NMUN•NY

New York City, NY, USA
2–6 April (Conf. A) / 10–14 April (Conf. B) 2023
https://www.nmun.org/conferences/new-york.html

United Nations Environment Assembly
Background Guide 2023

Written by Aemin Becker, Christopher W. Duggan,
Markus A. Bianchi, and Tobias Willms

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2023 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). The topics under discussion are:

1. Strengthening Action to Achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14
2. Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks

Members of our dais this year include:

Aemin Becker, Director, graduated with a Master's in International Security from Sciences Po Paris. She works in consulting at Booz Allen Hamilton.

Christopher W. Duggan, Director, holds a Bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Administration from St. Petersburg College. He is pursuing a Master's in Global Environmental Policy from the School of International Service at American University in Washington, D.C.

Tobias Willms, Assistant Director, completed the First Legal Examination in Germany and thereby obtained a Magister's degree from the University of Heidelberg. He is pursuing a Master's degree in Law at Trinity College Dublin.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on 1 March 2023 in accordance with the guidelines in the Position Paper Guide and the NMUN•NY Position Papers website.

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. NMUN Rules of Procedure - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory NMUN Conduct Expectations on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Development & Human Rights Department, Tiffany Dao (Conference A) and Danielle Curtis BL (Conference B), at usg.dhr@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Aemin Becker, Director
Conference A

Christopher W. Duggan, Director
Tobias Willms, Assistant Director
Conference B

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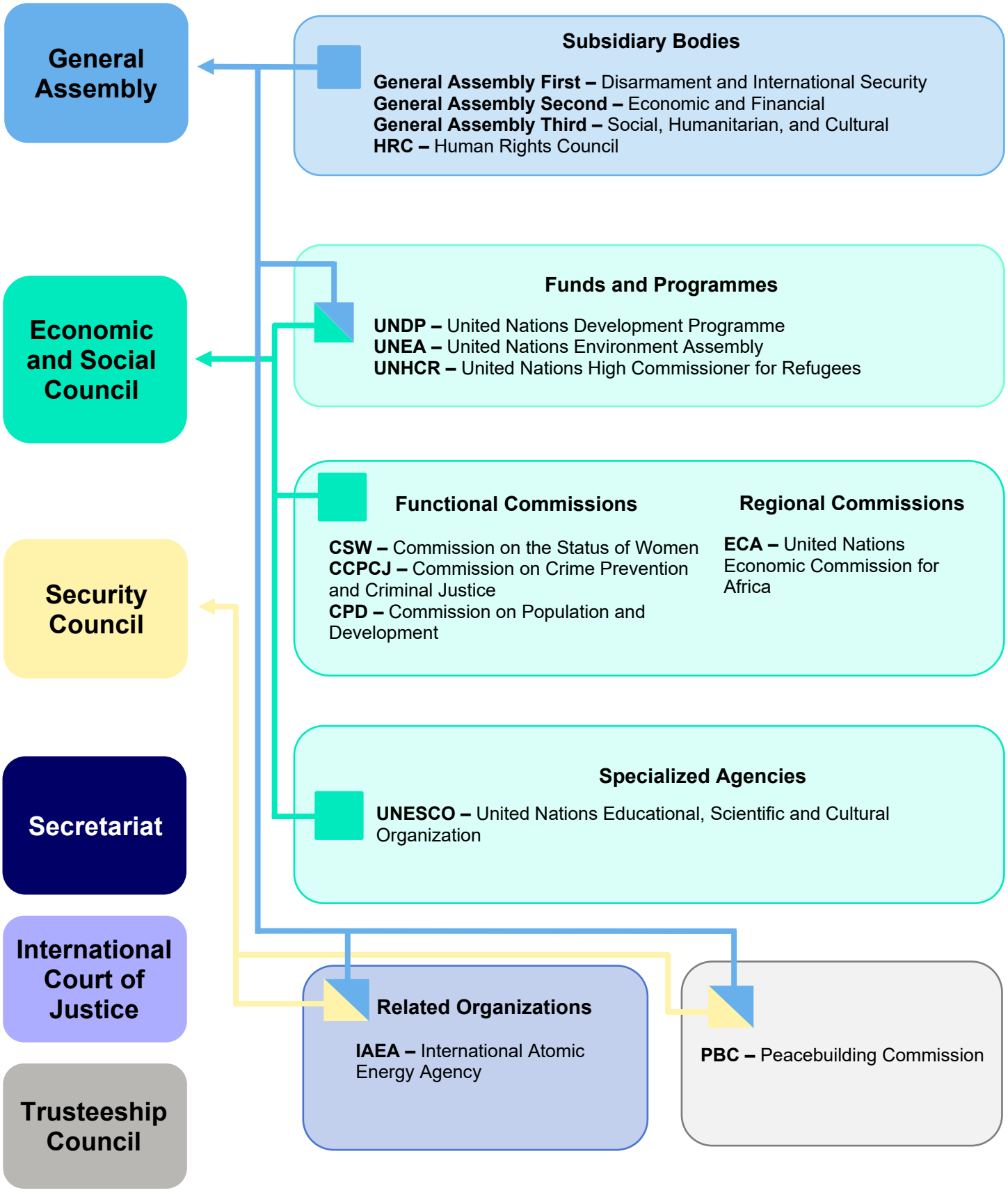
United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee "sits" within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the primary governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is the international community's highest-level decision-making body on environmental matters.[1] In partnership with other United Nations (UN) institutions, it outlines the international environmental agenda and sets priorities for the international community.[2] Although its resolutions are not binding, UNEA plays a critical role in bringing together relevant actors within the international community to address global environmental issues and shape future environmental governance.[3]

We simulate the **Environment Assembly** in terms of composition and size. In addition to making budgetary and programmatic decisions for UNEP, the Assembly may also propose global priorities, policies, and legal frameworks under the mandate of UNEP.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

Twenty years after the adoption of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP so that it could better execute its mandate.[4] UNEA was created in 2012 as the successor to UNEP's Governing Council.[5] Whereas the Governing Council was composed of 58 Member States and sat within UNEP, UNEA is structured as a distinct entity and enjoys universal membership with 193 Member States.[6]

UNEA is a high-level governance body that reviews and coordinates the work of the international community on environmental matters, whilst serving as an initiator on debates that will generally be continued by other, more specific bodies.[7]

Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of UNEA can be summarized as:

- UNEA **will generally**: set broad priorities for global environmental policy; identify emerging themes in environmental governance; develop international environment law and begin negotiations on environmental treaties; define the work and priorities of UNEP; create ad-hoc committees and subsidiary bodies to implement specific environmental objectives when necessary.[8]

- UNEA **will not generally**: engage in operational projects; complete negotiations on environmental treaties, but rather identifying emerging issues and agreeing next steps amongst Member States to create the architecture for future environmental governance.[9]

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[1] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[2] Ibid.
[3] United Nations Environment Programme. *Q&A: UN Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[4] United Nations, General Assembly. *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)*. 2012. p. 18.
[5] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[6] Ibid; Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. *Proceedings of the Governing Council at its Nineteenth Session (UNEP/GC.19/34)*. 1997.
[7] International Institute for Sustainable Development. *The United Nations Environment Assembly's Role as a Governance Architect*. 2022.
[8] United Nations Environment Programme. *What you need to know about the UN Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[9] Ibid.; International Institute for Sustainable Development. *The United Nations Environment Assembly's Role as a Governance Architect*. 2022.

