markets
7. Read more about the evolution of plastic pollution in different environments, such as marine pollution.

# Websites for reference

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- 4) <https://www.oecd.org/environment/waste/policy-highlights-improving-plastics-management.pdf>
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- 14) <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-44359614>
- 15) <https://www.earthday.org/lessons-from-the-countries-fighting-to-kick-the-plastic-bag-addiction/>
- 16) <https://www.edie.net/news/5/World-Environment-Day--Seven-countries-leading-the-war-on-plastics/>
- 17) <https://swachhindia.ndtv.com/plastic-waste-different-countries-handling-plastic-india-can-learn-14037/>
- 18) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/30-countries-helping-beatpollution-through-un-environments-cleanseas>
- 19) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/report-consumers-and-business-concerned-about-plastic-waste-expect>
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# **(QARMA) Questions a Resolution must answer**

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1. Will there be a limitation on the use of plastics?
2. Can plastic be replaced with a more environmentally and economically friendly material? If yes, what would / could that be?
3. Would there be and, if yes, an upgraded set of laws for the regulation of industrial and single-use plastics?
4. What policies would be created for the management of industrial plastics that are caused by third parties (such as private corporations)?
5. How can countries offer other materials to diminish the use of plastic?
6. Should the resolution include a roadmap that nations in need can follow?
7. Would all the procedures and policies included be economically efficient?.

# Position Paper Guide

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A position paper is a collection of your research. Writing a position paper is a great way to streamline your understanding of a provided topic and point out the main ideas you want to address in committee.

## **A position paper is usually divided into four sections:**

### **I. General Information**

Paragraph – Opening Statement (3 – 4 sentences)

Why is this topic important for the committee to address?

Why does your country care about this issue?

What is your country's policy on this topic?

### **II. National approach**

Paragraph – National Actions (3 – 5 sentences)

Is the topic an issue in your country?

What actions has your country taken to improve or address the issue on a national level?

### **III. International approach**

Paragraph – International Actions (3 – 5 sentences)

How has your country improved or addressed the issues on an international level?

What actions has your country taken on the issues on an international level?

What conventions, treaties, and resolutions have your country supported on this issue?

What organisations is your country a member of that discusses this issue?

Can you reference government officials on this issue?

### **IV. Action Recommendations**

Paragraph – Recommendations for Action (4 – 6 sentences)

What role would your country like to see the international community take to address the problem?

What are your country's recommendations to the committee on how to best resolve the issue?

**Tips for an effective position paper:**

- Do a lot of relevant research. DO NOT include information about your country that is not related to the issue.
- DO NOT restate information found in the topic guide.
- DO NOT just list facts. Give recommendations on issue specifics.
- The final and essential section of your position paper should create the foundation for your participation in the committee. It should first detail your nation's general policy on the critical points of contention presented in this background guide.
- Then, the most important part of your position paper is your presentation or original proposals for solving the issues at hand. These should be presented as specific solutions geared towards the nuances of the topic of the position paper.
- An important point to remember is that a position paper is a formal document and not your personal opinion.

**Note:**

- The position paper should not be more than 1 page long.
- The formatting should be as follows:
  - Font - Times New Roman
  - Font - 12

# Bibliography

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