Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Valdosta State University’s 2015 Model United Nations conference and to the General Assembly Plenary. My name is Rachel Crew and I am thrilled that you have chosen to participate in what is surely going to be a unique and educational experience for all of you. This semester marks my second year of participation on VSU’s MUN team as well as my second High School conference. I was fortunate to be chosen to attend both the Southern Regional and National Model UN conferences in Atlanta and New York City, respectively. My experiences with this organization have encouraged me to continue pursuing cultural understanding and diplomacy, even after graduation. I am pursuing a degree in International Relations as well as a minor in Spanish. I developed a love for both of these subjects in high school and became aware of the larger international community after I began one simple activity: reading the newspaper. I hope that each and every participant in this year’s conference is as inspired to continue their pursuit of involvement and understanding as I was by my first glimpse of our interconnected world.

The General Assembly Plenary is the main policymaking organ and multilateral discussion forum in the United Nations. The General Assembly Plenary meets from September-December every year to discuss and resolve political, humanitarian, social, legal, and economic issues on a global scale. Every Member State is represented in the committee and has one vote. The topics for the General Assembly Plenary are:

I. The Effects of Deforestation on Indigenous People
II. Encouraging Sustainable Development in Post-Conflict Countries
III. Exploring Alternate Energy Options to Lessen the Global Dependence on Fossil Fuels

The purpose of this background guide is to provide a general understanding of the history, complexities, and international efforts related to each topic. Delegates should use this background guide as simply that—a guide—to begin further research for committee debates and Member State position papers. Position papers are required for each delegation. The length should not exceed two pages and should outline the history and political positions of their respective Member States in regard to the provided topics. For more information about the VSU Model United Nations conference, please refer to the teacher’s manual.

Good luck delegates. We look forward to seeing you in March!

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History of the General Assembly Plenary
Established by the United Nations Charter in 1945, the General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the United Nations. The General Assembly is the highest political body in the United Nations and is unique in that the General Assembly provides for universal membership and representation of all 193 Member States. The General Assembly Plenary is also charged with electing the nonpermanent members of the Security Council and Economic and Social Council as well as approving administrative budgets and assessing the financial status of Member States. The General Assembly Plenary convenes annually from September to November, with special sessions called by the Secretary General, Security Council, or at the request of a majority of Member States as needed to discuss pressing issues. This universal representation provides a unique setting for multilateral discussions and debate of a variety of international issues covered by the UN Charter—from organizational administration issues and addressing the promotion of sustainable growth and development, to the promotion of global human rights.

Because of the wide variety of topics discussed in the General Assembly, the creation of six specialized General Assembly committees dedicated to addressing specific international issues was necessary. The six subsidiary committees are the Disarmament and International Security Committee; the Economic and Financial Committee; the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee; the Special Political and Decolonization Committee; Administrative and Budgetary Committee; and the Legal Committee. Each discusses the topics specifically related to its mandate; however some questions such as those regarding the Palestinian State or the ongoing situation in the Middle East are discussed directly in the General Assembly Plenary by all Member States present.

The General Assembly’s agenda is centered on reports submitted by both the Secretary General and the wide range of subsidiary committees and groups charged by the General Assembly to research, review, and assess current international situations such as those previously mentioned. The General Assembly Plenary assesses reports submitted by Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) and special commissions to make recommendations to the Security Council regarding international peace and security matters as well as general recommendations to Member States present at the committee meeting.

The diversity of responsibilities held by the General Assembly Plenary is a true reflection of the United Nations as a whole: each country is permitted one equal vote on a variety of subjects that affect each and every Member State, be they political, economic, social, legal, or even humanitarian in nature. The General Assembly Plenary addresses the full spectrum of international issues and places equal value on sovereignty and cooperation, lesser- and mostly-developed countries, Western and Eastern values.
I: Effects of Deforestation on Indigenous People

“Forests are not solely economic resources, but are the center of spiritual life and cultural integration for indigenous peoples. The New York Declaration is a long-awaited show of political will by all countries to support indigenous peoples as we fight to defend our forests.”

