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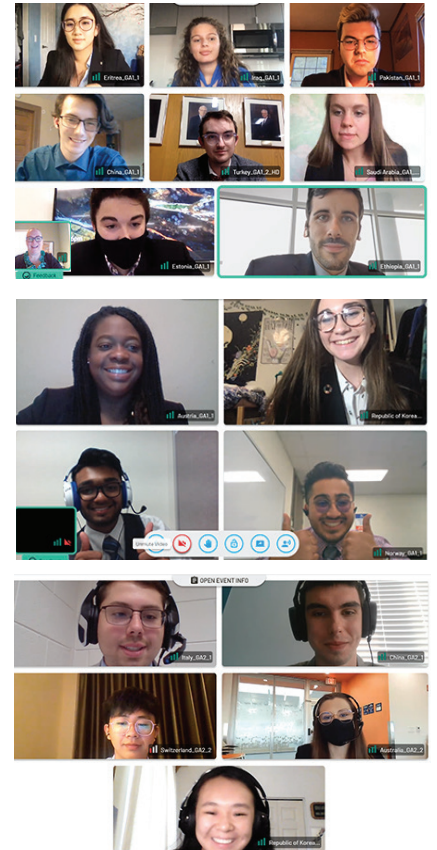
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United Nations Environment Assembly Background Guide 2021

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NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2021 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). This year's staff is: Director Lindsey Velde and Assistant Director Anthony Bassey. Lindsey completed her Bachelor of Science in Marketing with an interest in data trends at the University of South Florida. After several years in the industry, she is currently pursuing her master's degree at New York University in Applied Statistics for Social Science Research. Anthony studied Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University with a minor in Spanish, and he currently works for the American Red Cross.

The topics under discussion for UNEA are:

- I. Leveraging Climate Action for Sustainable Development
- II. Safeguarding Arctic Biodiversity

The Assembly was created at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). As the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEA holds universal membership with 193 members. UNEA is the highest-level decision-making body on the environment, which meets every other year. The Assembly works to assist in the development of environmental policy and international law through its resolutions. During the Assembly's sessions, items that coincide with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a priority.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretary-General Ana Willett at usgana.dc@nmun.org or Secretary-General Courtney Indart at secgen.dc@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,
Lindsey Velde, Director
Anthony Bassey, Assistant Director



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Committee Overview

Introduction

Twenty years after the adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) called for the strengthening and upgrading of the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) so that it could better execute its mandate.¹ In 2013, the 58-member Governing Council of UN Environment adopted resolution 27/2, which expanded the Governing Council to universal membership and requested that the General Assembly change its designation to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), done so by General Assembly resolution 67/251 of the same year.² UNEA is the governing body of UN Environment and is the international community's highest-level decision-making body on environmental matters.³ UNEA's universal membership strengthens its own role and the role of UN Environment in international affairs as well as to increase the responsiveness of Member States in developing environmental policy.⁴

UN Environment exists because of a concerted effort made during the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden.⁵ Subsequently, the General Assembly established UN Environment as the official body concerned with environmental issues within the United Nations (UN).⁶ Since 1972, UN Environment has played a significant role in coordinating environmental policy across the UN system.⁷ UNEA governs and sets policy for UN Environment, whose mission is to "provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment" in order to develop environmental-friendly practices and policies in the UN system.⁸ UN Environment is a UN program that encourages international, regional, and local coordination for environmental issues, while also ensuring various other UN entities considers environmental impacts when executing their missions.⁹ UN Environment reports to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹⁰

UN Environment served as the secretariat and was a main contributor for the planning and execution of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, the outcomes of which included the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and *Agenda 21*.¹¹ These landmark documents revolutionized the international community's approach to environmental issues, provided further guidance, and renewed support for UN Environment's role in international cooperation on environmental protection.¹² UNCED marked a turning point for international collaboration to preserve biodiversity and the climate with the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (1992) and the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (1992) both opening for signature at the summit.¹³ The *Convention to Combat Desertification* (1994), another major agreement, was adopted two years later in 1994.¹⁴ While the three Rio Conventions are each administered by their own secretariat, UN Environment assisted in negotiating the conventions and was tasked with promoting their implementation through *Agenda 21*.¹⁵

¹ UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012, p. 18.

² UN Environment Assembly, *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1)*, 1972.

⁶ UN General Assembly, *Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation (A/RES/2997(XXVII))*, 1972.

⁷ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2019, pp. 263-264.

⁸ UN Environment Assembly, *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

⁹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2019, p. 263-264.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 263-264.

¹¹ Johnson, S., *UNEP The First 40 Years: A Narrative*, 2012, pp. 127-128.

¹² Ibid, pp. 137-139.

¹³ Convention on Biological Diversity, *The Rio Conventions*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Johnson, S. *UNEP The First 40 Years: A Narrative*, 2012, pp. 155-156.

Governance, Structure, and Membership

In 2013, UNEA became the designated policy-making body of UN Environment, superseding the original 58-member Governing Council.¹⁶ UNEA has universal membership, meaning that all 193 UN Member States are represented in the Assembly, along with the United Nations non-voting permanent observers.¹⁷ UNEA meets biennially to set priorities for global environmental policy, discuss developments for environmental legislation, and assist in the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹⁸ The UN Environment Secretariat is responsible for supporting UNEA and consists of a rotating President, three Vice-Presidents, and a Rapporteur.¹⁹ The President for the Fifth Session of UNEA is H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn of Norway.²⁰ The Bureau is elected during the final meeting of a regular session to oversee the general conduct of business of the UNEA.²¹ The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) is the subsidiary inter-sessional organ to the UNEA and meets at least four times a year.²² The CPR performs functions, also strengthened by Governing Council Decision 27/2, which included: (a) contributing to the preparation of the UNEA agenda, (b) holding an advisory role in policy matters within the UNEA, (c) monitoring the implementation of its decisions, (d) holding thematic and/or programmatic debates, (e) promoting the inclusion of non-resident members of the Committee, and (f) performing any other functions delegated by UNEA.²³ CPR is composed of all accredited Permanent Representatives to UN Environment and is led by a five-member bureau that is elected for two years.²⁴

UN Environment relies on three main financial sources to facilitate its agenda: earmarked funds, the Environment Fund, and the UN Regular Budget.²⁵ Earmarked funds, also known as earmarked contributions, are funds appropriated for specific projects, themes, or countries.²⁶ These funds aim to expand and/or replicate the results of UN Environment's work in more countries and with more partners.²⁷ The Environment Fund aids in maintaining the capacity, balance, and efficiency needed for UN Environment to function.²⁸ When contributing to the Environment Fund, Member States are encouraged to make financial contributions based upon the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISIC), which considers their respective socio-economic background to determine the predictability of a continued financial contribution.²⁹ The UN Regular Budget supports the functions of the Secretariat and its respective governing bodies, as well as the coordination of the UN Environment with the UN system and cooperation with global scientific communities.³⁰ From 2020, about 80% of UN Environment's income was comprised of earmarked contributions, while the Environment Fund made up about 15% and the UN Regular Budget made up about 5%.³¹ Earmarked contributions and the Environment Fund are comprised of voluntarily contributions; hence, 95% of UN Environment's income is accrued on a voluntary basis from Member States.³²

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Institutional and Financial Arrangements for International Environmental Cooperation (A/RES/2997(XXVII))*, 1972.

¹⁷ UN Environment, *Directory: Committee of Permanent Representatives to the UN Environment*, 2019, p. 4.

¹⁸ UN Environment Assembly, *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

¹⁹ UN Environment, *Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/EA.3/3)*, 2016.

²⁰ UNEA, *UNEA 5 Presidency and Bureau*.

²¹ UN Environment, *Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/EA.3/3)*, 2016.

²² UN Environment Assembly, *Committee of Permanent Representatives*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ UN Environment, *How is UNEP Funded*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; UN Environment, *Earmarked Contributions*.

²⁷ UN Environment, *Funding Facts*; UN Environment, *Earmarked Contributions*.