Delegates should recognize the distinction between UNEA and UNEP. UNEA is the primary governing body and priority-setting mechanism of UNEP; it does not operationalize these priorities itself.[10] In contrast, UNEP undertakes programs, projects, awareness campaigns, and provides support to national governments to achieve environmental obligations.[11]

Governance, Structure, and Membership

In 2013, UNEA became the designated policy-making body of UNEP, superseding the original 58-member Governing Council.[12] UNEA has universal membership, meaning that all 193 UN Member States are represented in the Assembly.[13] UNEA meets every two years to set priorities for global environmental policy, discuss developments for environmental legislation, and assist in the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).[14]

Consisting of ten Ministers for a term of two years on geographical rotations, the Bureau is responsible for the general conduct of business of UNEA.[15] The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) was first established as a subsidiary inter-sessional organ to UNEA and meets at least four times a year.[16] The CPR was then strengthened by Governing Council decision 27/2, and now contributes to the preparation of the UNEA agenda as well as holding advisory role in policy matters, and monitoring the implementation of decisions.[17] The CPR also holds discussion on key issues, promotes the inclusion of non-resident members of the Committee, and performs other tasks given by UNEA.[18] The CPR consists of all accredited Permanent Representatives to UNEP and is led by a five-member bureau that is elected for two years.[19]

UNEP relies on three main financial sources to facilitate its agenda: earmarked funds, the Environment Fund, and the UN Regular Budget.[20] Earmarked funds, also known as earmarked contributions, are funds appropriated for specific projects, themes, or countries.[21] These funds aim to expand and/or replicate the results of UN Environment's work in more countries and with more partners.[22] The Environment Fund aids in maintaining the capacity, balance, and efficiency needed for UNEP to function.[23] The UN Regular Budget supports the functions of the Secretariat and its respective governing bodies, as well as the coordination of UNEP with the UN system and cooperation with global scientific communities.[24] In order to assist in the action plan of UNEP, UNEA approved an appropriation for the Environment Fund of $200 million for the years 2022-2025.[25] In addition, the budget allocated funding of $200,000 for program initiatives for 2022-2023 with $164,000 of that being for UNEP's program of work.[26] Earmarked contributions and the Environment Fund are comprised of voluntary contributions, hence 95% of UNEP's income is received on a voluntary basis from Member States.[27]

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[10] Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme*. n.d.
[11] Ibid.
[12] United Nations, General Assembly. *Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation (A/RES/2997 (XXVII))*. 1972.
[13] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] United Nations Environment Programme. *Committee of Permanent Representatives*. n.d.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] United Nations Environment Programme. *How is UNEP funded*. n.d.
[21] Ibid.; United Nations Environment Programme. *Earmarked Contributions*. n.d.
[22] Ibid.
[23] United Nations Environment Programme. *How is UNEP funded*. n.d.
[24] Ibid.
[25] United Nations Environment Assembly. *Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 (UNEP/EA.5/L.3)*. 2021. p. 2.
[26] Ibid. p. 2.
[27] United Nations Environment Programme. *How is UNEP funded*. n.d.

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International Institute for Sustainable Development. *The United Nations Environment Assembly's Role as a Governance Architect*. 2022. Retrieved 23 October 2022 from: https://www.iisd.org/articles/unea-governance

> *This article succinctly articulates UNEA's role as the central forum for environmental governance in the international community. It provides clear detail on the responsibilities of a norm-setting body such as UNEA, including how it serves as a catalyst for other bodies (including UNEP) and how it identifies emerging themes in the field. Delegates should utilize this source as an approachable introduction to the opportunities and limits of UNEA's mandate and how it coordinates with other organizations.*

United Nations Environment Assembly. *Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 (UNEP/EA.5/L.3)*. 2022. Retrieved 5 September 2022 from: https://undocs.org/en/UNEP/EA.5/L.3

> *Adopted at the fifth session of UNEA, this resolution outlines the medium-term strategy for the period 2022-2025 and budget for 2022-2023. The programme of work for 2022-2023 is also defined in the document, which includes allocation of funds towards addressing issues such as climate action, environmental governance, chemicals and pollution action, and science policy. This resource also highlights the role of the Executive Director in the implementation of the programme of work and budget of the UNEP. Delegates will find this source useful in understanding more about UNEA's current priorities and how funds are allocated with respect to addressing environmental issues.*

United Nations Environment Programme. *What you need to know about the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from: https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/what-you-need-know-about-un-environment-assembly

> *This web page provides a general overview of UNEA's responsibilities and why the organization's work is important. Although brief, the information provided on this page summarizes the work that was achieved at the first half of the fifth session of the UNEA and includes an explanation on why the second half of the fifth session is important. Delegates should begin with this resource to understand what the UNEA is and why its work matters.*

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United Nations Environment Programme. *What you need to know about the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from: https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/what-you-need-know-about-un-environment-assembly

United Nations, General Assembly. *Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation (A/RES/2997 (XXVII))*. 1972. Retrieved 5 September 2022 from: https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2997(XXVII)

United Nations, General Assembly. *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)*. 2012. Retrieved 5 September 2022 from: http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/66/288

1. Strengthening Action to Achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14

Introduction

According to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the world's oceans, covering more than 70% of the globe, are the most important ecosystem due to their complex ability to impact all life on earth.[28] Oceans and other marine waterways are essential when it comes to local and regional economies, with their vast natural resources, ability to provide income, and navigable use.[29] Additionally, marine ecosystems are particularly important due to their capacity to regulate global climates.[30] Therefore, UNEA views Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (life below water) as a crucial aspect in achieving the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).[31]

SDG 14's targets attempt to address critical issues impacting life below water, including plastic pollution, the reduction in the the pH levels of the world's oceans, and reducing the ocean's ability to serve as a natural sink for greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).[32] An additional aspect of SDG 14 relates to the byproducts of socioeconomic activity such as eutrophication, the product of an excessive increase of nutrients into a body of water from land use and agricultural activity, which leads to a severe decrease in oxygen levels and death of marine life due to the overgrowth of plant life and algae.[33]

Due to the complexity of issues associated with SDG 14, UNEA sees oceans and other marine ecosystems as a vital aspect of future economic and social development, as global waterways contribute to an increase in quality of life through job creation, increases in income, transportation of food and medicine, and empowerment of women and children.[34] This is particularly evident for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), with their economies disproportionately dependent on marine ecosystems and, as such, disproportionately affected by their deterioration.[35]

International and Regional Framework

The *Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter* (1972) (London Convention), serves as one of the international community's first attempts at addressing the human impact on the world's waterways.[36] Parties to the convention agree to refrain from deliberate ocean dumping activities that could be deemed hazardous to marine environments.[37] The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment produced the *Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment* (Stockholm Declaration) (1972), a document designed to encourage Member States to implement policies aimed at the protection of global environments.[38] In addition to the establishment of international institutions such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the international community has

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[28] United Nations Environment Programme. *Goal 14: Life below water*. 2022.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] United Nations Environment Programme. *Plastic Pollution*. n.d.; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2022/55)*. 2022. p. 20; United Nations Environment Programme. *Eutrophication*. n.d.
[33] United Nations Environment Programme. *Eutrophication*. n.d.
[34] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *Goal 14: Life below water*. 2022; United Nations Environment Assembly. *Marine plastic debris and microplastics (UNEP/EA.1/Res.6)*. 2014. p. 21; United Nations Environment Assembly. *Oceans and seas (UNEP/EA.2/Res.10)*. 2016. p. 1.
[35] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Oceans Edition 2020*. 2020. p. 1; International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Small Islands, Large Oceans: Voices on the Frontlines of Climate Change*. 2021. p. 1.
[36] International Maritime Organization. *Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter*. 1972.
[37] Ibid.
[38] United Nations Environment Programme. *Declaration on the Human Environment*. 1972.

