



**SRMUN ATLANTA 2021**  
***Fostering Global Youth Empowerment and Leadership***  
**November 18-20, 2021**  
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Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) at SRMUN Atlanta 2021. My name is Claire Hodges, and I am delighted to be serving as your Director for the UNEA. This will be my third conference as a SRMUN staff member, having previously served as the Assistant Director of the Security Council and the General Assembly First Committee. I graduated from the University of Florida in 2020 with bachelor's degrees in Sustainability Studies and International Studies, as well as a minor in mathematics. Since then, I have transitioned my desire to protect people and the planet into work for Florida State University and the Florida Department of Health in COVID-19 response. Our committee's Assistant Directors will be Des Woods and Simone Spencer. This will be Des' second year as an Assistant Director at SRMUN, having previously served with the Commission on the Status of Woman for SRMUN Charlotte 2019. This will be Simone's inaugural year serving as an Assistant Director at SRMUN Atlanta, having previously attended the conference as a delegate.

Established in 2012, the UNEA is a relatively new and specialized United Nations (UN) agency that is charged with addressing critical environmental challenges and protecting, preserving, and rehabilitating the environment. With a universal membership of all 193 Member States of the UN, the UNEA sets the global environmental agenda in collaboration with individual nations, UN institutions, multilateral environmental agreements, major groups, and stakeholders. In less than a decade, they have tackled issues ranging from biodiversity and chemical waste disposal to disaster response and climate change.

In line with the mandate of the UNEA and the SRMUN Atlanta 2021 theme of "*Fostering Global Youth Empowerment and Leadership*," we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss come conference:

- I. Establishing Sustainable Circular Economies Through the Development of Waste Recycling Partnerships
- II. Promoting Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Underrepresented Populations in Environmental Governance

The background guide provides a strong introduction to the committee and topics that will be debated at SRMUN Atlanta 2021. It should be utilized as a foundation for a delegate's independent research. However, while we have attempted to provide a holistic analysis of the issues, the background guide should not be used as the single mode of analysis for the topics. Delegates are expected to go beyond the background guide and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own. The position papers for the committee should reflect the complexity of these issues and their externalities. Delegations are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies, and recommendations on each of the two topics. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit [srmun.org](http://srmun.org). **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, October 29, 2021, by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website in order to be eligible for Outstanding Position Paper Awards.**

Des, Simone, and I are excited to be serving as your dais for the UNEA. We wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you soon. Please feel free to contact Rachael, Des, Chris, or myself if you have any questions while preparing for the conference. We look forward to seeing you in November!

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## History of the United Nations Environment Assembly

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the highest-level body on environmental issues in the United Nations (UN) system.<sup>1</sup> The mandate of the UNEA is to partner with Member States in communicating, establishing, and completing global environmental policies in order to protect the environment.<sup>2</sup> Said policies focus on regulating matters such as focusing on the illegal hunting of animals and the administrating of dangerous chemicals.<sup>3</sup> The assembly promotes cooperation between Member States on international action through biennial meetings in Nairobi, Kenya.

The 193 Member States of the UN General Assembly (GA) make up the membership of the UNEA, and resolutions are passed by a simple majority.<sup>4</sup> Additional major groups and stakeholders, such as businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc., are able to bid to observe the plenary session and converse with Member States.<sup>5</sup> The major groups provide much of the support for the UNEA, since they are able to communicate and form partnerships with the body's delegates.<sup>6</sup> Some NGOs, such as the Earth System Governance Project, research environmental issues and share their results with the UNEA.<sup>7</sup> The UNEA can invite the UNGA to adopt draft resolutions at its recommendation, generating global action.<sup>8</sup>

The UNEA is the governing body of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and is the ultimate leader on environmental problems in the UN.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, It replaced the Governing Council of the UN Environment Programme, which was composed of 58 Member States. The UNEA has a Governing Bureau that contains 25 delegates from 10 different Member States who are also heavily involved with conservation efforts in said Member States. These delegates are chosen by their own governments and these officials will participate the entire session.<sup>10</sup> The Bureau's duties include reviewing potential resolutions and manage the UNEA and its workload.<sup>11</sup> The UNEA President is elected in the last session.<sup>12</sup> Tasks of the UNEA include the encouragement of environmental protection policies and boosting global sustainability.<sup>13</sup> The current president of the UNEA and member of the Bureau is H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, the Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway.<sup>14</sup> Much of the work of the UNEA is enacted through the UNEP, which depends on voluntary contributions for 95 percent of its income, in addition to the support of the UN Regular Budget for the functions of the Secretariat.<sup>15</sup> The UNEA budget is very extensive and consists of categories in which they can disburse funds to Member States for various sustainability projects. Some of

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<sup>1</sup> "About UNEA," *United Nations Environment Assembly*, <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/about-united-nations-environment-assembly> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> "Media Fact Sheet," *United Nations Environment Assembly*, <https://www.cbd.int/idb/image/2014/celebrations/wed-2014-factsheet-unea.pdf> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> "Media Fact Sheet," *United Nations Environment Assembly*.

<sup>4</sup> "About UNEA," *United Nations Environment Assembly*.

<sup>5</sup> "Accreditation," *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> "UNEA Delivering on 2030 Agenda," *United Nations Environment Programme*, pp. 3, <https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/9724/unea2-delivering-on-the-2030-agenda-brochure.pdf> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> "About," *Earth Systems Governance*, <http://www.earthssystemgovernance.org/about> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> "Media Fact Sheet," *United Nations Environment Assembly*, <https://www.cbd.int/idb/image/2014/celebrations/wed-2014-factsheet-unea.pdf> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> "About UNEA," *United Nations Environment Assembly*.

<sup>10</sup> "Ministers Prepare for UNEA-2," *Implementation of the Intergovernmental Sustainable Development Agenda*, <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/ministers-prepare-for-unea-2-in-may-2016/> (accessed February 2, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> "Functions of the Bureau", *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31314/UNEA%20and%20CPR%20Bureau%20TORs%20US%20commitments%201-16-2020.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y#:~:text=Evaluating%20potential%20resolutions%20and%20decisions,ii> (Accessed March 7, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> "About UNEA," *United Nations Environment Assembly*.

<sup>13</sup> "Accreditation," *United Nations Environment Programme*.

<sup>14</sup> "UNEA 5 Presidency and Bureau," *United Nations Environment Assembly*, <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/unea-5-presidency-and-bureau> (accessed February 2, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> "Funding Facts," *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/funding-and-partnerships/funding-facts> (accessed February 13, 2021).

these categories include budget funds for resilience to disasters and conflicts, healthy and productive ecosystems, and environmental governance.<sup>16</sup>

While the UNEA is young as compared to other bodies of the United Nations, the assembly of Member States has been able to implement ideas that have set the foundation for change towards environmental protection. The two most recent sessions of the UNEA were the UNEA-4 and UNEA-5 assemblies. The fourth session (UNEA-4) occurred from March 11-15, 2019, in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme for this session was “Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production,” which focused on how poverty is linked to environmental challenges and the management of natural resources.<sup>17</sup> The session also gave attention to addressing the loss of biodiversity and finding sustainable food systems.<sup>18</sup> By the conclusion of the meeting, 23 resolutions had been passed by the body ranging from the proper management of coral reefs<sup>19</sup> to enhancing the UNEP’s scope on the Global Environment Outlook.<sup>20</sup> One major action item to come from the session was the creation of the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics.<sup>21</sup> This committee, conveyed by the UNEP Secretariat, was formed to evaluate the barriers to combating microplastics and marine litter in all sources of water, especially those that provide water for global citizens.<sup>22</sup> One of the main goals of the convention is to find a “full life-cycle”<sup>23</sup> method to using evidence-based management and control of plastic.<sup>24</sup>

The UNEA convened for their fifth session (UNEA-5) in late February 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme for this session is “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”<sup>25</sup> Another concern brought up during the meeting was ensuring that the UNEP has a diverse staff that represents the different regions of the globe.<sup>26</sup> Due to the safety concerns related to convening during the global Coronavirus pandemic, the UNEA will not handle substantive issues that the body will need to address until February 2022, when the UNEA Bureau leadership feels it will be more appropriate to meet in person.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020– 2021,” United Nations Environment Assembly, March 15, 2019, [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28411/UNEP\\_PoW\\_Budget\\_2020-2021\\_Final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28411/UNEP_PoW_Budget_2020-2021_Final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>17</sup> “Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,” United Nations Environment Assembly, <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/unea4> (Accessed February 15, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> “Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,” United Nations Environment Assembly.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Resolution EA.4/L.14, *Sustainable coral reefs management*, UNEP/EA.4/L.14, March 9, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28477/K1901066.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Resolution EA.4/L.27, *Keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook*, UNEP/EA.4/L.14, March 9, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>21</sup> “UNEP Shares Options for Continued Work on Marine Litter and Microplastics in Advance of UNEA-4,” United Nations Environment Assembly, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unep-shares-options-for-continued-work-on-marine-litter-and-microplastics-in-advance-of-unea-4/> (Accessed March 18, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> “UNEP Shares Options for Continued Work on Marine Litter and Microplastics in Advance of UNEA-4,” United Nations Environment Assembly.

<sup>23</sup> “UNEP Shares Options for Continued Work on Marine Litter and Microplastics in Advance of UNEA-4,” United Nations Environment Assembly.

<sup>24</sup> “UNEP Shares Options for Continued Work on Marine Litter and Microplastics in Advance of UNEA-4,” United Nations Environment Assembly.

<sup>25</sup> “Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,” United Nations Environment Assembly, <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5> (Accessed February 15, 2021).