²⁸ UN Environment, *How is UNEP Funded*.

²⁹ UN Environment Assembly, *Environment Fund*.

³⁰ UN Environment, *How is UNEP Funded*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2997 of 1972 on “Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation,” UN Environment was created with a mandate to “promote international and regional environmental cooperation, develop environmental policy, highlight global and regional problems, facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge, assist developing Member States in environmental matters, review reports of the Executive Director, and approve the annual program on the allocation of the Environment Fund.”³³ The first expansion of UN Environment’s mandate came after the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992) via *Agenda 21*, which outlined a list of priority areas for UN Environment’s future work and called for the program to gain “access to greater expertise and... adequate financial resources,” as well as closer collaboration with the rest of the UN system to fulfil these new tasks.³⁴

In 1997, during its 19th regular session, the Governing Council of UN Environment held a discussion on the future role of the UN Environment, which resulted in the adoption of the *Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme* (1997).³⁵ As the 19th Special Session of the General Assembly was scheduled to address the implementation of *Agenda 21* later that year, the *Nairobi Declaration* represented a call to the UN system and its Member States to acknowledge UN Environment’s role.³⁶ The General Assembly endorsed the *Nairobi Declaration* (1997), which reaffirmed and established UN Environment’s mandate “as the leading global environmental authority.”³⁷

UN Environment’s authority was further affirmed by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who advocated for the reform and strengthening of its role as “the focal point for harmonization and coordination of environment-related activities.”³⁸ In October 1998, the General Assembly reported a set of recommendations that further modified UN Environment’s mandate, as per recommendations made by the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements.³⁹ As a result of one of the recommendations, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) was created with the Executive Director of UN Environment serving as its chairperson.⁴⁰ A key purpose of the EMG is to coordinate information sharing and facilitate discussion on essential priorities in order to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective allocation of resources.⁴¹

As the governing body of UN Environment, UNEA develops international environmental law and policy that serves as a catalyst for intergovernmental action through the practice of multilateral agreement.⁴² Under UNEA’s guidance, UN Environment assesses the environment on a global, regional, and national scale and uses that information to hold relevant stakeholders accountable in developing proper action.⁴³ As the UN recognizes climate change as the predominant issue in its global-civic efforts, UN Environment continues to collaborate with various stakeholders to highlight the complexity of environmental issues in terms of conflict, disaster, security, and education.⁴⁴ UNEA often hosts intersessional events and forums with these stakeholders to build and foster support for UN Environment initiatives.⁴⁵ UNEA also has the

³³ UN General Assembly, *Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation (A/RES/2997(XXVII))*, 1972.

³⁴ UN Conference on Environment and Development, *Agenda 21*, 1992.

³⁵ Johnson, S., *UNEP The First 40 Years: A Narrative*, 2012, p. 155.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (A/RES/S-19/2)*, 1997, par. 123; Governing Council of UN Environment, *Proceedings of the Governing Council at its Nineteenth Session (UNEP/GC.19/34)*, 1997, pp. 52-56.

³⁸ UN General Assembly, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform (A/51/950)*, p. 58.

³⁹ UN General Assembly, *Environment and human settlements: Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/463)*, 1998.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² UN Environment Assembly, *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

⁴³ UN Environment, *Programme Performance Report 2016*, 2016, p. 57.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ World Animal Net, *United Nations Environment Assembly: A Guidance Document for Animal Protection Organizations*, p. 5.

ability to create ad hoc committees and subsidiary bodies to implement specific environmental objectives when necessary.⁴⁶

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

With the adoption of the *2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development*, the responsibility of UN Environment has shifted towards addressing environmental protection as part of an integrated vision of sustainable development, rather than addressing environmental issues in a silo.⁴⁷ UN Environment assesses that more than half of the Sustainable Development Goals have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources.⁴⁸ These include poverty, health, food and agriculture, water and sanitation, human settlements, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, and oceans and terrestrial ecosystems.⁴⁹ UN Environment further finds that 86 of the 169 targets across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are concerned with environmental sustainability.⁵⁰ The fourth regular session of UNEA took place in March 2019, and its theme was “Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production.”⁵¹ A key outcome was the *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly (2019)* that designated 19 key actions, which exemplified a concerted effort to address environmental challenges by Member States.⁵² A few of these actions entail improving global resource management strategies, the promoting and sharing of innovative knowledge sharing, and the engagement of environmental research and relevant stakeholders.⁵³ By continuing to foster sustainable development as an integrated effort, UNEA agreed to continue its mandate in overcoming common environmental challenges by: distinguishing innovative solutions, promoting the use of environmental data and its sharing, along with the engagement of pertinent stakeholders, such as civil society members, those from academia, and the private sector.⁵⁴

The paradigm change toward an integrated approach is shown in the series of “Medium Term Strategies,” which envision UN Environment as providing “an environmental lens through which to view, understand and advise on sustainable development.”⁵⁵ UN Environment’s *Medium Term Strategy 2018-2021* outlines seven thematic priorities: climate change; resilience to disasters and conflicts; healthy and productive ecosystems; environmental governance; chemicals, waste, and air quality; resource efficiency; and environment under review.⁵⁶

In 2021, UNEA held its Fifth Session resulting in the passage of a new *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025*, a plan designed to promote a high functioning and effective UN Environment program in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁷ The strategy calls for a decade of action that maintains a “2050 outlook,” extending beyond the goals of the next three years to encompass crucial and broad changes to global

⁴⁶ UNEA, *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session: Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1)*, 2019.

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015; UN Environment Assembly, *Delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: Information note of the Executive Director (UNEP/EA.2/INF/4)*, 2016.

⁴⁸ UN DESA, United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP - *Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform*, 2016.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ UN Environment Assembly, *Delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: Information note of the Executive Director (UNEP/EA.2/INF/4)*, 2016, p. 1.

⁵¹ UN Environment Assembly, *Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

⁵² UNEA, *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session: Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1)*, 2019.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ UN Environment, *Medium Term Strategy 2018-2021*, 2016, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.16.

⁵⁷ UN Environment, *For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022-2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution (UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1)*, 2021.

environmental policy.⁵⁸ At the heart of the document are three identified environmental crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.⁵⁹ The strategy incorporates four broad areas for enhancement: provide science and know-how to governments; transform the sectors that have an impact on our environment; leverage digital and emerging technologies; and tackle environmental unsustainability.⁶⁰ The 2022-2025 strategy is also an outline of work for UNEP to strengthen the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.⁶¹ It further analyzes the impacts of current UN management and governance reform and sets strategic priorities for UN Environment's operations in the allotted timeframe.⁶² The Medium-Term Strategy also leveraged the UN development system reform to engage the wider UN system in more coordinated and mutually supportive environmental action.⁶³

The setbacks, which occurred due to of the COVID-19 pandemic, were at the forefront of the conversation during UNEA-5.⁶⁴ UN Environment has re-focused some of its work in order to adequately respond to the pandemic and “build back better.”⁶⁵ UN Environment recently led a discussion at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development regarding opportunities to jumpstart and rebuild economies through green recovery plans that are aligned with the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.⁶⁶ UN Environment's COVID-19 work also includes sustainable and climate-resilient economic recovery, especially for economies dependent on eco-tourism and biodiversity; sustainable consumption and production during coronavirus quarantining procedures; and future prevention of zoonotic diseases.⁶⁷ These COVID-19 recovery plans would emphasize building resilience, ensuring prosperity, and engaging with economic stakeholders, especially local actors and the private sector.⁶⁸ UN Environment has also been responding to regional action plans developed in response to COVID-19; specifically, how these regional action plans can influence global response to the pandemic and its aftermath.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The reform of UN Environment at the start of the 1990s redefined its thematic role within the UN system and highlighted the importance of addressing environmental issues on a global scale.⁷⁰ UNEA's inception represents a key step in UN Environment's mission to ensure the work of all UN entities, Member States, and respective stakeholders' aims to be environmentally sustainable and align with international laws and policies concerning the environment.⁷¹ The establishment of an international authority for environmental issues with a universal membership reflects the need for an integrated and comprehensive approach for environmental protection.⁷² The *Ministerial Declaration* from the Fourth Session of UNEA will elicit further global effort to meet a multidimensional environment, but will also aim to address capacity building and pivot on socio-economic enhancement for sustainable development.⁷³ Moreover, a retroactive

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Press Conference, *UNEA-5 and launch of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy*, 2021.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² UNEA, *Draft roadmap for the development of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025*, 2019.

