Advance Responsible Consumption for Sustainable Growth

United Nations Environment Programme

Annual Spring 2020 Model UN Conference
Global Classrooms DC
INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE: UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global voice on the global environment. It provides leadership and encourages 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 works with governments, the private sector, civil society, and with other UN entities and international organizations across the world. Global headquarters for the organization are in Nairobi, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Responsible consumption and production refer to making resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and access to services, jobs, and a better quality of life a major priority. Responsible consumption and production need to be implemented at all levels. Consumers need to minimize food waste, and industries and businesses need to create systems to recycle and reduce waste. These need to be done not only for the benefit of the environment, but also for the well-being of the entire human race and protection of democracy.

While the conversation on consumption is often concentrated around overconsumption in wealthy countries and populations, there are millions of people in extreme poverty that are consuming too little. Although poverty rates have declined since the 1990s, from 36% to 10% in 2015, there are still an estimated 767 million people who live on less than $1 a day.

In this Model UN committee, countries will find solutions for responsible consumption. To do so, countries must not only address the issue of overconsumption in wealthy countries but also underconsumption in areas with high levels of poverty, by looking at what solutions have worked and not worked in different countries.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL #12

The United Nations emphasizes this idea through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which contains 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), including SDG #12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Responsible consumption and production involve many different parts, including food waste, air pollution, recycling, and sustainable tourism.

SDG #12 realizes that while economic growth is important for a country’s development, sustainable development is a better long-term goal. In order to achieve both economic growth

and sustainable development, it is urgent that we change how we produce and consume goods and resources. Otherwise, irresponsible consumption and production could lead to depletion of natural resources, terrible effects of climate change, extreme natural disasters, and unequal development of countries.

**Why is SDG #12 Important?**

There are 694 initiatives and partnerships in achieving this goal, such as European Commission Initiative on Sustainable Finance and ASEAN SDGs Frontrunner Cities Programme. “Responsible” means being sustainable or practicing sustainability, especially by producing and consuming goods and resources in a sustainable manner. Being “responsible” also means guaranteeing enough current consumption without compromising consumption of the future generations.

SDG #12 is also related to the protection of democracy and the human race. When linked with a lack of decent work opportunities, under-consumption leads to stunted societal progress, which erodes democratic values in a society.

It’s also linked with other SDGs, such as Gender Equality (SDG #5), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG #6), and Climate Action (SDG #13). For example, as part of the “Women-Led Climate Resilient Farming Model” (WCRF), marginalized rural women in Marathwada, India, are trained to become entrepreneurs through sustainable agriculture, where they learn new skills, how to earn money, how to market themselves, and accessing government services.

**SDG #1: No Poverty**

SDG #12 is linked to poverty (SDG #1), especially considering that many people in poverty are under-consuming. More than half of the extreme poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and around half of this population lives in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Ethiopia. But food consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa has not increased, despite population growth. Kenya and the DRC have decreased their consumption.

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5 https://academicimpact.un.org/content/decent-work-and-economic-growth
SDG #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

A lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments, and under-consumption does not give people the opportunities they deserve. As growth of the global economy slows, consumption is forecasted to slow around the world. Thus, finding ways to encourage a sustainable economic model, rather than one based on growth, is key. For example, an economy concentrated on growth prevents fossil fuel-rich developing countries from diversifying their industries.

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE WORLD

Responsible consumption takes many forms around the world, with each example reflecting how communities are affected by environmental damage.

In 2016, in West Africa, the government of Benin launched a project called the National Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme. The project’s goal was to increase the rural water supply rate to 70% in 2017. This project is much needed in the country’s rural areas. Lack of drinking water in the rural areas leads to children suffering from waterborne diseases like diarrhea and cholera. In addition, primarily girls drop out of school to trek miles every day to fetch clean water.

As another example, people who live in Skopje (left image), which is in North Macedonia in Europe, live in one of the most polluted cities on the continent. Globally, nine out of ten people are breathing air that the World Health Organization says is unsafe—that’s more than 6.76 billion people. Harmful gases like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, hydrocarbons and lead—all are literally taking fresh air from our bodies. Even when it doesn’t kill, air pollution can shorten the average lifespan by one year. Air pollution can also lower your I.Q. and increase the risk of dementia and miscarriages, in addition to asthma in children. A recent study estimates that four million children develop asthma every year—that’s the same as 11,000 new cases every day.