seen follow-up conferences addressing much of the ideals expressed in the principles of the Stockholm Declaration.[39] The *Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping Wastes and Other Matter* (London Protocol) (1996) serves as a replacement of the 1972 London Convention.[40] The London Protocol came into effect in 2006 and expressly prohibits the dumping of any material into oceans, with the exception of substances on the protocol's "reserve list," which are deemed to be organic in nature.[41] Additionally, the London Protocol looks to explicitly prevent the transportation of material from a state for the expressed purpose of dumping it into the world's oceans.[42] While the protocol aims to inherently prevent marine dumping, the protocol is only legally binding to the 53 Member States who chose to ratify it, making enforcement difficult.[43]

In 1982, the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* was adopted, establishing an international legal framework for all activities relating to the oceans and seas.[44] It is intended to promote international cooperation on marine and maritime matters and to provide a legal order for the sustainable use of marine resources.[45] 164 Members States and one regional organization – the European Union – have ratified the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea*.[46]

The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) (1992) was the international treaty produced during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development designed to address the impact of human behavior on climate change.[47] The framework was followed by the *Kyoto Protocol* (1997) and the *Paris Agreement* (2015), both being measures designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change.[48] The *Paris Agreement* serves as the international community's legally binding leading climate change initiative.[49] The agreement intends on curbing global temperature rise through long-term strategies designed to reduce Member States' emission of greenhouse gases.[50] Efforts made through the *Paris Agreement* are of particular importance to achieving SDG 14, as increases in GHG negatively impact the world's oceans' ability to absorb carbon dioxide gases – a natural buffer to anthropogenic climate activity.[51]

In 2015, the international community followed up the work of the Millennium Development Goals with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/1, "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2015) and the creation of the SDGs.[52] SDG 14 specifically addresses the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, sea, and marine resources for sustainable development.[53] While SDG 14 serves as the goal directly relating to the world's waterways, the targets and action undertaken by UNEA

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[39] Ibid.
[40] International Maritime Organization. *Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter*. 1972; International Maritime Organization. *1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972*. 1996.
[41] International Maritime Organization. *1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972*. 1996.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. 1982.
[45] Ibid.
[46] United Nations, Treaty Collection. *Chapter XXI Law of the Sea*. 2022.
[47] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.
[48] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?* 2022.
[49] Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.
[50] Ibid.
[51] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*. 2022; Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.
[52] United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.
[53] Ibid.

to address SDG 14 interlink with other SDGs, including SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 15 (life on land).[54]

Methods to ensure regular reporting and assessment of marine environments were established in General Assembly resolutions 57/141 (2002) and 58/240 (2003), both on "Oceans and the law of the sea."[55] In both resolutions, the General Assembly recommended all Member States who have not become signatories to the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* to do so while also reaffirming the need to improve the assessment of marine ecosystems and the impact of human activity.[56] General Assembly resolution 71/312, "Our ocean, our future: call for action," contains an annex from the meeting of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.[57] The annex, a declaration produced by the 2017 conference, points to the responsibility to protect marine ecosystems from the negative impacts of socioeconomic activity, including marine pollution, acidification, sea level rise, coastal erosion, and adverse weather patterns.[58]

The second United Nations Ocean Conference, held in 2022, concluded with Member States collectively reaching an agreement to put forth innovative action toward addressing SDG 14, including commitments from civil society, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and efforts to include youth.[59] The conference produced the *Lisbon Declaration* (2022), which includes commitments to better assist SIDS, to strengthen data collection methods, to recognize the role of indigenous populations in the sharing of best practices when it comes to reducing GHG emissions, and the promotion of innovative financial solutions as to achieve more sustainable ocean-based economies.[60] Furthermore, the *Lisbon Declaration* places an emphasis on the active participation of women and girls in ocean-based economic activities.[61]

Role of the International System

As the United Nations' (UN) primary governance body on environmental matters, UNEA plays a key role in ensuring the targets of SDG 14 are met.[62] UNEA 5.2, held under the theme of "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals," concluded in March 2022 and produced resolutions reaffirming its commitment to achieving SDG 14.[63] UNEA resolution 5/14, "End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument" (2022), calls for an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop and oversee the implementation of a legally binding agreement to eradicate plastic pollution.[64] The resolution also draws attention to the importance of sustainable consumption and production of plastic material, and highlights past UNEA resolutions on marine plastic pollution and environmentally sound management of waste.[65] In addition to UNEA resolution 5/14, UNEA 5.2 produced additional resolutions, including UNEA resolution 5/4 on "Sustainable lake management" which aims to protect, conserve, and sustainably manage the use of lakes.[66]

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[54] Ibid.
[55] United Nations, General Assembly. *Oceans and the law of the sea (A/RES/57/141)*. 2002; United Nations, General Assembly. *Oceans and the law of the sea (A/RES/58/240)*. 2003.
[56] Ibid.
[57] United Nations, General Assembly. *Our ocean, our future: call for action (A/RES/71/312)*. 2017.
[58] Ibid.
[59] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Dire state of ocean's health met with tide of pledges at UN Ocean Conference*. 2022.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[63] United Nations Environment Programme. *UN Environment Assembly concludes with 14 resolutions to curb pollution, protect and restore nature worldwide*. 2022.
[64] Ibid.; United Nations Environment Assembly. *End plastic pollution: towards and international legally binding instrument (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)*. 2022.
[65] United Nations Environment Assembly. *End plastic pollution: towards and international legally binding instrument (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)*. 2022.
[66] United Nations Environment Assembly. *Sustainable lake management (UNEP/EA.5/Res.4)*. 2022.

In addition to its biannual meetings, UNEA also governs its operational subsidiary body, the United Nations Environment Programme.[67] UNEP's manual, *Understanding the State of the Ocean: A Global Manual on Measuring SDG 14.1.1, SDG 14.2.1 and SDG 14.5.1* (2021), presents research on variables impacting life below water, including pollution and eutrophication.[68] The manual intends to measure the success of initiatives put in place to protect marine ecosystems and prevent further impact of the aforementioned variables.[69] Furthermore, the UNEP manual points to the importance of continual oversight of the world's oceans, particularly the indicators within targets one, two, and five, on coastal eutrophication, marine plastic debris, ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas, and addressing marine and coastal areas by protected areas.[70]

UNEP also manages initiatives such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA).[71] The GPA, governed by UNEA, is a programme comprised of Member States working in conjunction with intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, private sector, and civil society to address the impacts of land-based activity on the waterways.[72] An additional initiative of the international community, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is an effort to protect ecosystems worldwide and deter future degradation.[73] Additionally, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development takes place between 2021 and 2030, with a mission to apply scientific initiatives toward a future of sustainable development and reach seven targets, including oceans that are clean, healthy and resilient, productive, predicted, safe, inspiring and engaging, and accessible.[74]

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) serves as the UN's central forum for all discussion relating to implementation, review, and progress of the 2030 Agenda.[75] HLPF's 2022 session reviewed several SDGs, including SDG 14, with a report of the Secretary-General, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*.[76] Within the report, the Secretary-General points toward the continued issues of eutrophication and plastic pollution.[77] The report also highlights the rise in ocean acidification as a product of increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, resulting in degradation of marine ecosystems.[78] However, the Secretary-General's report to HLPF also highlights an improvement in Member States' implementation and effectiveness of international and national tools designed to combat overfishing between 2018 and 2022, leading to better measurements than past reports.[79]