⁶³ UN Environment, *For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022-2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution (UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1)*, 2021.

⁶⁴ Press Conference, *UNEA-5 and launch of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy*, 2021.

⁶⁵ UN Environment, *COVID-19 updates from UNEP*.

⁶⁶ UN Environment, *Recovering better: Global opportunities to jumpstart the real economy*.

⁶⁷ UN Environment, *COVID-19 updates from UNEP*.

⁶⁸ UN Environment, *Recovering better: Global opportunities to jumpstart the real economy*.

⁶⁹ UN Environment, *COVID-19 updates from UNEP*.

⁷⁰ Johnson, S., *UNEP The First 40 Years: A Narrative*, 2012, p. 155.

⁷¹ World Summit on Sustainable Development, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.199/20)*, 2002.

⁷² UNEA, *Delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: Information note of the Executive Director (UNEP/EA.2/INF/4)*, 2016.

⁷³ UNEA, *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session: Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1)*, 2019.

assessment of nature-based solutions will reaffirm the necessity of a healthy ecosystem.⁷⁴ As the world continues to face alarming implications of climate change and the global recovery from COVID-19, UNEA continues to be a key leader in achieving global sustainable development.⁷⁵

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This declaration is the primary outcome document of the most recent session of UNEA, held in March 2019. It highlights the priority areas that emerged from the session and the efforts necessary to influence these areas. The declaration discusses how Member States, CSOs, the private sector, local communities, and academia can promote more sustainable uses of resources and more responsible production and disposal of these resources. Delegates can find the current priorities and talking points of the UNEA within this document.

United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. Retrieved 14 April 2021 from: <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/about-united-nations-environment-assembly>.

This website provides a basic overview of the Assembly and its role within the UN Environment's governance structure, including its history and mandate. The resource represents an entry point for delegates to begin their research on the committee, as it provides an overview of the body's functions, as well as links to the documentation of past sessions and current thematic priorities of the Assembly. It is also here that preparatory material for the upcoming session of the Assembly is collected. This website should help delegates to easily distinguish between UN Environment and UNEA and understand how they are connected to each other.

United Nations Environment Programme. (2021). *UNEA-5 and launch of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy*. Retrieved 3 March 2021 from:

<https://www.unep.org/events/press-conference/unea-5-and-launch-uneps-medium-term-strategy>

This source provides a link to a live video press conference hosted by the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen and the Minister of Climate and the Environment from Norway and President of UNEA-5, Sveinung Rotevatn. The press conference provides a comprehensive recap of the topics discussed during the virtual session of UNEA-5. Both speakers further elaborate on the Medium-Term Strategy for the period of 2022-2025. The topics of climate change biodiversity loss, and pollution are also spoken about in more depth. The speakers answer several questions regarding future goals of UNEP and UNEA posed by the Head of UN News and Media, Ms. Keishamaza Rukikaire.

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⁷⁴ UN Environment Assembly, *Fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

⁷⁵ UN Environment Assembly, *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*.

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United Nations Environment Assembly. (n.d.). *Fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*. Retrieved 14 April 2021 from: <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/unea5>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP - Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform*. Retrieved 18 April 2021 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=243&men#:~:text=6%20%E2%80%9CDelivering%20on%20the%202030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%E2%80%9D%20UNEA,providing%20overarching%20policy%20guidance%20and>

United Nations Environment Assembly. (n.d.). *UNEA 5 Presidency and Bureau*. Retrieved 12 April 2021 from: <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/unea-5-presidency-and-bureau>

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I. Leveraging Climate Action for Sustainable Development

“Climate Change is the single greatest threat to a sustainable future, but, at the same time, addressing the climate challenge presents a golden opportunity to promote prosperity, security, and a brighter future for all.”⁷⁶

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) defines Climate Action as “urgent action to combat the effects of climate change,” which is a result of the concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth’s atmosphere leading to steadily rising global temperatures.⁷⁷ Human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, coal, crude oil, and natural gas are one of the main causes of the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and contribute to about two-thirds of greenhouse emissions.⁷⁸ The effects of these emissions include a 1.1°C increase in global temperatures, which can lead to catastrophic events such as droughts, tropical cyclones, winter storms, and wildfires.⁷⁹ Climate action is an international priority since climate change affects every Member State, disrupts economic growth, global health, and jeopardizes the implementation of the other SDGs.⁸⁰ These disruptions are due to natural disasters and their long-term effects, including forced migration, gender inequality, and marginalization of at-risk populations.⁸¹

Climate change has overwhelming negative impact on developing countries; specifically, due to a lack of social and economic capital, making it difficult to build resilient systems and infrastructure.⁸² Adopted in 1992, the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) created the framework for how the international system would address climate change moving forward.⁸³ The UNFCCC was an initial international recognition to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and keep them at safe levels.⁸⁴ In 2015, Member States adopted a landmark resolution, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) as a blueprint for building a sustainable planet and future.⁸⁵ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an outcome of the 2030 Agenda, are a call to action for all Member States towards eliminating poverty, improving healthcare, education, economic growth, reducing inequality, and combating climate change.⁸⁶ Specifically Goal 13 of the SDGs, Climate Action, is prioritized in all aspects of sustainable development.⁸⁷ The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is dependent upon more ambitious climate action such as the *Paris Agreement* (2015), which prioritizes multi-lateral partnerships.⁸⁸ Target 13.2 seeks to integrate climate change into national planning and policies that require partnerships with members of civil society.⁸⁹ In line with the UNFCCC and *Paris Agreement*, Member States are working to update existing nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are efforts specific to each Member State that collectively seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.⁹⁰

International and Regional Framework

⁷⁶UN DPI, *Secretary-General’s Remarks at Climate Leaders’ Summit in Washington DC*, 2014.

⁷⁷ UNEP, *Facts About the Climate Emergency*.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² UN DESA, *Climate Change*.

⁸³ UNCED, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ UN DESA, *The 17 Goals*.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UN DESA, *Climate Change*.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*, 2021.

In 1992, climate action was made a priority at the Rio Earth Summit, a united global activism summit focused on climate action, during which the UNFCCC was adopted.⁹¹ The Convention proposed actions aimed at reducing and stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid future climate disasters and keeping global warming to below 1.5°C.⁹² In 2015, Member States adopted the *Paris Agreement*, which re-energizes global attention to climate change and aims to limit global warming to below 2°C.⁹³ The *Paris Agreement* is a legally binding treaty and incorporates all Member States' commitments to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.⁹⁴ Its implementation is based on a five-year cycle of analyzing and reassessing Member State NDCs, which has now led to renewed efforts by Member States to aggressively address climate change.⁹⁵ The *Paris Agreement* serves as a framework for financial and technical support for Member States to share information about their NDCs towards long-term solutions to lower greenhouse gas emissions.⁹⁶ The agreement also provides a platform for accountability and knowledge sharing among Member States, by reporting their progress to mitigate and adapt to climate change.⁹⁷ Since its inception, the Agreement has yielded results by opening new carbon-free markets for energy, including the adoption of carbon neutrality targets by Member States.⁹⁸ The 2030 Agenda is implemented through more specific actions, such as those outlined in the *Paris Agreement*.⁹⁹ In 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report which stated that more action is needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C in order to build a more sustainable and equitable world.¹⁰⁰ Without immediate climate action, the IPCC forecasts that rapidly changing weather phenomena and disasters will continue as oceans warm.¹⁰¹ Additionally, it will further exacerbate global poverty and other challenges such as food insecurity and forced migration since many vulnerable populations are dependent on agriculture and other activities that are susceptible to temperature increases.¹⁰² The report also stresses that many strategies for sustainable development, such as gender integration have the potential to reduce the vulnerabilities of ecosystems and improve the adaptation to climate change.¹⁰³ Since women make up a considerable part of the agriculture workforce, climate policy requires input from women for optimal implementation of the *Paris Agreement*.¹⁰⁴

Role of the International System

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) set the theme for its fifth meeting as “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”¹⁰⁵ This theme brings into focus the need to leverage climate action for sustainable development.¹⁰⁶ It also calls for increased and strengthened action to protect the environment through social, economic, and environmental measures such as UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2025.¹⁰⁷ The MTS seeks to prevent biodiversity loss, pollution, and mitigate the effects of climate change.¹⁰⁸ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNEA has

⁹¹ UN DESA, *Climate Change*; UNCED, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992.

