



MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Human Rights Council: Climate Crisis

Chairs: Amanda Shih '21 & Griffin Seidel '21

Dear delegates,

Hello and welcome to the Human Rights Council of CAMUN 2021! My name is Amanda Shih and I will be chairing this committee along with Griffin Seidel. I am a senior from Natick, MA and have been involved in Model UN since my freshman year. My co-chair, Griffin Seidel, and our rapporteur, Darley Boit, are also seniors this year.

The main goal for this committee is for delegates to engage in discussion and debate about solutions to the climate crisis. Ultimately, we hope that the members of this committee will work collaboratively to produce resolutions that offer innovative, global solutions to this dire and complex issue.

To be considered for awards, delegates should email the chairs a researched position paper no longer than two pages double-spaced prior to the conference. If you would like feedback on your paper, please submit it by Friday, April 2, 2021. This guide will provide you with a general background on the subject and some direction for further research, but this issue is large in scope and you should feel free to bring forth a wider array of topics than is covered here.

We are looking forward to meeting you all in the virtual space. Please feel free to email either co-chair with any questions!

Amanda Shih, amanda.shih@concordacademy.org

Griffin Seidel, griffin.seidel@concordacademy.org

Introduction

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”¹ Climate change is caused by human activities such as large scale agriculture, fossil fuel consumption, and deforestation. Each of these practices increases the concentration of greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere, causing global temperatures to increase in tandem. The impacts of climate change are substantial in both scope and scale. Rising sea levels, loss of biodiversity, and shifting weather patterns are just a few effects of climate change that have already begun to threaten human life and our natural ecosystems. Without far-reaching and immediate action, scientists warn that the consequences of the global climate crisis will be catastrophic.²

History

On December 6, 1988, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) jointly established the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The objective of the IPCC is “to provide internationally coordinated scientific assessments of the magnitude, timing, and potential environmental and socio-economic impact of climate change.”³ The IPCC produced its First Assessment Report in 1990, highlighting the need for international cooperation to address the global climate crisis.⁴ The report also played an integral role in the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a landmark treaty “to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner” by reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.⁵

Further progress in the fight against climate change came with the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and the Paris Agreement in 2015. The Kyoto Protocol legally binds developed countries that are party to the protocol to greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The Paris Agreement strengthens and accelerates global efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Specifically, it is aimed at keeping global temperature rise in this century below 2 degrees Celsius. Both of these treaties have

¹ https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf

² <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change>

³ <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/02/UNGA43-53.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/about/history>

⁵ https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf

received overwhelming support from the international community.⁶ Currently, 192 countries are parties to the Kyoto Protocol and 186 have ratified the Paris Agreement.

Current Situation

This session of the Human Rights Council will aim to mitigate the effects of climate change while also focusing on sustainability. Delegates must contend with the variety of effects that result from a changing climate, most of which disproportionately affect developing countries. Climate change has exacerbated existing water crises and created new ones, with the growing likelihood of water toxicity rising and 500 million children in areas that are at risk for flooding.⁷ Desertification is another key issue, threatening to cripple food production with its alarming acceleration as a result of worsening climate change.⁸ These are just two among a multitude of environmental developments that must be grappled with. This committee needs to address the growing burden of the growing masses of climate migrants, which the World Bank estimates will increase by 143 million by 2050 from Latin America alone.⁹ As ecological conditions worsen, this committee will need to take steps to mitigate or prevent famine and disease.

Questions to Consider

1. What issues does your country believe are the most urgent in this crisis?
2. How will you balance the economic needs of developing nations with the need for environmental protections?
3. How will your solutions address the disparity between developed and developing nations?
4. What issues should be prioritized in order to prevent growing humanitarian crises?

Sources for Further Research

1. Your nation's climate/energy/development department can be useful for specific measures your country has taken.
2. <https://unfccc.int>: the UNFCCC website.
3. <https://www.ipcc.ch>: the IPCC website.

⁶ <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/stories/water-and-climate-change-10-things-you-should-know>

⁸ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/explainer-desertification-and-the-role-of-climate-change>

⁹ <https://unfccc.int/news/un-warns-climate-change-is-driving-global-hunger>

4. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change>: overview of UN efforts to combat climate change.
5. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>: website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.