<sup>26</sup> “UNEA-5 Opens with Adoption of Three Decisions,” International Institute for Sustainable Development, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unea-5-opens-with-adoption-of-three-decisions/> (Accessed March 7, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Environmental Assembly, Meeting of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly Summary, October 8, 2020 <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34115/Meeting%20summary%20UNEA%20bureau%208%20Oct%20final%20%28PrsChRap%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

# I. Establishing Sustainable Circular Economies Through the Development of Waste Recycling Partnerships

## Introduction

Most products have a simple lifecycle: raw materials are extracted, the item is created, it is used, and then it is discarded.<sup>28</sup> In this linear system, waste is accumulated while raw materials are used up.<sup>29</sup> The idea of a circular economy seeks to challenge this system. In a circular economy, waste is used more efficiently and materials from old products are reused, re-manufactured, or recycled to be used to create new products.<sup>30</sup> Each stage of a product's lifecycle is examined to determine how to extend its lifespan and prolong its use.<sup>31</sup> This includes improving resource efficiency, product design, waste collection and sorting.<sup>32</sup> These efforts are in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.<sup>33</sup> The international community closely monitors this field, relying on the World Bank's 2012 "What a Waste" and 2018 "What a Waste 2.0" reports on the current state of global waste management.<sup>34</sup>

The ways in which byproducts and waste can be reused as raw materials and alternative fuel are of particular interest to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) because of the multitude of environmental impacts from waste.<sup>35</sup> Inadequate waste collection, dumping, and burning can pollute the air, water, and soil.<sup>36</sup> Emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) from solid waste treatment and disposal contribute to climate change, accounting for approximately five percent of total global GHG emissions in 2017.<sup>37</sup> In addition, improving waste recycling has the potential to reduce resource consumption as fewer raw materials are needed to create new products.<sup>38</sup> This subsequently increases nonrenewable virgin resource availability and helps to regenerate ecosystems that have been overtaxed for natural capital.<sup>39</sup> Within the existing global waste trade, these environmental impacts often disproportionately affect low- and middle-income Member States that receive the majority of global waste.<sup>40</sup> The flow of trade is increasingly from developed to developing Member States because it is often cheaper to pay Member States to accept exported waste than to dispose of it in its country of origin.<sup>41</sup>

## History

Waste, and therefore waste management, are integral parts of the human experience, but formal waste management systems came with the advent of the modern age.<sup>42</sup> Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, waste was usually disposed of in convenient ways or locations, including being incinerated, dumped in refuse pits or water bodies, or simply tossed

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<sup>28</sup> "Circular Economy" (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, July 2017), 3, [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Circular\\_Economy\\_UNIDO\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Circular_Economy_UNIDO_0.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> "Circular Economy," 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Circular Economy," 3.

<sup>31</sup> Silpa Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," Urban Development Series (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018), 120, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30317>.

<sup>32</sup> "Circular Economy," July 2017.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, September 25, 2015, [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E).

<sup>34</sup> Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," 116.

<sup>35</sup> "Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production" (United Nations Environment Assembly, March 15, 2019), <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28517/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>36</sup> Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," 116.

<sup>37</sup> Kaza et al., 118.

<sup>38</sup> "Concept," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>.

<sup>39</sup> "What Is the Circular Economy?," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/what-is-the-circular-economy>.

<sup>40</sup> Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," 116.

<sup>41</sup> Adomas Balkevicius, Mark Sanctuary, and Sigita Zvirblyte, "Fending off Waste from the West: The Impact of China's Operation Green Fence on the International Waste Trade," *The World Economy* 43, no. 10 (October 1, 2020): 2742–61.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York, N.Y.: Owl Books, 1999).

on the street.<sup>43</sup> However, with the onset of industrialization and the subsequent growth of urban populations, the amount of waste produced began to reduce sanitation and quality of life.<sup>44</sup> The public began to advocate for municipal solid waste management, which has continued to develop and increase its scope and authority over the last few centuries.<sup>45</sup> This rise in consumerism collided with the environmental movement of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time that the production of single-use products was becoming more wide-spread, people were becoming more aware of the negative impacts of humans on the planet.<sup>46</sup> In direct response, mainstream recycling efforts began to gain more traction, not “in order to get the most out of the materials” as they had been before the rise of consumerism, but “in order to deal with the massive amounts of waste produced during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>47</sup> Recycling has only grown in scale since then, turning into an international industry worth over USD 200 Billion.<sup>48</sup> About half of the plastics intended for recycling are traded overseas, demonstrating the importance of the global market.<sup>49</sup>

The rise in environmentalism also affected predominant economic theory. In 1966, Kenneth Boulding published the essay “The Rise of Spaceship Earth,” which argues for a closed economic system in which “all outputs from consumption would constantly be recycled to become inputs for production.”<sup>50</sup> These ideas were furthered through the development of the field of industrial ecology, which focuses on material and energy flows through systems and the development of more sustainable industrial systems where “outputs of an industry [can] be the inputs of another.”<sup>51</sup> These varied concepts have coalesced into the modern conception of a circular economy, but as a relatively new field, it lacks a concrete definition.<sup>52</sup>

The pursuit of a circular economy will rely on a successful and effective international waste and recycling industry that maximizes the use of secondary materials in new production.<sup>53</sup> The global waste trade allows Member States to import or export waste based on their needs and waste management capacities. In practice, this has led to a transfer of waste primarily from developed to developing Member States, which has grown 500 percent from 1992 to 2012.<sup>54</sup> As an example, in January 2017, the G7 Member exported 3,182,000 tonnes of plastic waste yet imported only 271,000 tonnes.<sup>55</sup>

Against this background came the most notable effort to reduce the international transportation of any waste, 1989 the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (Basel Convention).<sup>56</sup> Toxic or hazardous waste is waste that poses a threat to human health or the environment.<sup>57</sup> The primary functions of the Basel Convention are to regulate the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, require the environmentally sound management of waste, and ensure that Member States obtain Prior Informed Consent

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<sup>43</sup> Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York, N.Y.: Owl Books, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York, N.Y.: Owl Books, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Holly Jean Buck, “Should Carbon Removal Be Treated as Waste Management? Lessons from the Cultural History of Waste,” *Interface Focus* 10, no. 5 (October 6, 2020): 20200010, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsfs.2020.0010>.

<sup>46</sup> Buck, “Should Carbon Removal Be Treated as Waste Management?”

<sup>47</sup> Olivia B. Waxman, “The History of Recycling in America Is More Complicated Than You May Think,” *TIME Magazine*, November 15, 2016, <https://time.com/4568234/history-origins-recycling/>.

<sup>48</sup> Leslie Hook and John Reed, “Why the World’s Recycling System Stopped Working,” *Financial Times Magazine*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/360e2524-d71a-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8>.

<sup>49</sup> Hook and Reed.

<sup>50</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, “The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth,” in *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy*, ed. E. Jarrett (Baltimore, MD: Resources for the Future/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 3–14, [http://arachnid.biosci.utexas.edu/courses/THOC/Readings/Boulding\\_SpaceshipEarth.pdf](http://arachnid.biosci.utexas.edu/courses/THOC/Readings/Boulding_SpaceshipEarth.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas E. Gallopoulos and Robert A. Frosch, “Strategies for Manufacturing,” *Scientific American*, September 1989, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/strategies-for-manufacturing/>.

<sup>52</sup> Cline, “Will the Circular Economy Save the Planet?”

<sup>53</sup> Cline, “Will the Circular Economy Save the Planet?”

<sup>54</sup> Balkevicius, Sanctuary, and Zvirblyte, “Fending off Waste from the West: The Impact of China’s Operation Green Fence on the International Waste Trade.”

<sup>55</sup> Hook and Reed, “Why the World’s Recycling System Stopped Working.”

<sup>56</sup> “Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal” (United Nations Environment Programme, 1989), <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8385/-Basel%20Convention%20on%20the%20Control%20of%20Transboundary%20Movements%20of%20Hazardous%20Wastes%20-20113644.pdf?sequence=2&amp%3BisAllowed=>.

<sup>57</sup> “Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.”

(PIC) from Member States receiving hazardous waste.<sup>58</sup> The Convention originally only applied to hazardous wastes, household wastes, and incinerator ash, but in 2019, the Fourteenth Conference of the Parties adopted several amendments expanding its scope to cover plastic wastes.<sup>59</sup> As of January 1, 2021, Member States exporting contaminated plastics or hard-to-recycle mixed plastics will need to first obtain consent from the receiving Member States.<sup>60</sup>

### *Actions taken by United Nations*

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as the Rio+20 Conference, produced a series of groundbreaking documents that transformed the sustainable development field.<sup>61</sup> Among accomplishments including the launch of the process to develop the SDGs and the creation of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was the creation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP).<sup>62</sup> The 10YFP is a global commitment to accelerate the shift toward sustainable consumption and production and is explicitly called for in the eight targets for SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production.<sup>63</sup> The One Planet Network was created to implement the commitment of the 10YFP and serves as a multi-stakeholder partnership for Member States and all relevant organizations.<sup>64</sup> It organizes its efforts, impacts, and reports around six programmes: public procurement, buildings and construction, tourism, food systems, consumer information, and lifestyles and education.<sup>65</sup> As central tenets of sustainable consumption and production, and therefore the circular economy, the 10YFP and One Planet are oft-cited partners with and resources for UNEA.<sup>66</sup>

The UNEA has prioritized waste management as an environment issue of concern since their first session in 2014, producing Resolution 1/5 on *Chemicals and Waste*.<sup>67</sup> Following the development of the international waste trade, this resolution solely addresses the issue of dangerous chemical waste in the light of “the significant adverse effects on human health and the environment,” as well as establishes a Special Programme to support strengthening national waste management institutions.<sup>68</sup> Resolution 1/5 was followed by Resolution 2/7 on *Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste* in their second session in 2016 that reinforces the hopes of the UNEA for international cooperation.<sup>69</sup> In this same session, Resolution 2/8 on *Sustainable Consumption and Production* provides the first mention of a circular economy approach in a UNEA resolution.<sup>70</sup> The idea of a circular economy is similarly mentioned in the third session’s Resolution 3/4 on *Environment and Health*, as one element that can provide “key

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<sup>58</sup> “Controlling Transboundary Movements,” Basel Convention, accessed May 20, 2021, <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/Controllingtransboundarymovements/Overview/tabid/4325/Default.aspx>.

<sup>59</sup> “Overview,” Basel Convention, accessed May 20, 2021, <http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/Overview/tabid/1271/Default.aspx>.

<sup>60</sup> “Questions and Answers Related to the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments,” Basel Convention, accessed May 20, 2021, <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/Plasticwaste/PlasticWasteAmendments/FAQs/tabid/8427/Default.aspx>.

<sup>61</sup> “United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20,” Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>.

<sup>62</sup> “United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20.”

<sup>63</sup> “The One Planet Network - Who We Are,” The One Planet Network, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/who-we-are>.

<sup>64</sup> “The One Planet Network - Who We Are.”

<sup>65</sup> “The One Planet Network - Who We Are.”