⁹² UN DESA, *Climate Change*.

⁹³ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *The Paris Agreement*, 2021; COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *The Paris Agreement*, 2021.

¹⁰⁰ IPCC, *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C: Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication, and Reducing Inequalities*, 2018.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Allen, *Framing and Context in: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*, 2018.

¹⁰³ IPCC, *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C: Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication, and Reducing Inequalities*, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ UNEA, *Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ IISD, *UNEA-5 Online Session Sets Stage for Next Four Years*, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ IISD, *UNEA-5 Online Session Sets Stage for Next Four Years*, 2021.

adjusted its schedule to include a virtual session in February 2021, and a subsequent session will be held in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2022.¹⁰⁹ At the virtual session, Member States held a dialogue among leaders of Member States which highlighted that climate action will lead to low emissions and a sustainable world.¹¹⁰ It also reiterated the importance of multilateralism in addressing climate change and the role the assembly and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) play in environmental governance.¹¹¹

UNEP assists with mitigation by facilitating Member States' initiative to utilize renewable energy in cities, transportation systems, and educating them on management practices that lead to reduced emissions such as high-tech subway systems, bicycle paths, and walkways that have significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions.¹¹² These best practices are supported by programs such as the UN Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), which aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.¹¹³ This program currently has 118 Member States with forest and land management included in their national planning leading to 162 million hectares of restored land globally.¹¹⁴ UNEP also works with commercial banks to develop financing programs that provide households access to energy-efficient technologies while giving developing Member States access to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).¹¹⁵ GCF is the world's largest climate fund with a mandate to support developing Member States in implementing their national programs designed to reduce emissions and build climate-resilient communities.¹¹⁶ In energy, UNEP works with developing Member States to develop infrastructure for renewable energy through economic and poverty alleviation programs while leveraging the private sector to transition to cleaner sources of energy, such as solar, and wind power generation plants to drive overall reliance on clean and renewable energy.¹¹⁷ UNEP has created the Climate Initiatives Platform, which monitors climate action initiatives undertaken by civil society, the private sector, and regional bodies and now includes all 230 International Cooperative Initiatives.¹¹⁸ This platform provides open-source data to Member States and non-state actors for tracking and implementation of climate policies.¹¹⁹

In February 2021, the UN Climate Change Secretariat announced a series of meetings to promote regional climate action.¹²⁰ These meetings will facilitate regional work in climate action and advance regional implementation of the *Paris Agreement*.¹²¹ This is being carried out by providing a platform for representatives of national governments and other relevant institutions to share knowledge and undertake more effective methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.¹²² The UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, and the World Bank Group partner with the UN Climate Change Secretariat to organize these meetings.¹²³ Despite global responsiveness and activism towards climate action and sustainable development, climate commitments are not on track to achieve the goals of the *Paris Agreement*.¹²⁴ In 2021, the UN Climate Change Secretariat published its first Nationally Determined Contributions

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ UNEA, *Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*, 2021.

¹¹² UNEP, *Mitigation*.

¹¹³ UNEP, *REDD+: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; UN-REDD Programme, Our Impact*, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ UNEP, *Climate Mitigation Finance: Driving Clean Energy Investments*; Green Climate Fund, *About GCF*, 2021.

¹¹⁶ Green Climate Fund, *About Green Climate Fund*.

¹¹⁷ UNEP, *Energy*.

¹¹⁸ UNEP, *Climate Initiatives Platform*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Regional Climate Weeks to Drive Forward Climate Action in 2021 and 2022*, 2021.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Regional Climate Weeks to Drive Forward Climate Action in 2021 and 2022*, 2021.

Synthesis Report that draws attention to the shortfall in the implementation of the *Paris Agreement* and calls for stronger and more ambitious efforts by Member States in climate action.¹²⁵

Integrating Climate Action into National and Regional Planning

Target 13.2 of SDG 13 seeks to integrate climate action into national planning and policymaking.¹²⁶ In 1992, Member States initiated plans to integrate socio-economic and environmental objectives into their national planning during the Rio Earth Summit.¹²⁷ Member States now incorporate the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* into their respective national policies and National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS).¹²⁸ NSDS are coordinated actions and plans to achieve economic and environmental objectives with a balanced and integrative approach.¹²⁹ NSDS are established on five principles: Member State ownership and commitment, environmental policy integration across different sectors of national planning, inclusivity and effective partnerships, capacity building, targeted action, and implementation.¹³⁰ Since the needs of each Member States is inherently different, each Member State adopts its own model.¹³¹ Climate action in NSDS results in more effective implementation and benefits because it is not undertaken independently.¹³² NSDS provides a platform for national governments to measure the benefits of climate action, thereby providing more information on how to adapt and improve policy and planning.¹³³ NSDS also provides national governments with a system to make up for the economic losses that arise from replacing current economic models with more sustainable ones.¹³⁴

Since climate action transcends national borders, regional and international partnerships are also utilized to improve adaptation and implementation strategies.¹³⁵ UNFCCC also partners with technology companies such as Google and Microsoft, international organizations such as the World Bank Group, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Rainforest Action Network, the World Economic Forum, and academia to increase awareness about climate action.¹³⁶ In 2013, the UNFCCC Secretariat created six Regional Collaboration Centers (RCCs) across the globe to foster partnerships among Member States in climate action through networking, capacity building, and technical assistance.¹³⁷ After the adoption of the *Paris Agreement*, RCCs were expanded to include providing support to developing countries to implement their NDCs.¹³⁸ Some of the objectives of RCCs include providing a platform for information and data sharing among regional Member States and facilitating their work with respective affiliated UN agencies.¹³⁹ RCCs also work to provide intergovernmental strategies for climate action in their respective regions and facilitate action plans in line with the objectives of the *Paris Agreement* and the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴⁰ The result of these efforts includes stronger collaboration between national and international actors towards green development, strengthened local capacity on climate action, new partnerships, and direct support and guidance to Member States on policymaking and national planning.¹⁴¹ In 2020, RCCs created a work plan to implement the goals of the *Paris Agreement*, including

¹²⁵ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Greater Climate Ambition Urged as Initial NDC Synthesis Report is Published*, 2021.

¹²⁶ UNEP, *Goal 13: Climate Action*; United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Agenda*.

¹²⁷ UN DESA, *National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS)*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, *National Sustainable Development Strategies – the Global Picture*.

