ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE STUDY GUIDES

by the Committee Directors
Dear ACMUN Delegates,

The study guides that follow are written by the directors of your committee in order to help you in your preparation for the conference. Remember that your own research on the topic area and your country’s policy is essential. The main purpose of this document is, as its name suggests, to simply guide you in your personal research.

Each delegate should come to the conference with a working paper for each topic area. In brief, a working paper is a one-page list of proposals addressing the different aspects of the problem, in accordance with the position of the delegate’s country on the issue. For more information on preparation and the rules and procedures of the conference, please consult the online Delegate Preparation Guide. Also, keep in mind that the directors are more than willing to answer any questions you may have, which you can send to the email addresses provided.

I hope that you will benefit from reading these well prepared and thorough study guides.

Sincerely,

Argyris Tsiaras
Secretary-General
Honorable delegates,

My name is Alexandra Karabournioti, I am 17 years old and I am in the 6th form of high school. I have attended five Model United Nations conferences until now, four of them as a delegate and one as the Deputy President of the General Assembly. I have also taken part in two European Youth Parliament conferences as a delegate, one in Greece and one in Paris. As you can realize, my M.U.N. C.V. contains more conferences as a delegate than a chair, but I hope that this conference will offer me the best of memories. Since I have been in your shoes for four times, I can understand how anxious you are and that some of you could feel a bit stressed as far as the whole procedure is concerned. However, I shall remind you that if you are well prepared on your topic and as long as you are following your country’s policy, you have nothing to worry about! A friendly notice to the new-comers: do not hesitate to speak and express your opinion no matter what your level of English is! What matters the most is that you all enjoy these days and that you leave this conference having widened your knowledge, practiced your debating skills and of course having made as many friends as you can.

One of the topics in our committee concerns Natural Disasters. Natural Disasters consist one of the most important problems humanity has to face. The following study guide will, hopefully, help you familiarize yourselves with it and prepare for fruitful debates! If you have any questions or problems concerning your topic, I would be more than happy to help.

Alexandra Karabournioti
Director
princessalexkar@hotmail.com

Dear Delegates,

My name is Konrad Masłowski and I’m an IB student in Batory High School in Warsaw, Poland. I’m a great passionate of MUNs because it’s a wonderful occasion to get involved in various international issues and meet new interesting people who have the same passions. The 2nd Anatolia College Model United Nations will be my fourth conference and I will have the honour to be the Deputy Director in the Environmental Committee. Below I present you the study guide on the topic of international waste management. I wish you successful preparation and I look forward to seeing you at conference.

Sincerely Yours,

Konrad Masłowski
Deputy Director
konrad907@wp.pl
Environmental Committee

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**TOPIC AREA A**

**DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope with it using its own resources. The most common major natural disasters that the UN is concerned with are hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, and tsunamis. On a lesser scale there are disasters such as volcanic eruptions, wildfires, and tornadoes. Most, if not all, natural disasters are an outcome of the climate change that our planet faces, due to gas emissions. There are two major parts in dealing with natural disasters: prevention and reduction of damage, and relief when a disaster strikes. The wealthiest countries usually have the economic and logistical means to deal with major disasters without outside aid and are able to bring aid to affected people by their own means, unlike third world countries that need outside help in order to recover. Aid from all over the world including food donations and military support help the relief effort, but problems do arise. Many people are missing and never found. All these tragedies that occur all over the world, leaving people helpless and hopeless bring to light the urgent need for action to be taken. It is true that over the years, mankind has realised the need to prevent natural phenomena, and subsequently alleviate them. As a direct result of rapid and up-to-date technological improvement, specially designed detection machinery has been manufactured so that both the occurrence and the timing of natural phenomena can be predicted.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Nowadays, we are all aware of natural disasters which often occur worldwide. We cannot predict when they are going to happen and how fierce they are going to be. Due to their unpredictability, they are extremely dangerous and can cause great harm to the world. The main cause of natural disasters is the climate change due to gas emissions. Nations are striving to lower the levels of such emissions in order to protect themselves and contribute to the protection of the environment. The efforts are not followed by satisfying results though, as we can see that major disasters occur frequently in various parts of the world. Over the last decade, several powerful natural disasters occurred in many countries of the United Nations. It is an undeniable fact that since 1990, the number of casualties from disasters has been increasing. However, this situation can be altered and this depends to a great extent on the nations of the world.

**HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM - PAST UNITED NATIONS ACTIONS**

There are many examples of tragedies that occurred both to the developing nations as well as to the developed world. Mexico experienced its worst flood in 1999 and almost 300,000 people lost their houses and their fortunes, not to mention the death-toll that reached 5,000. In that same year, an unprecedented cyclone occurred in India destroying 18,000 villages in one single night. At the end of 2001, a powerful typhoon caused extensive damage and fatalities in the Philippines. In 2002, unpredicted flooding hit many European countries killing more than 2,500 people. One should not forget the tsunami tragedy in Southern Asia two years ago, and the catastrophic hurricane Katrina that devastated the southern states of the U.S.A. as well as the earthquake in Pakistan that ruined so many peoples’ lives.

The United Nations General Assembly instituted, through Resolution 54/219 adopted December 22, 1999, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, whose executive Secretariat is based in Geneva. Faced with the growing frequency and magnitude of disasters (whether earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, flooding or tsunamis) which have claimed innumerable lives and caused serious social, economic and ecological repercussions in at-risk countries in the entire world, notably in developing countries, UNESCO has several programmes which examine what is at stake and the solutions to limit the effects. There is also the Council of Europe Major Hazards; this intergovernmental Agreement is a platform for co-operation in the field of major natural and technological disasters between Eastern Europe, the South of the Mediterranean and Western Europe, concerning knowledge, prevention, risk management, post-crisis analysis and rehabilitation. Moreover, there is the GMES which is a joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Space Agency, designed to establish a European capacity for the provision and use of operational information for Global Monitoring of Environment and Security, as well as the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World including Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation.
A helping hand in the elimination of natural disasters caused by climate change, is the implementation of the Kyoto protocol. It is an agreement made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Countries that ratify this protocol commit to reducing their emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases, or engage in emissions trading if they maintain or increase emissions of these gases. This way, they contribute to the protection of the environment and reduce the danger of any natural disaster caused by emissions of carbon dioxide which is the main reason why these phenomena strike often.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

Despite the continuous efforts made by the members of the United Nations, as far as the prevention of natural disasters and the elimination of their impacts are concerned, problems still arise and there are countries that still suffer from them. It is of vital importance that measures be taken immediately. The continuation of the insistence on reductions in the emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute significantly to climate change and consequently to the increases in the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters, could help positively to that goal. There are proposals for a new climate change program, forest fire monitoring and civil protection mechanisms, but without having in place the infrastructure to better understand their causes, to better predict their likely occurrence and to provide early warnings of their onset there will be no satisfying results. The proposals, though, demand further study of the phenomena in universities or in special laboratories. The rise in the educational level of scientists would also improve the way houses are built so that they can have better resistance in seismic activity or high winds. Also, an achievement of progress in earth sciences (i.e. climatology, seismology and volcanology) would improve the prediction of the effects of natural disasters by giving scientists the opportunity to identify zones and the intensity of the disasters. Furthermore a Natural Disaster Research and Applications Information Centre should be established in a member state that could serve as a clearinghouse for hazard-related topics. Last but not least, it should be pointed out that nations, although having policies that may clash, should work together and share data and information in order to act effectively against natural disasters since they have no respect for national boundaries. We can clearly realize that there is still much to be done in order for the U.N. to achieve its target.

**BLOC POSITIONS**

There could be two blocs formed according to the need for further funding of the United Nations disaster prevention and alleviation programs:

1) Bloc consisted of countries that can afford spending money on disaster prevention and alleviation without further support from the U.N. They can also offer aid to other countries when and if needed. These are the following:

- European nations: European nations are some of the largest supporters of UN relief efforts both logistically and personnel-wise because of this wealth. The contribution of its scientists to the research that has been done in order to find ways to prevent or deal with natural disasters is of great significance. Europe has suffered major natural disaster phenomena in its history and is now going through a climate change because of Global warming. However, Europe does not remain inactive when it comes to the future of its environment. The European Environment Agency (E.E.A.) was created in order to deal with the impacts of each one of the natural disasters and to improve Europe’s environmental conditions so as to eliminate floods, fires or droughts. In Europe, the NEDIES project running and its main objective is to support the Commission Services of the European Community, Member State Authorities and European Organisations and the citizens in their efforts to prevent and prepare for natural disasters and to manage their consequences.

- The U.S.A.: The United States is becoming more vulnerable to natural hazards mostly because of changes in population and national wealth density—more people and infrastructure have become concentrated in disaster-prone areas. South American nations are often victims of natural disasters such as flooding, particularly during the monsoon season. Many of them are poverty stricken and cannot provide aid either in the financial sector nor in the scientific. The US and Canada both have enough resources to deal with natural disasters, and are chief suppliers, along with the European Union of financial and logistical aid, as well as personnel. Organizations such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army are also based in the US.