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, “Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production,” March 28, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28517/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, Resolution 1/5, *Chemicals and Waste*, UNEP/EA.1/Res.5, June 27, 2014, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17285/K1402364.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 2/7, *Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste*, UNEP/EA.2/Res.7, August 3, 2016, [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11183/K1607167\\_UNEPEA2\\_RES7E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11183/K1607167_UNEPEA2_RES7E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>70</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 2/8, *Sustainable Consumption and Production*, UNEP/EA.2/Res.8, August 3, 2016, [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11184/K1607179\\_UNEPEA2\\_RES8E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11184/K1607179_UNEPEA2_RES8E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

system-wide and preventive solutions to tackle pollution and thereby improve health and the environment synergistically.”<sup>71</sup> However, it was not until the UNEA fourth session in 2019 that a resolution directly addresses pursuing a circular economy, with Resolution 4/1 prioritizing *Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production*.<sup>72</sup> This document directly ties the pursuit of a circular economy to the SDGs, establishes initial UNEA efforts to produce reports on industry life-cycles and waste recycling, and prioritizes achieving sustainable consumption and production in future UNEA actions.<sup>73</sup> These efforts were supplemented by two additional resolutions from the same session. Resolution 4/4 on *Addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices* recognizes the importance of the private sector in moving toward sustainable consumption and production.<sup>74</sup> Resolution 4/7 on *Environmentally sound management of waste* finally expands UNEA’s waste management efforts to include all solid waste, with special emphasis on plastic, and outlines a variety of schemes to promote integrated approaches to solid waste management from production to disposal.<sup>75</sup>

In its role to facilitate the goals of the UNEA, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Finance Initiative produced a report in 2020 titled “Financing Circularity: Demystifying Finance for Circular Economies” that provides guidelines for how the financial sector can accelerate the shift to circular business models.<sup>76</sup> It provides both financial institutions and government regulators with recommendations and strategies to scale up innovation, manage risks, and create a resilient economic system, using examples of transitions under way in industries from mining to fashion.<sup>77</sup> The UNEP also partnered with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) to produce an online course for policy makers on applying Circular Economy practices in the context of the SDGs, in hopes that it will expand involved scales and sectors.<sup>78</sup> In 2007, UNEP also launched the International Resource Panel, consisting of scientists with expertise in resource management, who also provide crucial insight on sustainable consumption issues and natural resource usage.<sup>79</sup> Their 2019 report, “Global Resources Outlook 2019: Natural Resources for the Future We Want” provides recommendations for developing public and private sustainable consumption and production through data-based resource life cycle assessments.<sup>80</sup>

Outside of the environmental sector, organizations across the breadth of the UN have embraced the concept of a circular economy and taken steps toward that goal in their respective areas. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has actively worked to incorporate circular economy efforts into its existing projects, including increasing resource-efficient manufacturing, product lifetimes, and safe recovery and disposal.<sup>81</sup> Of UNIDO’s many projects, most relevant to this committee are its efforts to develop recycling industries within the circular economy approach. In 2018, UNIDO met with 50 partner Member States in a conference titled “Circular Economy: Development of Recycling Industries” to discuss the main barriers to a more robust international

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<sup>71</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 3/4, *Environment and Health*, UNEP/EA.3/Res.4, January 30, 2018, 5, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31019/k1800154.english.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 4/1, *Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production*, UNEP/EA.4/Res.1, March 28, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28517/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>73</sup> “UNEP/EA.4/Res. 1.”

<sup>74</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 4/4, *Addressing Environmental Challenges through Sustainable Business Practices*, UNEP/EA.4/Res. 4, March 28, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28500/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, Resolution 4/7, *Environmentally Sound Management of Waste*, UNEP/EA.4/Res. 7, March 28, 2019, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28472/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, *Financing Circularity: Demystifying Finance for Circular Economies* (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020), [https://www.unepfi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UNEPFI\\_DemystifyingFinanceCircularity-2020-2.pdf](https://www.unepfi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UNEPFI_DemystifyingFinanceCircularity-2020-2.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, 4.

<sup>78</sup> “Circular Economy and the 2030 Agenda,” United Nations System Staff College, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.unssc.org/courses/circular-economy-and-2030-agenda/>.

<sup>79</sup> “About,” United Nations Environmental Programme, International Resource Panel, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://www.resourcepanel.org/about-us>.

<sup>80</sup> International Resource Panel, “Global Resources Outlook 2019: Natural Resources for the Future We Want” (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019), <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27517>.

<sup>81</sup> “Circular Economy,” United Nations Industrial Development Organization, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://www.unido.org/our-focus-cross-cutting-services/circular-economy>.

recycling industry.<sup>82</sup> The subsequent UNIDO report outlines potential supportive policies, incentives, and cooperative efforts that could be used by international organizations and Member States to develop a sustainable recycling industry.<sup>83</sup> Examples include establishing more concrete regulatory frameworks for waste quality in recycling, coordinating national regulatory requirements on waste import and export, and creating tax incentives for favorable actions such as using recycled materials, among many others.<sup>84</sup>

### ***Current Situation***

In 2020, Circle Economy, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to facilitate the global transition to a circular economy, described the global economy as 8.6 percent circular, a reduction from the 9.1 percent reported in 2018.<sup>85</sup> This is not a result of decreased recycling efforts, but rather from increased waste production.<sup>86</sup> While recycling efforts have increased overall, they cannot match the growth in consumption, leading to the reduction in the overall percentage of recycled waste.<sup>87</sup> In 2016, the world generated 2.01 billion tons of solid waste, which is expected to grow to 2.59 billion tons by 2030, and 3.40 billion tons by 2050.<sup>88</sup> If the current trends of increasing waste continue at this rate, the global circularity gap will only continue to widen.<sup>89</sup>

Waste management varies drastically across the globe. High-income Member States generate 34 percent of the world's waste, while low-income Member States account for only five percent; the remaining 61 percent is generated by middle-income Member States.<sup>90</sup> The Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa regions produce the least amount of waste both per capita and in magnitude.<sup>91</sup> While East and South Asia produce the most waste in total, they also are regions with a high-proportion of low- and middle-income Member States and generate among the lowest amount of waste per capita.<sup>92</sup> Looking at waste disposal, approximately 93 percent of waste has been "burned or dumped in roads, open land, or waterways in low-income Member States," whereas two percent of waste is abandoned in higher-income Member States.<sup>93</sup>

The Basel Convention regulates much of the international waste trade, but only touches the surface of the transnational recycling market. The imports and exports of plastic waste began to surge in 1993, and collectively China and Hong Kong alone have imported 72.4 percent of all global plastic waste.<sup>94</sup> However, in 2017, China debuted its new "National Sword" policy, banning the import of 24 types of municipal, manufacturing, and other waste, including electronic items, a variety of common plastics, mixed and unsorted paper, textile waste, and slag

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<sup>82</sup> "Chair's Summary: Circular Economy-Developing Recycling Industries Meeting Vienna, 14th-15th November 2018" (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, November 15, 2018), <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2018-11/Chair%27s%20Summary%20-%20Circular%20Economy%20-%20Development%20of%20Recycling%20Industries%20-%2014-15Nov2018.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> "Development of Recycling Industries within the UNIDO Circular Economy Approach" (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2019), <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-07/Development%20of%20recycling%20industries%20within%20the%20UNIDO%20circular%20economy%20approach.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> "Development of Recycling Industries within the UNIDO Circular Economy Approach."

<sup>85</sup> "The Circularity Gap Report 2020" (The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, January 26, 2020), 15, [https://assets.website-files.com/5e185aa4d27bcf348400ed82/5e26ead616b6d1d157ff4293\\_20200120%20-%20CGR%20Global%20-%20Report%20web%20single%20page%20-%20210x297mm%20-%20compressed.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5e185aa4d27bcf348400ed82/5e26ead616b6d1d157ff4293_20200120%20-%20CGR%20Global%20-%20Report%20web%20single%20page%20-%20210x297mm%20-%20compressed.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> "The Circularity Gap Report 2020," 15.

<sup>87</sup> "The Circularity Gap Report 2020," 15.

<sup>88</sup> Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," 24.

<sup>89</sup> "The Circularity Gap Report 2020" (The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, January 26, 2020), 4, [https://assets.website-files.com/5e185aa4d27bcf348400ed82/5e26ead616b6d1d157ff4293\\_20200120%20-%20CGR%20Global%20-%20Report%20web%20single%20page%20-%20210x297mm%20-%20compressed.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5e185aa4d27bcf348400ed82/5e26ead616b6d1d157ff4293_20200120%20-%20CGR%20Global%20-%20Report%20web%20single%20page%20-%20210x297mm%20-%20compressed.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> Kaza et al., "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," 20.

<sup>91</sup> Kaza et al., 20.

<sup>92</sup> Kaza et al., 20.

<sup>93</sup> Kaza et al., 34.

<sup>94</sup> Amy L. Brooks, Shunli Wang, and Jenna R. Jambeck, "The Chinese Import Ban and Its Impact on Global Plastic Waste Trade," *Science Advances* 4, no. 6 (June 20, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aat0131>.



from steel manufacturing, among others.<sup>95</sup> It took this step due to environmental concerns that encompass air, soil, and water pollution; general public health complaints; levels of toxic substances in the environment that exceed international limits; and even poor neonatal health.<sup>96</sup>

Without China willing to accept much of the world's global recycling, developed and developing Member States that do not have the necessary infrastructure to process and recycle all the waste that they produce will need to quickly find a new solution before the amount of waste produced exceeds national waste management carrying capacities.<sup>97</sup> Most of the waste previously sent to China has shifted to Southeast Asia; between 2017 and 2018, Malaysia became the biggest importer of plastic scrap in the world, accepting a volume twice that of China and Hong Kong, while Thailand saw the greatest percentage increase, where plastic scrap import surged by 1,370 percent.<sup>98</sup> These rising imports have been met with a growing backlash, and many Member States are trying to curb the amount of both legal and illegal waste imports.<sup>99</sup> Exporting nations are also reducing the amount of waste sent out of the country, increasingly sending it to landfills because of a lack of adequate domestic recycling centers.<sup>100</sup>

The international community has continued its efforts to promote a circular economy and waste recycling throughout recent years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNEA split its 2021 fifth session into two parts: one in February 2021 that was conducted virtually (UNEA-5.1) and another for February 2022 that will hopefully be conducted in person when conditions are safer (UNEA-5.2).<sup>101</sup> During UNEA-5.1, dozens of officials from Member States and organizations spoke about the importance of pursuing a circular economy, and UNEA-5.2 will hold much more in-depth discussions on substantive issues.<sup>102</sup> The Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE) was also launched at UNEA-5.1.<sup>103</sup> Established by the European Commission on behalf of the European Union and by the UNEP, and in coordination with UNIDO, this alliance will bring together governments and organizations to develop and advocate for “initiatives related to the circular economy transition, resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production.”<sup>104</sup> GACERE will work alongside existing regional alliances including the African Circular Economy Alliance, launched in 2017, and the Latin America and the Caribbean Circular Economy Coalition, launched in 2021, to share knowledge and implement, replicate, and scale-up circular approaches in Member States.<sup>105</sup>

The efforts of these alliances are dependent on partnerships with a number of nonprofits, NGOs, and research organizations. Circle Economy is a nonprofit that manages the Circularity Gap Reporting Initiative, producing an annual global Circularity Gap Report since 2018. In 2018, the nonprofit the World Economic Forum launched the

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<sup>95</sup> Sultana Yesmin, “Global Waste Crisis: A Rising Threat to Environment,” *Modern Diplomacy*, December 26, 2019, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/12/26/global-waste-crisis-a-rising-threat-to-environment/>.

