

COMMON WEALTH



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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Commonwealth of Nations at PACMUN 2019! My name is Alex Qiu and I am currently a senior at Interlake High. This year I have the privilege of serving as your Director alongside my two exceptional staff members: your Chair Peter Lie, a senior from Inglemoor High, and your Assistant Director Harshitha Rebala, a freshman from Interlake High. We are all in this together to ensure the greatest possible experience for this committee!

Within the Commonwealth, we have the opportunity to debate as members of a unique group of nations made up mostly by remnants of the former British Empire. We shall be discussing the topics of Ocean Environmental Accountability and Corruption in the Public Sector, which were chosen due to their rising role in present programs of the Commonwealth, and their relevance to a diverse range of countries. Ocean Environmental Accountability already plays a role in many policy issues regarding developed nations, while posing greater questions with balancing economic growth in lesser developed nations. On the other hand, Corruption in the Public Sector poses a related, but quite unique set of questions. As the developed world becomes involved in the well-being of the undeveloped world, the conflict between sovereignty and corruption has emerged on many levels of significance. There are more potential topics and directions that this committee can explore, but this Background Guide is here to outline the main paths advised.

The Background Guide provided will give the context for our two topics, as well as get delegates up to speed on the various bloc, country, and subtopic information that this committee will engage with. Please contribute to your own stance with research of your own that is sourced from credible origins, as preparation will only help the experiences of everyone in this committee. The directions explored in this committee are more niche and specific than those in other committees, so the Background Guide should be used to inspire further research on the ideas outlined. If you ever have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. I'm looking forward to seeing you all in committee!

Best,

Alex Qiu

Director | Commonwealth

Pacific Model United Nations 2019



COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Commonwealth of Nations, one of the newest additions to PACMUN 2019! The Commonwealth is a unique political association, composed mostly of past British territories along with the United Kingdom. It is led by Queen Elizabeth who meets biannually with other government leaders to discuss and take action on pressing issues. By giving all sovereign states equal power, the Commonwealth ensures that all have the opportunity to voice their concerns and issues. While the Commonwealth is not a committee of the United Nations, it is a similar international organization which deals with complex global issues regarding inequality, global trade and environmental sustainability.

As the Commonwealth is one of the oldest associations of states, delegates should be familiar with how its unique history impacts the beliefs of its member-states, as well as the range of socioeconomic status across the member states. Delegates will be expected to be knowledgeable in the cultural and developmental divides that have long stratified the member states along with the shared concerns and values that bring member-states together. Preparation is critical to this committee, as delegates will be participating in debate over the topics of Ocean Environmental Accountability and Corruption in the Public Sector, topics that demand identification of very distinct problems and solutions. With strong background research and creativity, delegates will be able to effectively address the problems of the Commonwealth.

For committee, delegates are expected to write a position paper for each topic in order to be eligible for awards and are otherwise strongly recommended for the sake of debate quality. For further information on position paper requirements, delegates may reference the PACMUN 2019 website under the Resources page. Each position paper should include an overview of the topic given, the beliefs and concerns of your country, previous Commonwealth action, and possible solutions that the Commonwealth can implement to resolve the issue. Please take note that since the Commonwealth is a separate organization from the UN, your paper must contain details on your position's stance and policies in the Commonwealth and not just the UN.

Position papers should be turned in to the committee email address, cw@pacificmun.com, no later than the time listed on the website, unless an extension has been granted by the dais.