¹³⁰ UN DESA, *National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS)*.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² UN DESA, *Addressing Climate Change in National Sustainable Development Strategies – Common Practices*, 2007.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *UNFCCC Partners*, 2021.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Regional Collaboration Centers*, 2021.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Regional Collaboration Centers: 2019 Highlights*, 2019.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

through support for local and regional climate action.¹⁴² RCCs continue to promote capacity building, facilitate the implementation of the *Paris Agreement*, and mobilize and coordinate climate action in each region.¹⁴³

Gender and Climate Action

Women and children are more vulnerable to the impact of climate change due to societal inequalities and lack of safety nets, they are also the least equipped to manage the effects of natural disasters.¹⁴⁴ These factors increase women's exposure to gender-based violence, forced migration, human trafficking, and inaccessible education and healthcare.¹⁴⁵ Since natural disasters have become more devastating, the UNFCCC Secretariat has worked to empower women and girls by including them in policymaking and leadership at all levels of government.¹⁴⁶ Gender considerations are now included in political forums about policy climate action, not only to improve the understanding of women's vulnerabilities but also to create opportunities for inclusion of women in leadership roles such as in national parliaments and other levels of government.¹⁴⁷ Women's participation in policymaking has led to increased responsiveness to the needs of local and minority groups, including inter-ethnic cooperation and capacity building.¹⁴⁸ At local levels, women have contributed to the improved implementation of policies through inter-ethnic partnerships and projects undertaken by their respective governments, UN bodies, and other members of civil society.¹⁴⁹ One way this is being achieved is the integration of gender-inclusive expertise in capacity-building and technical assistance at national levels, in partnership with the UN system to address climate-related issues such as drought and food insecurity.¹⁵⁰ Another way in which gender is being integrated into climate action is by making intersectional gender analysis a key part of any programs or policies developed for climate action at all levels of government and civil society.¹⁵¹

UNEA works with UNEP, UN Women, UNDP, and other members of civil society such as the Africa Network for Animal Welfare, the Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Organizations' Engagement Mechanism, and the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee, to facilitate efforts by national governments to enact climate action policies.¹⁵² These bodies also support women's organizations and civil society organizations such as Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, and the Women's Earth Alliance, to integrate climate-related security into their national climate change Gender Action Plans (GAPs).¹⁵³ At UNEA-4, Member States adopted a resolution to "Promote Gender Equality, and the Human Rights and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Environmental Governance" (UNEP/EA.4/L.21).¹⁵⁴ This resolution also invites Member States to recognize the human right to a healthy environment and to incorporate social and gender safeguards in climate action.¹⁵⁵ UNEP

¹⁴² United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Enabling Long-term Impact: The Role of Regional Collaboration Centers in Catalyzing Climate Action*, 2019, pp 9, 41-42.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Introduction to Gender and Climate Change*, 2021.

¹⁴⁵ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate, and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Introduction to Gender and Climate Change*, 2021.

¹⁴⁷ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 41.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Introduction to Gender and Climate Change*, 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 41.

¹⁵² Ibid; UNEP, *Partnerships*.

¹⁵³ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴ Logan, UN Environment Assembly Passes Landmark Resolution Promoting Gender Equality in Environmental Governance, 2019; UNEA, *Promoting Gender Equality and the Human Rights and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Environmental Governance (UNEP/EA.4/L.21)*, 2019.

¹⁵⁵ UNEA, *Promoting Gender Equality and the Human Rights and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Environmental Governance (UNEP/EA.4/L.21)*, 2019.

incorporates gender mainstreaming into its programs and organization.¹⁵⁶ At the organizational level, UNEP focuses gender mainstreaming on its internal policies and processes, which include capacity development, communication, oversight, financial and human resources, and knowledge and information management.¹⁵⁷ At the program level, UNEP works to provide for the different needs of women and men by promoting a gender perspective in climate action at national, regional, and international levels.¹⁵⁸ UNEP also works closely with UN Women to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, by improving public understanding of the relationship between women and natural resources and how women's empowerment is vital for climate action.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Climate action has risen to the top of the priority list for the UN, Member States, and other members of civil society working in partnership to ensure a sustainable future.¹⁶⁰ These partnerships are built on different platforms and international documents such as the UNFCCC.¹⁶¹ Reports by institutions such as the IPCC aid in advancing climate action through more specific goals and actions that are needed to limit global warming to below 1.5°C.¹⁶² Climate action is now prioritized by Member States in national planning and is being incorporated into their national planning policies and programs.¹⁶³ Despite unified global efforts in climate action, more ambitious measures need to be adopted to achieve sustainable development, which is now more dependent on climate action.¹⁶⁴ Initiatives such as gender mainstreaming and engagements with members of civil society are being utilized in implementing the goals of climate action outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹⁶⁵

Further Research

Delegates should consider the following in their research: What is UNEA currently doing to leverage climate action for sustainable development? In the coming year, UNEA has some ambitious goals on climate action – what are the ways in which these goals will impact sustainable development? How can civil society be better engaged by UNEA, the UN and national governments in climate action? How can Member States be better encouraged to meet their NDCs? How can the existing platforms for knowledge sharing be better used to optimize stakeholders work in climate action?

Annotated Bibliography

Allen, M. R., et al. (2018). *Framing and Context in: Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Retrieved 25 February from: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-1/>

This source is a summary of the impacts of a global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This information is useful because climate action seeks to keep rising global temperatures to a level where remediation is attainable. It illustrates the relationship between global average temperatures and the environment as it stands. It

¹⁵⁶ UNEP, *Gender Mainstreaming*.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ UNEP, *Partnerships*.

¹⁶⁰ UN DESA, *The 17 Goals*.

¹⁶¹ Ibid; UNCED, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992.

¹⁶² IPCC, *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C: Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication, and Reducing Inequalities*, 2018.

¹⁶³ UNEP, *REDD+: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation*; UN-REDD Programme, *Our Impact*, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, *Regional Climate Weeks to Drive Forward Climate Action in 2021 and 2022*, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ UNEP et al, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, p. 41.

also compares these averages to pre-industrial levels. This information will help delegates understand why this target is necessary to achieve sustainable development globally.

Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Twenty-first session. (2015). *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved on Climate Change. Retrieved 25 February from: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The agreement has a long-term goal of limiting global warming to below 1.5°C. It recommends economic and social changes Member States need to undertake to achieve a climate neutral world by 2050. Delegates will find this useful when researching how national governments plan to implement the goals set in this agreement. The agreement also includes NDCs, which Member States utilize to share their action plans towards reducing greenhouse emissions.

United Nations. (n.d.). *The Sustainable Development Agenda*. Retrieved 24 February 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

The Sustainable Development Agenda is simplified here. It gives the reader information about all the SDGs in a manner that is easy to access. The Frequently Asked Questions section answers most questions that a delegate would ask as they begin their research. It also includes information about why these goals are important, how to achieve them, and how they differ from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These questions and their answers serve as a good starting point for delegates who wish to discourse the relationship between climate action and sustainable development.

United Nations Climate Change Secretariat. (2021). *Regional Collaboration Centers*. Retrieved 2 March 2021 from: <https://unfccc.int/about-us/regional-collaboration-centres>

This source gives delegates an overview of what regional efforts have been made up to 2020 in climate action for sustainable development. It highlights the impacts of regional cooperation and how it has enhanced the implementation of climate-related policies. When delegates embark on forming partnerships, this will serve as a guide to what has been done and what remains to be enacted in policy. It also reflects different means of implementation across six different regions of the world. Since all this work stems from the objectives of the United Nations, the Regional Collaboration Centers also show how they interface with the United Nations System, promote accountability, and measure and report on their progress.

United Nations Environment Assembly. (2021). *Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*. Retrieved 3 March 2021 from: <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5>

Delegates will find this source useful because it contains information regarding the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. From the timeline of meetings to current discussions, delegates will find links for related material. Since this topic is currently being considered by the assembly, this will be a good starting point for retrieving information about current challenges, statistics, and trends. Delegates will also be able to find the relationships between climate action and sustainable development.

