



International Utopia MUN'20

# United Nations Environment Programme

Reviewing the real-time Progress of SDGs with special emphasis on Climate Change

## **ABOUT THE COMMITTEE**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the platform for the environment in the United Nations (UN). UNEP is a specialized programme that coordinates environmental activities at both an international level and a local level to “promote [and protect] international co-operation in the field of the environment. Recent restructuring of the UNEP Governing Council has positioned the body to better fill this role. Since 2014, UNEP has implemented projects across several priority themes, including climate change, disasters and conflict, and ecosystem management. UNEP falls into a category of entities within the UN system identified as “programmes and funds.” Programmes and funds are a type of entity within the UN system which is controlled by separate and distinct intergovernmental bodies, i.e. a body comprised of Member States, which derives “most of their financial resources from sources other than United Nations budgets.” Further, programmes are much more “operational and carried out at field level, they have needs dictated by an environment quite different from that of headquarters-centered administrations.

The General Assembly recommended the establishment of UNEP at the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in June 1972. The General Assembly adopted resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, which established UNEP as the foremost environmental body of the UN. With this resolution, UNEP was mandated to promote international environmental cooperation, guide the creation of environmental policies, review reports of the Executive Director, monitor the global environment in order to highlight problems, transfer scientific knowledge where needed, assist developing countries with any further aid they require, and review and approve the annual program on the allocation of the Environment Fund, which is the main source of funding for UNEP. The UNEP Secretariat established its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, where the Secretariat gains a prime understanding of the difficult nature of environmental issues facing developing countries. Since its creation, UNEP’s mandate has been revisited, reaffirmed, and amended several times. The most significant of these changes to the mandate come from Agenda 21, adopted in 1992 by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, adopted by the UNEP Governing Council in its decision 19/1. Agenda 21 (1992) outlines strategies for incorporating sustainable development into the

twenty-first century, which is significant to UNEP's mandate as it ensured an environmental conscience was associated with social and economic developments worldwide. Despite this particular adjustment to the mandate, UNEP still lacked clarity as to what role the program played in the global environmental field; there were few successful operations and the committee was not strong. This resulted in the Nairobi Declaration, which redefined and strengthened UNEP's role and mandate, being adopted. One of the most important outcomes of the Declaration is the confirmation of UNEP's position as the principal UN body with global environmental authority. The Declaration expanded UNEP's mandate, emphasizing the promotion of international cooperation and coordination through sharing scientific knowledge and further developing international law by ensuring international agreements were fully implemented. Given this mandate, UNEP's current mission is "to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations." UNEP is funded from a range of voluntary sources, including the UN Regular Budget, the Environment Fund, the General Trust Fund, the Technical Cooperation Trust Funds, Earmarked (Counterpart) Contributions (CPL), other Earmarked Contributions and Other Trust Funds. Non-governmental donors including individuals and the private sector also play an important role in financially supporting UNEP. The legislative body of UNEP comprises 58 Member States, chosen by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly every four years. These members are distributed through the regions for optimal representation "generally providing about 16 seats for African Member States, 13 for Asia, 6 for eastern Europe, 10 for Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 for western Europe and other Member States."

UNEP is focused mainly on:

1. Climate change and all of the related fields such as pollution, nuclear energy usage, and human threats to the ecosystem among others. The Territorial Approach to Climate Change (TACC) is a very important paradigm for this thematic area.
2. Disasters and conflicts
3. Ecosystem Management
4. Governance

5. Harmful substances
6. Resource efficiency and energy exploitation
7. Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

## **HISTORY OF UN INVOLVEMENT IN CLIMATE ACTION**

The first UN environmental conference, the Stockholm Conference, happened in 1972. This important conference outlined a framework for environmental action that had to be taken in the upcoming decades. Its importance lies primarily in the fact that it made hundreds of politicians aware of their impact on nature, and many agree that this conference has given a foundation to modern environmentalism.