TOPIC A

Corruption in the Public Sector

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Corruption is often an invisible problem, with even the larger negative repercussions being often hidden under more excuses and cover-ups by various governments. Many underlying problems such as poverty and incompetence of public officials often lead to conditions where those with money dominate over the interest of the public when it comes to persuading often weak-willed public officials. However, corruption poses a threat in both developed and undeveloped nations and has ramifications that stretch beyond the scope of government officials of each nation or jurisdiction, especially in regard to the economic relationships of a nation in an international context. Small scale deals and influencing behind the scenes, outside of the scope of the oversight of the national government, can break down the infrastructure and economic performance of a country, preventing standards of appropriate economic and public sector assets from being met for example. Meanwhile, larger scale corruption can take place with “grand” and “political” corruption which occur with agencies and political decision makers, respectively, which can have greater impacts and consequences than that of petty corruption. The United Nations has been officially committed to fighting corruption such as in the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, while the Commonwealth of Nations has emphasized the importance of fighting corruption among its member states of which major players in world power such as the United States are not a part of. At the same time however, the Commonwealth has been criticized by organizations such as Transparency International for ignoring the underlying factor of corruption within its meetings to establish defense budgets and economic action. Through opaque government, it becomes increasingly easier for actions such as misappropriation of funds and money laundering to slip in under the guise of public sector budgeting.



The public sector is defined as the part of an economy which is controlled or owned by the government, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary. Meanwhile, corruption is defined as illegal acts committed within a government for purposes against that of the entrusting of power to an official, on varying scales from petty, grand, and political, according to Transparency International.

HISTORY

Corruption has existed in human society since the beginning of any organizational structure and has often been a force indicative of a negligent and ineffective government. Throughout history, order has been a defining characteristic of the human condition and the way that we survive as a species, from tribal leadership, medieval honor codes, to the complex governments, we surrender to order due to the security and communication that it grants in daily life. At the same time, human nature and the imperfections of our world bring rise to crime and rebellions against any order, and many times, proper order becomes eroded when disorder resides within the institutions meant to bring leadership. Whether through selfishness, lack of vigilance, necessity, or through even good intentions, the various governments of human society have always been susceptible to corruption.

In ancient times, corruption was looked down upon and punished to varying extents, even if governments did not have the accountability measures that the information technology today has. From Hammurabi's Code to the moral laws of Abrahamic tribes to the modern interpretations of such moral codes in forms such as the Bible, corruption was seen as a serious crime, punishable by death in certain societies. During these times, issues of land and natural resources were often the premise for officials to turn corrupt, especially if these were in short supply.

Within the formation of the urban cities such as in the United States in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, corruption was known to be a problem during this "Gilded Age". Many cities in the United States from the 1880s to the 1910s had corrupt administrations known for operating "political machines", where labor and control over citizens and new immigrants were returned with political favors and jobs from a central "Boss".



On a larger scale, corruption spreads across a nation when the institutions are deeply rooted within crime, such as in the “narco-states” that have grown since the 1970s to the present day. Manuel Noriega was known as a figure in the drug trade in the Americas, and was both an ally and an enemy of the United States, facilitating anti-communist aggression in favor of US foreign policy interests for a time while simultaneously using his power to cut a slice of the regional drug trade for himself. An equal, if not greater, figure of infamy would be Pablo Escobar, who was able to grow his drug empire through his philosophy of “Plata o Plomo” (“Silver or Lead”), a succinct description of his policy towards government officials.

PAST UN ACTION

Corruption has long plagued the world, harming economic development and destroying ethical values. Developing countries, such as the members of the Commonwealth are especially susceptible to this crime as it often goes unchecked. The first major step to fight corruption occurred in 2003 when the United Nations General Assembly passed the UN Global Convention against Corruption (Resolution 58/4), a legally binding anti-corruption treaty with an extensive guide to dealing with different forms of corruption and recovery. This document is the only universal anti-corruption instrument. The Conference of the States Parties (COSP) is the associated policy making body of the Convention but the actual implementation into domestic law is evaluated by a peer review process. However, a global institution like the UN has had less success in addressing corruption compared to regional bodies which have tackled it through smaller scale initiatives, particularly the Commonwealth. Recognizing the additional support needed for its developing countries, the Commonwealth built the Legislative and Technical Guide as a resource for countries attempting to adhere to the UN Global Convention against Corruption. The Commonwealth has also created the Model Act and Codes of Conduct with input from three regional (Caribbean, Pacific and other small jurisdictions) seminars. Publicly endorsed in 2013, the act aimed to ensure figures of authority would be held accountable to following the law. In addition, the Commonwealth secretariat worked to address the global corruption issue in 2011 by gathering African anti-

corruption agency leaders to create the Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Commonwealth Africa. After four years in 2015, Caribbean countries followed suit and formed the Association of Integrity Commissions and Anti-Corruption Bodies in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Both organizations brought together their members to exchange anti-corruption initiatives and developed bilateral agreements to resolve and prevent trans-border crimes. In addition, the Commonwealth has made strong efforts to improve transparency for natural resources financial management by assisting member-states to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). This global organization's requirement of tracking and reporting of total natural resource revenue and spending fostered accountability and curbed corruption.

