



UNEP

United Nations Environment Programme



Committee: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Topic: Issues with Plastic Alternatives

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Welcome to SPISMUN25! We are absolutely thrilled to have you join us in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Committee. Together, we will tackle important global challenges and work toward meaningful solutions.

The team of Chairs for this conference are Pedro Garcia, your Secretary, Andres Parada, your Moderator, and I, María Fernanda Mora, your Director. We hope you have an amazing experience and bring valuable contributions toward reaching a resolution. Remember to enjoy the process and learn as much as you can.

We expect you to give your best in making the debate engaging, and we hope the experience is both enjoyable and educational.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to:

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Sincerely,

Maria Fernanda Mora

I. Committee Background

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is the organization that primarily focuses on the environment. It began in 1972 following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. This was created in order to be able to monitor the state of the environment and to unify criteria on environmental difficulties in order to face them. Its mission is to inspire, inform, and enable nations and people to improve their quality of life, making sure the future generations don't get affected.

The main objective of UNEP is to solve the three major environmental problems, which are climate change, the loss of nature and biodiversity and pollution. This organization works with governments, civil society, the private sector and other United Nations corporations to solve environmental problems. UNEP helps countries transition to low-carbon, resource-efficient economies, strengthen environmental governance and laws, save ecosystems and provide evidence-based data to inform policy decisions.

UNEP has managed to bring together efforts from around the world in order to address the greatest environmental challenges on the planet. This collaboration has successfully produced great results, such as repairing the ozone layer, getting rid of leaded fuels, and saving some endangered species from extinction. UNEP assists all 193 Member States in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and coexisting in harmony with nature.

II. History of the Topic



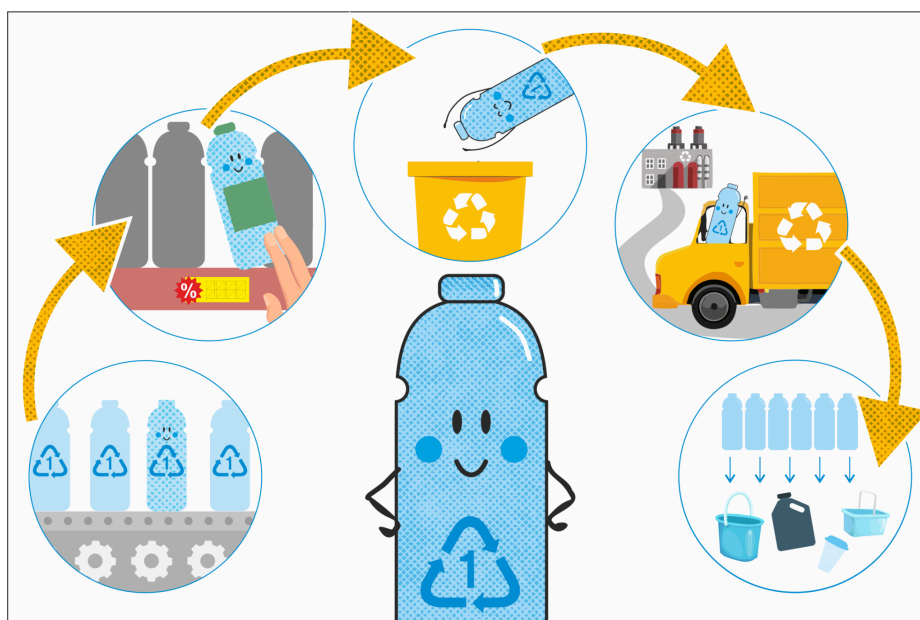
As the issue of plastic pollution has been growing significantly, searching for alternatives to the traditional plastic has joined global efforts to solve this problem. This issue started capturing the attention of others in the mid-20th century, when plastic production increased notably. At first, plastic was well received by everyone because of its durability and low cost, leading to its spread in

many industries. However, with the increase of plastic products, plastic waste also grew, making it end up in oceans and natural areas, causing damage to flora and fauna.