The increased environmental awareness caused by the Stockholm conference led to a number of international conferences and treaties. The Kyoto Protocol, for example, created binding targets for many developed nations to reduce their emissions. However, it failed to do so for developing nations since it recognized that richer countries have historically been responsible for emissions. So that meant that India and China were free to emit as many greenhouse gasses as they pleased. On top of this, the United States did not even ratify the treaty, so it was not legally bound to a reduction either.

As the first commitment period (2008 - 2012) for the Kyoto Protocol began, some countries like the European union were on track to meeting their goals, but other like Canada failed to meet their targets and ended up pulling out of the treaty altogether. Furthermore, the United States and China had emitted more than enough greenhouse gasses to make it so any progress made by other nations would have no impact on global emissions. Recently, in 2012, a new commitment period where 37 nations, including the entire European Union, was decided upon; however, Russia, China, Canada, India, and the United States were not a part of it.

Another notable conference is the Millennium Summit, held in 2000. The result of this was the Millennium Development Goals, a list of eight international development goals for the year 2015.

There was an entire goal about environmental sustainability, and it had sub-sections regarding issues such as biodiversity loss, clean water and sanitation, and integrating sustainability into countries' policies and programs. The goals were very successful in some areas -- poverty alleviation, child mortality, and empowerment of women -- but it is difficult to call them successful when it comes to sustainability. They definitely were successful when it comes to clean water since they nearly doubled the amount of access to piped drinking water since 1990. Furthermore, marine protected areas in Latin America and the Caribbean went from 8.8% in 1990 to 23.4% in 2015.<sup>33</sup> Other areas were not so successful, though. For example, global carbon emissions have increased by 40% from 1990 to 2009, and the goals did not even mention the agriculture industry

As the time frame for MDGs ended in 2015, the world and our governments needed to continue with the efforts to fully achieve MDGs and build upon them by tackling new challenges. For the last few years, the UN has been discussing what the global priorities should be for the next 15 years (2016 - 2030).

In particular, the Rio+20 conference in June 2012 galvanized a process to agree upon the post-2015 global development framework and develop 17 new Goals, or global priorities, which are called SDGs.

On 1 January 2016, SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities, and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Regardless of economic concerns, the need to act imminently cannot be overstated. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), avoiding a global temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius is necessary to prevent cataclysmic climate crises. According to the report, 1.5°C-consistent pathways can be identified under a range of assumptions about economic growth, technology developments and lifestyles. However, the lack of global cooperation, lack of governance of the energy and land transformation, and growing resource-intensive consumption are key impediments for achieving 1.5°C-consistent pathways. In short, to achieve the necessary climate goals set by the IPCC, cooperation and consistent support for climate science is paramount. In terms of concrete numbers, limiting warming to 1.5°C implies reaching net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally around 2050, and

concurrent reductions in emissions of non-CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants, particularly methane. These ecological demands necessitate monumental changes to the global economy characterized by energy-demand reductions, decarbonisation of electricity and other fuels, electrification of energy end use, deep reductions in agricultural emissions, and some form of carbon storage or sequestration in geological reservoirs through actions such as green spaces and other initiatives to trap CO<sub>2</sub>. Low energy demand and low demand for land- and greenhouse gas (GHG)-intensive consumption goods facilitate limiting warming to as close as possible to 1.5°C.

## **2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals**

In 2015, the United Nations accepted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the collaborative work of multiple UN agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNEP, 17 SDGs and 169 targets were adopted by the UN, formally named the “2030 Agenda.” The creation of the 2030 Agenda spurred from both the end date approaching and from the global community recognizing the outdated language and statistics of the prior acclaimed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs used comparative language by labelling nations as “developed” or “developing,” and did not set targets for country or region-specific issues as needed. Expanding from only eight goals and roughly 21 targets, the creation of the SDGs aimed to follow four principles set out by the Agenda: universality, integration, innovation, and human rights and equality. Listed below are 6 of the 17 SDGs that closely align with the agenda of our committee.

**Goal 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation – With seven targets associated to this goal, the increase of natural water resource management and assurance to clean drinking water are being sought out as this goal is essential to stabilizing agriculture, promoting economic growth, and the prolonged development of growing communities.