Both the United Nations and the Commonwealth have worked towards a more sustainable and fair future. Thanks to their efforts, countries now have the resources to persecute corruption, but they still have a long way to go in order to protect all their citizens.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Commonwealth of Nations has had several successes into the present, but substantial work still needs to be done. The performance of member countries against corruption can be seen in stark comparison against countries in similar regions as said member countries, as noted by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI): "Corruption perception of Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean is also better when compared to non-Commonwealth countries in those regions." Despite this progress, corruption is still a significant issue within the Commonwealth, perpetuated by the historical conflicts and the developing fight against poverty that has been present in many nations formerly under British control.

For instance, institutionalized corruption in Commonwealth member nation governments is often hard to track not only by third party anti-corruption measures, but also by anti-corruption interests within such governments. According to a 2019 Interview with Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, the Director General of the Institute of



National Security Studies in Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defense, even working against petty corruption cases among government officials can prove difficult. His corruption-fighting approaches of using technology such as the website "I Paid a Bribe" and digital methods to account for government records have not seen widespread support among the Commonwealth organization. Introducing regulations to cover the examination of public records could help the Commonwealth of Nations develop a more effective anti-corruption policy as opposed to their current strategy, but this could face opposition due to its implications on government sovereignty and privacy.

Within the scope of power that the Commonwealth currently has, there have been efforts to standardize anti-corruption levels and morality clauses to properly enforce Commonwealth policy. Patricia Scotland, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, stated in 2016 that future plans for the Commonwealth include introducing requirements for member states to meet and prove their authenticity under new anti-corruption standards, and beginning an initiative to curtail funding from members states unable to meet these standards with authenticity. In 2017, the Commonwealth Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform similarly introduced a new set of standards, albeit within the scope of individual officials. The 2017 Moral Act on Integrity in Public Life assesses the conduct and advises moral guidelines for both elected and non-elected public officials and is a step further into developing more comprehensive anti-corruption reform. The Commonwealth is moving away from large scale corruption standards that merely expose the lack of authority the council has, to a more assertive stance within the nature of the governments of Commonwealth Member States.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 2: BANGLADESH

With its GDP of 249.7 billion, Bangladesh cannot afford to direct most, if not any resources towards fighting corruption. This is mostly due to the fact that other issues such as contaminated drinking water, and the thousands of refugees are

straining the economy. Therefore, Bangladesh still ranks as one of the most corrupt countries despite the fact that it has made immense progress in education and healthcare over the past decade. The heart of the problem lies in the fact that out of the 18 departments in charge of assisting citizens, law enforcement was deemed the most corrupt. For instance, a report of Transparency International Bangladesh concluded that 72.5% of people seeking out law enforcement fell victim to corruption as figures of authority would implicate and delay cases until bribes were given. Additionally, even Health and Education sectors have harmed almost half the households in the country. Corruption has become so rampant that according to TIB, 71% of the people think bribes are necessary to services. Bangladesh does have anti-corruption legislation such as the Anti-corruption commission rules and money laundering prevention rules along with Anti-Corruption Commission, but all has been futile. Since the government itself has high rates of corruption, it is struggling to correct itself and provide protection for citizens. Moving forward, Bangladesh must focus on stricter anti-corruption measures for the government itself and try to gain back the lost faith from citizens and businesses.