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II. Safeguarding Arctic Biodiversity

Introduction

Since 1970, 68% of global biodiversity has been lost.¹⁶⁶ Biodiversity is defined as "the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems, as well as the ecological complexes, of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems," according to the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD)¹⁶⁷. Biodiversity includes many lesser-known and researched species, collectively, these species help support necessary food webs and ecosystems and create an inter-reliant system.¹⁶⁸ Many unique ecosystems of these species can be found in the Arctic region, which includes Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation, and the United States, who are also members of the Arctic Council.¹⁶⁹ In the Arctic region, there are over 21,000 species made up of mammals, birds, fish, invertebrates, plants and fungi, and microbes.¹⁷⁰ Due to climate change, before or by 2050 it is anticipated that the Arctic will be ice-free during the summer months.¹⁷¹ With ice-free conditions and increasing demand for Arctic resources, global biodiversity will rapidly decline given their interconnectedness.¹⁷²

The United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP), CBD, and the Arctic Council have been contributing actors towards safeguarding global biodiversity, particularly in the Arctic.¹⁷³ Conservation efforts have also been made by many other indigenous peoples' organizations, non-Arctic Member States, intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society.¹⁷⁴ In efforts to preserve the Arctic, these actors have developed and maintained assessment plans, mainstreamed biodiversity into development plans, organized plans to reduce emissions, executed multilateral environmental agreements, and establish protected areas.¹⁷⁵

International and Regional Framework

In 1993, the CBD entered into force through the work of UNEP's Ad Hoc Working Groups and the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*.¹⁷⁶ CBD is a legally binding treaty with three main objectives: conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biodiversity resources, and the sharing of the benefits that arise from the use of genetic resources.¹⁷⁷ In 2010, the Conference of Parties (COP) adopted a 10-year action plan framework to safeguard biodiversity called the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*, which includes the *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*.¹⁷⁸ The ABTs set out to create innovative approaches to integrate social and economic factors with biodiversity.¹⁷⁹ As the United Nations Decade of Biodiversity ends, the strategic plan will be reviewed by the COP and will deliver the achievements met at COP's fifteenth session, which is scheduled for September of 2022. In addition to that delivery, it is anticipated that decisions on the *Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework* will be made.¹⁸⁰ The

¹⁶⁶ World Wildlife Fund, *Living Planet Report 2020 – Bending the curve of biodiversity loss*, 2020, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ CBD, *Article 2. Use of Terms*, 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Johnsen et al., *Protecting Arctic Biodiversity*, 2010, p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ Arctic Council, *About the Arctic Council*, 2021.

¹⁷⁰ Arctic Council, *Safeguarding Arctic Biodiversity*, 2021.

¹⁷¹ World Wildlife Fund, *A Living Planet – 2018: Aiming Higher*, 2018, p. 23.

¹⁷² Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 5.

¹⁷³ Arctic Council, *Safeguarding Arctic Biodiversity*, 2021; CBD, *Introduction*, 2012; UNEP, *UNEP and Biodiversity*, 2020.

¹⁷⁴ Arctic Council, *Arctic States*, 2021.

¹⁷⁵ CAFF, *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*, 2015, p. 5; Johnsen et al., *Protecting Arctic Biodiversity*, 2010, p. 24.

¹⁷⁶ CBD, *History*, 2021.

¹⁷⁷ CBD, *Introduction*, 2012.

¹⁷⁸ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Nations Decade on Biodiversity*.

¹⁷⁹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Taking Action for Biodiversity*.

¹⁸⁰ IISD, *On the Road to the 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference: Imagining the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, 2019.

purpose of the post-2020 framework is to build on the strategic plan's foundation that outlines comprehensive action towards transforming the relationship between society and biodiversity.¹⁸¹

In the pursuit to achieve sustainable development, General Assembly resolution 70/1 "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2012.¹⁸² Biodiversity contributes to the well-being of our planet and societies by: providing basic sustenance for food and medicine, services like pollination and water purification, responding to unpredictable changes through ecosystem resilience, facilitating genetic diversity by adaptation, and provides cultural opportunities in research and education.¹⁸³ Given the comprehensive impacts of biodiversity, it is included in many SDGs, such as Goal 13: Climate Action, Goal 14: Life Below Water, and Goal 15: Life on Land.¹⁸⁴ Specifically, Goals 14 and 15 highlight the importance of preserving biodiversity through protected areas, increasing financial resources, and expanding research capacity and technology transfers.¹⁸⁵

In 2019, UNEA continued to demonstrate the need to address biodiversity and ecosystems through a series of resolutions adopted in its fourth session.¹⁸⁶ Specifically, the extensive UNEA resolution "Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation" (UNEP/EA.4/Res.10), which supported the CBDs *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*, but also urged Member States and other actors to be active in the development of the *Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework*.¹⁸⁷ Another noteworthy resolution from that session is "Protection of the marine environment from land-based activities" (UNEP/EA.4/Res.11), which bolstered the Global Programme of Action for Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities by requesting UNEP provide technical assistance.¹⁸⁸

The Paris Agreement emphasizes that the integrity and protection of all ecosystems is significant.¹⁸⁹ The goal of the agreement is to limit global warming by reducing levels to 1.5 Celsius in comparison to the pre-industrial era.¹⁹⁰ Striving to achieve temperatures below 2 Celsius, specifically 1.5 could make a difference in rates of poverty, extreme heat, rise in sea levels, habitat loss, and drought.¹⁹¹ Through the agreement, party countries are required to supply a National Determined Contributions plan, which outlines actionable items the country with take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions over a five year period.¹⁹² Although the work of 196 parties who pledged their commitment to the agreement is significant, biologists fear it will not be enough to combat the serious impacts of climate change on biodiversity in all regions including the Arctic.¹⁹³

Role of the International System

In late February of 2021, UNEA virtually hosted its first session of UNEA-5.¹⁹⁴ During the online session, UNEA endorsed the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025.¹⁹⁵ The objective set forth by the MTS is to achieve climate stability through net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, conserving biodiversity

¹⁸¹ CBD, *Update of the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, 2020.

¹⁸² CBD, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

¹⁸³ CBD, *TST Issues Brief: Biodiversity*.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, *The 17 Goals*.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, *Goal 14*; United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, *Goal 15*.

¹⁸⁶ *What did UNEA-4 Do for the Environment?*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2019.

¹⁸⁷ UNEA, *Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation (UNEP/EA.4/Res.10)*, 2019, p.3.

¹⁸⁸ UNEA, *Protection of the marine environment from land-based activities (UNEP/EA.4/Res.11)*, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Hance, What does the Paris Agreement mean for the world's other 8 million species?, *The Guardian*, 2016; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *The Paris Agreement*, 2021.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, 2018.

¹⁹² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *The Paris Agreement*, 2021.

¹⁹³ Hance, What does the Paris Agreement mean for the world's other 8 million species?, *The Guardian*, 2016.

¹⁹⁴ UNEA, *Fifth session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly*.

¹⁹⁵ IISD, *Summary of the 5th Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly: 22-23 February 2021*, 2021.

and maintaining ecosystems, and sustaining a pollution-free planet.¹⁹⁶ The MTS strives to conserve and maintain biodiversity and ecosystems through addressing the indirect and direct drivers of change, such as climate change.¹⁹⁷ The Nature Action Subprogram of the MTS intends to achieve three outcomes by 2050 which are: economically and socially sustainable pathway to “zero net loss” and “net gain” established, sustainable management of nature adopted and implemented in development frameworks, and enhanced Nature conservation and restoration.¹⁹⁸

In 2019, UNEP published its sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), which is considered a roadmap for achieving the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda.¹⁹⁹ Within GEO-6 it discusses the comprehensive impacts of biodiversity loss, such as an increase in human mortality and degradation of our resources, as well as many other factors causing an unhealthy planet.²⁰⁰ GEO-6 outlines the need for innovation in systemic and transformative policies in order to achieve sustainable development.²⁰¹ UNEP works with many organizations, such as the Arctic Council as an observer entity.²⁰² The Arctic Council has six different working groups that support sustainable development and environmental protection, for example, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME).²⁰³ Focusing on biodiversity, CAFF prioritizes habitat management, and information sharing on management and regulatory techniques to make decision-making more informed.²⁰⁴ CAFF is also responsible for developing responses to development and economic pressures, conservation opportunities, and political commitments.²⁰⁵ In 2020, CAFF released an implementation plan for their Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) for Arctic coastal regions, which includes a broad network of scientists, indigenous groups, NGO’s, and other actors to help collect and interpret data from Arctic States.²⁰⁶ Protecting and ensuring the sustainable use of the marine environment in the Arctic is PAME’s directive, including addressing policy, responding to environmental changes from land and sea-based activities, organizing pollution prevention, and developing programs, assessments, and guidelines.²⁰⁷ PAME largely operates in arctic shipping, resource development and exploration, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2055, marine pollution, and ecosystem management.²⁰⁸ In late January of 2021, PAME held its biannual meeting which focused on shipping, marine protected areas, ecosystem approach, marine litter, and resource exploration and development.²⁰⁹ During the meeting PAME also outlined its 2021-2023 project list, such as a Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of MPAs.²¹⁰

The Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) has significantly impacted research plans and funding for those plans at an international level.²¹¹ Traditionally organizations and programs, such as CAFF, PAME, Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme, and the Global Environment Facility, provide funding for arctic biodiversity initiatives.²¹² Specifically, the Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme is a part of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Arctic Cooperation Programme 2018–2021.²¹³ The program is an effort to support the Arctic’s sustainable development and conservation through the perspective of the SDGs.²¹⁴ Based on

¹⁹⁶ UNEA, *Agenda Item 4: Consideration of a draft UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and Programme of Work 2022-2023 (UNEP/ASC.7/2)*, 2020, pp.26-36.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p 6.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* , pp.23-26.

