

# *InventMUN Topic Guide*

## *General Assembly*

### **UNEP**

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Topic: The Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion

Chairs: Maryam Akber, Erick Canastuj

#### **Letter from the Dais**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Maryam, and I'm a senior here at Thomas A. Edison High School. This is my first time being a chair, and I'm really excited for the experience and to hear all the ideas you guys have for this committee. Model UN has been one of the best academic experiences I've had at school, and I hope you all enjoy this conference, whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned delegate. Outside of MUN, I study Medical Assisting at school, and some of my hobbies include jewelry making, henna, and making ribbon bouquets.

Our committee focuses on the environmental impact of fast fashion, which is something not a lot of people stop to consider. The aim is to focus on what companies are doing and what roles countries play in the environmental pollution that results from the production of fast fashion products. Looking forward to hearing your stances and how you all work together to preserve the environment! Email me at [maryama144@nycstudent.net](mailto:maryama144@nycstudent.net) for any questions you may have.

Best,

Maryam Akber

Dear delegates,

My name is Erick but you can call me Edi preferably, I'm a senior at Thomas A Edison CTE HS for automotive repair shop class. I am honored to serve as your chair and host for this year's InventMUN, I hope you all are excited and take an advantage of the skills and connections between other members around you and be comfortable. Some few things about myself, including hobbies is I'm a gym-goer, mostly head to workout every afterschool, I play Sunday-league soccer, Listen to mostly R&B and Latin music in my free-time / studying, and the only impressive thing, which to me it is, is rapidly snapping my fingers, P.S (people think it's my wrist snapping but it's not).

But moving further towards the topic guide what we strive to educate our delegates is the rundown basics of what sort of impact can Fast-Fashion leave behind when mistreated. And what our next step courses are to not only tackle against an environmental challenge, but water scarcity, and Low-cost laborers. I am greatly looking forwards for the day we get to see your showcase of resolution. Email me at [Erickc7898@nycstudents.net](mailto:Erickc7898@nycstudents.net) for any support and/or in advance before the day of visit.

Best,

Erick Canastuj

## Topic Background & Information

Every year the global fashion industry produces billions of garments designed to be worn briefly and discarded quickly. It is estimated that approximately 85% of textiles end up in landfills or are incinerated, contributing significantly to pollution, resource depletion, and climate change. Fast fashion characterized by low-cost, rapidly produced clothing has greatly changed consumer habits worldwide, but at a growing environmental and social cost. Fast fashion is defined as the mass production of inexpensive garments that replicate current fashion trends and move rapidly from design to retail. This model relies on accelerated production cycles, global supply chains, and high consumer turnover. While it has increased accessibility to fashion, it has also intensified environmental degradation through excessive water use, greenhouse gas emissions, chemical pollution, and waste generation. The fast-fashion model began to expand in the late 20th century, with brands such as Zara pioneering rapid production timelines. Over time, companies including H&M, UNIQLO, Forever 21, and Shein adopted similar practices, scaling production to meet rising global demand. As manufacturing often occurs in developing countries, environmental regulation and oversight frequently lag behind industrial growth. This issue is directly relevant to the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, which seeks to promote sustainable development, reduce pollution, and address environmentally destructive practices. UNEP initiatives, including the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, Delegates will be expected to evaluate the responsibility of producing, consuming, and regulating states while keeping in mind the diverse economic capacities of Member States.

## **Environmental Impacts**

The fast fashion industry holds a growing pressure on natural resources through large-scale water and energy use. Fabric production and processing can contribute to water pollution and a lack of resource supply, particularly in regions where manufacturing is heavily concentrated. These environmental effects can often extend beyond national borders, impacting shared ecosystems and global climate systems. In addition, the production, transportation, and disposal of clothing contribute to a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions. As consumption continues to gradually rise, concerns have also grown regarding the long-term environmental sustainability of current production models.