Addressing Marine Pollution

Marine pollution includes improperly disposed litter, industrial sewage, agricultural waste, and heavy metals, about 80% of which are generated by land-based activities and reach the oceans through rivers, direct disposal in coastal waters, and storm-water run-off.[80] Solid pollution is generally referred to as marine litter and includes discarded solid materials which have been manufactured or processed.[81] In its

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[67] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[68] United Nations Environment Programme. *Understanding the State of the Ocean: A Global Manual on Measuring SDG 14.1.1, SDG 14.2.1 and SDG 14.5.1*. 2021.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] United Nations Environment Programme. *Goal 14: Life below water*. 2022.
[72] United Nations Environment Programme. *Governing the Global Programme of Action*. 2022.
[73] United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. *About the UN Decade*. 2022.
[74] United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. *Vision & Mission: Achieving the ocean we want by 2030*. 2022.
[75] United Nations, High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. *High-Level Political Forum*. 2022.
[76] United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2022/55)*. 2022. p. 20.
[77] Ibid. p. 20.
[78] Ibid. p. 20.
[79] Ibid. p. 20.
[80] United Nations Environment Programme. *Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution*. n.d.
[81] Ibid.

2021 report *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*, UNEP found that plastics constitute at least 85% of all marine litter, with the production of plastic having quadrupled over the last four decades.[82] Currently, approximately 5 to 12 metric tons of additional plastic are released into the oceans every year, which may lead to there being more plastic than fish in the water by 2050.[83] As plastic degrades at a slow rate, it will come into contact with marine life and can strangle animals or cause them to starve or suffocate when ingested.[84] When the plastic does degrade, toxins and very small pieces of plastic, known as microplastics, are released into the water.[85] Microplastics in turn are capable of entering and damaging cells.[86] According to UNEP, this could also affect humans who consume contaminated seafood.[87] This has a disproportionate impact on least developed countries, where more than 50% of the population rely on seafood as their primary source of protein.[88]

More than 60 Member States have introduced bans on specific single-use plastic items and others have implemented action plans for the prevention of plastic waste.[89] However, these regulations frequently allow for exceptions, have not been fully implemented, or lack efficient monitoring systems.[90] Additionally, of the 20 coastal Member States producing the most marine plastic litter, many were found not to have a national policy for its prevention.[91] Furthermore, only a small number of studies have addressed the full impact of plastic pollution in the oceans.[92]

To coordinate, improve, and expand the existing efforts made by individual Member States, UNEA has called for the establishment of a binding international agreement on plastic waste in its 2022 resolution, "End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument."[93] According to UNEP, combatting plastic pollution will also require a reversal of the current trend towards more comprehensive plastic management systems, focusing on the prevention of plastic waste in favor of an increase in its reuse and recycling.[94] UNEA calls for action plans that incorporate the monitoring and assessment of their effectiveness.[95]

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[82] United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. pp. 22, 84.
[83] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Life Below Water: Why It Matters*. 2020. p. 2; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *FEATURE: UN's mission to keep plastics out of oceans and marine life*. 2017.
[84] Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity et al. *Marine Debris: Understanding, Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity*. 2016. pp. 11-12; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity et al. *Impacts of Marine Debris on Biodiversity: Current Status and Potential Solutions*. 2012. p. 8; United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. p. 14.
[85] United Nations Environment Programme. *Microplastics*. n.d. p. 2; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity et al. *Impacts of Marine Debris on Biodiversity: Current Status and Potential Solutions*. 2012. p. 9.
[86] Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection. *Sources, fate and effects of microplastics in the marine environment: part two of a global assessment*. 2015. p. 78; United Nations Environment Programme. *Marine plastic debris and microplastics: Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change*. 2016. p. 105.
[87] United Nations Environment Programme. *Marine plastic debris and microplastics: Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change*. 2016. p. 102.
[88] Ibid. p. 102.
[89] United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. pp. 85, 91.
[90] Ibid. p. 91.
[91] Ibid. p. 91.
[92] Ibid. p. 25; United Nations Environment Assembly. *End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)*. 2022. p. 1.
[93] United Nations Environment Assembly. *End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)*. 2022. p. 3.
[94] United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. p. 85.
[95] United Nations Environment Assembly. *End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)*. 2022. p. 3.

Chemical pollution as a result of agriculture, industrialization, and urbanization involves chemicals such as nitrogen and phosphorus being deposited into oceans.[96] This is exacerbated by deforestation, which causes topsoil rich with nutrients becoming washed into the oceans after trees have been removed.[97] This overabundance of nutrients creates dense blooms of algae which, upon dying, consume an excessive amount of oxygen, thereby creating oxygen-depleted "dead zones."[98] The number of "dead-zones" has increased from 10 to more than 450 between 1969 and 2008.[99] Eutrophication can be addressed through universal systems and standards for monitoring and assessing its local causes, such as the Northwest Pacific Action Plan, which has developed common guidelines for the assessment of eutrophication in any given area.[100] This system has been used to create an online map of areas in the northwest pacific region that are in danger of eutrophication.[101]

Awareness for the importance of the oceans can be seen through the increasing number of voluntary commitments to achieve SDG 14 through the *Lisbon Declaration*.[102] Member States have stressed the importance of promoting marine scientific research and the necessity to develop comprehensive approaches for reducing pollution caused by waste products.[103] Nevertheless, the report *Assessment of the Impacts of the United Nations Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments* (2021), published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, shows that coordinating local and regional commitments, monitoring their effectiveness, and financing them remains challenging because they lack clear guidelines for ensuring their effectiveness.[104] The report also highlights projects such as the La Minga Fund in Colombia as positive examples of how trust funds can be used to secure the financing of voluntary commitments.[105]

SDG 14 and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

SIDS are particularly vulnerable to deterioration of the oceans, as the livelihoods and food security of their populations depend on marine resources.[106] The size of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of SIDS, a term that refers to areas around a Member State in which it may take special advantage of marine resources, can amount to more than 25,000 times of the landmass of the corresponding Member State and constitutes 16.1% of all EEZs globally.[107] SIDS also contribute a relatively small amount of GHG emissions, which amount to no more than 1% of all global emissions, yet are disproportionately affected

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[96] United Nations Environment Programme. *Understanding the State of the Ocean: A Global Manual on Measuring SDG 14.1.1, SDG 14.2.1 and SDG 14.5.1*. 2021. pp. 1, 11, 14; United Nations Environment Programme. *Eutrophication*. n.d.

[97] Lighthouse Foundation. *Rainforest destruction heats up algae growth in the ocean*. n.d.

[98] United Nations Environment Programme. *Eutrophication*. n.d.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Assessment of the Impacts of the United Nations Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments*. 2021. p. v; United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. pp. 19-20; United Nations Ocean Conference. *Our ocean, our future, our responsibility: draft declaration (A/CONF.230/2022/12)*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *A new declaration to help save our oceans*. 2022.

[103] United Nations Ocean Conference. *Our ocean, our future, our responsibility: draft declaration (A/CONF.230/2022/12)*. 2022. p. 5; United Nations Environment Programme. *A new declaration to help save our oceans*. 2022.

[104] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Assessment of the Impacts of the United Nations Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments*. 2021. pp. 12-13, 20, 25, 34, 43, 49, 56-57, 61-62, 64.

[105] Ibid. p. 42.