- Abdon Nababan

Introduction

Deforestation as a by-product of efforts to convert forest lands to usage intended for infrastructure expansion, agricultural growth, and more have contributed to nearly 20% of total greenhouse gas releases worldwide. Nearly 60% of all global tropical deforestation is completed in the Amazon located in South America. The Amazon forest is refuge to various inhabitants, including several diverse indigenous groups. Nearly 400 indigenous groups presently occupy the Amazon Forest of South America. Due to the great complexity and diversity of indigenous peoples, the term “indigenous” has not been formally defined or assumed by any UN-system body. Instead, the United Nations has established a contemporary understanding of the term “indigenous” based on a wide range of characteristics including: “ancient stability with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, solid link to territories and surrounding natural resources, distinctive language, culture and beliefs, resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.”

Over the years, indigenous groups have been awarded protected human rights including social, cultural, economic and environmental liberties. Several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have tried to assist to preserve the many livelihoods of indigenous people—including their rights to ecological lands.

Background

Deforestation has also contributed to global climate change which currently poses a major threat to the everyday livelihoods of indigenous people across the globe. The United Nations and the global scientific community has established the idea that deforestation has contributed to mass emission of dangerous gases impacting global climate change. The UN Agenda 21 has joined forces with NGOs and individual Member States in efforts to decrease the worldwide impact of carbon emissions through the Convention on Climate Change and the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (REDD) Program. The program focuses on “slowing climate change by paying developing countries to stop cutting down their forests.” REDD operates on the principal of PES (Payments for Environmental Service) and tries to increase the value for upholding forests within developing nations. However, critics argue that isolating forests into separate functions and placing a value or rate actually counters the interests of forest inhabitants, especially indigenous peoples. The relationship of NGOs associated with combating deforestation have been used to aid the progress in combating deforestation in major forests in South America, which includes the Amazon, as well as protecting the rights of the indigenous people there.

Current Issues

Deforestation, which is defined as the clearing, destroying, or removal of trees through deliberate, natural or accidental means, currently affects thousands of indigenous peoples who
inhabit forests around the world.\textsuperscript{18} Indigenous people continue to rely on these forests as a source of food, shelter, natural resources, and an overall tool for maintaining their vibrant cultures. Not only does a decrease in occupable land result in loss of shelter, but it also contributes to climate change, desertification, soil erosion, fewer crops, flooding, and increased greenhouse gases worldwide in addition to the immediate issues affecting indigenous people.\textsuperscript{19} As the world population continues to grow, the increasing need for land for development, wood, and farming is resulting in a loss of habitat for millions of indigenous peoples worldwide.

The effects of deforestation on global indigenous populations have continued to be an issue of concern for Member States and the United Nations. Within many indigenous cultures, the forest continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring that cultural practices are maintained and economic stability is attainable. Various international frameworks have been created to decrease the alarmingly fast rate of deforestation, and to encourage preservation of these important resources. These documents and international goals include: Millennium Development Goal Seven which is to “Ensure Environmental Sustainability”; the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Forest Principles, dedicated to promoting sustainable development; Agenda 21 which also emphasizes the need for sustainable development, and the REDD Program.\textsuperscript{20} Each of these documents aims to gain cooperation between Member States to promote and encourage the protection of traditional knowledge and customary practices of indigenous peoples in the management and use of forest.\textsuperscript{21}

One of the most apparent issues of deforestation regarding indigenous people surrounds their widely ignored rights to the forests land and natural resources. Illegal mining and farming have pushed many indigenous people out of their homes and into the inner city slums where they are forced to live in poverty\textsuperscript{22}. These people often have no other choice than to change their entire way of life; facing discrimination as both migrants and indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{23} The United Nations has taken note that due to forced and sudden migration coupled with their lack of legal migration options and limited opportunities to make informed choices, they have become more vulnerable to trafficking and smuggling.\textsuperscript{24} In Brazil, which contains a relatively large indigenous population in urban areas due to the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest, indigenous people continue to be victims of attacks, killings and other forms of violence and discrimination, often committed with impunity.\textsuperscript{25}