CASE STUDY 2: KENYA

Bordering the Indian Ocean in Eastern Africa, Kenya is a developing country with a GDP of under a hundred billion. The citizens of the country are extremely vulnerable to corruption as they struggle through financial problems, water shortage and healthcare risks due to pollution. Regardless of the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act 2003 along with the Bribery Act of 2016, government officials are exploiting the public and foreign aid for funds under the guise of helping the general public while in reality, they have been benefiting themselves. For instance, police officers extort money from innocents on the lie of funding counterterrorism and workers in the service-sector demand bribes in order to assist the public. These actions not only harm the victims, but the country's economy as a whole. Corruption inhibits business growth, fair market competition and foreign investment. However, Kenya has taken a major step in combating corruption with the recent arrest of Kenya's finance minister, Henry Rotich, and other government



officials for corruption. This small victory has given citizens of Kenya hope for a better future since the government that was unable to overcome its own corrupt practices, was now proving that it has the ability to hold anyone, regardless of their social status, accountable to the law.

BLOC POSITIONS

While it is entirely possible for each country to both fall victim to and work to solve this issue, the countries fall into a few distinct groups. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom lead the way with the lowest levels of corruption, and with the most financial resources. Many others are actively fighting corruption from many positions, such as Nigeria, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Several countries fall short, needing aid from others and a plan of action to make progress, notably, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. Common among these countries is a failed governmental system in the wake of imperialism and colonialism, leaving them without a sufficiently localized structure to effectively distribute resources.

Least Corrupt: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom

While no country is ever free of corruption, these countries have some of the best countermeasures and agencies dedicated to a fair society. Without external pressures such as a failing economy or an unstable government, these countries are able to establish anti-corruption legislation and hold the public and government accountable. Additionally, countries in this block have substantial financial resources, which many developing nations lack. Recently, these countries have taken a mentor role in assisting others implement anti-corruption legislative and offer training for criminal justice officials. For instance, prosecutors from Sri Lanka were mentored for three weeks in Australia's Office of the Attorney General. Others will be looking up to these countries for aid and resources such as models for anti-corruption measures. lead the fight against corruption.



Countries Working Towards Combating Corruption: Bahamas, Cyprus, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kingdom of eSwatini, Malaysia, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and United Republic of Tanzania

Recognizing the taxing effects of corruption, these countries have stepped up to combat corruption. While they may not have the financial resources or technical experience to tackle the problems by themselves, they recognize the need to combat this issue and often ask for aid where they require it. However, it is important to understand that corruption is still a large problem that threatens society and more action will need to be taken.

Countries that Require Aid: Bangladesh, Belize, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Uganda

A third group of countries falls short of meeting set thresholds or displaying any significant effort. Bangladesh, Belize, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Uganda make up a group that requires aid from other countries to help with their efforts. Common among these countries is the pattern of a failed governmental system in the wake of imperialism and colonialism, leaving them without a sufficiently localized structure to effectively distribute resources. Therefore, they often seek assistance from more developed countries, especially previous colonizers, to address problems that stem from actions long ago.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How does a policy balance anti-corruption against infringement on sovereignty?
2. How should the Commonwealth knowingly engage with corrupt high-level government officials?



3. What kind of factors should be considered to assess the level of corruption?
4. How can other Commonwealth nations cooperate to secure fair and equitable government frameworks?

FURTHER RESEARCH

[HTTPS://WWW.ACCAGLOBAL.COM/IN/EN/MEMBER/MEMBER/ACCOUNTING-BUSINESS/2018/06/INSIGHTS/COMMONWEALTH-AFRICA.HTML](https://www.accaglobal.com/in/en/member/member/accounting-business/2018/06/insights/commonwealth-africa.html)

[HTTPS://WWW.GOVERNANCEINSTITUTE.COM.AU/MEDIA/367597/Z_FINAL_SUBMISSION_NATIONAL_ANTI_CORRUPTION.PDF](https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/media/367597/Z_FINAL_SUBMISSION_NATIONAL_ANTI_CORRUPTION.PDF)

[HTTPS://JIS.GOV.JM/CARIBBEAN-COMMONWEALTH-COUNTRIES-GET-COMMITMENT-FIGHT-CORRUPTION/](https://jis.gov.jm/caribbean-commonwealth-countries-get-commitment-fight-corruption/)