<sup>96</sup> Dasheng Liu and Shuqi Wang, “The Global Issue of Foreign Waste,” *The Lancet: Planetary Health* 3, no. 3 (March 1, 2019), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(19\)30019-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(19)30019-1).

<sup>97</sup> Yesmin, “Global Waste Crisis: A Rising Threat to Environment.”

<sup>98</sup> Hook and Reed, “Why the World’s Recycling System Stopped Working.”

<sup>99</sup> Hook and Reed.

<sup>100</sup> Hook and Reed.

<sup>101</sup> “Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,” United Nations Environment Assembly, accessed April 15, 2021, [https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5?\\_ga=2.30411199.1062496581.1625418334-1052562259.1625418334](https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5?_ga=2.30411199.1062496581.1625418334-1052562259.1625418334).

<sup>102</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, *Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at Its Fifth Session*, UNEP/EA.5/25, February 24, 2021, <https://wedocs.unep.org/xmli/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35932/Proceedings%20of%20the%20United%20Nations%20Environment%20Assembly%20at%20its%20fifth%20session.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>103</sup> “Launch of the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE),” United Nations Environment Programme, February 22, 2021, <https://www.unep.org/events/online-event/launch-global-alliance-circular-economy-and-resource-efficiency-gacere>.

<sup>104</sup> “Concept Note for Side-Event at the Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5)” (United Nations Environment Programme, February 22, 2021), [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international\\_issues/pdf/GACERE%20Launch%20at%20UNEA5.1%20\(22%20Feb%202021\)%20-%20Concept%20Note%20rev.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/pdf/GACERE%20Launch%20at%20UNEA5.1%20(22%20Feb%202021)%20-%20Concept%20Note%20rev.pdf).

<sup>105</sup> “African Circular Economy Alliance,” Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://pacecircular.org/african-circular-economy-alliance>; “Latin America and the Caribbean Circular Economy Coalition,” Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://pacecircular.org/latin-america-and-caribbean-circular-economy-coalition>.

Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE), which is now hosted by the World Resources Institute.<sup>106</sup> PACE brings together environmental leaders and organizations and has developed a five-part Circular Economy Action Agenda.<sup>107</sup> The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is another such network, working to promote a circular economy from a business perspective and supporting public-private mechanisms.<sup>108</sup> Finally, the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) is an initiative from Finland and the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra that has occurred annually since 2017. Each year it has brought together thousands of experts and participants to discuss difference elements of the transition to a global circular economy, including April 2021's WCEF+Climate special virtual conference to discuss how to achieve climate neutrality.

### **Case Study**

#### *Japan's Sound Material-Cycle Society*

In May 2000, the Japanese government adopted the Basic Act for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society (Basic Act).<sup>109</sup> This act defines a “sound material-cycle society” as one:

*“in which the consumption of natural resources will be conserved and the environmental load will be reduced to the greatest extent possible, by preventing or reducing the generation of wastes, etc. from products, etc., by promoting proper cyclical use of products, etc. when these products, etc. have become circulative resources, and by ensuring proper disposal of circulative resources not put into cyclical use.”<sup>110</sup>*

In essence, it provides a vision for a circular economy that reduces natural resource consumption and environmental impact.<sup>111</sup> The Basic Act also outlines a five-level priority order by which waste disposal and recycling should be tackled: (1) reduce production, (2), reuse, (3) recycle, (4) thermal recovery, and (5) proper disposal.<sup>112</sup> Crucially, the Basic Act also delineates the responsibilities of the state, local governments, business operators, and citizens to take the necessary measures to promote the cyclical use of products.<sup>113</sup>

In accordance with the Basic Act, Japan's Ministry of the Environment established a Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society (Fundamental Plan).<sup>114</sup> Having undergone several renditions, the Fourth Fundamental Plan, released in 2018, currently outlines Japan's national strategy for waste recycling.<sup>115</sup> It is divided into seven pillars: integrated measures toward a sustainable society, regional circulating and ecological sphere, resource circulation through the entire lifecycle, proper waste management and the restoration of environment, disaster waste management systems, international resource circulation, and sustaining fundamentals for 3Rs and Waste Management.<sup>116</sup> Each of these pillars includes a vision for the sector, indicators and targets, and planned measures to implement their goals.

Of particular interest to this committee is the sixth pillar: “international resource circulation.” In 2008, Japan released a “New Action Plan towards a Global Zero Waste Society.”<sup>117</sup> This plan presents Japan's “leading role in

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<sup>106</sup> “About,” Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://pacecircular.org/about>.

<sup>107</sup> “About.”

<sup>108</sup> “Mission and Vision,” Ellen MacArthur Foundation, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-story/mission>.

<sup>109</sup> Government of Japan, “The Basic Act for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society,” Pub. L. No. 110 (2000), <https://www.env.go.jp/en/laws/recycle/12.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Government of Japan, 1.

<sup>111</sup> Government of Japan, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Government of Japan, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Government of Japan, The Basic Act for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society.

<sup>114</sup> Ministry of the Environment, “The 4th Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society” (Government of Japan, June 19, 2018), [http://www.env.go.jp/en/recycle/smcs/4th-f\\_Plan\\_outline.pdf](http://www.env.go.jp/en/recycle/smcs/4th-f_Plan_outline.pdf).

<sup>115</sup> Ministry of the Environment.

<sup>116</sup> Ministry of the Environment.

<sup>117</sup> “Japan's New Action Plan towards a Global Zero Waste Society” (Government of Japan, May 25, 2008), <http://www.env.go.jp/recycle/3r/en/approach/01.pdf>.

the international promotion of the establishment of sound material-cycle societies.”<sup>118</sup> It outlines goals for the nation, including establishing dialogues with neighboring countries, working with aid agencies and financial institutions to promote country-specific strategies, integrating waste education into cooperation schemes, and sharing information on resource productivity, among others.<sup>119</sup> In its international resource circulation pillar, this is measured by the number of Member States with a shared Memorandum of Cooperation on Environmental Cooperation, which was six as of 2018.<sup>120</sup>

Over the last two decades, Japan has seen relative success in moving towards a more circular society.<sup>121</sup> The Fundamental Plan uses four primary targets to measure overall progress: resource productivity, cyclical use rate of the resource base, cyclical use rate of the waste base, and the final disposal amount.<sup>122</sup> These base statistics are supplemented by more specific indicators for each of the seven pillars.<sup>123</sup> Japan’s resource productivity increased significantly right after the implementation of the Fundamental Plan, but has leveled off in recent years.<sup>124</sup> However, the cyclical use rates of its resource and waste bases continue to increase.<sup>125</sup> From 2000 to 2015, Japan saw an increase of five percent in its cyclical use rate of its resource base, from approximately 10 percent to 16 percent, and an increase of eight percent in its cyclical use rate of its waste base, from approximately 36 percent to 47 percent.<sup>126</sup> In the same span of time, the final amount of waste disposed went from almost 60 million tons to only 14 million tons.<sup>127</sup>

While Japan’s success at moving toward a more-circular economy can serve as a model for Member States around the globe, it is dependent on several unique factors that are important to note. Its high population density and limited landfill space forced the government to find alternatives to landfills as early as 1950.<sup>128</sup> In addition, its status as a major industrial producer with limited domestic metal and mineral resources makes recycled resources more desirable than raw materials.<sup>129</sup> While these distinct factors might lessen the interchangeability of its exact national policies, other aspects of its success are replicable: in 2011, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) established the Japanese Technical Cooperation Project for Promotion of Regional Initiative on Solid Waste Management in Pacific Island Countries (J-PRISM) to provide training, public education, and project development assistance in eleven neighboring countries.<sup>130</sup> Full government support, cooperation between governments and businesses, and citizen buy-in have all been crucial to realizing nation-scale change.<sup>131</sup> Just as important have been specific targets and indicators alongside regular evaluations and subsequent change and development.<sup>132</sup> Japan’s flexibility in responding to internal evaluations with new editions of the Fundamental Plan has allowed the Member State to adapt and improve its operations over the last 20 years.<sup>133</sup>

## **Conclusion**

With over 32.6 billion tonnes of waste produced in 2020, it is crucial that it is managed safely and securely.<sup>134</sup> Recycling as much of this waste material as possible will move the world toward a circular economy, in line with

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<sup>118</sup> “Japan’s New Action Plan towards a Global Zero Waste Society,” 1.

<sup>119</sup> “Japan’s New Action Plan towards a Global Zero Waste Society.”

<sup>120</sup> Ministry of the Environment, “The 4th Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society,” 14.

<sup>121</sup> Ministry of the Environment, “The 4th Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society.”

<sup>122</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>124</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>126</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>127</sup> Ministry of the Environment, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Dustin Benton and Jonny Hazell, “The Circular Economy in Japan,” *The Environmental Scientist*, March 2015, <https://www.the-ies.org/analysis/circular-economy-japan#6>.

<sup>129</sup> Benton and Hazell.

<sup>130</sup> “Utilize Japan’s Experience to Establish a Sound Material-Cycle Society on Pacific Islands,” Japan International Cooperation Agency, March 31, 2015, [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2014/150331\\_02.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2014/150331_02.html).

<sup>131</sup> Benton and Hazell, “The Circular Economy in Japan.”

<sup>132</sup> Government of Japan, The Basic Act for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society.

<sup>133</sup> Government of Japan.

<sup>134</sup> “The Circularity Gap Report 2020.”

the goals of the UN and pursuit of SDG 12.<sup>135</sup> However, the fallout from China's drastic 2017 ban illuminated the many flaws in the current international recycling system.<sup>136</sup> Developed Member States depend on developing Member States to receive much of their waste, but many of those receiving Member States do not have the appropriate infrastructure to manage the volume and quality of imported material.<sup>137</sup> In addition, the international waste trade is poorly regulated, depending on limited scope of the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention's purview was expanded with the 2021 amendments to include plastic waste, but these impacts are yet to be seen. The international recycling trade needs to expand across industrial sectors, moving beyond paper and plastic to creatively give secondary waste products new life in production operations. To facilitate this growth, Member States need to expand international waste regulation and develop new partnerships that prioritize sustainable development, ensure environmental justice, and center the philosophy of a truly circular economy.