Many world leaders have recognized the importance of indigenous peoples’ existence as protectors of the world’s forests. Historical practices and traditions of the indigenous have proven to be adequate for the sustainability and management of natural resources.\textsuperscript{26} Nations have increasingly implemented stronger legal protections for the rights of indigenous peoples. During the 2014 Climate Summit, the United Nations created an action plan which included a plan for commodity traders to call for public policies to eliminate deforestation, a pledge by indigenous peoples to protect hundreds of millions of hectares of tropical forests, and new commitments from forest country governments to reduce deforestation or to restore degraded lands.\textsuperscript{27} Legal protection has shown to be a positive step for the inhabitants such as the Kayapo of the Brazilian Amazon forests who fought for and won official recognition of their lands in the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{28} However, this may not be enough for nations such as Brazil who contain large territories lacking proper governance to enforce these laws.\textsuperscript{29} Global cooperation is needed to provide a viable solution.
**Actions Taken by the United Nations**

The United Nations has taken many steps towards combating the negative effects of deforestation. In regards to contesting deforestation, the United Nations Environmental Programme Agenda 21: Combating Deforestation was enacted to identify the numerous characteristics and functions of all forms of forestry and woodlands. The UN also acknowledges the lack of policies, procedures and tools necessary to support and develop the multiple ecological needs for forest lands. To combat these weaknesses, the United Nations has implemented specific guidelines aimed towards building reliable administrative structures. Objectives of this program include consolidating human skills to “implement policies, plans, programs, research and projects on management, for conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.” This program is intended to fight the destructive effects deforestation has on climate change due to gas emission. Likewise, the UNEP has also identified “the valuable inputs that these holders of traditional knowledge – gained through trans-generational experiences and observations - can contribute to environmental assessments and sustainable ecosystem management.” The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is an advisory organization to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established by mandate to debate indigenous issues linked to economic and social rights.

The United Nation Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples was approved September 13, 2007 by the General Assembly. Roughly 144 member states voted for, 4 voted against, and 11 abstained. The United Nations’ Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) establishes countless human liberties to indigenous people by endorsing economic and social development. The document upholds indigenous distinction of cultural uniqueness and outlaws discrimination targeted towards these groups of people. Protected rights established by UNDRIP also include environmental terrains: “indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources.” An Expert Group Meeting for discussion on an optional Protocol to UNDRIP is scheduled to meet in UN Headquarters, New York on 27-29 January 2015 to discuss various issues, such as focuses on land, territories and resource rights, like those contained in the UN Declaration.

**Conclusion**

Although progress has been made to decrease the amount of deforestation and the negative effects of it on indigenous peoples, much work must be done to ensure the future sustainability of forests. Forests are not only essential to the indigenous peoples that currently inhabit them, but to the entire world population. The protection of these forests largely depends on the protection of the indigenous and their rights as a people. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has expressed the need for countries to reduce deforestation in order to “reduce poverty, enhance food security, improve the rule of law, secure the rights of indigenous peoples and benefit communities around the world.” With action plans introduced in the REDD Program, at the 2014 Climate Summit, and more, Member States have a platform from which they can proceed productively. Member States must continue to work together in this manner to ensure sustainability for the future.
Committee Directive

During research, delegates should become more familiar with the global effects of deforestation and how it affects indigenous peoples in various regions of the world. Delegates must explore options to reduce deforestation in the immediate future and enhance legal protection of indigenous peoples.

Delegates should answer the following questions: How can Member States work together to decrease deforestation around the world? What initiatives has your nation taken to decrease deforestation and protect the rights of the indigenous community? What can be done to prevent discrimination and violence against indigenous immigrants? How has the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples improved the current state of deforestation and its effects on indigenous peoples? What can be done to improve current United Nations initiatives on the matter?