[HTTP://THECOMMONWEALTH.ORG/TACKLING-CORRUPTION-IMPROVING-TRANSPARENCY-NATURAL-RESOURCES](http://thecommonwealth.org/tackling-corruption-improving-transparency-natural-resources)

[HTTPS://WWW.TRANSPARENCY.ORG/COUNTRY/UGA](https://www.transparency.org/country/UGA)

[HTTPS://WWW.WEFORUM.ORG/AGENDA/2019/02/LEAST-CORRUPT-COUNTRIES-TRANSPARENCY-INTERNATIONAL-2018/](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/least-corrupt-countries-transparency-international-2018/)

[HTTPS://KNOWLEDGEHUB.TRANSPARENCY.ORG/HELPDESK/INTEGRITY-RISKS-FOR-INTERNATIONAL-BUSINESSES-IN-KENYA](https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/integrity-risks-for-international-businesses-in-kenya)

[HTTPS://WWW.BROOKINGS.EDU/BLOG/ORDER-FROM-CHAOS/2019/08/22/CORRUPTION-AND-TERRORISM-THE-CASE-OF-KENYA/](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/08/22/corruption-and-terrorism-the-case-of-kenya/)

[HTTPS://WWW.NEWVISION.CO.UG/NEW_VISION/NEWS/1484094/CORRUPTION-PERSISTS-UGANDA](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1484094/corruption-persists-uganda)

[HTTPS://WWW.TRANSPARENCY.ORG/CPI2018](https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018)

[HTTP://THECOMMONWEALTH.ORG/TACKLING-CORRUPTION-REINFORCING-RULE-LAW](http://thecommonwealth.org/tackling-corruption-reinforcing-rule-law)



TOPIC B

Ocean Environmental Accountability

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The ocean covers 71% of the earth's surface and contains 97% of its water. It houses multitudes of species and accounts for over USD \$3 trillion in GDP and 3 billion jobs around the world. For so many and so much to depend on the ocean, the treatment it receives from humankind stands in stark contrast. Every year, more than 12 million tonnes of plastic waste pollute our oceans and 80% of that plastic comes from land. This plastic litter is a testament to poor environmental practices, with everyday objects like bottles, cups and packaging, and plastics found in cigarette filters and straws washing down to the ocean when it rains. From there, it breaks down and travels great distances, affecting large areas of ocean. The plastics cause harm in a variety of ways, from choking and tangling wildlife to spreading unknown amounts of toxicity throughout the oceans. All across coastlines, poor waste management practices directly lead to negative outcomes in the water. The rise of megacities, with populations greater than ten million, put enormous pressure on waste management infrastructure, calling into question the sustainability of said practices. Six of the top twenty cities reside within the Commonwealth. While China has seven, the Commonwealth still holds power over their own regions. Without definitive action on the part of the Commonwealth, the ocean will continue to be exploited and polluted, affecting all those that depend on it. The Commonwealth is also uniquely situated to be a model for sustainable environmental practices and accountability across both developed and developing nations. Additionally, overfishing has affected upwards of a quarter of the world's fisheries and growing use of fertilizers have introduced nitrates into the water, facilitating algal blooms and dead zones.

Accountability is defined by Merriam-Webster as an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions. Often an expectation coming from the public, accountability rests on people, institutions, and governments in

positions of power. For our purposes, it is the responsibility for the deterioration of the natural environment, implying the allocation of environmental costs to the economic activities that cause such deterioration to fix their practices. As we only have one earth to live on in the foreseeable future, it is paramount that we keep it sustainable for future populations. If we do not, then we will be held accountable for the long-term health of the world over the coming generations.