**Goal 7:** Affordable and Clean Energy – The world is making progress towards Goal 7, with encouraging signs that energy is becoming more sustainable and widely available. Access to

electricity in poorer countries has begun to accelerate, energy efficiency continues to improve, and renewable energy is making impressive gains in the electricity sector.

Nevertheless, more focused attention is needed to improve access to clean and safe cooking fuels and technologies for 3 billion people, to expand the use of renewable energy beyond the electricity sector, and to increase electrification in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **GOAL 7 TARGETS**

7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services

7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix

7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency

7.A By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology

7.B By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and land-locked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support

**Goal 9:** Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure – Prioritizing and investing in green infrastructure and renewable energy industries will help lessen global environmental impacts and can bring stability to regions recovering from conflict through “green” industry-based economies.

**Goal 12: Sustainable Production and Consumption** – Transitioning societies to be more environmentally sustainable has been an incredibly difficult process as populations rise. We are faced with the problem of having to do more with a lot less. This goal focuses on the responsibility of individuals, corporations, and national governments, to reduce their consumption rates in food, energy, and water. Beyond decreasing consumption, the amount of production and what is being produced specifically must change from single-use, environmentally harmful materials to safe, reusable ones.

**Goal 14: Life Below Water** – The diverse oceanic ecosystems provide a global source of economic growth, food, and climate control. As average global temperatures continue to rise, these ecosystems are faced with increased pollution, which leads to the continued decrease in coral and fish populations. The economic and environmental value of the oceans is threatened until there are global efforts that focus on cleaning up the ocean, finding more renewable energy sources, and decreasing overfishing.

**Goal 13: Climate Action** – Calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It is intrinsically linked to all 16 of the other Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To address climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius

For many, a warming climatic system is expected to impact the availability of basic necessities like freshwater, food security, and energy, while efforts to redress climate change, both through adaptation and mitigation, will similarly inform and shape the global development agenda. The links between climate change and sustainable development are strong. Poor and developing countries, particularly least developed countries, will be among those most adversely affected and least able to cope with the anticipated shocks to their social, economic and natural systems.

The international political response to climate change began at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, where the ‘Rio Convention’ included the adoption of the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This convention set out a framework for action aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” The UNFCCC which entered into force on 21 March 1994, now has a near-universal membership of

197 parties. In December 2015, the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21/CMP1) convened in Paris, France, and adopted the Paris Agreement, a universal agreement which aims to keep a global temperature rise for this century well below 2 degrees Celsius, with the goal of driving efforts to limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. New climate data from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) predicts that the annual mean global temperature is likely to be at least 1.0°C above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900) in each of the coming five years (2020-2024) and there is a 20 per cent chance that it will exceed 1.5°C in at least one year.

1.5oC is the point where global warming linked consequences become increasingly severe and more difficult and expensive to adapt to, protect ourselves from, and control further temperature increases. Scientifically documented consequences of breaching 1.5oC include 70% loss of corals and loss of half the habitat of insects, including food pollinators, by the end of the century, bringing global food security issues, on top of accelerating frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

The earth's average temperature is already over 1.0oC above the pre-industrial period. The Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update, led by the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office, provides a predictive analysis of the world's climate for the next five years, updated annually. The last five-year period has been the warmest five years on record. June 2020 was just 0.01°C below the record-breaking temperatures of June 2019, driven by exceptional heat in Arctic Siberia, May 2020 was the hottest May on record.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States express their commitment to protect the planet from degradation and take urgent action on climate change. The Agenda also identifies, in its paragraph 14, climate change as “one of the greatest challenges of our time” and worries about “its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. Increases in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, including many least

developed countries and Small Island Developing States. The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk”.

Sustainable Development Goal 13 aims to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact”, while acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

More specifically, the associated targets of SDG 13 focus on the integration of climate change measures into national policies, the improvement of education, awareness-raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warnings. SDG 13’s alphabetical targets also call for the implementation of the commitment undertaken at the UNFCCC and for the promotion of mechanisms able to increase capacity for effective climate –change related planning and management in least developed countries and Small Island Developing States.

The outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, the Future We Want, underscores climate change as “an inevitable and urgent global challenge with long-term implications for the sustainable development of all countries”. Through the document, Member States express their concern about the continuous rising of emissions of greenhouse gases and the vulnerability of all countries, particularly developing countries, to the adverse impacts of climate change. Given these concerns, Member States have called for the widest cooperation and participation of all countries in an effective and appropriate international response to climate change.

The UN has defined 5 Targets and 8 Indicators for SDG 13. Targets specify the goals and Indicators represent the metrics by which the world aims to track whether these Targets are achieved.

**Target 13.1:** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related disasters

**UN definition:** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.1.1 : Deaths and injuries from natural disasters**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.1.1 is the number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population.

Indicators measured here report mortality rates, internally displaced persons, missing persons and total numbers affected by natural disasters.

**Goal:** By 2030 strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.1.2 : National disaster risk management**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.1.2 is the number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

This indicator identifies countries who have and have not adopted and implemented disaster risk management strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Goal:** By 2030 strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.1.3 : Local disaster risk management**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.1.3 is the proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies.

**Goal:** By 2030 strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

**Target 13.2:** Integrate climate change measures into policy and planning

**UN definition:** Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

**SDG INDICATOR 13.2.1 : Integration of climate change into national policies**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.2.1 is the number of countries that have communicated the establishment or operationalization of an integrated policy/strategy/plan which increases their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development.

This indicator measures the number of countries signed on to multilateral agreements on climate change. Currently this indicator does not reflect the levels of operationalization or implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation action.

National commitments within the UNFCCC Paris Agreement vary by country depending on their Nationally Determined Contributions (NCDs) so are not directly comparable. In the additional charts below you will find data on national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, per capita emissions and carbon intensity measures.

**Goal:** By 2030 integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

**Target 13.3:** Build knowledge and capacity to meet climate change

**UN definition:** Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.3.1 : Education on climate change**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.3.1 is the number of countries that have integrated mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula.

**Goal:** By 2030 improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.3.2 Capacity-building for climate change**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.3.2 is the number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of institutional, systemic and individual capacity-building to implement adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions.

**Goal:** By 2030 improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

### **Target 13.A: Implement then UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**

**UN definition:** Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.

### **SDG INDICATOR 13.A.1 : Green Climate Fund mobilization of \$100 billion**

**Definition:** Indicator 13.A.1 is the mobilized amount of United States dollars per year between 2020 and 2025 accountable towards the \$100 billion commitment.

This indicator measures the current pledged commitments from countries to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as annual US\$ contributions pledged. Also shown is the collective global total.

**Goal:** Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources

Unlike most SDG targets which have a set target year of 2030, this indicator requires a mobilization of \$100 billion per year from 2020 onwards.

**Target 13.B:** Promote mechanisms to raise capacity for planning and management

**UN definition:** Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

**SDG INDICATOR 13.B.1:** Support for planning and management in least-developed countries

**Definition:** Indicator 13.B.1 is the number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management.

**Goal:** By 2030 promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries.

## **Progress Report 2020**

The yearly report of the UN Secretary-General on progress towards the 17 SDGs has been released ahead of the 2020 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable

Development (HLPF). The report draws on the latest available data on the indicators contained in the global SDG indicator framework as of April 2020. It also highlights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on each SDG.

The 2020 SDG Progress Report finds “continued unevenness of progress” and identifies areas where significant improvement is required. Areas of progress until the end of 2019 included declining global poverty, falling rates of maternal and child mortality, access to electricity for more people, and the development of more national sustainable development policies and signing of international agreements for environmental protection. At the same time, progress was stalled or reversed on the number of people suffering from hunger, the rate of climate change, and increasing inequalities.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Will any actions taken now or in the future be scientifically sufficient to forestall the direct impacts of climate change?
2. Do the SDG Indicators currently indicate a positive progress in achieving the 2030 targets pertaining to the climate?
3. Considering the 2020 SDG Progress Report, what measures must be taken to ensure steady progress towards achieving the climate goals by 2030?
4. Is the framework of the UNFCCC effective in aiding member states to meet the 2030 SDG Goals?