[106] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Oceans Edition 2020*. 2020. p. 1; International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Small Islands, Large Oceans: Voices on the Frontlines of Climate Change*. 2021. p. 1.

[107] Ibid. pp. 3-4.

by their impacts.[108] As recognized by the 2022 Ocean Conference, the vulnerability of SIDS has been further exacerbated by adverse effects on their economies, supply chains, and tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.[109] The additional strain on the tourism industry is particularly significant as the sector has previously enabled SIDS to develop beyond the classification of a Least Developed Country.[110]

While SIDS have direct access to the oceans, overfishing and pollution prevent them from using their resources effectively.[111] To prevent the depletion of fish stocks through overfishing, sustainable fisheries can be implemented which monitor fish populations and analyze catch trends to regulate the fishing industry.[112] By implementing sustainable fisheries and protecting the oceans around them against the effects of marine pollution and climate change, SIDS can grow their economies and secure employment.[113] In SIDS such as Tonga, which defines "Special Management Areas" around its coast to prevent the overfishing of certain species, fishing accounts for 70% of its export revenue and provides employment for more than 50% of its population.[114] However, SIDS usually lack the funds required and their infrastructures are less than sufficiently developed to implement sustainable fisheries or systems for the mitigation of the adverse impacts of marine pollution.[115] Although $100 billion was pledged to developing states in 2019 to mitigate the impacts of climate change, SIDS were only able to access 1.5% of these funds.[116] When combined with a lack of technical ability and the emigration of trained individuals, the development of marine science and technology is hampered within SIDS.[117] The Alliance of Small Island States has therefore published a declaration stressing the importance of providing SIDS with scientific knowledge, marine technology, as well as the means to conduct marine research through capacity building partnerships.[118] One such example, the Ocean Teacher Global Academy of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, provides training to marine data and information managers and thereby facilitates the transfer of marine technology.[119]

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[108] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. *REGISTER: Weathering COVID-19 in Small Island Developing States: A pathway to resilience*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *Marine plastic debris and microplastics: Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change*. 2016. p. 17.

[109] Ibid; United Nations Ocean Conference. *Our ocean, our future, our responsibility: draft declaration (A/CONF.230/2022/12)*. 2022. p. 4; United Nations Environment Programme. *A new declaration to help save our oceans*. 2022.

[110] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Oceans Edition 2020*. 2020. p. 7.

[111] Ibid. p. 26.

[112] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. *Indicator 14.7.1 - Sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries*. 2022; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. *The Status of Fishery Resources*. 2022.

[113] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Oceans Edition 2020*. 2020. pp. 1, 26.

[114] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. *FAO and SIDS: challenges and emerging issues in agriculture, forestry and fisheries*. 2004; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. *Report Reveals Positive Outcomes Of Tonga's Special Management Areas On Marine Environment*. 2020.

[115] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Oceans Edition 2020*. 2020. p. 5; Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection. *Sources, fate and effects of microplastics in the marine environment: part two of a global assessment*. 2015. p. 87.

[116] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Climate finance for SIDS is shockingly low: Why this needs to change*. 2022.

[117] United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *Fostering Innovative Ocean Science Partnerships for Small Island Developing States in the Ocean Decade*. 2020.

[118] Alliance of Small Island States. *Declaration for the Enhancement of Marine Scientific Knowledge, Research Capacity and Transfer of Marine Technology to Small Island Developing States*. 2022. pp. 2-3.

[119] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization et al. *Transfer of Marine Technology: Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Development for Sustainable Ocean and Coastal Management*. 2015. p. 4.

The lack of infrastructural funding for SIDS is further addressed as part of the blue economy.[120] This term, alongside the term ocean economy, refer to concepts for making use of marine resources to advance economic growth whilst also promoting sustainability, social inclusion, and the strengthening of the oceans.[121] One example of a blue economy partnership involving SIDS is a study conducted by Barbados, in partnership with UNEP, which analyzed the requirement of implementing a sustainable and profitable blue economy on the island.[122] The study found that establishing a blue economy requires financial and technological support as well as tariff, investment, and tax systems promoting the transition.[123] It also highlighted the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme as an existing source of funding.[124] According to the 2015 report, the findings of the study show that changes to the small-scale domestic markets of SIDS require a streamlined approach with regard to governance, policy, and programming processes.[125] Another example is the establishment of a Blue Recovery Hub by Saint Lucia in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Economic Forum, which shares lessons with regard to the financing of a blue economy with other SIDS.[126] The UNEP report *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change* (2015) iterates an inclusion of SIDS as essential for the achievement of a global blue economy.[127]

Conclusion

The world's oceans face a multitude of challenges, including climate change, marine pollution, and unsustainable economic activity in marine environments.[128] In order to achieve the targets set out in SDG 14, existing efforts will need to be broadened and harmonized, while taking the specific needs of individual Member States into account.[129] The 2022 Ocean Conference and its *Lisbon Declaration* indicate a need to significantly increase actions to protect the world's oceans.[130] An increase in voluntary commitments, alongside technological and innovative ways of supporting SIDS, provide an opportunity to build on existing efforts and address the challenges facing efforts to achieve SDG 14.[131]

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[120] United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. pp. 20-23.
[121] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Oceans Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Small Island Developing States*. 2014. p. v.
[122] United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. p. 21.
[123] Ibid. p. 22.
[124] Ibid. p. 22.
[125] Ibid. p. 22.
[126] International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Blue Economy Innovations by SIDS Can Advance Climate Action and Survival*. 2021.
[127] United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. p. 3.
[128] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*. 2022
[129] United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. p. 86; United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. p. 23; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Oceans Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Small Island Developing States*. 2014. p. 5.
[130] United Nations Ocean Conference. *About the 2022 UN Ocean Conference*. n.d.; United Nations Ocean Conference. *Our Ocean, our future, our responsibility: draft declaration (A/CONF.230/2022/12)*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *A new declaration to help save our oceans*. 2022.
[131] United Nations Environment Programme. *A new declaration to help save our oceans*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. p. 86; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Oceans Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Small Island Developing States*. 2021. p. 7; United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. p. 22; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Assessment of the Impacts of the United Nations Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments*. 2021. p. 12.

Further Research

Delegates will need to consider the following questions when conducting their research: How has UNEA addressed matters relating to SDG 14 and what areas should UNEA look toward in future efforts? How has the topic evolved over time and how is the international community addressing the multiple targets associated with SDG14? How does marine pollution impact achieving SDG 14 and what action can be taken to protect marine ecosystems? How does SDG 14 impact other efforts within the 2030 Agenda? What is being done to assist SIDS and other developing areas with respect to the 2030 Agenda?

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The document serves as the international community's follow-up to the 1972 London Convention. The 1996 London Protocol serves as a tangible example of international action and legally binding measures taken to address the protection and maintenance of the world's oceans and marine ecosystems. While the document continues international legal precedent established more than 20 years prior, delegates should note that Member States are only obligated to adhere to the 1996 London Protocol should they be active parties to the protocol. Nevertheless, delegates will find this source useful as it explicitly attempts to address action that is harmful to life below water.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Dire state of ocean's health met with tide of pledges at UN Ocean Conference*. 2022. Retrieved 7 August 2022 from: https://www.un.org/en/desa/dire-state-ocean%E2%80%99s-health-met-tide-pledges-un-ocean-conference-lisbon-declaration-launches-new

This article is UN DESA's landing page for insight into the 2022 UN Ocean Conference. The source provides a summary of the meeting and a look into the outcome document of the conference, the Lisbon Declaration, which calls for a multitude of actions towards SDG 14. Additionally, the source provides a direct link to a draft of the declaration. Delegates will find this source useful when researching the most recent activity relating to SDG 14 and efforts being made to achieve the goal.