HISTORY

Within the span of history, human presence has remained relatively impact free as just another species on planet Earth. Since the start of the industrial revolution however, human waste and byproducts have increased exponentially over the course of the last century and a half. The rapid industrialization of the Western World led to the introduction and staggering growth of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Many other chemicals introduced into the environment showed their negative effects years later. More recently, the expansion of capitalism and technology across the globe has stimulated mass production and consumerist attitudes of material items. Consequently, the human race has generated more plastic waste in the last eight years than the whole of the 20th century. Additionally, because of the development of modern technology, ocean resources are in danger of being overexploited. More efficient methods of fishing combined with natural greed and capitalist values have put in danger the sustainable food source available to us over our whole past. Recently, whales, sharks, and many fish stocks have become scarcer in many locations. Endangered species are accidentally caught and killed in indiscriminate fishing nets.

With the rise of global population, food sources everywhere have become strained. On land, the cash crops designed to feed many mouths have needed artificial fertilizers to keep pace with rising demand. These fertilizers, such as nitrates, make their way to the ocean, and help to create dead zones and algal blooms, sucking the life out of the oceans.

The Commonwealth's framework for addressing issues was introduced at the beginning of its inception. The underlying principles for the Blue Charter were



provided in the Charter of the Commonwealth, signed in 2013 by Queen Elizabeth. These ensure that the Commonwealth takes a fair, equitable, inclusive and sustainable approach to ocean economic development and protection. To drive action on specific issues, Commonwealth nations participate in Blue Charter Action Groups that are member driven, led by 'Champion' countries. Champion countries allow individuals and groups to take charge on issues they find important. That way, the groups working on the project require motivation and will solve issues that pertain to them. Currently, 12 countries have become Champion countries and stepped forward on nine topics they believe are important and are moving forward with initiatives and programs in specific areas designed to promote activism across the world. The Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) seeks to ban microbeads and significantly reduce single-use plastics by 2021.

PAST UN ACTION

Throughout much of history, the ocean has been seen as a dumping ground, washing away the blemishes of the land. The first meaningful laws passed on ocean conservation came from the UN, through the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I), in April 1958. Part of the resulting agreement was the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of Living Resources of the High Seas, designed to solve the problems involved in the conservation of living resources of the high seas through international cooperation. These guidelines set the precedent for creating universal maritime laws and maintaining sustainable ocean practices.

To ensure that shipping is cleaner and greener, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a United Nations institution, has adopted regulations to address the emission of air pollutants from ships and has adopted mandatory energy-efficiency measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from international shipping. These include the landmark International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of 1973, as modified by a 1978 Protocol (MARPOL), and the 1954 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil.

Additionally, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has worked towards the conservation of the ocean through the Global Programme of Action for



the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, which has been active since 1995, that aims to provide guidance to national and regional authorities on how to prevent, reduce, control and eliminate marine degradation from land-based activities. The 2017 UN Environment's #CleanSeas campaign is urging governments to enact policies to reduce the use of plastic, targeting industry to minimize plastic packaging and redesign products, and calling on consumers to change their throwaway habits before irreversible damage is done to the seas. Also important to note are the 1954 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of 1973, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency measures.

In the Blue Charter's brief past, the main force of action has come from the Action Groups and their Champion countries. Each individual project has driven work towards more sustainable biomes, including coral reefs, mangroves, aquaculture, acidification, and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In the 70 years of Commonwealth existence, slow progress has been made in different areas, but never as much or as focused as the Blue Charter.

CURRENT SITUATION

Out of the 53 members of the Commonwealth, 46 of them have a marine coastline. Billions look towards the ocean for a livelihood and its economy is estimated to be worth \$24 trillion due to global trade. However, due to humanity's harmful activities such as pollution, destruction of habitats, and climate change, the marine ecosystem is in an endangered state. A truckload of waste enters the ocean every minute. Many different numbers have been suggested by scientists on the exact extent of earth's crisis. From 12 years to save it, to 3 meters of sea level rise, to the 80,000 tons of plastic in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, staggering estimates appear wherever you look. In order to create a sustainable future and preserve the ocean trade and ecosystems, the Commonwealth established the Blue Charter in 2018. The Blue Charter addresses the numerous factors contributing to the perilous condition of the ocean by creating nine Blue Charter Action Groups which are led by



