

ULSACUNMUN 2017 TIME TO ACT, TIME TO CHANGE

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*“Time to Act, Time to change”*

Background Guide

## UNEP

United Nations Environment Programme



“Implementing the International agreement to prevent  
climate change”



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Honorable delegates, you are all welcome, first allow me to introduce myself. My name is Irazu Vergara Espinosa. I am currently studying at Universidad La Salle Cancun and I have participated in two MUNS and it is clear to me that I love it because it leaves whole new experiences. I am going to be your chair on this ULSACUNMUN 2017, and for me it is a pleasure.

I love to travel, discover different cultures and also learn new languages. I have spent quite a few times in different countries around the world and I know that I love learning about different languages and lifestyles. In addition, their social conflicts, that is why I decided to participate on these models and I am sure that it was one of the best decisions I have ever taken. After graduating from high school, I will apply to a medicine school and specialize in pediatrics. Meanwhile I will continue to enjoy the pleasures that the world has to offer.

I'm delighted to be leading this committee, and I am totally involved in this topic because this does not only implicate climate change, but also the destruction of other animals' habitats and some other serious consequences that will not only affect natural environments but our civilization in ways that we do not even imagine.

As I know what a good chair does, I hope that my co- chair and I create a gentle environment so you feel relaxed and gain confidence therefore we can discuss the topic fluently and actually get to a resolution.

Yours truly,

**Irazu Vergara Espinosa**

**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

## **Committee description**

In 1968, Sweden first suggested to ECOSOC the idea of having a UN conference to focus on human interactions with the environment. ECOSOC passed *resolution 1346* supporting the idea. *General Assembly Resolution 2398* in 1969 decided to convene a conference in 1972 and mandated a set of reports from the UN secretary-general suggesting that the conference should focus on "stimulating and providing guidelines for action by national government and international organizations" facing environmental issues.

Later in June 5, 1972, Maurice Strong founded the United Nations Environmental Programme as a result of the *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference)*.

UNEP has global responsibility for environmental issues among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming. UNEP activities cover an extensive range of issues regarding the marine and terrestrial ecosystems, atmosphere, environmental governance and green economy. It has played a noteworthy role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting environmental science and information and illustrating the way those can be implemented in conjunction with policy, working on the development and implementation of policy with national governments, regional institutions in conjunction with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.

The United Nations Environmental Programme has aided in the formulation of guidelines and treaties on issues such as the international trade in potentially harmful chemicals, transboundary air pollution, and contamination of international waterways.

The General Assembly of the United Nations upgraded the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and established the universal membership of its governing body. The decision allows full participation of all 193 UN member states at the UNEP Governing Council in February 2013 and forward.

# "Implementing the international agreement to prevent climate change"

## Introduction

To understand better this topic, we need to know the key definitions and also the most important key terms.

**What is the COP21?** COP21 is an International environmental agreement on climate change that is part of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*. As they held their 21st annual Conference of the Parties (COP) it is commonly known as COP21, it took place in Paris the past November, 2015.

**What is climate?** Climate is usually defined as the "average weather", or more rigorously, as the statistical description of the weather in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over periods of several decades.

**3 Rs of COP21** include:

- Reduce consumption of resources.
- Reuse products.
- Recycle the waste.

**What is a Greenhouse gas?** It is a gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range.

**What is IPCC?** The intergovernmental panel on climate change.

## Historical Background

The Earth's climate has changed throughout history. Just in the last 650,000 years there have been seven cycles of glacial advance and retreat, with the sudden end of the last ice age about 7,000 years ago marking the beginning of the modern climate era and of human civilization.

Since 1712, as a consequence of the invention of the first steam engine, the use of coal increased. Then in 1800 the world population reached 1 billion, and as the population started to grow, carbon emissions from fossil fuel burning and industry reach one billion tonnes per year, and as time passed it reached six billion tonnes per year.

On 1970 it was celebrated the First Earth Day an environmental movement that reaches strong influence and spreads concern about global degradation. World concern about

environmental effects of airplanes leads to investigations of trace gases in the stratosphere and discovery of danger to ozone layer.

On 1987 Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention imposes international restrictions on emission of ozone-destroying gases that have a great impact on the atmosphere.

On 1990 IPCC produced the First Assessment Report which concludes that temperatures have risen by 0.3-0.6C over the last century, that humanity's emissions are adding to the atmosphere's natural complement of greenhouse gases, and that the addition would be expected to result in warming.

Human activities since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (taken as the year 1750) have produced a 40% increase in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, from 280 ppm in 1750 to 400 ppm (Parts-per notation: pseudo-units to describe small values of quantities) in 2015.