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Finally, unequal consumption of food is also a problem. 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted every year, while almost 2 billion people go hungry or undernourished. In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30-40% of the food supply. Meanwhile, for Guatemala, 1 out of 2 children in the country suffers from malnutrition.

**Consumption and the Economy**

Wealthy countries provide more than $125 billion in aid each year to developing countries; however, the trade of resources between wealthy and poor countries is extremely unbalanced. In 2012, the last year of recorded data, although developing countries received $1.3 trillion in aid, $3.3 trillion was sent to other countries from developing nations in the form of debt payments, investments, and capital flight.

Not only are the consumption rates high in high-income countries, but they also have a greater harmful environmental impact. Developed countries use one-fifth of natural resources to produce the same amount of economic output as developing countries. Although material intensity has decreased in many parts of the world, much of the progress made is due to increases in GDP, specifically in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia, and Oceania. However, in some areas, material intensity has increased, leading to a period of neither increases nor decreases in consumption globally.

Considering the differences between high-income and low-income countries, it is clear that there is an imbalance in how nations around the world are addressing consumption. High-income countries must work with low-income countries to address these differences. Low income countries must ensure that they are able to create sustainable economies. At the same time, high-income countries must create solutions to reduce their material footprint.

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16 Ibid.
CONSUMPTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure has many opportunities for sustainable consumption and production. Through investment, countries can build sustainable infrastructure, including public transit, water-efficient housing, and pathways for reduced energy demands for heating, cooling, and transport.17

Most of the buildings and infrastructure that will exist in 2050 have not yet been built, so there is a large window of opportunity for investing in sustainable infrastructure today. Especially because building new structures, roads, buildings, and more has an immense cost on the environment, nations must encourage companies to adopt environmentally-friendly policies.18

To do this, countries must seek sustainable infrastructure solutions that promote community over individualization. For example, rather building roads for more cars, nations could instead build up social infrastructure, like parks and bike-sharing hubs. Furthermore, the involvement of stakeholders such as government bodies, consumers, research institutions, and investors to putting cities on the path of sustainability.19

For example, JUCCCE, an NGO in China, has been a leader in supporting the China Dream. The China Dream was implemented by President Xi Jinping in 2013 to encourage sustainable habits China through shaping social norms and introducing policies that guided sustainable consumer behavior. Sustainable consumption was linked to cultural identity and prosperity, impacting consumer behavior in food, transportation, energy, and housing.20

Infrastructure and Tourism

As one of the fastest growing economic sectors, tourism heavily impacts infrastructure. As a labor-intensive industry, tourism largely contributes to the economies of several developing countries. However, tourism has major issues of ownership, employment, social and environmental impacts, and disruptions to customs and traditions.

The tourism industry also heavily impacts consumption levels, considering that tourists often feel entitled to luxury standards of consumption. Although programs such as the UNEP Green Passport Initiative worked to raise awareness about sustainable tourism, nations must create

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
programs that provide incentives that encourage both the hospitality industry and tourists to engage in more sustainable practices.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{CURRENT ACTION}

The good news is that there are many people taking actions towards sustainable development.

In Peru, Gregoria Cruz is one of many women in her community who have left working in the landfills of Arequipa – Peru’s second biggest city – to become promoters of a recycling culture and show that there are opportunities for sustainable development in waste management.\textsuperscript{22} Gregoria works at Recicla Vida, an association of recyclers with seven members. Six are women, and together they collect about 400 kg of waste every day. Recicla Vida is one of two associations supported by the Peruvian Environment Ministry and the Municipality of Arequipa, with help from UNDP, UNEP, and volunteers.

\textit{Nature-Based Solutions}

In addition to community action, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) promotes and provides \textbf{Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)}. NBS are long-term and cost-effective approaches to combating climate change and food insecurity.\textsuperscript{23}

In El Salvador (right image), NBS provided a solution for farmers struggling because of droughts and soil erosion. To combat the effects of climate change, an FAO project focused on \textbf{micro-watersheds}. Through Farmer Field Schools (FFS), participants learned about soil management while also building rainwater

\begin{flushright} Image via Recicla Vida \end{flushright}

\begin{flushright} Image via FAO \end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{21} Sustainable Consumption and Production.” UN Environment Programme.