12 Champion countries. Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) is one such group and it is focused on reducing plastic pollution that affect ecosystems. The Blue Charter also recognizes the important role of technology and has devoted the action group Ocean Observation to creating a sustainable future with the aid of technology. Another area of focus is habitat protection which is covered by these teams: Coral Reef Protection and Restoration, Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihoods, and Marine Protected Areas. These groups ensure endangered species get legislative protection and resource allocation. Along with ecosystem protection, the other major factors are human influence and how they affect the health of the ocean. The Ocean Acidification, Sustainable Aquaculture and Climate Change teams work to identify how the ocean resources can be used in a sustainable manner. After all, along with the marine species, the marine-dependent societies will also be devastated by the oceans' deterioration. The efforts of all these action groups flow into the Sustainable Blue economy, which aims to outline eco-friendly global trade practices of the ocean.

In addition to the efforts of the Commonwealth member-states, notable NGOs, such as the World Economic Forum and World Wide Fund for Nature, have stepped up to assist the members of the Commonwealth attain their goals. Ocean Conservancy works for the protection of special marine habitats, the restoration of sustainable fisheries and most importantly, for reducing the human impact on ocean ecosystems. Their focus lies in public education and policy change. Sea Shepherd takes a more aggressive stance, taking direct actions against whaling boats on the sea, like usage of butyric acid. Many more NGOs also assist in different sectors of the environment. Corporations are also starting to recognize their impact, linking unsustainable usage to long term economic losses. While the Blue Charter has given the Commonwealth direction towards tackling the ocean environmental accountability, it is imperative that all member-states must make immediate and coordinated effort, collaborating with companies and organizations to make an impact.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: SAMOA

The island of Samoa lies in the South Pacific, halfway between New Zealand and Hawaii. With a GDP of under \$1 billion, it does not have many economic back stops to rely on. Its population of 200,000's main revenue comes in the form of coastal and ocean-related activities, such as tourism, weather-based agriculture, and recreation. Due to this, the environment around Samoa and the health of the surrounding ocean is critical. Specifically, temperature stress and ocean acidification negatively affect coral reefs, a large tourist attraction. Often, countries competing for ocean space will take part in unsustainable practices in order to claim space and discourage others from expanding as well. Thus, the lack of governance affected the environment negatively. Originally, a lack of ocean governance led to a relatively unregulated area of chaos in the South Pacific. Exclusive economic zones are areas in which only a specific country is allowed to gain revenue from, including activities such as fishing and tourism. Without these, it is entirely possible for a country to be overrun by another, and economically choked by unsustainable environmental practices, like overfishing. Article 76 of UNCLOS implemented training courses for countries to be able to recognize their own capacity and prepare submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The workshops were held jointly with the UN Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS) and the Commonwealth Secretariat. As a result, and further consultation, eight countries lodged submissions for extension of the continental shelf in their exclusive economic zone, including Samoa. While the outcome is still in doubt, substantial progress has been made because of it. In the South Pacific, the Commonwealth helps to facilitate the rightful and fair claiming of countries exclusive economic zones.

CASE STUDY 2: JAMAICA

Jamaica is another one of the Commonwealth's islands. Located south of Cuba, Jamaica is much larger than Samoa, with a population of 2.9 million and a



GDP of close to \$15 billion. 27 Pacific islands have joined the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, or the CCOA, in an attempt by the Commonwealth to address poor practices in regard to waste. However, in Jamaica the problem comes from the land, which simply washes off into the sea. Beaches lie covered in layers of plastic after each new rainfall. Laws are in place to mitigate this problem, but the fallout comes from the lack of enforcement. “Across the Commonwealth region, failure to enforce the laws is a common thread,” says Stephen Harris, Special Representative to the CCOA. In Jamaica, numerous problems surrounding the plastic waste buildup occur due to a simple lack of repercussions. “So the laws are in place but they are not being enforced and therefore you see a lot of the stuff blowing or washing around the environment. And it goes into the air and is poisonous. There is a lot of money in solutions, but those solutions need to stand up to increasingly rigorous tests,” Harris said. This year, Jamaica introduced a single-use plastics ban, holding corporations accountable for their manufacture, importation, and distribution of those materials. Legislation, helped along by organizations and supported by public and groups such as the Commonwealth, has made a large difference there already. Like many other countries, Jamaica has lots of work still to be done towards their goals, and the Commonwealth can start by helping to enforce environmental legislation and attempt to aid them in their efforts. Additionally, many other countries can follow Jamaica’s example, with concentrated, cohesive governmental action utilizing outside support.