### *Committee Directive*

While the pursuit of a complete circular economy is beyond the scope of this conference, this committee will be investigating a crucial first step toward that goal. Delegates should seek to focus their work on the facilitation of transnational waste recycling efforts and the role of UNEA and Member States. What is within the bounds of the UNEA to facilitate these transnational partnerships? How can Member States create and maintain sustainable long-term and large-scale cooperative efforts? Noting that in the case study, Japan's resource productivity leveled off after a few years, how can delegates ensure that circular economy efforts continue to improve beyond initial implementation? For all Member States, what steps can be taken to improve national recycling capabilities? Consider the specific needs of developed versus developing Member States and how they can assist each other without relying on existing colonial patterns. Keeping in mind the theme of this conference, "Fostering Global Youth Empowerment and Leadership," and noting the exacerbating impacts of this issue on climate change, delegates should place future generations at the forefront of sustainability efforts. These questions and comments are only a catalyst for research into this complex and urgent issue, and delegates are expected to bring their own new findings to the table.

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<sup>135</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, September 25, 2015, Liu and Wang, "The Global Issue of Foreign Waste."

<sup>136</sup> Hook and Reed, "Why the World's Recycling System Stopped Working."

<sup>137</sup> Liu and Wang, "The Global Issue of Foreign Waste."

## II. Promoting Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Underrepresented Populations in Environmental Governance

### *Introduction*

The United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) recognizes the importance of including all global citizens, no matter their identities, in all forms of Environmental Governance.<sup>138</sup> This is congruent with the ideals of the United Nations (UN), which enacted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in January 2016.<sup>139</sup> The SDGs were created by the UN to serve as an overarching blueprint for all UN bodies and Member States to follow when creating global partnerships related to ending poverty and inequalities.<sup>140</sup> Of the 17 SDGs created by the UN, Goals Five and Ten are the most pertinent to ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, and underrepresented people. The fifth goal focuses on improving gender equality for women and girls globally.<sup>141</sup> While the UN Entity for Gender Equality (UN Women) reports that there has been an increasing number of women in cabinet-level positions, with the majority of these positions in environmental protection, men still hold more than 79 percent of ministry positions.<sup>142</sup> The tenth SDG centers on reducing inequalities and barriers faced by the world's most vulnerable and disenfranchised citizens.<sup>143</sup> The UNEA recognizes that one of the major barriers for historically marginalized and underrepresented people to become active participants in environmental governance is poverty.<sup>144</sup> As these individuals often face life-threatening circumstances due to financial concerns, many find it difficult to focus on advocating for environmental rights without equitable access to resources.<sup>145</sup> These identities overlap and often exacerbate each other. For example, the disproportionate effects of climate change on underrepresented populations such as indigenous communities can have particularly severe impacts on native women who experience substantial gender inequality.<sup>146</sup>

With more than 1.5 billion youth living around the world, and about 90 percent of these youth living in developing Member States, it is crucial to include youth in the decision-making process for environmental protection in order to face upcoming climate concerns.<sup>147, 148</sup> The UNEP reports that less than nine percent of youth surveyed are confident that the world can work together to address and reverse the results of climate change.<sup>149</sup> This shows that we must work to rally and increase the participation of this group in environmental protection.

### *History*

Environmental Governance (EG), as defined by the Environmental Governance Draft Strategy, is “the process and institutions that guide and restrain the collective action of Governments, organizations, major groups and civil society to address collective environmental issues at all levels, from local to national, sub-regional, regional and

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<sup>138</sup> “What Did UNEA-4 Do for the Environment,” International Institute for Sustainable Development,” <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/what-did-unea-4-do-for-the-environment/> (Accessed July 31, 2021).

<sup>139</sup> “The Sustainable Development Agenda,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> (Accessed June 16, 2021).

<sup>140</sup> “The 17 Goals: History,” United Nations, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>141</sup> “Goal 5,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> (Accessed May 24, 2021).

<sup>142</sup> “Facts and Figures: Women’s Leadership and Political Participation,” UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures> (Accessed April 14, 2021).

<sup>143</sup> “Goal 10,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/> (Accessed June 16, 2021).

<sup>144</sup> “Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs” UN Environment Programme, <https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/poverty-environment-action-sustainable-development> (Accessed June 16, 2021).

<sup>145</sup> “Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs.”

<sup>146</sup> “Environment,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Indigenous Peoples, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/environment.html>.

<sup>147</sup> “Beyond 2030: Youth Taking Charge of the Environment,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth-flash/feature/2018/06/beyond-2030-youth-taking-charge-of-the-environment/> (Accessed April 14, 2021).

<sup>148</sup> “Beyond 2030: Youth Taking Charge of the Environment,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth-flash/feature/2018/06/beyond-2030-youth-taking-charge-of-the-environment/> (Accessed April 14, 2021).

<sup>149</sup> “Youth Stats,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climate-change/> (Accessed August 1, 2021).

global.”<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, International Environmental Governance (IEG) is recognized as “the international environment regime (such as United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) within an international governance system.”<sup>151</sup> The goal of both EG and IEG is “maintaining or improving the ability of environmental systems to function and to produce ecosystem services through the persistence of species, habitats and biodiversity.”<sup>152</sup> Historically, the key actors in EG have ranged from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to businesses and communities as a whole.<sup>153</sup> This is because “governance” is not the same as “government,” and “good governance” occurs when those at the local level can have their thoughts and opinions represented.<sup>154</sup> One example of IEG in which many regional Member States participate are Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).<sup>155</sup> The UN Convention to Combat Desertification defines an MEA as an agreement between three or more nations that was made to achieve an environmental goal that benefits all actors.<sup>156</sup> With almost all MEAs, an international body such as the UNEA or European Union (EU) oversees and moderates these agreements to validate their legality.<sup>157</sup>

EG and IEG have brought about varying degrees of both local and global research on resource scarcity, resource conflicts, access and allocation of resources, forest conservation, freshwater conservation, marine conservation, and the conservation of atmospheric systems.<sup>158</sup> According to a 2018 analysis on EG by the Society for Conservation Biology, contributors concluded that EG was a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of conservation efforts and environmental management.<sup>159</sup> When thinking of the environmental issues EG focuses on, researchers are also able to identify ever-changing environmental factors that disproportionately impact underrepresented populations, such as minorities and indigenous people.<sup>160</sup> Frequently, these populations live in regions that are prone to environmental disasters such as hurricanes.<sup>161</sup> These communities are more often have resource-dependent livelihoods and homelands in marginal environments.<sup>162</sup> Yet, governments routinely fail to enact policy aimed at protecting them from environmental concerns.<sup>163</sup> The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs reports that developing

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<sup>150</sup> Ghanimé, Linda et al., “Evaluation of the UNEP Environmental Governance Subprogramme,” United Nations Environment Programme, September 2013, [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/346/Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_UNEP\\_Programme\\_on\\_Environmental\\_Governance.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/346/Evaluation_of_the_UNEP_Programme_on_Environmental_Governance.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>151</sup> “Funds, Programmes, Specialized Agencies and Others,” United Nations Environment Programme, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html> (Accessed August 1, 2021)

<sup>152</sup> Bennett, Nathan J. and Terre Satterfield, “Environmental Governance: A Practical Framework to Guide Design, Evaluation, and Analysis,” *Conservation Letters* 11, no. 6 (July 24, 2018), [https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12600#:~:text=1%20Effective%20environmental%20governance.biodiversity%20\(see%20Figure%201\)](https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12600#:~:text=1%20Effective%20environmental%20governance.biodiversity%20(see%20Figure%201)) (Accessed June 17, 2021).

<sup>153</sup> “Annual Review of Environment,” The Annual Review, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.energy.31.042605.135621> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>154</sup> “Environmental Governance,” <https://www.scribd.com/document/493616450/environmental-governance> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>155</sup> “Multilateral Environmental Agreements,” United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, <https://knowledge.unccd.int/lib-unccd-terminology-and-glossary/lib-unccd-terminology-and-glossary-142> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>156</sup> “Multilateral Environmental Agreements,” United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, <https://knowledge.unccd.int/lib-unccd-terminology-and-glossary/lib-unccd-terminology-and-glossary-142> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>157</sup> “International Issues,” European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international\\_issues/agreements\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/agreements_en.htm) (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>158</sup> Bennett, Nathan J. and Terre Satterfield, “Environmental Governance: A Practical Framework to Guide Design, Evaluation, and Analysis.”

<sup>159</sup> Armitage, Derek, Rob de Loë, and Ryan Plummer, “Environmental Governance and its Implications for Conservation Practice,” *Conservation Letters* 5, no. 4 (April 2, 2012): 245-255, <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1755-263X.2012.00238.x> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>160</sup> “How Minorities Are Disproportionately Affected by Climate Change, and What We Can Do to Help,” The Sierra Club, <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/napa/blog/2020/11/how-minorities-are-disproportionately-affected-climate-change-and-what-we> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>161</sup> “How Minorities Are Disproportionately Affected by Climate Change, and What We Can Do to Help.”

<sup>162</sup> D.J. Nakashima et al., *Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216613.locale=en>.

<sup>163</sup> “How Minorities Are Disproportionately Affected by Climate Change, and What We Can Do to Help.”