II. Sustainable Development in Post Conflict Countries

Introduction

To understand the importance of promoting sustainable development in post-conflict countries, one first must ask the question: What is sustainable development? Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Without sustainable development, countries lacking in economic and natural resources would be unable to create long-term plans for population and economic growth. Sustainable developed is necessary for long term peace. A country that is capable of sustainably using its resources will have a better ability to ensure a higher quality of life for its citizens.

History

The principal of sustainable development was a product of the first Earth Summit that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 and hosted over 2,400 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representatives. Officially titled the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the principal themes presented at the conference were environment and sustainability. The conference produced important environmental protection and sustainable development documents such as Agenda 21—a knowledge platform examining social and economic factors such as poverty, and the importance of promoting sustainability by integrating the environment and development into decision-making.

Twenty years later, at the Rio+20 Conference, it was agreed upon by the majority of Member States to begin addressing the needs of a growing global population with finite resources. Nearing the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, Member States began forming a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which would expand upon the MDGs and address certain shortcomings in implementation. The Rio+20 conference proposed that SDGs be based on certain fundamental documents such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and Agenda 21 as well as the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. 17 SDGs have been crafted from 13 working group sessions between March 2012 and July 2014 and are expected to be voted upon by the UN General Assembly in September 2015.
countries outlined in Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.\textsuperscript{42}

Member States emerging from conflict face unique challenges in implementing SDGs. The nature of armed conflicts makes resources—both natural and human—scarce. Recovery from conflict often places higher importance upon immediate, short term needs which tend to overshadow long term visions of sustainable development. Our Common Future, an outcome document from the Rio+20 Conference cites conflict as a cause of unsustainable development as governments expend many of their resources on arms and military attacks instead of meeting the needs of their war-torn populations.\textsuperscript{43}

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT), established in 1977 by the General Assembly GA/RES/32/197, called for a single official in charge of coordinating operational activities within the UN system.\textsuperscript{44} This single official was designated the Resident Coordinator and he or she works with governmental agencies (such as the…) as part of the Resident Coordinator system in charge of ensuring tangible results in the implementation of weak or dismantled governments’ development agendas. UNCTs support recovering governments’ goals of long-term sustainability, contributing to a long-term peace. UNCTs exist in 136 countries and cover all of the 180 countries with existing United Nations programs.\textsuperscript{45}

Post-conflict countries face many challenges in achieving lasting peace—most related to their typical status as Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs). Ineffective legal systems, weak leadership and a focus on short term instead of long-term goals all influence a nation’s ability to successfully and sustainably meet the needs of its citizens, present and future.\textsuperscript{46}

Security Council Resolution SC/RES/1645 created an implementation framework as well as highlighted the importance of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) to peace building and sustainable peace\textsuperscript{47}. A Member State’s National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) is the set of strategies, development plans, and donor requirements which are necessary for progress. The instability found in post-conflict countries hampers the ability to set specifics; however the overall needs may still be observed and addressed. SC/RES/1645 also emphasized the need for a coordinated and integrated approach to post-conflict peace building and reconciliation as well as the responsibility of new and transitioning governments to identify and implement strategies associated with long-term peace and avoiding relapse into violence\textsuperscript{48}. Post-conflict peacebuilding is a multi-faceted task and often depends on contributions from the nations’ civil society as well as specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to meet all the demands required of developing, implementing, and sustaining peacebuilding policies.\textsuperscript{49}

**What does Post-Conflict Sustainable Development Include?**

When implemented correctly, sustainable development in post-conflict countries promotes and supports peace through long term planning of economic recovery, economic stability, governmental accountability, and reduced corruption. The vision and ability to create long term plans can insure future stability for both governments and their citizens. One way sustainable development of the economy can promote lasting peace is by breaking the poverty conflict trap. Conflicts can severely degrade a country’s infrastructure, leaving citizens without homes or jobs. Sustainable development of economies can break the cycle of recessions into conflict and allow citizens to rebuild their lives and regain their livelihoods, eventually developing the means to escape poverty on both micro- and macro-economic levels.\textsuperscript{50}

Sustainable development also builds stronger governments by reducing corruption and increasing government accountability. Sustainably planned governments provide for a series of
checks and balances, creating a transparent government in which corrupt officials are limited in their abilities to reignite ethnic, religious, or political violence within a country. This creates a more stable and therefore longer-lasting government capable of fostering both civic and economic growth.