\textsuperscript{22} “United for a Clean City.” UN Development Programme. \url{https://stories.undp.org/united-for-a-clean-city}

\textsuperscript{23} “The answer is in nature.” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. \url{http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1208516/}
collection harvesting systems to prepare for the dry seasons.  

Managing resources well is not exclusive to El Salvador. In Africa, the Kagera River basin, home to most of Africa’s agro-biodiversity and food production, are suffering from degradation, deforestation, and invasive species. FAO developed a program to cultivate vegetables that need only a small amount of land, have a short growth cycle, and can be easily sold. Through FFS, farmers were taught how to adapt their skills to respond to climate change effects, and adapt their crops into drought-tolerant varieties. 

Not only does NBS work to create new approaches to farming, but it also promotes existing systems. The Qanat irrigation system has existed in Iran since 800 B.C. and is still used by farmers today. This system has sustained food security through the efficient use of water resources. Farmers have been able to cultivate many plant species for years, allowing them to use local plants and protect Iran’s biodiversity.

The Role of Private Organizations and NGOs

Although UNEP promotes sustainable practices through numerous initiatives, the organization is not the sole actor on the issue. Private entities and NGOs need to participate in creating new systems. These sectors can provide financial resources and innovative approaches for sustainable consumption.

For example, as part of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Forum of Countries on Sustainable Development agree that the private sector is essential in order to fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Past practices by corporations, like Unilever Chile, display how businesses can mobilize contributed towards the promotion of sustainable consumption practices. The company committed to using raw materials from 100% renewable sources by 2020.

PROGRESS ON SDG #12

Despite initiatives for sustainable consumption and production, the 2019 UN report does not show much progress. Globally, the amount of waste is increasing and about one-third of food produced for consumption is wasted, primarily in developed countries.

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
28 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” UN Statistics Division.
In order to combat these increases, UN member states have signed multilateral environmental agreements. The Montreal Protocol calls for the regulation of production and consumption of ozone depleting substances that harm humans and the environment.\(^{29}\) The Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions aim to reduce the amount of hazardous chemicals and waste created from unsustainable consumption patterns.\(^{30}\) Each of these agreements requires progress on each country’s performance. However, not all parties have implemented plans to reach their goals. The average compliance rate is 70% among the four agreements.\(^{31}\)

**UNGA 2019 Climate Talks**

Considering the impact of climate change on the ability to grow crops, climate action is integral to predicting the future of responsible consumption.

At the September 2019 UN General Assembly, world leaders were heavily criticized for their action in combatting the climate crisis. Greta Thunberg (right image), a 16-year-old climate activist, specifically called out leaders for their failure to address climate change for future generations.\(^{32}\)

As a result, many nations have since committed to climate-change initiatives: the France and New Zealand banned new oil and gas exploration in their borders or off-shore waters; Costa Rica launched a decarbonization plan; and Indonesia announced an energy transition to phase out fossil fuels.\(^{33}\) In addition, 65 countries and major economies, such as California, recognized the need to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and committed to net zero by 2050.\(^{34}\)

Under the Paris Climate Agreement, many countries also announced concrete steps towards combatting the climate crisis. However, the largest emitters of carbon, China, the United States, and India, have not committed to net-zero. Most of the larger commitments came from smaller countries, including the Bahamas, the Maldives, and the Marshall Islands, even though they do not largely contribute to the problem.\(^{35}\) The private sector additionally committed towards climate action, including carbon-neutral investment portfolios, emissions reduction, and alignment with the Paris agreement goals.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{29}\) “About Montreal Protocol.” UN Environment Programme. [https://www.unenvironment.org/ozonaction/who-we-are/about-montreal-protocol](https://www.unenvironment.org/ozonaction/who-we-are/about-montreal-protocol)


\(^{36}\) “Climate Action Summit 2019 Closing Release.” UN.
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
1. How has your country been negatively affected by irresponsible consumption and production?
2. Which aspect of irresponsible consumption and production is obvious in your country?
3. What can you do to promote responsible consumption in your family or even in your community?
4. What can your country do to protect its resources more effectively?
5. What countries/UN agencies can your country partner with to solve the issues?
6. How can you increase public awareness of sustainable development?
7. How can countries practice better consumption practices?
8. How can the U.N. ensure members are employing effective practices and measures of consumption?