BLOC POSITIONS

Because of the nature of the Blue Charter, the assumption is made that every country is committed to a sustainable earth. However, different countries might have different priorities when it comes to local problems or focuses. Due to the fact that each country comes from a wildly diverse range of economic backgrounds and demographics, the countries do not have a consensus on what to focus on or how to address it



Highest Economic Bracket: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom

These countries have larger economic resources to use, but also put less emphasis on local issues, instead choosing to address larger, global issues. For instance, they might be less interested in helping a small area clean up shores, but more interested in reducing shipping carbon outputs across the globe. This is due to their global connections, meaning that they have more invested in the overall health of the world, and have the excess resources to be able to address them. Smaller countries cannot afford to take care of worldwide recurring issues, so these countries must either lend a helping hand, or consolidate resources and focus on national issues. Normally, these countries utilize their worldwide soft power to facilitate sustainable practices.

Middle Ground Countries: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka

While these nations also possess economic power, they do not have the same wide-reaching influence as the first bloc. Additionally, they would like to see issues resolved that help them in some way, such as direct clean up or legislation relating to them. Oceanic destruction affects these countries mildly, and they do not have as solid systems in place for mitigating negative effects. Often, solutions for these countries include both individual fixes, as well as larger scale root causes. They would like to see legislation passed that also does both, as they have global investments as well as endangered local involvements.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Jamaica, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tuvalu

Small Island Nations are typically financially limited, and each would prefer if something was done to help their country specifically, such as assistance with a certain problem or directly changing a condition. Because they are completely or significantly dependent on the ocean, they have strong feelings about the continued



abuses, and hope that the earth will become sustainable in the long run. Additionally, many are low-lying, running into the risks of sea level rise as the planet warms. As a general rule, the small island nations do not have the resources to conduct or help conduct global operations like larger more financially stable nations do and cannot afford to be as invested with the problems of others as the larger, more economically stable countries are. Their indigenous populations are more suited to their islands and continuing the same traditions and practices they have for generations, rather than traveling across oceans to appeal to westernized courts about their oceanic problems. They are also the most impacted and the least at fault group

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Why should the Commonwealth have significance in comparison to other multilateral ocean agreements?
2. Should the Commonwealth engage with non-member superpowers to develop large scale environmental measures?
3. Should the Commonwealth have the powers to enforce economic restrictions for environmental purposes?

FURTHER RESEARCH

[HTTPS://CONTENT.GOVDELIVERY.COM/ACCOUNTS/UKNOC/BULLETINS/2404D02](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKNOC/bulletins/2404D02)

[HTTPS://WWW.WATERCANADA.NET/COMMONWEALTH-COUNTRIES-EYE-BAN-ON-SINGLE-USE-PLASTICS/](https://www.watercanada.net/commonwealth-countries-eye-ban-on-single-use-plastics/)

[HTTPS://OCEANCONSERVANCY.ORG/NEWS/ENTANGLED-EATEN-CONTAMINATED-OCEAN-CONSERVANCY-COMMONWEALTH-SCIENTIFIC-INDUSTRIAL-RESEARCH-ORGANIZATION-CSIRO-PUBLISH-FIRST-COMPREHENSIVE-IMPACT-ASSESSMENT-TRASH-MARINE-WILDLIFE/](https://oceanconservancy.org/news/entangled-eaten-contaminated-ocean-conservancy-commonwealth-scientific-industrial-research-organization-csiro-publish-first-comprehensive-impact-assessment-trash-marine-wildlife/)

[HTTPS://BLUECHARTER.THECOMMONWEALTH.ORG/](https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/)



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