Bridging the Gaps for Sustainable Transition

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development has organized workshops focused on overcoming the disadvantages many post-conflict countries face when implementing sustainable development. Also known as the Development Account Project (ROA 105), these workshops strive to improve a country’s capacity to employ sustainable development projects through policy and cultural principles.51

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) plays a key role in the redevelopment of Member States emerging from conflict. Beyond the goal of political stability, UNDP must analyze each Member State’s unique situation and determine the balance of short term needs of the population, the medium term needs of infrastructure reconstruction, and long term goals development. Thorough analysis of individual Member States’ situations is vital because the circumstances surrounding both the lapse into violence and the reconciliation process are necessary for identifying short-, medium-, and long-term goals for peace and sustainability.52

Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs have an international impact on sustainable development and have become key players in the promotion and implementation of sustainable development, often by providing funding for sustainable development programs or even policy frameworks for creating lasting peace. NGOs play different roles such as activists, providers of essential public services, researchers, and watchdogs for future conflict. A common misconception is that NGOs are nonprofit charitable organizations. According to the World Trade Organization, NGOs include industrial lobbyist groups such as Association of Swiss Bankers and the International Chamber of Commerce. However they are often capable of providing private funding and are quicker in dispatching responses than many governmental agencies that depend on bureaucratic systems of approvals.

Conclusion

Sustainable development in post-conflict countries is the implementation of policies which promote a stable nation so as to allow true progressive growth and sustainable growth. The implementation of sustainable development in post-conflict countries can be a sensitive measure due to the nature of the post-conflict country and the problems resulting from violence. The UN and its Member States have developed a strategy which can be modified to each post-conflict country’s unique situation called the National Sustainable Development Strategy. When followed correctly, NSDS can promote stable long term growth, improving a country’s social, economic, and political position.

Committee Directives

Delegates should discuss their country’s efforts to implement National Sustainable Development Strategies, the successes they’ve had, or the steps their country has taken to improve or support sustainable development in countries emerging from conflict. Delegates
should also identify gaps in implementation of National Sustainable Development Strategies and sustainable development as well as possible areas for improvement.

**III: Exploring Alternate Energy Options to Lessen the Global Dependence on Fossil Fuels**

*Introduction*

Currently the world economy depends on energy produced by fossil fuels. These include coal, oil, and natural gas, and they are formed from organic materials over the course of millions of years. Oil is pumped out of reservoirs deep underground, or can be harvested from oil shale or tar sands. It is then processed in oil refineries to create fuel oil, liquid petroleum, gasoline, and nonfuel oil-based products like pesticides, fertilizers, plastics, and pharmaceuticals. Our gasoline and diesel powered vehicles alone number 930 million globally. Coal was once the primary source of fuel for travel, such as was common in steamboats and coal-powered trains. Today it is primarily used to generate electricity. Natural Gas burns cleaner than coal and oil and is commonly used to provide electricity and produce heat for industrial processes and buildings. Natural Gas is also used in the production of fertilizers, paints, and plastics. Primarily composed of CH4 (commonly known as Methane Gas), Natural Gas can also be generated by the decomposition of municipal waste in landfills and manure from livestock production.

The world is also currently in need of the development of alternative, clean, and renewable energy sources. While oil and coal dominate the current market, they cannot be replenished and cause harm to the environment. More efficient and sustainable energies are in high demand, not just for the environment, but for more economic reasons as well. The Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (SE4All) outlined by the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, calls for three key objectives in order to achieve sustainable energy for all by 2030. Objective number one is to ensure universal access to modern energy services, while number two is to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency. The third goal is to double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. According to Secretary Moon, sustainable development is all about the creation of new opportunities: the growth of small business, the creation of new markets, and the generation of jobs. Improving access to and capabilities of producing alternative energies is one of the key ways the United Nations strives to provide individuals and nations with the power to fuel their own ingenuity.