Member States hold 92 of the 100 most vulnerable cities for natural disasters, and suffer the most financially from natural disasters and other environmentally-charged catastrophes due to lack of insurance on infrastructure.<sup>164</sup>

EG by underrepresented communities is just as important as IEG concerning these communities, because “the legitimacy of international policies and decision-making depends on local experiences and local perceptions.”<sup>165</sup> Local community input and support is crucial for developing and implementing plans that are tailored to specific conditions and community members can more accurately and effectively balance the social, economic, and environmental contexts.<sup>166</sup> Local organizations and institutions are more knowledgeable than national governments about the needs of their communities and are able to engage in more flexible and fine-tuned decision-making.<sup>167</sup> This bottoms-up approach to governance is particularly crucial in the environmental sector, where indigenous communities maintain traditional ecological knowledge in addition to attentiveness to environmental variability at an extremely fine spatial scale and temporal depth that is crucial for responding to climate change.<sup>168</sup> In 2007, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) first acknowledged indigenous knowledge as an invaluable basis for developing adaptation and natural resource management strategies.<sup>169</sup> The 2014 Fifth Assessment Report further underlined the importance of utilizing multiple forms of knowledge and existing adaptation practices to both increase the effectiveness of adaptation and ensure that policy practices are ethical and sustainable.<sup>170</sup> While respect for the importance of indigenous knowledge is now close to universal, a 2020 review noted that many projects in place take an extractive approach to knowledge generation that falls into familiar colonial frameworks.<sup>171</sup> Modern indigenous-led proposals for environmental governance projects, such as a 2021 report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, instead call for recognition of collective territorial rights, compensation for environmental services that are already being provided, community management, revitalization of ancestral knowledge, and the strengthening of grassroots organizations and territorial governance.<sup>172</sup>

In an attempt to bring forth political inclusion to underrepresented communities, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has helped the unrepresented, particularly women, to “identify locally-driven and science-based solutions, and facilitate the development of equitable, gender-sensitive, accessible, and just solutions for the environment.”<sup>173</sup> A tangible example is NDI’s previous work in Nepal where annual flooding was devastating local village communities.<sup>174</sup> The NDI was able to push a parliamentary representative to mandate legislation that would protect against deforestation, which was identified as a primary contributing factor to the flooding.<sup>175</sup> The NDI was only able to achieve this level of success because of their work within the underrepresented communities directly impacted by the flooding.<sup>176</sup> The NDI is one of the oldest NGOs to encourage underrepresented citizens to become more active in their local and state governments, while also working with over 150 different Member States to advise them on how to become more accountable and open with their processes.<sup>177</sup> Another recent way in which the NDI has upheld the vision of the UNEA is in Mali. Once the government of the Member State decentralized government power to the local level, this created a vacuum of regulation for environmental protection, which gave the NDI the opportunity to assist local Nepali people and leaders to advocate for inclusion into the decision making

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<sup>164</sup> Gu, Danan, “Exposure and Vulnerability to Natural Disasters for World’s Cities,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, December 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/technical/TP2019-4.pdf> (Accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>165</sup> Kirsty Galloway McLean, “Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Global Climate Governance,” *Our World*, May 12, 2012, 8/1/2021, <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/engaging-indigenous-peoples-in-global-climate-governance>.

<sup>166</sup> McLean.

<sup>167</sup> McLean.

<sup>168</sup> Nakashima et al., *Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation*.

<sup>169</sup> Nakashima et al.

<sup>170</sup> Jan Petzold et al., “Indigenous Knowledge on Climate Change Adaptation: A Global Evidence Map of Academic Literature,” *Environmental Research Letters* 15 (November 5, 2020): 113007, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abb330>.

<sup>171</sup> Petzold et al.

<sup>172</sup> Santiago, “Forest Governance by Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. An Opportunity for Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean.” (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2953en>.

<sup>173</sup> “Environmental Governance and Resilience,” National Democratic Institute, <https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/environmental-governance-and-resilience> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>174</sup> “Environmental Governance and Resilience.”

<sup>175</sup> “Environmental Governance and Resilience.”

<sup>176</sup> “Environmental Governance and Resilience.”

<sup>177</sup> “About NDI” National Democratic Institute, <https://www.ndi.org/about-ndi> (Accessed June 24, 2021).

of how to protect the government.<sup>178</sup> The NDI then provided assistance to local leaders and community activists to educate them on the issues occurring and how all involved could work towards a solution. The NDI also created a public education campaign for citizens to view and share the information with others.<sup>179</sup>

Since 2005, the UNEA has been part of the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI). The PEI is a coalition between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP that was formed to research the link between poverty and climate concerns and works with developing Member States on how to properly incorporate all citizens into the decision making around proper environmental governance.<sup>180</sup> The PEI tasks itself with providing guidance to Member States that have a significant number of poor citizens on how to implement poverty-environment linked initiatives into their daily governance.<sup>181</sup> The PEI also works globally with financial banks on how to create investments that benefit environmental projects that are centered on making more people financially independent.<sup>182</sup> One of the current ways the PEI is doing this is by working with major cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin to explore how the digital currency exchange market can become more accessible to the world's poorest as compared to traditional methods.<sup>183</sup> Another benefit of the PEI is that the organization works with local groups and NGOs that may not be recognized by the head state government where they are located.<sup>184</sup> One of the current major projects of the PEI is the 4-year Poverty Environment Action Plan (PEAP). The PEAP is a joint project between the UNEP and the UNDP to reevaluate the SDGs concerning their language on the environment and examine how they can be modified to ensure even more historically excluded people are written into the goals.<sup>185</sup> This program, funded by the EU, Austrian Development Agency, Norway, and Sweden, will also work at mainstreaming the process for developing Member States to receive ethical investments focused on the eradication of poverty. The current Member States being supported by this plan are Rwanda, Mauritania, Malawi, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Laos, Myanmar, and Nepal.<sup>186</sup>

### *Actions Taken by the United Nations*

One of the more recent actions the UNEA has taken to promote equality within environmental participation was the passage of UNEP/EA.4/Res.17, entitled "Promote gender equality, and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance."<sup>187</sup> The call for this resolution to be passed was due to an increasing amount of UN bodies and coalitions writing gender equality into their guiding documents and meeting the standards of others on the topic.<sup>188</sup> This resolution works to recognize the importance of businesses providing equitable finances to women and youth in relation to renewable energy and sustainable agriculture.<sup>189</sup> The resolution also calls for Member States to provide accurate and updated metrics on how they are increasing the amount of women in governance related to the environment so that they can appropriately set goals and determine where future projects need to be focused.<sup>190</sup> It also calls for the revision of the Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and the Environment 2014–2017 that was passed more than 8 years prior.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> "Environmental Governance: Local Efforts Yield Important Results," National Democratic Institute, April 16, 2021, <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/environmental-governance-local-efforts-yield-important-results>.

<sup>179</sup> "Environmental Governance: Local Efforts Yield Important Results."

<sup>180</sup> "About the Poverty-Environment Initiative," UNDP-UN Environment Poverty-Environment Initiative, <https://www.unpei.org/about-the-poverty-environment-initiative/> (Accessed June 19, 2021).

<sup>181</sup> "About the Poverty-Environment Initiative."

<sup>182</sup> "About the Poverty-Environment Initiative."

<sup>183</sup> "About the Poverty-Environment Initiative."

<sup>184</sup> "About the Poverty-Environment Initiative."

<sup>185</sup> "Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming," Nairobi Global Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification, United Nations Development Programme, [www1.undp.org/content/nairobi-gc-red/en/home/poverty-environment-action-for-the-sdgs.html](http://www1.undp.org/content/nairobi-gc-red/en/home/poverty-environment-action-for-the-sdgs.html) (Accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>186</sup> "Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming."

<sup>187</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, Resolution 5, *Addressing Environmental Challenges through Sustainable Business Practices*, UNEP/EA.4/L.5, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28500/English.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>188</sup> UNEP/EA.4/L.17.

<sup>189</sup> UNEP/EA.4/L.17.

<sup>190</sup> UNEP/EA.4/L.17.

<sup>191</sup> "NBSAP Knowledge Base," National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, <https://nbsapforum.net/knowledge-base/resource/policy-and-strategy-gender-equality-and-environment-2014-2017> (Accessed August 1, 2021).



The UN has also taken steps to promote the voices of indigenous and native peoples at all levels of environmental governance. In 1982, the UN established the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) as a subsidiary organ to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and today the UN system includes the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>192</sup> These bodies have relatively succeeded in advocating for indigenous rights with the culmination of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>193</sup> This document provides a crucial framework for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in environmental governance, by “recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment,” and delineating in Article 29 that “indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources [and] States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.”<sup>194</sup> More broadly, it also establishes the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making (Article 18), and mandates that Member States take all appropriate measures to cooperate with indigenous peoples in making decisions pertaining to their lands, territories, and resources (Articles 19 and 27).<sup>195</sup>

Almost every UN agency or body now includes statements, action plans, or task forces on protecting indigenous rights in their sectors and increasing the inclusion of native peoples in governance.<sup>196</sup> However, even the United Nations notes that this increased recognition of indigenous peoples’ environmental rights at the international level has not translated well to concrete advances at national and local levels.<sup>197</sup> In 2012, UNEP established a Policy Guidance that supports staff in understanding the links between indigenous peoples and the environment.<sup>198</sup> The UNEP is also continuing to expand its “Community Protocols for Environmental Sustainability,” a broad range of policy guidelines that are developed by indigenous and local communities in relation to their territories.<sup>199</sup> Indigenous participation in UNEP decision-making occurs through the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, with additional representation within the UNEP’s Major Groups Facilitating Committee.<sup>200</sup>

### ***Current Situation***

The current COVID-19 pandemic has caused more people to become aware of the inequalities and lack of access to EG for marginalized groups. For example, a recent study from the United States (US) of America’s Harvard University reported that lower-income citizens experience a higher exposure rate of fine air pollution, referred to as PM2.5.<sup>201</sup> COVID-19 exacerbated this by heightening respiratory issues in these communities, leading to impoverished people facing more COVID related hospitalizations, and an eight percent rise in deaths as compared to before the pandemic.<sup>202</sup> When asked in this same article why the head researcher believed that this was the case, Environmental Scientist Dr. Saboby Wilson states that he sees a lack of political participation linked to pollution

<sup>192</sup> “Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Indigenous Peoples, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>; “Indigenous Peoples,” The World Bank, March 19, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.

<sup>193</sup> “Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations.”

<sup>194</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, A/RES/61/295, September 13, 2007, [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).

<sup>195</sup> A/RES/61/295.

<sup>196</sup> Dwayne Mamo, ed., *The Indigenous World 2021*, 35th ed. (Copenhagen, Denmark: The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), n.d.), <https://iwgia.org/doclink/iwgia-book-the-indigenous-world-2021-eng/eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJpd2dpYS1ib29rLXRoZS1pbmRpZ2Vub3VzLXdvcmxkLTIwMjEtZW5nIiwiaWF0IjoxNjE4OTE0NDcyLCJleHAiOiJlMjE2MTkwMDA4NzJ9.16jl03Uv-9UUBvfvf4xV5yXkXCPI46vbfKaGwv>.

<sup>197</sup> “Environment.”

<sup>198</sup> “Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities,” United Nations Environment Programme, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/major-groups-modalities/major-group-categories/indigenous-peoples-and>.

<sup>199</sup> “Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities.”

<sup>200</sup> “Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities.”

<sup>201</sup> Bagley, Katherine, “COVID-19 Worsens the Role Environmental Injustice Plays in Marginalized Communities,” Public Broadcast Service, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/covid-19-worsens-the-role-environmental-injustice-already-plays-in-marginalized-communities>, May 12, 2020 (Accessed June 19, 2021).