United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*. 2022. Retrieved 7 August 2022 from: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/

The source serves as the landing page for SDG 14. Delegates will find it useful as it serves as an official UN resource and a starting point for their research into the topic. The webpage provides a summary of the goal, its targets, and their indicators. The UN resource also highlights the actors within the international community that are currently focusing on an array of issues relating to the topic, such as marine pollution, protecting the integrity of marine ecosystems, and fostering capacity building measures and knowledge sharing.

United Nations Environment Programme. *Blue Economy: Sharing Success Stories to Inspire Change*. 2015. Retrieved 14 August 2022 from: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9844/-Blue_economy_sharing_success_stories_to_inspire_change-2015blue_economy_sharing_success_stories.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

This report articulates the concept of a blue economy and contains examples of its successful implementation by Member States. As blue economies intend to use marine resources in an equitable and sustainable fashion, whilst benefiting from them at the same time, this document can help delegates determine existing best practices in this area. The report also contains an outline of the Barbados Green Economy Scoping Study, which is an example of a collaboration between a SID and UNEP.

United Nations Environment Programme. *From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution*. 2021. Retrieved 14 August 2022 from: https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/36963

This is a report published by UNEP, which serves as a detailed assessment of plastic pollution in the oceans, its causes, and existing best practices to overcome this issue. As UNEA has recently called for the establishment of a binding legal instrument addressing plastic debris in the oceans, this report will be particularly relevant for the work of the committee in the coming years. Consequently, delegates can use it as a reference point for the development of new ideas regarding this aspect of SDG 14.

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2. Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks

Introduction

As its governing body, the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) works closely with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) on several environmental topics, including climate-fragility risks.[132] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defines fragility as the exposure to risk while, at the same time, not being able to cope with or mitigate those risks.[133] Fragility and conflict arise from different social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental drivers.[134] According to UNEP, countries experience different fragility situations, including violent conflict, political instability, civil unrest, or regime changes, which can emerge on the local, national, regional, and global levels.[135] Fragility can lead to negative outcomes such as violence, institutional breakdown, displacement, or other humanitarian crises, causing new conflicts to erupt or impeding the settlement of ongoing ones.[136]

Climate change aggravates pre-existing stressors and exacerbates existing fragilities.[137] As noted by UNEP, climate-fragility risks occur when climate change interacts with other political, social, economic, and environmental realities.[138] The issues of climate change, sustainable development, and peace and security are interconnected, with the impacts of climate change contributing to or accelerating both short-term shocks and long-term pressures on societies.[139]

There is a particular intersectionality between climate change and conflict.[140] Climate change has the potential to lead to increased food insecurity, increased competition over resources, land degradation, and significant displacement of populations.[141] When combined with contexts such as poor national governance, lack of social cohesion, and an inability to respond to these impacts, there is a higher risk of conflict.[142] UNEP notes that, as of 2021, 1.5 billion people live in conflict-affected areas worldwide.[143] More than 400 million of these people also live in areas already affected by climate change.[144] 90% of refugees or displaced persons originate from states already impacted by climate change.[145]

According to UNEP, many programs intended to combat the effects of climate change ignore the impacts it has on future conflict risk.[146] Where it is acknowledged, it is often viewed as an objective separate from the main program objective, meaning programs with conflicting objectives are sometimes developed.[147] According to UNEP, these fragmented responses need to be overcome to tackle climate change in a holistic manner, requiring joint and adaptive strategies that can address the connections between climate and fragility.[148]

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[132] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2022.
[133] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *State of Fragility 2020*. 2020.
[134] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid. p. 3.
[139] Van Bronkhorst et al. World Bank. *Tackling the intersecting challenges of climate change, fragility and conflict*. 2021.
[140] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021. p. 6; United Nations Environment Programme. *Addressing Climate-Related Security Risks*. 2019.
[141] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Conflict and climate*. 2022.
[142] Ibid.
[143] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[144] Ibid. p. 6.
[145] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Conflict and climate*. 2022.
[146] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021. p. 2.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.

International and Regional Framework

The United Nations (UN) has discussed the impact of the environment on human security since 1949, with initial discussions focusing on the conservation of resources and decreasing the impact of human activity on the ozone layer.[149] The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment was the first summit explicitly convened to discuss international action to combat environmental degradation.[150] Its outcome document was the *Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment* (1972), which outlined 26 principles for environmental preservation, recommended international action, and raised the specific issue of climate change for the first time.[151] Most international efforts from 1972 until the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992 Earth Summit) focused on narrow issues, including combatting water and air pollution, instead of the overall issue of climate change and climate-fragility risks.[152]

The 1992 Earth Summit recognized the importance of sustainable human development to mitigate humanity's adverse impacts on the environment.[153] The most significant outcome documents of the 1992 Earth Summit were the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (Rio Declaration), *Agenda 21*, and the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC).[154] The Rio Declaration contained 27 principles emphasizing the importance of protecting the environment even as Member States pursue further economic development.[155] *Agenda 21* expanded on these principles by discussing specific social and economic dimensions of human development, such as the connection between combatting poverty with environmental concerns such as reducing deforestation and promoting environmentally sound resource management.[156] The UNFCCC committed Member States to limit their economic and other activities in order to stabilize the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, thereby preventing further damage to the ozone layer.[157] It was also the first international document to recognize differentiated levels of responsibility for Member States in combatting climate change based on their unique development levels.[158] By doing so, the UNFCCC aimed to lessen or prevent the effects of climate change and promote sustainable economic development.[159] Together, these were among the first international documents to establish a linkage between human development, the environment, and human security.[160]

The UNFCCC has served as the foundation for climate action since it opened for signature in 1992.[161] In 1997, Member States adopted the *Kyoto Protocol* to the UNFCCC, which legally committed States parties to reduce carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions by 5% between 2008-2012.[162] The protocol's 192 States parties recommitted to this target during the second commitment period of 2013-2020.[163] At

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[149] Jackson. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *From Stockholm to Kyoto: A Brief History of Climate Change*. 2007.
[150] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 5-16 June 1972, Stockholm*. 2022.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Jackson. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *From Stockholm to Kyoto: A Brief History of Climate Change*. 2007.
[153] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992*. 2022.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *Agenda 21*. 1992.
[157] Jackson. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *From Stockholm to Kyoto: A Brief History of Climate Change*. 2007.
[158] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?* 2022.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Jackson. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *From Stockholm to Kyoto: A Brief History of Climate Change*. 2007.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Climate Change*. 2022.

the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2015, States parties adopted the *Paris Agreement*.[164] The *Paris Agreement* acknowledges the impact of climate change on human security, particularly within developing countries.[165] It seeks to strengthen the global response by committing Member States to contain the rise in global temperatures to below two degrees Celsius.[166] Additionally, the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), which established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at providing an overarching framework for the UN's sustainable development agenda.[167] Several SDGs relate directly to addressing climate-fragility risks, such as SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).[168]

Role of the International System

UNEA coordinates and guides the work of UNEP to address environmental concerns, including climate-fragility risks.[169] At its most recent session, held with the theme of "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals," Member States reaffirmed UNEA's mandate as a leading global environmental authority.[170] They also called for greater, more inclusive multilateralism to address environmental challenges, especially as they connect to security and fragility risks.[171]