The SE4All initiative also declared 2014-2024 the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All—passed unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly. This resolution notes that 1.3 billion people are without electricity globally and that 2.6 billion people in developing nations use the most basic forms of biomass for cooking and heating. General Assembly Resolution 65/151 declared 2012 the “International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.” These principals are encompassed in the 7th Sustainable Development Goal outlined by the United Nations Open Working Group’s Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals which is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Today’s nations are encouraged to act more responsibly and divest their current resources from fossil fuels while both improving efficiencies in regards to fossil fuels and researching new alternative energy sources.
Oil, Coal, Natural Gas, and Problems Associated with Fossil Fuels

The back-bone of the world economy is dependent upon “black gold”. While enough oil still lies underground to power the world’s motors for several decades to come, the vast majority of our reserves lie under the sands of a few countries around the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is situated on a quarter of the world’s oil reserves and four of her neighbors, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates each boast another 10% share. While they choose not to produce at full capacity, the rest of the world continues to deplete their own natural resources rapidly. Regardless of who maintains a large share of the supply of oil—such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which aims to control production, trade, and prices for oil and oil products—most experts agree that we will deplete all of our resources within the next century. The once-large oil fields in the North Sea for example, are now 70-90% depleted.

In order to compensate for the rapidly decreasing world oil fields, many top oil executives such as Harry Longwell at ExxonMobil suggest a new series of non-OPEC oil field developments. These new oil fields would range from the Caspian Sea, which is north of Iran, to the Gulf of Mexico and to the Keystone-XL pipeline in the United States of America. These fields are highly controversial however, from political divisiveness in the United States over the Keystone XL Pipeline, to the Tehran Convention’s stance on oil pollution in the Caspian Sea.

However, according to Mr. Longwell, regardless of political issues this will also require “huge new investments” which the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates would cost big oil firms more than $1 trillion over the next decade. Recently the net increase in global oil production is roughly one percent per year. As soon as 2015 however, this number will begin to decrease to negative integers. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) argues that the only way to decrease dependency on oil is an increase in price, which will undoubtedly become a factor as current oil reserves become exhausted.

Although most of the coal produced by countries is not destined for the international market, there are some key providers of coal. Global production of coal is found primarily in China, which provides nearly 50 percent of the world’s coal supply annually and meets the majority of Asia’s coal demands. The next-largest coal-producing nation is the United States of America with 14.1 of the world market share of coal production.

Natural gas is also primarily burned as a heat source or used to provide electric power. It can also be used as a fuel source, but this practice is less common. The majority of fuel-related uses of natural gas are found in large commercial bus fleets and typically accounts for less than 2 percent of natural gas usage annually. Russia is the major exporter of natural gas for Europe while most North American imports of natural gas come from the United States and Canada—this is because it is most commonly transported by pipeline. It is increasingly being transported by ship however, in its liquefied form (LNG) to meet greater global demand.

Divestment of Resources and Increasing Energy Efficiency and Sustainability

Since the start of the new millennium, the U.N. has been dedicated to decreasing the dependency on fossil fuels, and working to motivate more nations to invest in alternative energy sources. The U.N. Divest-Invest Movement is a grassroots movement to mobilize private and public capital away from fossil fuels and towards clean, sustainable sources of energy that support a safe climate. The movement’s goals include the divesting—or diversifying—of assets within the next five years, and a “clean trillion” in annual energy investments which includes a minimum of five percent invested in renewable energies and clean technologies. The movement
was started by activists on half a dozen university campuses in 2011 and after two years the campaign was on roughly 400 campuses globally and had spread to various NGOs, businesses and individuals. The highlight was its featuring at the 2014 U.N. Climate Summit with the anticipation of tens of billions of dollars in new divest-invest commitments.