<sup>202</sup> Bagley, Katherine, “COVID-19 Worsens the Role Environmental Injustice Plays in Marginalized Communities.”

facing poorer communities at higher rates. Wilson also states: “So this NIMBY-ism, ‘Not in My Backyard,’ can stop an incinerator, stop a landfill, stop a highway from being built in those neighborhoods. Whereas, a lower-wealth community of color, because they don’t have the economic capital which drives their political capital, they don’t have the capacity to prevent the siting of those types of things in their community.”<sup>203</sup>

While COVID-19 caused environmental governance to worsen in some aspects, it has caused the topic to move in a positive direction in regard to accessibility.<sup>204</sup> The UNEP writes that the global pandemic caused an unprecedented acceleration in EG agencies and bodies looking into how to include the voices of historically marginalized groups.<sup>205</sup> Many state governments have had their budgets impacted by the pandemic, leading to fewer funds available to be invested into social programs and environmental concerns.<sup>206</sup> COVID-19 also affected the global community’s poorest by causing many of these people to lose their vocational income when companies closed their businesses to prevent the spread of the virus.<sup>207</sup> Since many did not have any form of a financial safety net, this caused a significant amount of impoverished people to fall deeper into poverty.<sup>208</sup> With more and more of the world’s poorest citizens losing their income, they can become unable to focus on how to improve their environment due to all of their energy being invested in meeting basic needs.<sup>209</sup> The UNEA and other organizations are working on this is strengthened inclusion of digital integration. From telecommuting, to creating a e-learning platform for the different MEAs sponsored by the UNEP.<sup>210</sup>

Another way that the UNEA and UNEP work to encourage EG between developing and developed Member States is through the implementation of MEAs. As stated previously, the UN, especially the UNEP, serves as the main negotiator and arbitrator of MEAs due to the international body’s neutrality.<sup>211</sup> As the main body overseeing global environmental concerns, the UNEP provides administration to 15 MEAs around the world.<sup>212</sup> Of all the MEAs in action, the most prominent one with the most members is the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). The MAP is a MEA of regional parties formed to protect the marine health of the Mediterranean Sea and other bodies of water in the area.<sup>213</sup> The official vision of the convention is to promote “a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.”<sup>214</sup> The MAP currently has 22 contracting parties signed onto the plan, ranging from Cyprus to the EU.<sup>215</sup>

To address and increase the inclusion of indigenous people in climate action, the 2016 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) initiated the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP).<sup>216</sup> The LCIPP has three primary functions in order to strengthen local and indigenous responses to climate change: promote the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices while prioritizing the protection and preservation of traditional knowledge; build the capacity of indigenous peoples to enable their engagement in the UNFCCC process and stakeholder community; and design and implement climate change policies and actions that integrate diverse knowledge systems, promotes the rights of local communities, and

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<sup>203</sup> Bagley, Katherine, “COVID-19 Worsens the Role Environmental Injustice Plays in Marginalized Communities.”

<sup>204</sup> “Environmental Democracy in Times of COVID-19,” United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, <https://unece.org/general-unece/news/environmental-democracy-times-covid-19>, June 5, 2020 (Accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>205</sup> “Modernising Global Environmental Governance,” United Nations Environment Programme, <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/covid-19/modernising-global-environmental-governance> (Accessed June 19, 2021).

<sup>206</sup> “Environmental Democracy in Times of COVID-19.”

<sup>207</sup> “Environmental Democracy in Times of COVID-19”

<sup>208</sup> “Modernising Global Environmental Governance.”

<sup>209</sup> Paul, Delia, “Merging the Poverty and Environment Agendas,” International Institute for Sustainable Development, February 12, 2021, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/merging-poverty-and-environment-agendas> (Accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>210</sup> “Still Only One Earth.”

<sup>211</sup> “Secretariats and Conventions,” United Nations Environment Programme, <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/why-does-un-environment-matter/secretariats-and-conventions> (Accessed June 19, 2021).

<sup>212</sup> “Secretariats and Conventions.”

<sup>213</sup> “Who We Are,” UN Environment, <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/who-we-are> (Accessed June 19, 2021).

<sup>214</sup> “Who We Are.”

<sup>215</sup> “Who We Are.”

<sup>216</sup> “Chronology - Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP),” United Nations Climate Change, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://unfccc.int/topics/local-communities-and-indigenous-peoples-platform/the-big-picture/introduction-to-lcipp/chronology-local-communities-and-indigenous-peoples-platform-lcipp#eq-6>.

facilitates increasingly ambitious climate action.<sup>217</sup> While this is the most ambitious UN plan yet concerning inclusion in environmental governance, it has also been criticized for failing to recognize the roles that unequal power relations and colonialism play in marginalizing indigenous peoples, in addition to the institutional and structural barriers to integration.<sup>218</sup>

## Case Study

### Rwanda

One Member State that has worked to increase women in government leadership, especially when it comes to the environment, is Rwanda. To first discuss how Rwanda has become a leader in the sector, one must address the series of events that changed the national involvement of women in all forms of government and governance. The Rwandan Genocide was a statewide conflict that occurred between the Hutu militia groups and the Rwandan Armed Forces that lasted a little over 3 months in 1994.<sup>219</sup> Gross human rights violations led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and Hutu people.<sup>220</sup> The majority of those who died in the conflict were men, leaving the country's population at nearly 70 percent women as an effect of the genocide.<sup>221</sup>

Leaders in the Rwandan Government noticed and recognized the crucial need for women to be involved in the rebuilding of the economy and infrastructure.<sup>222</sup> When the Rwandan government established a new constitution in 2003, they subsequently became one of only a few Member States that have included language stating that gender equality was a basic human right, by stating in the Preamble that they are "COMMITTED to building a State governed by the rule of law, based on the respect for human rights, freedom and on the principle of equality of all Rwandans before the law as well as equality between men and women."<sup>223</sup> The constitution also includes a mandate that 30 percent of all government positions must be filled by women.<sup>224</sup> As of 2017, UN Women ranks the Rwandan Parliament alongside Bolivia as the only Member States that have as many women in their government as men.<sup>225</sup> This has led to the creation of many programs such as Women for Women International, which has helped more than 75,000 women in Rwanda become more self-sufficient and economic leaders.<sup>226</sup>

When it comes to environmental governance, women have been at the forefront of this cause as well. Both heads of the Ministry of Lands and Forestry and the Ministry of Environment are women. Currently Dr. Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya serves as the Minister of Environment for the state where she is tasked with overseeing the department responsible with safeguarding green innovation and climate protection initiatives.<sup>227</sup> Dr. Mujawamariya is a native Rwandan who has served multiple roles in the federal government, ranging from Minister of Education to

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<sup>217</sup> "Functions of the LCIPP," United Nations Climate Change: Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform Web Portal, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://lcipp.unfccc.int/about-lcipp/functions-lcipp>.

<sup>218</sup> Zoha Shawoo and Thomas F. Thornton, "The UN Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform: A Traditional Ecological Knowledge-Based Evaluation," *WIREs Climate Change* 10, no. 3 (May 1, 2019): e575, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.575>.

<sup>219</sup> "Outreach Programme on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the United Nations," United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/historical-background.shtml> (Accessed April 14, 2021).

<sup>220</sup> "Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice: Creating Conditions for Peace, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law." *Dealing With the Past Series*, Swiss Confederation Political Affairs Division IV, Federal Departement of Foreign Affairs FDFA, 2006, [http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Media/Publications/Journals\\_Articles/Publications\\_by\\_staff/Sisson\\_Jona\\_than\\_Dealing\\_with\\_the\\_Past\\_and\\_Transitional\\_Justice.pdf](http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/Journals_Articles/Publications_by_staff/Sisson_Jona_than_Dealing_with_the_Past_and_Transitional_Justice.pdf).

<sup>221</sup> "Gender Equality," ONE UN Rwanda, <http://www.rw.one.un.org/mdg/mdg3> (Accessed April 14, 2021).

<sup>222</sup> "Gender Equality."

<sup>223</sup> "Rwanda's Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015," Constitute Project, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda\\_2015.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.pdf?lang=en) (Accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>224</sup> "Rwanda's Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015."

<sup>225</sup> "Revisiting Rwanda five years after record-breaking parliamentary elections," UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/feature-rwanda-women-in-parliament> (Accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>226</sup> "Gender Equality."

<sup>227</sup> "About Ministry," Rwanda Ministry of Environment, <https://www.environment.gov.rw/about> (Accessed June 23, 2021).

the Ambassador to Russia.<sup>228</sup> In November 2019, Mujawamariya was appointed into her current role. Alongside serving in this role, Dr. Mujawamariya also heads the nation's Gender and Women in Development Commission, where she recruits and mentors women for leadership positions ranging from local offices to cabinet-level positions.<sup>229</sup> In 2011, Rwanda released the "Green Growth and Climate Resilience National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development initiative" to prepare the nation to address climate change and its effects. One of the five pillars of the plan revolves around educating women and rural citizens on climate resistant, low carbon farming.<sup>230</sup> One of the ways the Rwanda ensures this is by involving its Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion as an active partner.<sup>231</sup> In the plan, the pillar of gender equality begins by affirming that, "neither impacts of, nor responses to, climate change are gender-neutral. Gender matters at all levels and scales and in all sectors."<sup>232</sup>

A more recent way that Rwandan women and youth have led in EG is with the creation of the country's first green village, Rubaya. The Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) and the PEI partnered together to work with the mostly-female leaders of Rubaya to stop soil erosion and deforestation in the village.<sup>233</sup> The mission of REMA is to "promote and ensure the protection of the environment and sustainable management of natural resources through decentralized structures of governance and seek national position to emerging global issues with a view to enhancing the well-being of the Rwandan people."<sup>234</sup> One of the ways that this special project is unique is that it purposely worked with women and youth to enable the village people to become self-sustainable and empower them to advocate to the nation's government leaders.<sup>235</sup> While REMA and PEI have had some successes, one area where this program can improve is its connections to regional and international NGOs. One way that NGOs can support these taskforces is providing them with more access to international data and mentorship on how to enforce environmental justice.<sup>236</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite the fact women, youth, and other historically marginalized and subjugated groups experience the worst consequences from the effects of climate change and poor environmental management, there is a disproportional lack of representation and inclusion in EG. While there have been some strides made to increase equity in the decision-making processes in a couple of Member States, there is much room to develop as a global community. While overlapping identities can increase the complexity of these issues, these also offer opportunities for conjoined progress: including gender equality in climate change policies and responses has been shown to contribute to enhanced resilience and adaptive capacity.<sup>237</sup> Many people and governance bodies tend to ignore these issues because they do not see themselves affected by them, but without cooperation from all global citizens, these devastating environmental concerns will continue to worsen and affect more people. One area that seems to have inadequate research and focus is how native and indigenous groups have been drastically affected by being not included in the Environmental Governance process in many Member States.