Governed by UNEA, UNEP first began addressing the interlinkages between climate change and security in 2008 when they were requested by the UN Special Envoy for Climate Change Jan Egeland to analyze climate change and security risks in the Sahel.[172] UNEP collaborated with the International Organization for Migration, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and other partners to publish the report *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict in the Sahel* (2011).[173] The report identified 19 climate change hotspots and concluded that climate change affects resource availability, leading to migration and competition over scarce resources.[174] In addition, UNEP was requested to provide technical inputs to the Secretary-General's report *Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications* (2009), thereby connecting climate change to security and establishing UNEP as a source of authority on these issues.[175]

In 2019, UNEP published the guidance note *Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*.[176] This document recommended a two-step approach to build resilience to climate-fragility risks within individual communities and Member States.[177] Firstly, it is important is to assess the link between climate change, fragility, and conflict and identify existing climate-fragility risks.[178] Step two is to translate that assessment

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[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.; Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.
[166] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Climate Change*. 2022.
[167] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2022.
[168] United Nations Environment Programme. *Climate Change and Security Risks*. 2022.
[169] United Nations Environment Programme. *United Nations Environment Assembly of the UNEP (UNEA)*. 2014; United Nations Environment Assembly. *Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.2/Res.15(2016))*. 2016.
[170] United Nations Environment Assembly. *About UNEA-5*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *UN Environment Assembly Concludes with an Urgent Call for Action to Solve Planetary Emergencies*. 2021.
[171] Ibid.
[172] United Nations Environment Programme. *Climate Change and Security Risks*. 2022.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*. 2009.
[176] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

into tailored responses that also link with peacebuilding, climate change adaptation, and development.[179] The guidance note also included additional reports on monitoring and evaluation of programs and a toolbox for policymakers to optimize their decisions to account for the effects of climate-fragility risks.[180] In 2021, UNEP published its first synthesis report, or report in which data was combined from multiple environmental assessments, titled *Making Peace With Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity, and Pollution Emergencies*.[181] The report shows that climate-fragility arises from environmental changes, which threaten development goals by imposing high and unsustainable economic costs and causing millions of deaths annually.[182] It recommends that economic and financial systems be transformed to decrease risks posed by climate change and ensure sustainable development.[183]

Other UN bodies, including the Security Council, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are also involved in addressing climate-fragility risks.[184] In 2011, the Security Council published a presidential statement requesting the Secretary-General include information on the security implications of climate change in his Security Council reports when such issues are tied to conflict, challenge implementing mandates, or endanger the peace process.[185] The Security Council has also held various open debates addressing the intersection between climate change and security.[186]

The IPCC is the UN body specifically responsible for assessing science related to climate change.[187] Its most recent report, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (2022), recognized the connection between climate, ecosystems, biodiversity, and human society and assessed the impacts and risks of climate change, including certain factors that predispose specific geographic areas to increased risk and fragility.[188] These factors include pre-existing vulnerability; low levels of socioeconomic development; proximity to coastlines, ice, and seasonal rivers; physical water availability; and high-temperature climates.[189]

Finally, the DPPA, UNDP, and UNEP jointly established the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) in 2018.[190] The CSM's objective is to strengthen the UN's capacity to analyze and address adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security.[191] The DPPA provides peace and security expertise, the UNDP provides technical support to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and UNEP promotes the implementation of this expertise with environmental issues.[192] In addition to these bodies, the informal

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[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] United Nations Environment Programme. *Making Peace with Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity, and Pollution Emergencies*. 2021.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] United Nations Environment Programme. *Climate Change and Security Risks*. 2022; Climate Security Expert Network. *Climate Security at the UNSC: A Short History*. n.d.; United Nations, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. 2022; United Nations System Staff College. *Joint Efforts for Sustaining Peace: Meet the UN Climate Security Mechanism*. 2021.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Climate Security Expert Network. *Climate Security at the UNSC: A Short History*. n.d.
[187] United Nations, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. 2022.
[188] United Nations, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. 2022.
[189] Ibid.
[190] United Nations System Staff College. *Joint Efforts for Sustaining Peace: Meet the UN Climate Security Mechanism*. 2021.
[191] United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Climate Security Mechanisms: Progress Report*. 2021.
[192] Ibid.

coalition known as the UN Group of Friends on Climate and Security also meets to discuss the intersection between climate change and security issues.[193]

In 2015, the foreign ministries of the Group of Seven (G7) launched the report *A New Climate for Peace*.[194] This report identified seven climate and fragility risks: resource competition, livelihood insecurity and migration, extreme weather events, volatility in food prices and availability, water management, sea level rise and coastal degradation, and the unintended effects of climate policies.[195] Additionally, it suggested work across three key policy sectors to address these risks: climate change adaptation programs, development and humanitarian aid programs to build resiliency, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention programs centered on climate-resilient peacebuilding.[196] As a follow-up to this report, UNEP established a partnership with the European Union to address the security risks of climate change in two selected states.[197] As part of this partnership, UNEP works at a national level with Member States to develop and deploy methodologies to help stakeholders map and prioritize climate change and security hotspots and addressing threats posed by those hotspots.[198]

Climate-Resilient Peacebuilding

The UN refers to peacebuilding as "efforts to assist countries and regions in their transitions from war to peace and to reduce a country's risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict."[199] Typically, these efforts will include strengthening national capacities for managing conflicts and laying the basis for sustainable peace and development.[200] In her briefing to the Security Council in 2020, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, stressed that climate change is a significant obstacle to peacebuilding and sustaining peace worldwide.[201] This point makes climate-resilient peacebuilding even more critical, as failure to include climate change adaptation plans into peacebuilding strategies can hinder the long-term success of both.[202]

The DPPA classifies local resource competition, water mismanagement, extreme weather and disasters, and livelihood insecurity as climate-related security risks.[203] According to the DPPA, climate change increasingly exacerbates existing fragilities in conflict-affected environments where the state has little to no authority or is lacking legitimacy.[204] Without strong governance, states often lack the capacity and the resources to address both climate change and security issues.[205] Climate change can also undermine conflict prevention efforts and facilitate the rise and growth of non-state armed actors, which can more easily operate in those environments.[206] According to the Climate Security Expert Network, the increasingly negative impact of climate change on the lives of the people in many different regions also

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[193] Scott. New America. *Climate Change, Peace and Security, and the UN Group of Friends*. 2021.
[194] United Nations Environment Programme. *Climate Change and Security Risks*. 2022; Group of Seven. *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks, Executive Summary*. 2015.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Group of Seven. *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks, Executive Summary*. 2015.
[197] United Nations Environment Programme. *Climate Change and Security Risks*. 2022.
[198] Ibid.
[199] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Peace and Security*. 2022.
[200] Ibid.
[201] United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security*. 2022.
[202] Crawford et al. International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Building Peace and Climate Resilience: Aligning peacebuilding and climate adaptation in fragile states*. 2022.
[203] United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security*. 2022.
[204] United Nations Peacebuilding. *The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund: Climate Security and Peacebuilding*. 2020.
[205] Ibid.
[206] United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security*. 2022.

makes them more vulnerable to recruitment by these non-state armed groups.[207] These groups can offer economic support or solutions to political, social and economic problems, such as food insecurity or lack of shelter, by taking advantage of people in vulnerable positions due to climate-fragility risks.[208]