Scientist said that ever since the world's population started to grow, the Earth started to be destroyed, with a considerable amount of carbon dioxide and many other gases that polluted the atmosphere and now we have to deal with the effects that this caused.

Global climate change has already had observable effects on the environment. Glaciers have shrunk, ice on rivers and lakes is breaking up earlier, plant and animal ranges have shifted and trees are flowering sooner. Effects that scientists had predicted in the past would result from global climate change are now occurring: loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise and longer, more intense heat waves.

Many of this issues happened before and didn't affect that much, but the real problem here is that everything is happening really fast. Faster than ever. According to NASA'S Global Climate Change website, the evidence for rapid climate change is compelling: global sea level rose about 17 centimeters in the last century, global temperature rise, warming oceans, shrinking ice sheets, declining Arctic sea ice, ocean acidification and many others that lead to many serious consequences that we don't even imagine.

### **Actions taken**

#### ***By the United Nations Environmental Programme:***

The United Nations Environmental Programme has more than twenty years of experience working on climate change.

UNEP helped establish the IPCC with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the 1980s and conducted assessments of the scientific understanding of climate change in preparation for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It also supported the negotiation of the UNFCCC, which entered into force in 1994.

UNEP's work has focused on efforts to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases, primarily by promoting renewable energy and upgraded energy efficiency, and spurring development of a carbon market. UN Environmental Programme has also been active in efforts to reduce the risks of, and improve society's resilience to, climate change, especially through its support to the development of National Adaptation Programmes of Action. Many of UNEP's activities, while not driven solely by climate concerns, have had positive mitigation or adaptation impacts.

### ***By the United Nations:***

The United Nations have also worked to help eradicate climate change making campaigns about the 3 Rs of COP21, and publishing it on their own website so people knows what to do to help the environment, such ideas are recycling paper, plastic, glass, and metal. Reusing, mend, and repurpose things to save money and divert waste from your local landfill. Plugging air leaks in windows and doors to increase energy efficiency. Adjusting your thermostat, lower in winter, higher in summer and replacing old appliances with energy efficient models and light bulbs.

### ***By NGO's or other organizations:***

There are many other organizations that also help such as the *Kyoto Protocol* which is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which commits its Parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets. Under the Protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures. However, the Protocol also offers them an additional means to meet their targets by way of three market-based mechanisms. The Kyoto mechanisms are:

- International Emissions Trading
- Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
- Joint implementation (JI)

*Greenpeace* likewise works with the Kyoto protocol to reduce a 5.2% of the emission of the toxic gases and has a wide range of campaigns to help the issue. It created the Greenpeace's International Campaign to Save the Climate that has as goal going from a world powered by nuclear and fossil fuels to one running on renewable energy.

*Climate Action Network (CAN)* is a worldwide network of over 430 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels.

*Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E)* is recognised as Europe's leading network working on climate and energy issues.

### **Current Situation**

The Earth's average temperature has increased about 1°F during the 20th century. One degree may sound like a small quantity, but it's an unusual event in our planet's recent history. Earth's climate record, preserved in tree rings, ice cores, and coral reefs, shows that the global average temperature is stable over long periods of time. Furthermore, small changes in temperature lead to enormous changes in the environment. For example, at the end of the last ice age, when the Northeast United States was covered by more than 3,000 feet of ice, average temperatures were only 5 to 9 degrees cooler than today.

Scientists have high confidence that global temperatures will continue to rise for decades to come, largely due to greenhouse gases produced by human activities.

Global climate is projected to continue to change over this century and beyond. The magnitude of climate change beyond the next few decades depends primarily on the amount of heat-trapping gases emitted globally, and how sensitive the Earth's climate is to those emissions.

Because human-induced warming is superimposed on a naturally varying climate, the temperature rise has not been, and will not be, uniform or smooth across the country or over time.

Droughts in the Southwest and heat waves (periods of abnormally hot weather lasting days to weeks) everywhere are projected to become more intense, and cold waves less intense everywhere. Summer temperatures are projected to continue rising too.

## **Guided questions**

1. - Is your country a main producer of greenhouse gases? If so what actions do your country takes in order to decrease the production?
2. - How can countries monitor their health effects to see if climate change is affecting them?
3. – What can be done to protect populations from climate impacts? What can your country do in order to protect them?
4. - As a consequence of the actions taken in your country, are there any reductions on the rates of the effects of climate change?
5. - Is your country mainly affected by climate change? Is your country affecting the environment?

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