



Arizona Model United Nations 64

United Nations Environment Assembly

Background Guide

Chair Introduction

My name is Valentina. I am a sophomore at the University of Arizona, majoring in Finance with a minor in Political Science. I joined the Model United Nations to discuss global issues, debate ideas from different perspectives, and strengthen my public speaking skills. Through this experience, I have gained valuable insights and created great connections with amazing people! UNEA is one of my favorite committees because it encourages creativity while working toward realistic solutions to environmental challenges. As your chair, I hope to see active participation, confidence in sharing ideas, and genuine effort from delegates. I look forward to the discussions and solutions that will emerge throughout the conference!

Committee Introduction and Purview

The United Nations Environment Assembly was created in 2012, when world leaders called for the UN Environment to be strengthened and upgraded. This assembly is important because it serves as the world's highest-level decision-making body on environmental issues, setting global priorities and starting negotiations for new international laws, conventions, and protocols.

UNEA brings together representatives from all UN member states, along with observers and environmental stakeholders, to discuss pressing environmental challenges. Delegates examine global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and sustainable development. The committee works to develop practical solutions, share knowledge, and recommend policies that guide international environmental action.

The assembly has a universal membership of all 193 member states. Each member state has one vote, regardless of its size or level of development, which ensures equal participation. The assembly meets regularly to debate environmental issues, propose solutions, and adopt resolutions. Decisions and recommendations from UNEA help guide the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and influence global environmental policy. Observers, such as non-governmental organizations and experts, may also attend to provide insight, but only member states take part in formal decision-making.

Topic I: Protecting Endangered Species

The rapid decline of endangered species has become a major global concern due to habitat destruction, climate change, pollution, and illegal wildlife trade. Human activity has significantly increased extinction rates, threatening biodiversity and the stability of ecosystems. Protecting

endangered species is critical not only for environmental balance but also for food security, cultural heritage, and economic stability in many regions of the world.

International efforts such as protected wildlife areas, anti-poaching laws, and conservation treaties have helped slow species loss, but enforcement and funding remain inconsistent. Many existing policies lack strong local involvement, which limits their long-term effectiveness. Additionally, economic pressures often push communities toward practices that harm wildlife, highlighting the need for sustainable alternatives.

The United Nations Environment Assembly encourages cooperation between governments, local communities, and international organizations to strengthen conservation efforts. UNEA works alongside agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote sustainable wildlife protection. Moving forward, delegates should consider solutions that balance environmental preservation with economic development and community participation.

Questions to Consider:

- Are current policies and programs enough, or do they need to be reinforced and reworked?
- What role should local communities play in the protection of endangered species?
- What economic or social incentives can promote the conservation of species (i.e. ecotourism, reduced payments for environmental services)?

References

- United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). *Biodiversity and ecosystems*. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/biodiversity>
- World Wildlife Fund. (n.d.). *Endangered species*. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species>

Topic II: Addressing Air Pollution in Urban Areas

Urban air pollution is one of the most immediate environmental challenges facing cities today. Emissions from transportation, energy production, and industrial activity contribute to unhealthy air quality that affects millions of people daily. The impacts of air pollution extend beyond health, influencing climate patterns, economic productivity, and social inequality.

Cities around the world have experimented with a wide range of solutions, including emission limits, improved public transportation, and energy-efficient buildings. While these measures have proven effective in some regions, their success often depends on infrastructure, funding,

and political commitment. Rapid urban growth has also made it difficult for policies to keep pace with rising pollution levels.

Through UNEA and UNEP initiatives, the United Nations promotes clean air as a global priority. The committee encourages cooperation between governments, private sectors, and local authorities to reduce emissions and improve urban planning. Delegates are expected to consider scalable approaches that can be adapted to cities with varying levels of development.

Questions to Consider:

- What types of sustainable transportation can be implemented?
- How can we make energy more efficient in homes, buildings, and industries?
- What role can the transition to renewable energies play in the reduction of urban pollution?

References

- United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). *Air pollution*. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/air>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Ambient (outdoor) air pollution*. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution>

Topic III: Promoting Renewable Energy in Developing Countries

Energy access remains uneven across the globe, with many developing countries facing limited or unreliable electricity supplies. As energy demand increases, continued reliance on fossil fuels raises concerns about environmental degradation and long-term sustainability. Renewable energy offers an opportunity to expand access while minimizing negative environmental impacts.

Efforts to promote renewable energy have focused on international financing, technology sharing, and public-private partnerships. Although these initiatives have helped expand renewable capacity, weak institutions and limited investment security continue to slow progress. In many cases, the challenge lies not in resource availability, but in implementation and governance.

Questions to Consider:

- How can we strengthen institutions to guarantee an efficient implementation of clean sources of energy?
- What financial systems can attract investments in renewable energy?

- What role should high income countries play in order to aid in the transition towards clean energy in low income countries?

References

- United Nations. (n.d.). *Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy*.
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7>
- International Renewable Energy Agency. (n.d.). *Renewable energy and development*.
<https://www.irena.org/energytransition>