While actors in the security sector may have an important role in some cases, the DPPA notes that addressing climate-fragility risks, especially during disaster responses, requires joint and preventative actions by development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding actors to tackle the root causes of conflict.[209] According to UNEP, climate change increases the necessity for peacebuilding, because it is an additional threat to already fragile situations in conflict-affected regions and concurrently increases the complexity of the problems peacebuilding must resolve.[210] Climate change is capable of undermining stability, but peacebuilding efforts and projects can cause secondary effects, exacerbating climate risks, if not carefully considered.[211]

The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) attempts to help build sustainable peace in countries at risk or affected by conflicts.[212] The PBF invests with UN entities, governments, regional organizations, multilateral banks, national multi-donor trust funds, civil society organizations, and other such actors.[213] In its 2020 guidance note, *Climate Security and Peacebuilding*, it highlights the need for strong peacebuilding efforts to mitigate climate-fragility risks alongside joint approaches across the UN system.[214] It provides an example of its ongoing work in Chad and the Central African Republic to invest in data gathering and mapping of herder communities to anticipate land and water needs and potential future displacement movements in order to anticipate future transboundary conflict.[215]

Gender, Climate, and Security

Gender norms, roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and power structures determine how different parts of society experience and respond to insecurities.[216] According to the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, the power dynamics connected to social expectations that define roles, responsibilities and behaviors determines ownership of land, livestock, and other financial assets.[217] It also influences how people experience and manage risk in the context of climate change and insecurity.[218] In its 2022 report, *Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected*, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) notes how gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability pose risks to communities' well-being across all Member States.[219] It outlines that, as they have a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel, women depend more on yet have less access to natural resources, particularly in developing states.[220] This creates an additional and disproportionate pressure on women, as well as on young girls, who may have to leave school in order to support their families.[221] As an

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[207] Climate Security Expert Network. *Climate Change in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Fund*. 2020.
[208] Ibid.
[209] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.
[212] United Nations Peacebuilding. *The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund: Climate Security and Peacebuilding*. 2020.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*. 2022.
[217] Smith et al. *The Climate-Gender-Conflict Nexus*. 2021.
[218] Ibid.
[219] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. 2022.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.

exacerbator of existing threats, climate change will also escalate existing challenges women face in situations of conflict, including conflict-related sexual violence, human trafficking, and child marriage.[222]

According to UN Women, addressing climate-related security risks without accounting for gender dynamics can increase the vulnerabilities of groups most exposed to the impacts of climate change.[223] In accordance with this perspective, UNEP shows that much research exists on the need for gender-responsive approaches to realizing climate goals, but little attention has been given to the connection between gender and climate-fragility risks, nor to how these issues could be taken into account to optimize sustainable development decision-making.[224] The UN Climate Security Mechanisms established in 2018 by UNDP, UNEP, the DPPA and UN Women offers guidelines on gender-sensitive approaches for helping the UN system address climate-related security risks.[225] UNEP further collaborated with UN Women, the DPPA and UNDP on publishing a report in 2020 on gender, climate and security, titled *Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change*. According to this report, mainstreaming gender into climate security policies and practices is lacking because the linkages between these issues remains poorly understood at the international level.[226]

Conclusion

Climate change aggravates pre-existing environmental, social, economic, and political pressures and stressors and can exacerbate existing insecurities, leading to increased vulnerability and fragility.[227] In contexts of existing insecurities, including poor governance, weak social cohesion, or resource scarcity, the impacts of climate change will only further heighten the risk of these factors leading to conflict.[228] An understanding of this intersectionality between sustainable development, security, and climate is required across the international system, including in how the UN assesses and responds to climate change.[229] Climate-resilient peacebuilding is important for addressing climate-fragility risks, as climate change can hinder peacebuilding efforts, create insecurity that is easily taken advantage of by non-state armed groups, and unwittingly increase the effects of climate-fragility risks.[230] Finally, mainstreaming gender into policies that address climate-fragility risks would better account for the vulnerabilities of and protect the well-being of groups most exposed to the impacts of climate change.[231]

Further Research

Delegates should consider the following questions as they pursue further research: How can UNEA work with other UN, international, and regional bodies, as well non-governmental organizations, to address climate-fragility risks? How can UNEA account for climate-fragility risks in peacekeeping efforts? How can UNEA support gender-responsive approaches to managing climate-fragility risks? What other contexts does climate-fragility interact with, and how can UNEA address climate-fragility risks within those contexts?

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.; World Health Organization. *Gender, Climate Change and Health*. 2014.
[224] United Nations Environment Programme et al. *Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change*. 2020.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid. p. 10.
[227] United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Conflict and climate*. 2022.
[230] Climate Security Expert Network. *Climate Change in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Fund*. 2020; United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021.
[231] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. 2022.

Annotated Bibliography

Climate Security Expert Network. *Climate Security at the UNSC: A Short History*. n.d. Retrieved 26 June 2022 from: https://climate-security-expert-network.org/unsc-engagement

This webpage describes the United Nations Security Council's history of tackling climate security issues. It includes a timeline of different Security Council actions, links to Security Council resolutions concerning specific regions, and a description of different initiatives within the UN system devoted to tackling this issue, including the Group of Friends on Climate and Security and the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security of Members of the UNSC. Delegates will find this webpage useful in understanding the broader history of climate security and its connections to climate-fragility within the UN system, as well as what actions have occurred and are currently taking place.

Group of 7. *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks, Executive Summary*. 2015. Retrieved 25 June 2022 from: https://climate-diplomacy.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/NewClimateforPeace_ExecutiveSummary_0.pdf

This report was commissioned by the G7. It analyzes and describes seven compound climate-fragility risks that pose serious threats to the stability of states and societies. It considers existing policies on climate change adaptation, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding. The document also offers four recommendations on how climate-fragility risks could be reduced, for example, by making it a central foreign policy priority. This document offers delegates a comprehensive overview on what issues are connected to climate-fragility risks and where to start with their research.

United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Climate Security Mechanisms: Progress Report*. 2021. Retrieved 25 June 2022 from: https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/csm_progress_report_2021_final.pdf

The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) is a joint initiative by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme. It was established in 2018 with the objective of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to analyze and more systematically address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security. The CSM works with partners internationally to enhance a gender-sensitive understanding of the issue and to support capacity building efforts for the prevention and management of climate-related security risks. This document offers delegates a deeper understanding of the connection between climate change and security.

United Nations Environment Programme. *Guidance Note: Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks*. 2021. Retrieved 25 June 2022 from: https://postconflict.unep.ch/Climate_Change_and_Security/CFRA_Guidance_Note.pdf

Published in 2021, UNEP's guidance note on addressing climate-fragility risks describes the threat climate change poses to peace and security and suggests a two-step approach for building resilience to climate-fragility risks. The document is intended to inform the development of policies, programs, and projects addressing these issues as well as mainstream climate-fragility considerations into existing initiatives. Delegates will find this document useful in understanding current efforts to promote awareness of climate-fragility risks within efforts both inside and outside of the UN system as well as the interconnection between climate-fragility and peace and security.

United Nations Environment Programme. *Making Peace with Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity, and Pollution Emergencies*. 2021. Retrieved 26 June 2022 from: https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34948/MPN.pdf

This report connects climate-fragility and environmental changes to high economic development costs, millions of annual deaths, and other threats to sustainable development. The report suggests that Member States transform their economic and financial systems to decrease climate change risks and return to the path of sustainable development. It draws the connection between humanity's impact on the environment

and the security and health risks of that impact. By reading this report, delegates will comprehend the connection between development, climate change, and human security and understand different types of solutions they could propose in their position papers and while at conference.

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