Another major concern is the waste of fabric. Clothing is most commonly treated as disposable, which results in a larger volume of discarded garments and limited reuse or recycling. This can also be shown to have a major impact in Australia, to which researchers conducted a collected amount of data to prove that about every 10 minutes 6,000 kilos of clothes are being thrown away onto the landfill, this all will persist and contribute to broader pollution challenges, including impacts on marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

## **Social and Economic Impacts**

Fast fashion relies heavily on global supply chains that often depend on laborers on “low-cost” wages. While yes, the industry does provide opportunities for employers, there are still some safety concerns regarding their well-being, and fair wages. Poor developing countries often bear the brunt of pollution and poor working conditions and stability, and if spoken economically, fast fashion does contribute to trade growth, but people aren't seeing the bigger picture when environmental and social costs are often unevenly distributed. Which raises questions to the concerns of equity and shared responsibility. Thus, Delegates must consider how to support economic opportunities without reinforcing any sort of harmful practices.

## **Current Situation**

Currently, this issue has many different impacts around the world. It has economic impacts, social impacts, and most importantly, environmental impacts. But, efforts are being made out such as international organizations, governments, and private actors, who have all begun addressing the impacts of fast fashion through a way of improving supply chain transparency, encouraging responsible production, and promoting a more sustainable consumption behavior.

Alternative approaches such as, reducing overproduction, extending garment lifespans, and tapping into a more suitable eco-friendly material, have gained an influx of attention. While these efforts represent only just progress of what could become a worldwide effectiveness. There is currently no real comprehensive global framework regulating the fast fashion industry

## Past Solutions

Some past actions taken by the UN against this issue consisted primarily of using broader sustainability and environmental frameworks rather than sector-specific regulations. They adopted the **Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, which has encouraged Member States to reduce waste and promote sustainable industrial practices. UNEP has further advanced this effort through initiatives such as the **UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion**, which coordinates UN agencies to promote best practices and awareness within the fashion industry. Additionally, UN-supported treaties including the **Basel, Stockholm, and Rotterdam Conventions**, regulate hazardous waste and chemicals associated with textile production and disposal. While these measures have increased global awareness and cooperation, they remain largely voluntary and non-binding, limiting their effectiveness in curbing the environmental damage caused by fast fashion.

The United Nations' efforts to address the environmental impacts of fast fashion have been most effective in raising global awareness and establishing normative frameworks rather than producing direct, measurable reductions in environmental harm. Initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion have successfully brought international attention to issues of overconsumption, waste, and pollution, encouraging governments and corporations to acknowledge their responsibility. UN-backed conventions regulating hazardous chemicals and waste have improved reporting standards and restricted some of the most harmful substances used in textile production. However, the overall degree of effectiveness has been limited, as most measures remain voluntary, lack enforcement mechanisms, and are unevenly implemented across Member States. As a result, while sustainability discourse and corporate commitments have increased, global fast fashion production, textile waste, and emissions have continued to rise, indicating that existing UN actions have not yet matched the scale or speed of the problem.

## Glossary

- **Circular Economy Model** - A system that keeps resources in use for as long as possible, extracting maximum value, then recovering and regenerating products and materials at the end of their life
- **Disposable Consumption**  
A consumption pattern where clothing is used briefly and discarded quickly.
- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**  
The UN body responsible for coordinating global environmental action.

- **UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion**

A UNEP-led initiative promoting environmental and social sustainability in the fashion industry.

- **Social Equity**

The fair distribution of environmental and economic impacts between nations and communities.

- **Shared Responsibility**

The principle that producers, consumers, and governments all share accountability for environmental impacts.

## Delegate List

- **USA** - One of the largest consumers of fast fashion in the world. The US is a large contributor to overconsumption due to fast-changing trends and high purchasing power.
- **UK** - The UK has a high per-capita clothing consumption rate and has explored regulatory approaches to reduce textile waste. The country is increasingly active in promoting circular economy models in fashion.
- **France** - France has taken legislative steps to regulate fast fashion, including measures

against overproduction and waste. It advocates for corporate accountability and sustainable consumption.

- **Germany** - Germany emphasizes environmental regulation, recycling systems, and sustainable manufacturing. It supports strong environmental standards within global supply chains.
- **Italy** - As a global fashion hub, Italy balances economic interests in textiles with sustainability initiatives. It promotes innovation in sustainable fabrics and ethical production.
- **Japan** - Japan focuses on efficiency, technological innovation, and waste reduction. It supports sustainable materials and advanced recycling technologies in the fashion industry.
- **South Korea** - South Korea is a major fashion consumer market with growing awareness of sustainability. It invests in green technology and eco-friendly textile innovation.
- **Canada** - Canada emphasizes environmental protection and responsible consumption. It supports international cooperation and environmental reporting standards for industries.
- **Australia** - Australia faces significant textile waste challenges and advocates for extended producer responsibility policies. It supports stronger waste management and recycling frameworks.
- **Netherlands** - The Netherlands is a global leader in circular economy initiatives. It

strongly promotes textile recycling, reuse, and sustainable design standards.