¹⁹⁹ UNEP, *Global Environment Outlook – GEO-6: Healthy Planet, Healthy People*, 2019, pp.28-30.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp.582.

²⁰² Arctic Council, *Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary Organizations*, 2021.

²⁰³ Arctic Council, *About the Arctic Council*, 2021.

²⁰⁴ CAFF, *About CAFF*, 2021.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ CAFF, *CBMP-Coastal 2020-2022 Implementation Plan*, 2020.

²⁰⁷ PAME, *About PAME*, 2021.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ PAME, *PAME Working Group Meeting Reports*, 2021.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Uryupova, COVID-19: How the Virus has frozen Arctic Research, *The Arctic Institute*, 2021.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Nordregio, *Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the Council's four dimensions: planet, peoples, prosperity, and partnerships, they annually select recipients to receive these funds to implement projects and research in the Arctic region.²¹⁵ Recently, the Council selected The Norwegian Research Centre's project for the implementation of SDGs in the Nordic Arctic Region.²¹⁶

Approaches to Safeguard Arctic Biodiversity

In efforts to conserve Arctic biodiversity the establishment of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), protected areas (PAs) cooperation strategies like the Cooperative Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, assessments, and monitoring systems have been implemented.²¹⁷ MEAs are recognized as conventions, protocols, and other international agreements put in place to protect the environment and require full participation by all signatories to be effective.²¹⁸ Some examples of relevant MEAs are CBD, *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*, *United Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*, and *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.²¹⁹ According to UNEP experts, to strengthen these agreements, enhancements to international environmental governance through cooperation and information sharing of MEAs is necessary.²²⁰ Despite progress, the enforcement of some MEAs has been a consistent challenge as many Member States consider the agreements soft law.²²¹

Monitoring and assessments are essential for capacity-building working groups like CAFF and PAME to make: tracking progress, measuring change, and implementing strategic plans possible.²²² Experts emphasize the integrity of an ecosystem and how it responds to disturbances or actions taken to reduce biodiversity loss is critical.²²³ An example of a comprehensive program that monitors the Arctic's living resources is the CBMP.²²⁴ Monitoring is also the foundation of early warning systems for biodiversity loss, which provides an opportunity to focus and prioritize efforts towards specific areas, species, and resources.²²⁵ Equally important, assessments interpret the data collected during the monitoring process providing context to stakeholders, such as policymakers and ecosystem managers.²²⁶ Another important approach to safeguarding Arctic biodiversity is PAs and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).²²⁷ The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) outlines PAs as "clearly defined geographical space, [...] and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve long-term conservation of nature."²²⁸ Signed in 1982, UNCLOS created a foundation for MPAs, underlining that states are obligated to protect the marine environment.²²⁹ In addition to that obligation, it also allows states to legally create MPAs by outlining the ability to establish limits to a defined marine area in Article 211.²³⁰ However, the provisions do not explicitly state MPAs and many other policy related issues to the high seas.²³¹ Therefore, a new treaty focusing on waters beyond states' nation jurisdiction was purposed in 2018.²³² The newly purposed treaty has undergone several negotiation sessions but has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²³³ Over the past four decades, PAs have contributed to food

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Nordregio, *Implementation of SDGs in the Nordic Arctic*.

²¹⁷ CAFF, *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*, 2015, pp. 12-15.

²¹⁸ Johnsen et al., *Protecting Arctic Biodiversity*, 2010, p. 24.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 27.

²²⁰ Ibid. p. 28.

²²¹ Ibid. p. 24.

²²² PAME, *About PAME*, 2021; CAFF, *About CAFF*, 2021.

²²³ Biodivcanada, *Biodiversity Monitoring, Research, Information Management, and Reporting*.

²²⁴ CAFF, *Monitoring: The Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP)*, 2021.

²²⁵ Schipper & Francesco, *Effective Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring*, 2017.

²²⁶ Biodivcanada, *Biodiversity Monitoring, Research, Information Management, and Reporting*.

²²⁷ IUCN, *Biodiversity and protected areas*, 2021.

²²⁸ IUCN, *About*, 2021.

²²⁹ Ribeiro, *Marine Protected Areas: the case of the extended continental shelf*, 2014, pp. 181-183.

²³⁰ Ibid. pp. 181.

²³¹ Lohan, *New High Seas Treaty Could Be a Gamechanger for the Ocean*, *The Revelator*, 2020.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

security, clean water, and ecosystem stability, however biodiversity is still at a decline.²³⁴ Experts believe the two main questions contributing to these trends are: How effective are PAs for biodiversity outcomes? And do current PAs contain significant biodiversity sites?²³⁵ Currently, the Arctic has several opportunities for PAs and MPAs, which could help the conservation of marine life and migratory bird habitat and breeding grounds.²³⁶ In its 2017 report, *Natural Marine World Heritage in the Arctic Ocean, Report of an expert workshop and review process*, IUCN highlighted the lack of representation of the Arctic region on the World Heritage List.²³⁷ In the report, it outlined seven Arctic regions that represent outstanding universal value: Remnant Arctic Multi-Year Sea Ice and the Northeast Water Polynya Ecoregion, The Northern Baffin Bay Ecoregion, Disko Bay and Store Hellefiskebanke Ecoregion, The Scoresby Sound Polynya Ecoregion, High Arctic Archipelagos, and The Great Siberian Polynya.²³⁸

The Link Between Biodiversity and Depleting Sea Ice

Recognizing that sea ice is a link to biodiversity allows us to better understand the impacts that its receding will have above and below water.²³⁹ First-year sea ice is rapidly replacing multi-year ice, which causes concern of habitat loss and rising temperatures.²⁴⁰ In all seasons, the extent of sea ice is shrinking, and within the next 30 years, experts expect the Arctic region to be virtually ice-free during the summer months.²⁴¹ Ice-free conditions pose several ecological concerns such as: habitat loss, change in biological events, food and resource security for ingenious groups, change in the water conditions, species' ability to adapt, and the interconnected fragility of food webs.²⁴²

Sea ice serves many purposes and provides a unique habitat to species such as ice algae, ice amphipods, ringed seals, and polar bears.²⁴³ The polar bear is an ice-associated species, meaning they depend on the existence of sea ice and are highly sensitive to the changing conditions in the Arctic.²⁴⁴ Polar bears travel, hunt, and den on the ice, like their main prey, ringed seals.²⁴⁵ Both species use ice as reproductive areas and snow dens as birthing places, however, warming temperatures have caused dens to melt or collapse often killing their occupants.²⁴⁶ In instances of ice-free conditions, the polar bears often fast or follow a vegetarian diet.²⁴⁷ These eating habits create poor body conditions, lower populations, and changes in behavior.²⁴⁸ Due to these conditions, life is not sustainable for the polar bear without high-energy food sources like seals.²⁴⁹ Likewise, ice-associated seals who utilize ice as an essential habitat for reproduction and raising pups have been negatively impacted by receding ice.²⁵⁰ For example, the decreased extent of sea ice can result in early separation of mothers and pups causing increased mortality rates newborn seals.²⁵¹

The reduction of sea ice causes the reduction of necessary species in basic food chains, meaning each species is linked to one another, such as ice algae to zooplankton, zooplankton to polar cod, polar cod to

²³⁴ IUCN, *Biodiversity and protected areas*, 2021; IUCN, *Protected area solutions*, 2021

²³⁵ IUCN, *Biodiversity and protected areas*, 2021.

