



MODEL UNITED NATIONS

SOCOMUN XXXII

**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL
PROGRAMME**

TOPIC: REDUCING MARINE POLLUTION



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UN Environmental Programme Reducing Marine Pollution

Introductions

Hello, delegates! My name is Layla Amer, and I am honored to be your chair at SOCOMUN this year. This is my 3rd year involved in the MUN program, and I have grown immensely through it. Last year, I assisted my chair in the same UNEP committee, and am grateful for the opportunity to be a chair this year. Aside from MUN, I spend my time with my friends, going to the beach, or playing soccer. I hope that this conference is a great start to your year in MUN and can give each of you an educational and enjoyable experience. Looking forward to seeing you all in committee!

Welcome to SOCOMUN! I am Gabriel Park, your vice-chair, and a junior in SMCHS. In my three years with MUN, I most enjoyed rehearsing and giving speeches, basking in the speaker's high following a great presentation. A close second and third are talking to different delegates during informal consultations to develop resolutions and answer questions for my group's resolution paper. Otherwise, a typical day must include a workout and time for reading or studying, which, I suppose, makes me a rather boring individual. Still, I contend that classics are the best kind of self-help books out there. I look forward to all your innovative ideas and impactful speeches.

Hi everyone! My name is Noah Fan. This is my second year in MUN. I am a sophomore now. I was successful in my first year, and as of now, I have three awards from three of my conferences. When it comes to my hobbies I love boxing, Muay Thai, wrestling, ju-jitsu, and reading. I'm also an avid guitar player and pianist. I'm very excited to be a rapporteur for you all!

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask by emailing us at socomununep@gmail.com.

Background:

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, marine pollution is the entry of harmful substances into the oceanic or marine environment. This, in turn, can have a significant impact on the overall health of the ecosystem and those who live in it. Marine pollution is growing to become a severe problem for the stability of the biosphere. The introduction of this issue came about during the nineteenth century; during the rapid industrialization of developing countries, Alexander Parkes created single-use plastic. This invention, along with many others, completely revolutionized the effects of industrialization on various parts of the world, specifically the ocean. Scientists did not realize that plastic was not biodegradable and dissolved into small but harmful pieces called microplastics.

By that point, a great amount of damage had been done: 100 billion tons of waste had been discarded in the ocean. The United Nations estimates that, currently, the 5.25 trillion macro-pieces of plastic in the ocean harm over 800 oceanic species worldwide. One commonly known instance of garbage pile-up is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. This refers to a massive collection of plastic waste estimated to be twice the size of Texas and is in the Pacific Ocean. The patch was formed due to ocean currents, and often results in the ingestion of harmful materials by marine animals. It can lead to starvation, suffocation, and entanglement of thousands of creatures. In addition, oil spills are



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becoming more common in modern industrial conditions and are among the most damaging and conspicuous forms of pollution. These spills may occur during the production or transportation of oil and often poison the sediment of the seafloor and even entire communities of wildlife. In one of the worst oil spills in history, 3.19 million barrels of oil were spilled into the Gulf of Mexico. This resulted in the death of thousands of marine animals, including sea turtles, various species of fish, and sea otters. Additionally, sewage discharge is an influential source of marine pollution, in which there is a sudden introduction of pathogens, nutrients, and other contaminants into the marine environment. It may occur because of untreated or poorly treated sewage and can have devastating effects on nearby oceanic regions. Specifically, substances such as antibiotics are sometimes released into coral reefs and damage the protective layer of mucus, therefore leaving the coral exposed to disease.

Around 2001, an outbreak of the mysterious “white syndrome” killed over 70% of rare coral species on the coast of Florida. The destruction of coral reefs is dangerous for human civilization as well. According to the United Nations, approximately 1 billion people in the world depend on coral as both a food and livelihood source. The decrease in the population of coral reefs has resulted in thousands of people their main financial provisions. Coral also provides a food source for countless marine creatures, and their destruction in affected regions causes a drastic decrease in the biodiversity of those areas. Additionally, the discarding of fertilizers into the ocean causes the abnormal growth of algae which blocks sunlight from reaching a variety of plants in an area. This can create “dead zones,” in which there is a fatal reduction of oxygen concentration in the water. With all these issues becoming more and more crucial as time goes on, the United Nations has taken various steps to combat marine pollution. Goal 14 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals focuses on reducing marine pollution from land-related activities, regulating harvesting and overfishing, and conserving no less than 10 percent of marine and coastal areas around the world. The U.S. Department of State has taken greater strides, forming the WasteWise Program and the Trash Free Waters organization. Both institutions have sought to promote the reuse of mass-produced goods as opposed to marine littering. Although these operatives have been greatly beneficial in raising awareness of these problems, the concentration of pollutants in the ocean continues to climb to alarming levels.