2) Bloc to which countries that are in a need for funding from the U.N. belong. These countries are affected to a greater extent by natural phenomena as they do not have the means to
support themselves after a disaster. It consists of the following:

**Asian nations:** Because Asian nations are often hit with natural disasters, they support increased funding for disaster relief and prevention. Its people are warned about the risks and have maps showing the areas at risk; buildings are designed to resist earthquakes, the people have acquired knowledge and reflexes to cope with the risks, exercises are carried out each year; evacuation and public reaction plans are relatively honed. The Asian Preparedness Centre was created in order to reduce the impact of disasters in countries in Asia and the Pacific by raising awareness, helping to establish and strengthen sustainable, institutional mechanisms, enhancing knowledge and skills, and facilitating the exchange of information, experience, and expertise.

**Middle East:** Most Middle Eastern nations do not provide personnel aid in the event of a natural disaster or in order to help in its prevention, but the vast wealth of oil-rich nations such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates should be considered. Also, most Middle East nations have poor building codes and in the event of an earthquake such as the one in Pakistan, many buildings collapse.

**African nations:** While Africa is not usually hit by tsunamis or large earthquakes, drought, besides AIDS, is probably the biggest problem facing sub-Saharan Africa today. There are plenty of organisations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), through which the African nations try to cope with natural disasters.

**Oceania:** In this continent there is the highest diversity and highest frequency of all types of natural disasters known to man, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, fires, landslides, volcanic explosions, tsunamis. Australia and New Zealand are two essential powers in the Pacific region and Oceania is in constant co-operation with France (France-Oceania summit) as they share the same interests and concerns like global warming.

**QUESTIONS THAT A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER**

The questions below should be answered in your finalised position paper

a. Which are the main causes of natural disasters and what is their impact on people and nature?

b. Should the government of each member of the United Nations promote environmental campaigns (in schools, on T.V., magazines etc.), so that all citizens can be informed about the ways that they can contribute to the protection of the environment, therefore decrease the human impact on nature and consequently eliminate the danger of a natural disaster taking place?

c. Is the empowerment of governmental or intergovernmental organisations that are responsible for the recovery of areas that are hit by natural disasters a good way of helping in the effort that the countries make in order to relieve the victims of natural disasters?

d. Could there be specific programs in universities that widen future scientists’ knowledge on the issue of natural disasters and their impacts on the environment, as well as on humans, so that they could work on the invention of new ways of forecasting these phenomena early enough in order for the people to protect themselves and their fortunes from the catastrophes?

f. How can wealthy nations contribute to the protection of people or even whole countries that suffer from natural disasters?

g. What is the role of international co-operation in the case of natural disasters?

**CONCLUSION**

It is clear that natural disasters affect all of us, no matter who we are or where we live. People are threatened by hazards because of their social, economic and environmental vulnerability which must be taken into account. Earthquakes are inevitable, but death in an earthquake is not. Floods are a fact of life, but they need not wash away hope and livelihoods. We must learn to live with this risk and practise disaster risk management and sustainable development. As Mr Kofi Annan very distinctively said “While many people are aware of the terrible impact of disasters throughout the world, few realize that this is a problem that we can do something about. Disasters are a problem that we can and must reduce.”
BIBLIOGRAPHY - SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

www.wmo.int/disasters
www.unescap.org/mced2000/pacific/background/disaster.s.htm
www.gdrc.org/uem/disasters/disenvi/koetter.pdf
www.csa.com/discoveryguides/archives/ndht.php
citeseer.ist.psu.edu/640343.html
www.unisdr.org/eng/about_isdr/bd-yokohama-strat-eng.htm
www.unisdr.org/eng/about_isdr/bd-yokohama-strat-eng.htm
earth.esa.int/applications/data_util/ndis
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol#Description

www.ilo.org/encyclopedia/?doc&nd=857100065&nh=0 - 19k
www.disastercenter.com/disaster/TOP100C.html - 38k
www.epha.org/a/1158 - 19k
www.ifoplease.com/ipa/A0001459.html - 27k

You can run through the sites above, to find more information on your topic. Do not forget though that there are other sources that could provide you with information on your topic, such as newspapers and magazines. May I wish you all, the best of luck with your preparation!