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<sup>228</sup> "Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya," Rwanda Ministry of Environment, <https://www.environment.gov.rw/index.php?id=12> (Accessed June 23, 2021).

<sup>229</sup> "Gender Equality Strategy: UNDP Rwanda," United Nations Rwanda, <file:///C:/Users/dcwoods2/Downloads/Gender%20Equality%20Strategy.pdf> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>230</sup> "Green Growth and Climate Resilience," Republic of Rwanda, <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/policy-database/RWANDA%29%20Green%20Growth%20and%20Climate%20Resilience%20-%20National%20Strategy%20for%20Climate%20Change%20and%20Low%20Carbon%20Development.pdf> (Accessed June 24, 2021).

<sup>231</sup> "Green Growth and Climate Resilience," Republic of Rwanda.

<sup>232</sup> "Green Growth and Climate Resilience," Republic of Rwanda.

<sup>233</sup> "Women Take the Lead in Rwanda's First 'Green Village,'" United Nations Environment Programme, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/women-take-lead-rwandas-first-green-village> (Accessed June 18, 2021).

<sup>234</sup> "Mission, Vision, and Functions," Republic of Rwanda, <https://www.rema.gov.rw/index.php?id=10> (Accessed August 1, 2021)

<sup>235</sup> "Women Take the Lead in Rwanda's First 'Green Village.'"

<sup>236</sup> "Rwanda Environment and Climate Change Analysis," Swedish Environment Help Desk, [https://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/digitalAssets/1748/1748556\\_environment-and-climate-change-analysis-rwanda-2019-06-05.pdf](https://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/digitalAssets/1748/1748556_environment-and-climate-change-analysis-rwanda-2019-06-05.pdf) (Accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>237</sup> Nakashima et al., *Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation*, 8.

### *Committee Directive*

Delegates should begin their research with a deep dive into how their own Member State has worked to include marginalized people into their environmental governance. If delegates find national efforts, what are some successful programs and plans previously implemented that could work for other Member States, and what were their successes and failures? If delegates do not find any programs in place, where are some areas in that could use more inclusionary work, and are there national programs for inclusion in governance outside of the environmental sector? When discovering existing inequities and plans to address them, research how these intersect with other Member States so that delegates can come prepared with plans on how to work with each other on this topic. Delegates should also look at and analyze current systems in place that systemically keep marginalized groups out of EG, and the ways these systems can be addressed and changed. Are delegates' Member States currently or previously involved with any MEAs in place, and do they work with both developed and developing Member States?

## Annotated Bibliography:

### **Topic I: Establishing Sustainable Circular Economies Through the Development of Waste Recycling Partnerships**

Baillet, H el ene, Isaline Bergamaschi, and Ruggero Iori. "Division of Labor and Partnerships in Transnational Social Movements: Observations of North-South and South-South Interactions at the World Social Forum." In *Observing Protest from a Place: The World Social Forum in Dakar (2011)*, edited by Sim eant Johanna, Pommerolle Marie-Emmanuelle, and Sommier Isabelle, 115-36. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16vj27n.9>.

This article specifically focuses on combating inequalities in transnational partnerships. North-South partnerships can be uneven and promote disparities between partners that prevent the arrangement from being mutually beneficial. To level the playing field, the authors suggest making clear agreements before and during active partnerships that ensure both sides know what they are getting, and ensure they are not being taken advantage of. They also explore South-South partnerships that may have more participation and be more successful for both participants. Finally, they delve into the potential disparities that exist within seemingly more equitable South-South partnerships.

Jereme, I.A., Alam, Md. Mahmudul Alam, and Chamhuri Siwar. "Waste Recycling in Malaysia: Transition from Developing to Developed Country." *Indian Journal of Education and Information Management* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1-14. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2942721](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2942721).

The article provides an example of how developing Member States can use recycling to build their economies. Waste management and sustainability are important to governments and Member States that are currently developing, but many have a hard time keeping up with the demand of waste collection. This document outlines how the Malaysian government tackled this issue while also explaining the flaws in some Asian Member States' policies on waste management and collection. It also provides an outline on different waste recovery and storage systems and how governments can use these as viable sources of income.

Pattberg, Philipp, and Oscar Widerberg. "Transnational Multistakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Conditions for Success." *Ambio* 45, no. 1 (2016): 42-51. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/45134568.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Ad68b6d544a5e96dbed5b516003d08e12](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/45134568.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Ad68b6d544a5e96dbed5b516003d08e12).

The document directly outlines the components needed to successfully produce partnerships in sustainable development. It specifically mentions nine points that all entities seeking to build such partnerships—from Member States to non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—should consider, including actors, leadership, and funding. It also discusses how to navigate meta governance and large-scale problem solving. Further research is needed on the subject, but delegates should find it useful in tackling the myriad issues that can arise when creating, sustaining, and enhancing transnational partnerships.

Sch aferhoff, Marco, Sabine Campe, and Christopher Kaan. "Transnational Public-Private Partnerships in International Relations: Making Sense of Concepts, Research Frameworks, and Results." *International Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (2009): 451-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40389138>.

The research suggests that using public-private relationships can be helpful in some areas but may not work for all companies looking to invest or the Member States in which they seek to conduct business. Hybrid forms like this produce economies that are not government or monopoly-controlled, but rather more symbiotic and incentivize practices that are helpful to society and the government. When important needs of corporations and the government overlap, these partnerships can develop organically. This raises concerns about entities with personal interests hurting the validity of the partnership because they allow private groups to influence policy decisions. However, if given proper oversight these partnerships be critical to promoting wealth in developing Member States while also providing the government with valuable business insights.

Fan, Van Yee, Chew Tin Lee, Jeng Shiun Lim, Jiří Jaromír Klemeš, and Phung Thi Kim Le. "Cross-disciplinary approaches towards smart, resilient and sustainable circular economy." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 232 (September 2019): 1482-1491. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652619318025>.

This article discusses circular economies that develop through sustainable themes, such as minimizing pollution through recycling. Circular economies tend to focus on environmental and sustainability issues because the former is a big part of a Member State's economy and the latter can be used to make a more stable, balanced, equitable economy. It also speaks on important aspects of this topic such as water demand and waste generation measurements by region/Member State. Lastly, the article discusses green policy and pollution minimization at the subnational level in Member States, prominently featuring sustainability measurements taken by municipalities in Japan.

## **Topic II: Promoting Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Underrepresented Populations in Environmental Governance**

Benkenstein, Alex, Romy Chevallier, Desirée Kosciulek, Ditebogo Lebea, and Kiara Worth. "Youth climate action and the role of government." In *Youth Climate Advocacy*, 42-63. South African Institute of International Affairs, 2020. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29503.9.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aa786d98bd1464a0023ce7b31f309a5e5](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29503.9.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aa786d98bd1464a0023ce7b31f309a5e5).

Most Member States, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) consider children and youth as high-risk populations. This report from the South African Institute of International Affairs focuses on techniques to educate children about and involve them in climate action and environmental governance. It also discusses how Member States can include more disenfranchised groups like lower-income individuals and minorities in decision making with higher-class citizens. Although it only focuses on African Member States, the best practices it lays out can be tailored and implemented around the world to help youth and traditionally marginalized groups become more educated and involved in the governing decisions that directly affect their present and future well-being.

Bernhardt, Anna Caroline, Rika Yorozu, and Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo. "Literacy and Life Skills Education for Vulnerable Youth: What Policy Makers Can Do." *International Review of Education* 60, no. 2 (2014): 279-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24636727>.

This article discusses youth education and skills training with a particular focus on Member States in which the youth literacy rate is lower than normal. It explores policies that are already in place to combat said disparities in knowledge, and extracts from them best practices that can help policymakers around the world better tackle the issue. One of the more innovative concrete measures they recommend is directly involving *financial*, as well as and government systems, in educating children, as well as involving minors in programming and policy making. It also discusses why focusing on youth education is important as a method for building an information-age society that can resist the many and varied forms of disinformation that assail all demographic groups and degrade national social fabrics. It also breaks down the differences between urban, rural and conflict/post-conflict youth, and the specific needs educational needs of these populations.

Bennett, Nathan J., and Terre Satterfield. "Environmental governance: a practical framework to guide design, evaluation, and analysis." *Conservation Letters* 11, no. 6 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12600>.

To properly discuss and craft solutions to the challenge of underrepresented groups in environmental governance, delegates must be equipped with a sound understanding of what environmental governance is and what it entails. Bennett and Satterfield provide just such a resource in this paper, breaking down the concept of environmental governance into its objectives, attributes, characteristics, outputs, and outcomes, and then further separating out the components of each of these categories. In addition to providing a comprehensive understanding of environmental governance, delegates may also find that this resource

usefully situates the inclusion of underrepresented populations as a key component of sound environmental governance and provides a framework for discussing it in committee.

Mukherjee, Ranjeeta. "Eco-feminism: Role of Women in Environmental Governance and Management." *Galgotias Journal of Legal Studies* 1, no. 2 (2013). <https://www.galgotiasuniversity.edu.in/pdfs/Eco-feminism-Role-Women-Environmental-Governance-Management.pdf>.

Ranjeeta explains how women have been an important part in humankind's relationship with nature for millennia and should lead the current charge in environmental governance. It defines Eco-Feminism as the linking category that encompasses both the political ideology of feminism while also supporting ecosystem rights and sustainability. This article provides a connection between women's issues and sustainability that underscores the vitality of their inclusion in environmental governance, despite their historical underrepresentation in and marginalization from the process.

Wong, Sam. "Climate Change and Sustainable Technology: Re-linking Poverty, Gender, and Governance." *Gender and Development* 17, no. 1 (2009): 95-108. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27809209>.

The article discusses whether gender should be related to concepts like environmental protection. It also discusses the impacts technology can have on society and the environment, and its concomitant importance to societal and environmental governance. Wong delves into the major pros and cons of the debate, such as whether making sustainability a gendered issue promotes gender equality or further divides people into groups that are aligned against one another. The article also outlines what is needed to promote more women in state structures as well as what can be done to help them. More controversially, he also exposes readers to contrary viewpoints which highlight issues that could possibly arise from involving more women in governance.