Possible Solutions:

Concerning the actions which the United Nations must take to prevent the continuation of detrimental ocean pollution, one must take three factors into account: prevention, awareness, and damage control. These key areas seek to focus on what occurs before, during, and after pollution and waste are sent into the ocean. Related to the prevention of ocean pollution, governments may implement a national framework to ensure a sense of legal authority concerning actions by both individuals and large corporations. Additionally, another solution to combat this issue is to promote proper waste disposal through the provision of accessible and convenient waste disposal facilities, potentially following the waste-management and minimization systems designed by the legislations of the Netherlands and Denmark. These nations have been incredibly successful in the regulation of waste disposal, together recycling an average of 53% of their total waste. The reduction of single-use plastics, which account for up to 12.5 million metric tons of waste, may be an effective strategy as well. Governments can



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promote the use of reusable alternatives, such as water bottles, bags, and even straws. However, one must take into consideration the limitations faced by developing countries, which is why financial incentives may be a prudent action to take.

Concerning the collective awareness of society related to the effects of marine pollution, it is incumbent upon the United Nations to increase public knowledge and understanding of the problem at hand. This can be achieved through public education campaigns, which may be launched by governments at both a local and national level. These programs would seek to raise awareness about both the qualitative and quantitative effects of ocean pollution, as well as provide practical tips on how individuals can reduce their own impact on the stability of the oceanic climate. These campaigns can include the implementation of environmental awareness segments in the general curriculum of schools and public events like beach cleanups and educational seminars. Moreover, social media is often a critical tool utilized for raising awareness about environmental issues. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and even Tik Tok can be used to share educational content that highlights the impact of ocean pollution on marine ecosystems and human health. The benefits of social media platforms may be used to the fullest extent by collaborating with these corporations in taking advantage of the algorithms so that the information is able to reach the largest audience possible. This includes taking note of periods with the most traffic and hashtags which garner above-average amounts of attention from viewers.

A factor which must not be neglected is damage control, which can implement various ocean cleanup systems and legislative strategies to undo damage which has resulted in the large amount of death and destruction in the ocean. The Ocean Cleanup Project, now in its tenth year of work, has partnered with the United Nations in their Sustainable Development Goals to remove plastic waste from the ocean. Systems in which the ocean is cleaned use a combination of technology and innovation, such as large-scale floating booms and autonomous drones to collect and remove large quantities of debris. These systems can also provide valuable data on the sources and various types of pollution in the water. Additionally, another approach to this factor is creating regulations to be put in place, which hold polluters accountable for their damage and provide financial support for cleanup and restoration efforts. Governments may implement policies such as pollution taxes or fines for companies that have caused previous damage, using these funds to support further progress made in this area. Please keep in mind that funding is assumed to be provided by the UN, and should not be a prevalent consideration when developing solutions.

Questions to consider:

These questions do not need to be directly answered by delegates but should be considered when drafting speeches, caucuses, and resolution papers. With these questions, the chair hopes to expand each delegate's research on the topic as well as provide ideas on how to address the topic itself:

1. How has my country had an impact on marine pollution in the past?
2. What steps has my country taken to improve conditions in previous years?
3. Has my country been involved with Sustainable Development Goal 14?



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4. Do my country's solutions take into account financial and economic factors related to marine pollution?
5. How has my country been impacted economically by marine pollution?
6. Do I specifically address various factors related to the effects of marine pollution?
7. Are my solutions connected in the sense that none of them directly contradict one another?
8. Does my country have the financial means to improve their conditions for marine pollution? If not, how can I address this through my solutions?

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