Written by Alexandra Karabournioti, Director
TOPIC AREA B
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Waste management is one of the most urgent problems in the modern world. Basically waste management is the collection, transport, processing, recycling or disposal of waste in order to reduce its influence on the natural environment and recover resources from them. Methods of waste management vary depending on the level of development of the country/area and type of waste. These can be distinguished into three groups: solid, liquid, gaseous substances. There are also different concepts of dealing with wastes. The aim of a hierarchy of these concepts is to get at the same time the maximum practical benefits and minimize the amount of wastes.

Methods of waste management

Basic waste management methods are:

- Landfill – the most traditional technique used in majority of countries. A properly designed and well managed landfill can be hygienic and inexpensive method of waste management,
- recycling – it is the collection of waste and reuse of it from recovered materials,
- Incineration – it is the process of destroying waste by burning it. It’s a controversial method because incineration emits dioxin and furan into the atmosphere. The governments of the U.S. and the European Union were leaders in introducing strict emission standards for incineration of waste.
- Composting and aerobic digestion – it is the process of natural decomposition of organic waste.
- mechanical biological treatment – it is the combination of mechanic sorting and biological treatment of organic, municipal wastes
- Pyrolysis and gasification – it is a thermal method of heating waste with oxygen presence. The material is converted into energy.

In order to effectively spread these methods on a worldwide scale much has to be done. People must realize the hazards accompanying irresponsible waste management. The policies of countries must adjust to current demands. This requires transparent international cooperation and the development of international waste management.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The beginning of the problem of waste management on a bigger scale is the Industrial Revolution. Earlier in the past, thanks to low population density, and the types of materials used by humans, this problem was rather insignificant. The situation changed in the 18th century when people started to migrate to newly industrialized cities. In effect the amount of waste also increased. In addition, with a relatively low standard of living and hardly any system of waste management, the environment and human health faced a great danger. The first considerable efforts were taken in the mid 19th century in the UK. The United Kingdom was the precursor of the Industrial Revolution and thus had to cope with the abovementioned problems earlier. In 1848 the Public Health Act was passed and started the process of waste regulation. The act from 1875 charged local authorities with disposal of wastes. Later on as industrialism spread to other countries the issue of waste management began to involve more countries. At the turn of the 20th century this problem was considered as one of the most urgent for local authorities. Twenty Years Later with the foundation of The British Waste Paper Association the recycling of paper began.

The establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945 created new possibilities of dealing with the environmental problems on an international scale.
In June 1972, the first UN Environment Conference was held in Stockholm, leading to the establishment of the UN Environment Program (UNEP).

In June 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, known as the “Earth Summit,” was held in Rio de Janeiro. It gathered leaders from over 100 countries, being the largest intergovernmental gathering in history. The conference resulted in the acceptance of Agenda 21, a plan of action for sustainable development.

The same year the Basel Convention on hazardous waste movement was adopted. Due to the tightening of laws concerning environmental laws in the developed countries, the cost of waste management increased rapidly. The aim of the Basel Convention was to prevent the transfer of hazardous waste between more economically developed countries (MEDCs) and less economically developed countries (LEDCs), minimize the amount of dangerous and toxic waste and ensure its proper management.

The next great step on the way to fighting the effects of the increasing amount of waste (especially gases) was the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. It is an agreement made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Countries ratifying it commit to reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Actually the Kyoto Protocol involves more than 160 countries. In 1998 the USA withdrew from the agreement, explaining it by detriment to the economy.

Ten years after the Rio Conference, the Johannesburg Summit took place. Apart from assessing the progress done, the key event was the adoption of certain targets shaping the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including chemical waste management.

 Basel Convention Signatories
Countries which signed but not ratified the agreement.
Countries which signed and ratified the agreement.

CURRENT SITUATION

Nowadays many initiatives aiming to provide a support for governments and stakeholders dealing with waste are undertaken. The UNITAR’s (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) Programme in Chemicals and Waste Management is one of such projects. Its goal is to protect human health and the environment by providing sustainable development and beneficial conditions for developing trade in chemicals. This project contributes also to the implementation of such international agreements as (SAICM, Stockholm Convention, and Rotterdam Convention). UNITAR collaborates with other organizations: UNEP, WHO, ILO, FAO, UNIDO, UNITAR and OECD. In 2006-2007 the programme is expected to support about 80 countries. In February 2006 the International Conference on Chemicals Management was held in Dubai. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SIACM) was adopted. It is a policy framework for international action on the issue of dangerous chemicals.

