

**Freshman #14**

TOPIC:protecting coral reefs



SOCOMUN XXVII

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Life Below Water – Protecting Coral Reefs

Hello, my name is Patrick Villasenor and I will be one of your chairs in this committee. I have been in the MUN program since I was a freshman, and I have enjoyed it a lot. Not only has it taught me to open up my mindset, but it has also introduced me to topics that I normally would not know about. I have been on two travel trips with the SMCHS MUN program. These trips were UC Berkley and UPENN, and they were both informative and fun. My favorite committees in MUN are Security Council and ICJ because anything can happen during a crisis. I am particularly passionate about topics regarding human rights, and violent conflicts because they provide for an interesting and exciting debate. I am also fond of committees like the European Union and Pacific Alliance because it takes you out of the United Nations, and makes you think of different perspectives. It is important that we discuss these topics in MUN because it makes us informed about issues that affect everyday people across the whole world! In my spare time I enjoy watching television shows like Curb Your Enthusiasm and Silicon Valley, as well as hanging out with friends on the weekend. I hope you enjoy this committee because protecting our coral reefs (and the environment in general) is a very important step in keeping the planet and its inhabitants happy. Make sure that you research your topic thoroughly so that we can keep the debate lively and intelligent. I would also recommend that you print out your resources, so you can reference them during the conference, as well as incorporate them into all of your speeches. During caucus times, make sure you’re respectful of everyone’s opinion, and invite those who have spoken to speak in your caucus group. The more friends in committee you make the easier it is to pass a resolution, and you will also have more fun too! If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [socomunfresh14@gmail.com](mailto:socomunfresh14@gmail.com). I understand that this will be your first conference, and I want to make it an exciting and informative experience. Prepare well and I can’t wait to see all of you at SOCOMUN 2018!

**Background**:

Coral reefs are an important ecosystem that houses life, and provides the earth with one of the most beautiful natural entities. Many marine creatures rely on coral reefs to provide shelter, sustenance and protection. Animals such as the clownfish rely solely on the coral reef and would perish if the coral reef is damaged or destroyed. Coral reefs can be found across the world, and one of the most famous examples is the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Sadly, many coral reefs are disappearing or getting irreversibly damaged due to humanity and climate. Humans effect coral reefs by practicing over fishing, touching the coral reefs (usually on tours), pollution, dynamite fishing, and hitting it accidently with marine vessels. Climate change is also considered to be one of the most detrimental dangers to coral reefs, because it causes coral bleaching, which can destroy coral reefs. Climate change has also caused the temperatures in the water to fluctuate, which can damage coral reefs that might otherwise thrive in a specific temperature. Overfishing is a concern because it removes a part of the fragile ecosystem, which is a coral reef. Since a coral reef acts as a cycle of life (it provides food and shelter to the fish, and the fish tend to the coral reef) by removing one aspect of the ecosystem, the whole ecosystem is disrupted. The other main problem is tourists touching or accidently damaging parts of the coral reef. This is heavily prevalent in coral reefs in Thailand, and Australia. This usually happens on accident, but the damage is irreversible, and the damage can throw the whole ecosystem into a state of in-balance. Pollution (mainly from oil vessels and pipelines) can also damage the coral reefs and marine life that inhabit the reefs. Pollution poisons the water and causes everything in the vicinity to perish. Dynamite fishing is also extremely dangerous, as the explosions will destroy a part of the coral reef. Many dynamite fishers use dynamite without realizes that a coral reef is nearby, and the quick success rate of dynamite fishing also goes hand and hand with overfishing. Finally, marine vessels will often time get close to the beach and damage the coral reefs by scraping them with the bottom of the boat. As with overfishing, this problem has mainly occurred by the actions of fisherman. Other vessels like tourist boats, and rented jet skis have caused this at well. It takes around 10,000 years for most coral reefs to form, so it has been imperative for countries to protect these ancient ecosystems. To combat these problems, many international organizations, like the U.N. have proposed regulation in order help solve this issue. The United Nations has specifically created the UNEP Coral Reef Unit to help protect and promote the protection of coral reefs. This occurred in the year 2000, and ever since the United Nations has been heavily involved since. On the national level, many nations have created marine protection areas, which have stemmed the flow of overfishing and tourisms. These protection areas are heavily protected and are far away from any potential human risks that can affect coral reefs. While a large amount of countries wants to solve this problem, others are hesitant to impose regulation out of fear that it may disrupt their economy (specifically fishing and tourism). These fears have often followed countries in Asia, mainly Vietnam and Thailand, who rely on the fishing industry to survive economically. Other countries also might have leaders that do not believe that preserving the environment is a serious issue, which instils a culture of apathy for the environment. This important aspect of background information influences policy makers in the United Nations, as they must attempt to persuade countries that might not have the same views on the environment that the United Nations advocates for everyday in New York City.