GLOSSARY
ASEAN SDGs Frontrunner Cities Programme: the program expects to raise the capacity and profile of 27 (t.b.c.) ASEAN cities, to develop and scale up multi-dimensional benefit model practices/policies towards clean and green sustainable development.

Asthma: a chronic, or long-term, condition that intermittently inflames and narrows the airways in the lungs.

Basel Convention: a multilateral environmental agreement adopted in 1989 that protects people and environment from the toxic effects of hazardous waste through reductions in the amount of hazardous waste produced, restriction on the movement of hazardous waste, and the creation of a regulatory system for permitted movement of waste.37

Carbon dioxide: CO₂, is a colorless and odorless gas. CO₂ is called a greenhouse gas (GHG) because as part of Earth’s atmosphere CO₂ traps the energy from the sun and keeps the world at a livable temperature.

Carbon monoxide: CO, is an odorless, colorless gas that can poison people and animals who breathe it. It is found in fumes produced any time you burn fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, or furnaces.

Cholera: an fast-acting diarrheal infection caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water.

Consumers: a person who purchases goods and services for personal use.

Consumption: the use of goods and services in an economy, or the amount of goods and services used.

Dementia: describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills.

Depletion: when soil loses its natural nutrition, and can no longer be useful for crops or other plants.

Diarrhea: a symptom of an infection in the intestinal tract, which can be caused by eating contaminated food or drinking-water, or from person-to-person contact as a result of poor hygiene.

European Commission Initiative on Sustainable Finance: sustainable finance is the provision of finance to investments taking into account environmental, social and governance considerations.

Forced displacement: the movement of people from their home due to factors outside of their control.

Hydrocarbons: an organic compound consisting entirely of hydrogen and carbon.

Infrastructure: the physical structures and facilities necessary for a society to function, such as roads, water and electric systems, and schools.

Lead: toxic metal to humans and animals. Much of our exposure to lead comes from human activities including the use of fossil fuels including past use of leaded gasoline, some types of industrial facilities, and past use of lead-based paint in homes.

Malnutrition: a health condition that is caused by deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person’s intake of energy and/or nutrients.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): former UN goals to halve extreme poverty rates, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, by the target date of 2015.

Miscarriages: a term used for a pregnancy that ends on its own, often due to health problems.

Montreal Protocol: Signed in 1987, this agreement calls for the regulation of the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances for the conserve the ozone layer that protects humans and the environment from ultraviolet radiation.\(^{38}\)

National Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme: a program in Benin in West Africa that started in January 2016 to increase the rural water supply rate in Benin to 70% in 2017.

Nature-Based Solutions: solutions that help combat human issues, such as food security and climate change, while protecting natural ecosystems.

Nitrogen dioxide: or NO\(_2\), it primarily gets in the air from the burning of fuel. NO\(_2\) forms from emissions from cars, trucks and buses, power plants, and off-road equipment.

Per capita: term to refer to each person; in relation to people taken individually.

Post-harvest losses: these occur between harvest and the moment of human consumption. They include on-farm losses, such as when grain is gathered and dried, as well as losses along the supply chain during transportation, storage, and processing.

Responsible: having the duty of taking care of something.

Responsible Consumption and Production: promotes efficient and sustainable use of resources and energy, sustainable infrastructure, and access to basic services, green jobs, and a better quality of life.\(^{39}\)

Rotterdam Convention: this agreement protects people and the environment from hazardous chemicals through an international information exchange on hazardous chemicals and coordinated efforts to restrict the use of certain pesticides and industrial chemicals.\(^{40}\)

Sanitation: refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe management of human waste from the toilet to containment and storage, treatment and eventual safe end use or disposal.

\(^{38}\)“About Montreal Protocol.” UN Environment Programme.

\(^{39}\)“Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” UN.

\(^{40}\)“Overview.” UN Environment Programme: Rotterdam Convention. [http://www.pic.int/TheConvention/Overview](http://www.pic.int/TheConvention/Overview)
Stockholm Convention: this agreement focuses on the restriction of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) that have harmful effects on human health and remain in the environment for long periods. The convention calls on the restriction and elimination of intentional POP production and requires member nations to reduce unintentional releases of POPs into the environment through safe management of contaminants.41

Sulphur dioxide: or SO₂, the largest source of SO₂ in the atmosphere is the burning of fossil fuels by power plants and other industrial facilities.