An increase in energy efficiency is also highly desired. Increased energy efficiency is simply performing the same task, but using less energy. Increasing energy efficiency has numerous benefits including reducing harmful gas emissions, lowering demand for energy imports, and lowering costs on both micro- and macro-economic scales. Renewable energies attempt to accomplish these goals, but increasing the efficiency of current energy sources is a cheaper, more immediate solution to lowering fossil fuel consumption. There are numerous areas in which energy efficiency can be improved. For example, sustainable development of urban or highly populated human settlements can address the need to lower energy consumption. Building designers are trying to incorporate renewable energy technology which will lead to the creation of zero-energy buildings. Large steps like upgrading insulation and weatherization of buildings improve energy efficiency, but small steps such as replacing incandescent with LED light bulbs and energy efficient appliances also result in lower energy consumption.

Architects and community designers can begin to design cities in a fashion that develops the use of safe, accessible options for alternative travel such as walking, biking, and public transportation. Car makers are now producing cars that require less fuel to operate—many of them electric-fuel hybrid designs. Shipping companies are improving the efficiencies of transportation methods and shifting from truck to rail to minimize fuel consumption and reduce harmful emissions. Ultimately however, efficiency is also impacted by human behaviors such as how often people use their heaters or if they leave the sink running while they brush their teeth.

**Alternative Energy Sources**

Alternative energy is all energy produced by methods that do not consume fossil fuels. These are diverse, renewable, environmentally friendly, and cause little to no pollution. Alternate energy sources typically include biomass, hydrogen fuel cells, hydropower, wind, geothermal energy, and solar power. Biomass is the process by which energy is produced through the conversion of biological wastes and materials. It primarily uses carbon-based substances, including most plant and animal materials. Regions prime for biomass harvesting include agricultural and forested areas which are often located in lesser developed countries (LDCs). Unsustainable biomass harvesting can contribute to loss of biodiversity, increased deforestation, and increased gas emissions.

Hydrogen Fuel Cells are clean, reliable, quiet and efficient. They produce high-quality electric power that uses hydrogen to drive an electrochemical process that produces electricity. Their only by-products are water and heat. Hydropower dams use turbines to produce electric power and are commonly found in rivers and oceans. Wind energy is harvested from wind turbine farms, however, this requires a constant and strong source of wind to produce electricity. Geothermal energy is the use of the heat below earth’s surface for production of electricity and thermal energy. Geothermal heat pumps heat and cool buildings and are effective in most regions and climates. Geothermal power plants however, require more active geothermal sources. The last major source of alternative energy is solar power, which uses the sun’s rays for electricity or thermal energy.
**United Nations Positions and Actions to Date**

The United Nations continues to take on a leading role in providing and increasing sources of clean, reliable and affordable energy. The U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) is helping developing nations to ascertain more modern sources of energy, which will in turn lower poverty rates and raise standards of living. Another instrument for change is the U.N.-Energy knowledge network, which is an inter-agency collaboration in the field of energy. Its primary function is to develop programming to encourage inter-governmental and inter-agency cooperation in the field of energy. Resolution A/RES/36/193 “The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy” addresses the current world fuel crisis and calls for an intergovernmental body within the United Nations to facilitate the growth of alternative energy sources and energy efficiencies world-wide.59

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has even taken an active position and voiced his opinions and vision for the future. In 2011, he launched the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative whose primary goal is to provide sustainable energy for the entire world by 2030. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon states “energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, increased social equity, and an environment that allows the world to thrive.”60 According to the initiative the world faces two challenges: restricted access to sustainable energy and waste produced by the conventional sources of today. The key to solving the challenges presented by low energy access, waste, and pollution is to ensure that clean, sustainable energy is available to all.61

**Committee Directive**

The General Assembly Plenary strives to promote and provide initiatives that work to reduce the world dependency on fossil fuels and their detrimental effect on the environment and economic stability. Delegates should examine the transition to and development of alternative energy sources and how it relates to the sustainability of developing countries around the world. Delegates must also examine regional differences and the impact of the implementation of more sustainable, alternative energies on a local, national, and global scale. To be successful in this committee, delegates must work together to address these issues and create viable solutions.
References

Introduction and History

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Topic III: Exploring Alternate Energy Sources to Lessen the Global Dependence on Fossil Fuels


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