**Possible Solutions:**

There are many solutions delegates can advocate for during committee. Whether it be increasing types of regulation, instilling new laws, or doing nothing at all (because your country may not consider the environment to be a serious issue) it is important that you advocate it intelligently and persuasively. The solutions should be your country’s solutions and should not in any way reference or be the opinion of the United States of America (unless you are the U.S.). Make sure that your solutions are on country policy because we want to make this debate as realistic as possible. If your country is small, is not really involved with foreign diplomacy, or is not affected by this issue, you can still be involved in the debate. For these nations I would suggest that you research the policies of you bloc and allies, because nations will often have the same policies as their allies, much like you have the same interests as your friends. Delegates with larger countries or countries that are directly affected by this issue will want to advocate 4-5 solutions that best reflect your policy. It is better to have a small amount of quality solutions than a large amount of solutions that are uninspired and uninformative. The solutions should not be repetitive of each other and should all be totally different and distinct. You will also want to do research on other countries that are involved, so that you may caucus with them (as they will have similar solution). In regard to the topic, in order for any of your solutions to be implemented they must be clear, fair, and courteous to countries that may not share your views. Remember to focus on the topic with your solutions, and do not try to solve other environmental solutions (unless these solutions will also protect coral reefs). This committee’s sole objective is to solve the “coral reef” issue and nothing else. Since this is an environmental committee, it is also wise that you make your solutions not accusatory or undiplomatic. The environment is one of the last issues where the world as a relatively similar policy and making accusatory statements (like large and aggressive sanctions, or directly calling out a specific nation) may cause certain nations to lose faith in you diplomacy and may cause them to vote against your resolution. The only time your solutions should be accusatory is if a country is willingly involved in the destruction of coral reefs, or if the country is so apathetic that it comes to the point that the world must try to influence them for the good of the environment. The solutions should be specific and should respect the sovereignty of each individual nation. The United Nations cannot force a country to change their views and using and direct force would be contrary to the charter it was founded on. Do not worry about funding your solutions as that is not what our committee is focused on (that is the job of the Fifth Committee after a resolution is passed). Finally, when you make your speeches focus mostly on the solutions. Everyone in the committee knows what you are talking about, and hearing repetitive background will get old, and may cost you points. This aspect of committee will require you to do extensive research into your topic and will make you write meaningful solutions that help the environment, and more specifically coral reefs!

**Questions to Consider:**

I have written questions for you to consider when writing your paper. These questions will help you to stay on task, as well as on policy.

1. What is your country’s specific position? Do they already have strict laws regarding coral reefs, or do they not consider it a major issue?
2. What does your bloc (European, African, Asian etc.) think about coral reef protection? Does their position influence your country’s view on the topic? Are any of your country’s views the same as another nation?
3. Does your country have any coral reefs in its waters? How do they protect it currently, and have they suggested any new protections?
4. Does your country have any marine reserves? How are these reserves protected, and can a similar system be expanded to fit other countries’ needs?
5. Are there any government agencies in your country that currently protect coral reefs? Are these agencies effective, or should they be expanded?
6. Does your country’s economy depend on overfishing, or tourism? How can your economy be preserved, while protecting the coral reefs?
7. Are there any foreign countries or corporations that might be violating the health and safety of coral reefs near your shore?
8. Is your country against environmental regulation, or does your country not believe protecting coral reefs is a serious issue? How will you persuade other countries to respect your position if your position is contrary to the majority?
9. Is your country part of any other international organizations that are committed to protecting the environment, specifically coral reefs? What is the extent of your country’s involvement in these organizations?
10. Is the majority of your population in favor of protecting coral reefs? If not are there any solutions to changing the populace’s mind?

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| **Goal 14 Targets. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development** |
| 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution |
| 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans |
| 14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels |
| 14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics |
| 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information |
| 14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation3 |
| 14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism |
| 14.a Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries |
| 14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets |
| 14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The future we want” |

Works Cited

“ICRI, Coral Reefs and the UN.” *ICRI, Coral Reefs and the UN | International Coral Reef Initiative*, [www.icriforum.org/about-icri/coral-reefs-and-un](http://www.icriforum.org/about-icri/coral-reefs-and-un).

Annotation: Describes U.N. involvement and NGO involvement. Discusses how countries are combatting the destruction of coral reefs. Shows solutions that the world has endorsed as well as other aspects of the current problem.

NormileJun, Dennis. “Almost All of the 29 Coral Reefs on U.N. World Heritage List Damaged by Bleaching.” *Science | AAAS*, 8 Dec. 2017, [www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/almost-all-29-coral-reefs-un-world-heritage-list-damaged-bleaching](http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/almost-all-29-coral-reefs-un-world-heritage-list-damaged-bleaching).

Annotation: Gives explanation about “coral reef bleaching”. Talks about how we can stop this dangerous trend. The article describes the process in which coral bleaching occurs. Shows different organizations and countries that are committed to stopping coral bleaching.

“Reef Threats.” *Coral Reef Alliance*, coral.org/coral-reefs-101/reef-threats/.

Annotation: Gives examples of threats to coral reefs. Shows statistics and solutions to the threats. Shows both biological and human error threats. Also gives examples of organizations that are stopping the threat.

Slezak, Michael. “Coral Reefs 'at Make or Break Point', UN Environment Head Says.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 19 Jan. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jan/19/coral-reefs-at-make-or-break-point-un-environment-head-says](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jan/19/coral-reefs-at-make-or-break-point-un-environment-head-says).

Annotation: Shows the dangers to coral reefs and how close they are to being totally destroyed. Shows how human threats are affecting coral reefs. Gives evidence and statistics to back up the argument. Also gives information of different solutions that can protect coral reefs.

“Threats to Coral Reefs.” *Defenders of Wildlife*, 6 May 2013, defenders.org/coral-reef/threats.

Annotation: More info about reef threats, both from humans and natural. Shows how nations are involved in the destruction, and the conservation of coral reefs.

US Department of Commerce, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “How Does Climate Change Affect Coral Reefs?” *NOAA's National Ocean Service*, 3 Mar. 2015, oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coralreef-climate.html.

Annotation: Discussing climate change, and how