Supply chains: a network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product to the final buyer.

Sustainable agriculture: to meet society’s food and textile needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable development: the concept of conserving resources for future generations; the overall goal is the long-term stability of the economy and environment.

Sustainable tourism: tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Targets: the goals intended to be attained or achieved.

Women-Led Climate Resilient Farming Model (WCRF): repositions women as farmers and bearers of the knowledge, enabling them to take informed decisions related to what to grow, what to consume and how much to sell.

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GLOBAL CLASSROOMS DC POSITION PAPER OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

What is a Position Paper?
A position paper is a short document that outlines a country’s opinion on an issue. The paper includes a short summary of what the issue or problem is, explains why the country is interested in the issue, and communicates the country’s stance on what should be done to address the issue. A position paper is written as if you were the actual representative of the country stating its position. Your personal opinions on the issue should not be included. A position paper is not a summary of your country’s GDP, government, economy, languages, etc. unless directly relevant to the issue. Only one position paper is written per country, per grade school committee; if there are 2 or 3 delegates representing the same country on a committee, they should write the paper together.

Why write a Position Paper?
Writing a position paper will help you organize why an issue matters to your country and what your country wants done on the issue. The first thing you will likely do in committee is present an opening speech about your country’s position. You should be able to pull portions of a well written position paper into an introductory speech on your country’s perspective. Also, your delegation is not eligible to win best / outstanding delegation without the submission of a position paper. There are separate awards given for best position paper.

How to Write a Position Paper
(1) Research the Issue. The questions you want to answer are:
   1. How does this issue affect your country?
   2. How does this issue affect your country’s neighbors or allies?
   3. Is this a global problem that impacts everyone?
   4. What would your country like to see done on this issue?
   5. Are there countries or groups of people who will be particularly sensitive to addressing this issue?
   6. Are there any conventions or resolutions on the topics that your country has signed or ratified?
   7. What are UN actions on the issue? Has your country supported or opposed these actions?
   8. Keep in Mind: What a country says, and what it actually believes should be done may be different. Also, some countries may believe that no action should be taken on an issue. They may disagree with how others feel or may not want international involvement. It is okay if your position is that the international community should do nothing, but you will need to explain why.

(2) Brainstorm Specific Actions. Come up with 3-4 specific things that can be done to reach the outcome your country desires. For example: “The United States believes we should send a peacekeeping mission to monitor human rights abuses in Syria and encourage talks between both sides.” You will present these ideas in committee as possible solutions to the problem and attempt to pass a resolution which includes these actions.

(3) Outline Your Paper. Make an outline of what points you want to cover in your paper and the order in which you would like to address them. Remember a good paper should briefly explain the problem, explain why your country cares about the issue, and inform others what your country should like to see done. If you know other countries favor a solution that you will disagree with, make sure to include why your country disagrees.

(4) Write your Paper. Position papers should be no more than one page long and be written from the perspective of the country you are representing. Rather than being a report on the topic, a position paper should explain what your country wants to see done to address the issue. Start by giving a
brief summary of the issue and how it impacts your country. Then explain the specific actions you would like to see taken. Close by summarizing your country’s overall position. Proper grammar and spelling are a must!

**Award Criteria and Eligibility**
- One position paper award will be given out per committee.
- The ideal position paper will have a clearly defined and summarized topic with your country’s position clearly outlined. Points are also awarded for organization, style and correct grammar.
- GCDC Staff will be fact checking position papers, so be sure to include the most up to date information and a works cited (or list of all the sources you use).
  - Proper source citation: if an idea or quote came from another source, you must provide a footnote / citation.
- Papers will be disqualified if the conference staff has discovered that students did not write their own papers or that content has been plagiarized.
- Make sure your position paper must have the required header below! Do not create any additional title pages - points will be deducted for improper format.
- Formatting Requirements: 500 words minimum, 1,500 words maximum. Times New Roman font, 12-point size
- All position papers must be sent to gcdc@unanca.org by March 25, 2020 at 11:59 PM EST.

**REQUIRED POSITION PAPER HEADER**

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<th>Committee:</th>
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The United States of America believes …