As scientific studies were done, people realized how plastics were damaging the environment. In response, scientists, and engineers began searching for environmentally friendly material to replace the common plastics. These searches were successful and led to the development of alternatives like bioplastics that are made from renewable resources such as corn, sugarcane, and algae instead of petroleum. This material is designed to quickly decompose than the common plastics; this way it'll reduce their environmental impact.

At first, bioplastics had great expectations of them, but had complications. Bioplastics are expected to decompose faster than the normal plastics, but they require specific conditions that are not always available, so depending on their location, they remain in the environment as the common plastics. This shows that even though these renewable plastics were a great advancement, they do not solve the plastic pollution problem at all.

Additionally to the searching for alternatives, attempts are being made to reduce plastic consumption, improve recycling, and support a circular economy where materials are reused, and less waste is produced. This includes making recycling more effective in breaking down plastics into their basic parts and developing new materials that are good for the environment.



Organizations and governments are implementing policies to reduce plastic waste, such as banning the one-time use of plastics and supporting the use of recycling materials. Public awareness has also been important, as public education has helped understand the environmental impact of plastics and promotes more sustainable practices. Changing from traditional plastics to alternatives has had a significant economic impact that has affected industries and promoted the growth of green technology. The problem of plastic increase in oceans and other natural spaces demonstrates the need for continuous innovation and looking resolutions.

III. Current Issues

Plastic pollution is one of the biggest problems we face today. It harms our environment and our health in many ways. Countries are dealing with this issue differently, depending on how developed they are. More developed countries often have better ways to manage waste, while less developed countries struggle with this concern.

United States

In the United States, the demand for single-use plastics is extremely high, which is alarming. Every year, over 300 million tons of plastic waste are produced, creating a huge challenge for waste management systems. Even though there are efforts to find environmentally friendly alternatives, like biodegradable materials, many people still don't know much about them or how to use them. For example, companies like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are trying to develop plant-based packaging, but these solutions only make up a small part of the overall plastic used daily. The main issues to tackle are the need for more investment in recycling facilities and better education for the public on adopting sustainable habits.

India

In India, the fight against plastic pollution is crucial, especially in crowded cities. The



country produces about 15 million tons of plastic waste every year, but a lot of it is not managed well due to poor waste disposal systems. The Indian government has tried to ban certain single-use plastics, but enforcing these

bans is still a challenge. For instance, in Mumbai, there are community recycling programs encouraging people to separate their waste, but many people are not participating. India must improve its waste management systems and find ways to promote sustainable alternatives to traditional plastics if it wants to tackle plastic pollution effectively.

Liberia

In Liberia, managing plastic waste is a major issue that poses serious risks to the environment and public health. An astonishing 90% of plastic waste is disposed of incorrectly, leading to problems like clogged drainage systems that worsen flooding and spread diseases. Although there are efforts to introduce alternatives to plastic, such as community workshops that promote biodegradable materials, these initiatives are often slow due to economic challenges and lack of resources. To address this urgent difficulty, Liberia needs international help to strengthen its waste management infrastructure and run community education programs that inform people about the dangers of plastic pollution.

Brazil

Brazil is facing significant issues with plastic waste, especially in its coastal areas, where tourism and biodiversity are at risk. The country generates around 11.3 million tons of plastic waste every year, and a lot of it ends up in rivers and oceans. Programs like the “Green Seal” aim to encourage businesses to adopt sustainable packaging, but economic inequality makes it hard for these solutions to be widely accepted. Brazil needs to improve its recycling systems and encourage cooperation among the government, businesses, and communities to develop effective strategies for reducing plastic waste.



Nigeria

In Nigeria, plastic waste is becoming a big problem, particularly in cities where waste management systems often fall short. The country produces about 2.5 million tons of plastic waste each year, most of which goes to landfills or is burned openly, polluting the air and soil. Programs promoting alternative materials, like the “Clean Up Nigeria” campaign, have not been very effective, and public awareness of plastic's environmental impacts is still low. To solve this

problem, Nigeria needs to invest in sustainable waste management practices and run educational campaigns to promote the use of eco-friendly alternatives.

Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the world's largest contributors to marine plastic pollution, with an estimated 3.2 million tons of plastic waste entering the oceans every year. The rapid growth of cities has worsened this issue, as plastic use increases without proper waste management solutions. The government has started initiatives, like the “Indonesia Plastic Waste Free 2020 program, to encourage the use of biodegradable plastics, but the implementation varies across regions. Indonesia requires comprehensive strategies that include reducing waste, engaging communities, and developing sustainable materials to effectively combat plastic pollution.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh struggles with plastic pollution, especially due to its high population density and limited waste management capabilities. The country generates about 0.35 million tons of plastic waste each year, much of which is not properly handled, leading to severe environmental problems. Efforts to promote alternatives to plastic are often blocked by economic issues and a lack of awareness. The “Plastic Waste Management Project,” initiated by the government and NGOs, aims to improve waste management systems and implement educational programs to encourage sustainable practices among citizens. This program is a UN initiative and it is being implemented in several Countries.

Haiti

Haiti’s fight against plastic pollution is made harder by a lack of infrastructure and frequent natural disasters, complicating waste management efforts. Many communities depend on informal waste disposal methods, leading to significant environmental damage. While there are efforts, such as “Haiti’s National Waste Management Strategy,” to promote biodegradable alternatives, the country faces financial and logistical challenges in implementing these solutions on a larger scale. To effectively address plastic pollution, Haiti needs support to strengthen its waste management systems and raise public awareness about the impacts of plastic waste.

IV. UN Action and Resolution

The United Nations (UN) has created Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help solve global problems. One important goal is Goal 12, which is about “Responsible Consumption and Production.” This goal focuses on using and managing plastics in a better way. The UN Environment Programme is key in helping countries find eco-friendly alternatives to plastics.



The UN holds meetings and summits to discuss issues related to plastic pollution. These meetings often lead to agreements that encourage countries to cut down on single-use plastics and look for biodegradable options. The UN highlights the need for countries to work together, especially in developing nations, where dealing with plastic waste is very difficult.

To fight plastic pollution, the UN collaborates with governments, NGOs, and businesses. This teamwork can include campaigns that teach people about the dangers of plastic waste and promote sustainable alternatives. By forming these partnerships, the UN aims to create a global approach to tackle the serious issues caused by plastic pollution.

V. Essential Questions

1. How much plastic waste does your country produce each year?
2. What steps has your government taken to reduce plastic use and promote alternatives?
3. Are the current laws in your country effective in managing plastic waste?
4. What challenges does your country face in switching to sustainable plastic alternatives?
5. How does plastic pollution affect people's health and the environment in your country?
6. What role do businesses play in using plastic alternatives in your country?
7. How can other countries help your country improve its plastic waste management?
8. What programs exist to teach people about the dangers of plastic pollution?
9. How do economic issues affect the use of biodegradable materials in your country?
10. Can you share any success stories of using plastic alternatives in your country?

VI. Conclusion

Finally, the problem of plastic alternatives is very important for the future of our planet. Plastic pollution creates serious issues that affect both the environment and people's health. Countries that are growing quickly, like the United States, India, and Indonesia, face big challenges from plastic waste. This waste harms animals and plants, waterways, and damages our natural surroundings.



Switching to alternatives like biodegradable materials is a good step, but it is not the only solution. We need a complete plan that includes reducing how much plastic we use, improving how we manage waste, and teaching everyone about the importance of sustainability. It's not just about finding new materials; we also need to change how we think about and use plastic in our daily lives.

The United Nations is essential in promoting sustainable practices and encouraging countries to work together. Through initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN helps ensure that we use and produce resources responsibly. By partnering with governments, NGOs, and local communities, we can raise awareness about the effects of plastic pollution and find effective ways to tackle it.

Education is key in this effort. When people learn about the harm caused by plastic and the benefits of using alternatives, they are more likely to make better choices. We should encourage everyone, especially young people, to adopt habits that are better for the environment. Supporting the research and development of new materials will help us find practical replacements for plastic in many areas.

In summary, the path toward sustainable alternatives is crucial for protecting our planet and improving life for everyone. By working together and committing to long-term solutions, we can create a healthier environment and ensure a better future for generations to come. Together, we have the ability to make a positive impact and address the urgent issue of plastic pollution.

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