²³⁶ Speer et al., *Natural Marine World Heritage in the Arctic Ocean, Report of an expert workshop and review process*, 2017, pp. 6-8.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ NSIDC, *Multiyear Ice*, 2021.

²⁴¹ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 5.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁴³ CAFF, *Life Linked to Ice: Arctic sea-ice-associated biodiversity*, 2021.

²⁴⁴ NSIDC, *Wildlife: Polar Bears*, 2021.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 56; NSIDC, *Wildlife: Polar Bears*, 2021.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁵⁰ NSIDC, *Wildlife: Seals*, 2021.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

seals, and seals to polar bears.²⁵² The Arctic Ocean is comprised of several different water sources, including melted sea ice.²⁵³ Given the significant decrease in sea ice, there are serious effects on marine ecosystems, as sea levels have risen and the chemical makeup of the water has changed.²⁵⁴ Due to these changes, there have been significant impacts to the Arctic marine food web, for instance altering primary production creating a “bottom-up impact.”²⁵⁵ Bottom-up explains how a change in presence or absence of a species in the lower trophic levels, typically producers, can impact all species in a food web.²⁵⁶ However, as ice continues to recede and temperatures rise, it will invite new predatorial species creating a “top-down impact,” which both create disturbances through the trophic levels, directly impacting the biodiversity of the Arctic.²⁵⁷ Meaning, species at the top trophic level control the population of species within the lower levels.²⁵⁸ For example, unconsumed algae will sink to the ocean floor as new predators enter the Arctic regions and alter the abundance of algae-consuming species.²⁵⁹

As both land and marine environments change in the Arctic, so will human activities in that region.²⁶⁰ Arctic coastal people like Yupik Eskimo are most affected by receding sea ice, as their communities rely on the immediate marine environment for food, cultural, and small-scale economic purposes.²⁶¹ Adaptation of Arctic communities will be necessary as previous knowledge and methods may become inadequate, accessibility to fish and wildlife will change, and increased industrial activity will disrupt their way of life.²⁶² In order to respond to the changing conditions of sea ice, communities will need to build on the foundational knowledge, refine techniques and tools, and learn the new dynamics of the ice.²⁶³ However, due to the circumstances of receding sea ice, Arctic communities may receive to economic opportunities through shipping and tourism and new fisheries.²⁶⁴ These opportunities will likely create a new way of life by establishing more jobs for remote communities and remove economic barriers to those populations.²⁶⁵

Conclusion

The Arctic’s future requires a global effort to respond and mitigate the rapid changes in the Arctic that are yet to be realized.²⁶⁶ The region’s future is depending on adaptable wildlife and habitat management, mindful marine spatial planning, early warning systems, utilizing the advantages of local knowledge and improving communication channels to resource managers, which are individuals making wildlife conservation decisions.²⁶⁷ Experts indicate, as continued action in assessment plans, mainstreaming biodiversity into development, MPAs, and protected areas works towards safeguarding Arctic biodiversity, stronger efforts to incorporate the region into policy, resolutions, frameworks and strategic plans like the *Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework* and 2030 Agenda are needed.²⁶⁸

²⁵² Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 17.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Babu, The top-down vs bottom-up control in an ecosystem, *Eco-intelligent*, 2018; Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 18.

²⁵⁶ Babu, The top-down vs bottom-up control in an ecosystem, *Eco-intelligent*, 2018.

²⁵⁷ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 18.

²⁵⁸ Babu, The top-down vs bottom-up control in an ecosystem, *Eco-intelligent*, 2018.

²⁵⁹ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 18.

²⁶⁰ CAFF, *Life Linked to Ice: Arctic sea-ice-associated biodiversity*, 2021.

²⁶¹ Ibid; Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 62.

²⁶² Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 64.

²⁶³ Ocean & Climate Platform, *The Arctic: Opportunities, Concerns, and Challenges*.

²⁶⁴ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 64.

²⁶⁵ Ocean & Climate Platform, *The Arctic: Opportunities, Concerns, and Challenges*.

²⁶⁶ Eamer et al., *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*, 2013, p. 76.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ CAFF, *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*, 2015, p. 5; Johnsen et al., *Protecting Arctic Biodiversity*, 2010, p. 24.

Further Research

During delegates research these questions should be used to address key areas of the topic and how they relate to their country's position: How will the *Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework* impact and prevent further biodiversity loss on an international and regional level? How can existing information sharing and early warning systems be expanded and utilized to preserve the Arctic? In what ways can UNEA and international and national governments further the preservation of Arctic biodiversity?

Annotated Bibliography

Arctic Council. (2021). Safeguarding Arctic Biodiversity. Retrieved 8 February 2021 from: <https://arctic-council.org/en/explore/topics/biodiversity/>

The Arctic Council is a leading participant in the pursuit of safeguarding Arctic biodiversity. This resource is a great starting point for delegates as it provides foundational information regarding some of the challenges the Arctic ecosystems face and groups that work towards conservation. The source outlines a general overview of the Council's initiatives towards the topic through the explanation of Arctic biodiversity, its working groups, and other contributors.

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. (2015). *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*. Retrieved 8 February 2021 from: <https://www.caff.is/administrative-series/293-actions-for-arctic-biodiversity-2013-2021-implementing-the-recommendations-of-th/download>

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, commonly known as CAFF, is one of the Arctic Council's working groups. This assessment is a critical piece to the progress of Arctic biodiversity conservation. It outlines 17 recommendations and their implementation plans. The living nature of the documents requires a review every two years to ensure evolution to the recommendations and updates. This assessment is useful for delegates to incorporate real-time approaches and strategic plans that are being implemented safeguard Arctic biodiversity.

Eamer, J., et al. (2013). *Life Linked to Ice: A guide to sea-ice-associated biodiversity in this time of rapid change*. CAFF Assessment Series No. 10. Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. Retrieved 13 February 2021 from: <https://www.caff.is/assessment-series/254-life-linked-to-ice-a-guide-to-sea-ice-associated-biodiversity-in-this-time-of-ra/download>

This assessment was produced by various contributors of the Conversation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group to the Arctic Council. The assessment goes into extensive detail on the implication of depleting sea ice in the Arctic regions. Specifically, the document addresses how rapidly reducing sea ice impacts biodiversity: under the ice, on land, and in the sky. Delegates will find this assessment a resourceful piece to understanding the link between sea ice and biodiversity in the Arctic.

Johnsen, K., et al. (2010). *Protecting Arctic Biodiversity*. United Nations Environment Programme. Retrieved 4 March 2021 from: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7871/-Protecting%20Arctic%20Biodiversity%20Limitations%20and%20strengths%20of%20environmental%20agreements-2010973.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

This report provides a broad overview of MEAs and discusses the impact MEAs make on protecting biodiversity in the Arctic. The report also highlights areas that Member States must support to increase funding and conservation activities. The report is a great resource for delegates to understand the significance of MEAs and the roles they play in international participation of these agreements. It is also helpful for identifying existing MEAs that are important to explore during the research process.

United Nations Environment Programme. (2019). *Global Environment Outlook – GEO-6: Healthy Planet, Healthy People*. Retrieved 11 March 2021 from:

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27539/GEO6_2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

This assessment outlines a roadmap for achieving the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. The GEO-6 discusses the serious impacts of biodiversity loss and many other factors causing an unhealthy planet. This resource is useful for delegates as it provides an in-depth look at biodiversity conditions and objectives through answering a series of interconnected questions.

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