The World Bank Group is actually involved in about 120 active projects dealing with solid waste management. It encourages implementing integrated solid waste systems that can respond to fast population changes and industrialisation. The Bank has been also involved in a collaborative project working on the development of a framework for solid waste management. The group established a list of principles including among other topics: public participation, conserving natural resources, building institutional capacity. Despite these projects, the developing countries met considerable obstacles on their way to a modern system of solid waste management. 20-50 percent of their budgets are spent on this problem leaving about 60 percent of waste uncollected and serving only half of the
population. It seems that one of the most hotly debated current issues is the implementation of waste management systems in developing countries. The list of different programmes and organisations dealing with waste management is long. The problem is that no common, international policy is undertaken. The competition between institutions and countries is still present. Many programmes don’t give the expected results because of lack of operating capacities. The question is how to join the forces of all countries, especially the largest waste producers and cooperate effectively internationally, not only locally. It is high time. Climate changes are faster than ever, production of toxic gases into the atmosphere is alarming, and the greenhouse effect is extremely intense.

**BLOC POSITIONS**

**North America (USA, Canada)**

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) is the leader in the field of solid waste in North America. Its three aims are:

1. Educate
2. Innovate
3. Communicate

The governments of both states developed a bilateral cooperation in the case of dealing with hazardous waste. Approximately 765,000 tonnes of hazardous waste cross the Canada-U.S. border annually, on their way to the nearest environmentally sound recycling, treatment or disposal site.

**European Union**

Each year the European Union throws away 1.3 billion tonnes of waste - some 40 million tonnes of it hazardous. The OECD forecast that by 2020 45% more waste could be generated than in 1995. The EU’s Sixth Environment Action Programme considers waste management as one of the major issues. The EU waste management policy is based on three principles:

1. Waste prevention
2. Recycling and reuse
3. Improving final disposal and monitoring.

**Australia**

The Department of Environment and Heritage, Waste Management Association of Australia (WMAA) regard the encouraging of material efficiency, reducing the generation of waste, or enabling the recovery and reuse of discarded material as vital points for sustainable development. Australia has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol because of economic circumstances. John Howard, the Prime Minister claimed that it would cost Australian jobs due to countries such as China or India not having any obligations. The Government agreed to sign (along with USA) the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

**China**

China has experienced a fast increase in producing waste. In 2004 China surpassed United States as the biggest world waste generator. The government tries to respond to the challenge caused by this rapid change. The needs are enormous and China has to move up in the “waste management hierarchy” promoting common methods such as: recycling, reuse and reduction of waste. China has ratified the Kyoto Protocol (although doesn’t have any reduction obligations) and the Basel Convention.
Japan

Waste management is an increasingly important problem in Japan. The country is highly industrialized, large amount of fossil fuels and mineral resources are imported and converted to various kinds of products and energy. As a result a huge amount of waste is produced. It creates such problems as: waste minimization, proper incineration, safe disposal and material recovery.

LEDGs

In those countries the management of waste remains on a very low level. The methods applied to this process are harmful for the environment and human health. It is caused by lack of money and knowledge in the area of modern management techniques but also by such factors as the import of waste from MEDCs. The situation worsens in regions where basic industrialization takes place without developing sufficient waste management mechanisms on the need of this process.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

While writing your resolution, it is compulsory to consider the following questions. They are formulated in a general way and each delegate should specify it while writing the resolution. Suggest rational solutions to the problems and keep in mind the policy of your country because different groups can have various proposals.

1. How to introduce waste management techniques in countries which don’t possess them?
2. Is the role of the United Nations sufficient on the issue of international waste management? If not how should it be changed?
3. What role do NGOs play and does it have the expected effects? What can be done to rationalize their activity? It is often claimed that the NGOs do not have enough operating capabilities to cope with some issues.
4. To what extent should the responsibility of popularizing the waste management system be shared by the group of countries which already possess such techniques?
5. How should be the whole initiative be financed?
6. How can the developed countries be convinced to abide by the international regulations?
7. How can transparent legislation be implemented in developing countries so that a sound waste management policy can be introduced?
8. How can people be made aware of the damages caused by irrational waste treatment and encourage them to support the projects aiming to develop the waste management techniques.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays the issue of waste management is one of the most important environmental topics. The prognosis suggests that its significance will increase rapidly. The priority is to limit the rate of these changes to preserve the natural environment. I believe this guide will be helpful for your research and I will be glad to help you during the conference.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Here are some suggestions for further research:
http://www.unitar.org
http://www.basel.int/index.html
http://www.inderscience.com
http://www.iswa.org
http://www.findarticles.com/p/search?q=Waste+Management&f=all&qta=1&tb=art&x=0&y=0
http://www.greenpeace.org/international/footer/search?q=Waste+Management

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Written by Konrad Masłowski, Deputy Director