- **China** - China is the world's largest textile producer and exporter. It plays a critical role in reducing industrial pollution and transitioning to cleaner manufacturing practices.
- **Bangladesh** - Bangladesh's economy heavily depends on garment manufacturing. It seeks sustainable solutions that balance environmental protection with economic development.
- **Vietnam** - Vietnam is a rapidly growing textile manufacturing hub. It faces challenges related to water pollution and waste management from textile production.
- **India** - India is both a major producer and consumer of textiles. It must address water scarcity, chemical runoff, and sustainable cotton production.
- **Cambodia** - Cambodia relies heavily on garment exports for economic stability. Limited environmental regulation makes a sustainable transition a key challenge.
- **Indonesia** - Indonesia's textile industry contributes significantly to river pollution. It seeks international support for cleaner production technologies.
- **Pakistan** - Pakistan's textile sector is a major water consumer and polluter. The country emphasizes the need for sustainable water management solutions.
- **Sri Lanka** - Sri Lanka is known for comparatively ethical garment manufacturing. It promotes sustainable production while remaining economically competitive.
- **Turkiye** - Turkiye acts as a bridge between European markets and Asian production. It focuses on improving environmental standards in textile manufacturing.
- **Ethiopia** - Ethiopia is an emerging garment manufacturing hub. It seeks investment and technology transfer to avoid repeating environmentally harmful practices.
- **Maldives** - The Maldives is highly vulnerable to marine pollution and climate change. Microplastics and textile waste pose direct threats to its ecosystems.

- **The Philippines** - The Philippines faces severe marine pollution and is impacted by microplastics from global textile waste. It advocates for stronger international pollution controls.
- **Kenya** - Kenya receives large amounts of discarded clothing through second-hand markets. This contributes to textile waste and landfill overflow.
- **Peru** - Peru's biodiversity and water systems are vulnerable to industrial pollution. It emphasizes environmental protection and sustainable resource use.
- **Ghana** - Ghana is a major destination for global textile waste. The influx of discarded clothing strains waste management systems and harms ecosystems.
- **Bolivia** - Bolivia is environmentally vulnerable and emphasizes sustainable development. It supports regulations that protect land and biodiversity.
- **Fiji** - Fiji faces threats from ocean pollution and climate change. Textile-related microplastics pose risks to marine biodiversity and livelihoods.
- **Spain** - Spain has a significant fashion retail market and faces growing textile waste challenges. It supports EU-led sustainability regulations and circular economy initiatives.
- **Brazil** - Brazil is both a producer of natural fibers and a biodiversity-rich nation. It emphasizes protecting ecosystems from agricultural expansion and pollution.
- **Mexico** - Mexico has a growing textile and manufacturing sector. It seeks sustainable industrial development while reducing pollution and waste.
- **Egypt** - Egypt is a major cotton producer with water resource challenges. It emphasizes sustainable agriculture and pollution control in textile processing.
- **Morocco** - Morocco is an emerging textile manufacturing hub supplying European markets. It faces water scarcity and supports cleaner production technologies.
- **Sweden** - Sweden is a global leader in environmental policy and sustainable consumption. It advocates for strict environmental standards and innovation in textile recycling.
- **Denmark** - Denmark promotes circular fashion and sustainable design practices. It supports lifecycle-based regulation of textile production.
- **Nigeria** - Nigeria is impacted by second-hand clothing imports and textile waste. It advocates for better waste management and environmental protection.
- **Chile** - Chile faces environmental vulnerability due to climate change and pollution. It supports sustainable production models and international environmental cooperation.
- **Belgium** - Belgium plays a role in EU policymaking on environmental regulation. It supports transparency in supply chains and corporate environmental responsibility.

## Questions to Consider

1. How to improve accountability across supply chains?

- 2. How does fast fashion contribute to water pollution, air pollution, and soil degradation?**
- 3. How can textile-producing countries reduce pollution without harming economic growth? 4. How can UNEP promote reuse, repair, and recycling at a global scale?**
- 5. How does microplastic accumulation threaten marine food chains and human health?**