

OFFICIAL WELCOME

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of everyone at the 2010 Invitational Model United Nations, it is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the Special Session on Climate Change. The staff at IMUN looks forward to working with each of you, and plan for this committee to be a great learning experience and timely discussion for all.

This research guide has been prepared to assist in your preparations for the Conference, but is by no means an exhaustive list of the questions and resources applicable to our committee's topics. One of the primary goals of Model United Nations is education, and this guide should help as you learn more in your preparations for the Conference.

Cooperation and negotiation are critical to the operation of any Model United Nations committee. It is my hope that you keep these themes in mind as you prepare to participate in the Special Session on Climate Change. We look forward to working with you in making this an outstanding educational experience.

HISTORY OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In April 2007, the United Nations Security Council held the first-ever debate on the impact of climate change. The day-long meeting aimed to examine the relationship between energy, security and climate change. While several Member States praised the initiative, others held some reservations which saw climate change as a socio-economic development issue. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon projected that climate change could not only have serious environmental, social and economic implications, but implications for peace and security.

In September 2009, nearly 100 world leaders accepted Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's invitation to participate in an historic Summit on Climate Change to mobilize political will and strengthen momentum for a fair, effective and ambitious climate deal. In addition to discussing national plans for reducing emissions and for adapting to the impacts of climate change, world leaders stressed the need to find an agreement at the global level at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. Issues of trust between developed and developing countries, and the need to finance mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, emerged as key issues to be resolved by Heads of State in future talks.

At the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the December 2009 meeting was the culmination of months of negotiations complemented by community, industry and private sector-led events aimed at promoting urgent decision-making and action to combat climate change. It resulted in the Copenhagen Accord under which several developing and developed countries outlined intentions and commitments on carbon emissions, pledged support for technology transfer and acknowledged the importance of forest systems in combating climate change.

TOPIC #1: Preventing Threats to Vulnerable Populations

- Who are the most vulnerable to climate change effects and how can the UN help them in the most effective manner?

As we have seen in recent years, climate change has a negative and significant effect on the environment, evidenced by the increasing number of natural disasters throughout the world. In the coming decades, climate change is expected to significantly increase the risk of disasters, not only in regards to more frequent and intense hazardous events, but also through greater vulnerability to existing disasters and natural hazards. Storms and floods are increasing in frequency, and long-lasting droughts can prevent communities from being able to have the capacity to prepare, respond, and rebuild after multiple cycles of these disasters caused by climate change. Other effects and impacts of climate change that will lead to the increased vulnerability to natural disasters include: public health capacities; disruptions in ecosystems; and food security and migration.

The people that are most vulnerable are those currently living in abject poverty, as their access to resources is already limited. People living in “disaster hotspots” – areas prone to flooding and in cyclone tracks – are exposed to repeated climatic shocks. The threat of extreme weather events in the future and the ensuing demand for disaster response can only rise, along with its costs. Many of the Member States that are already in need of humanitarian aid will face even greater risks due to the impacts of climate change.

Recently in March of 2009 the UN released a report, “*From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*,” which explains how environmental factors play a pivotal role during all the stages of the conflict spectrum – from outbreak of conflicts all the way to the collapse of peace and the return to violence. The conflicts that occur throughout the international community can be traced back to the depletion or degradation of natural resources. Exploitation of natural resources has played substantial roles in financing and sustaining conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola and Cambodia. Environmental degradation has played a vital role in the ongoing conflict in Darfur, where water scarcity and the steady loss of fertile land have been and continue to be important underlying factors. Both the depletion and degradation of the environment can be associated with climate change, in which these realities are the consequences of the ever-changing climate of the earth. How can the UN minimize these impacts on these vulnerable populations? Should the UN’s focus be on preventing climate change itself or the aftermath of its impacts?

TOPIC #2: Advancing the Copenhagen Accord: Path Towards Greater Climate Security

- How can the United Nations raise climate change issues to the highest level of government? What expectations can the UN have by 2015 as the international community reviews whether global action needs to be more urgent?

The Copenhagen Accord is a work in progress. At the 15th session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, delegates underlined that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our lifetime and emphasized a strong political will to

urgently combat climate change. The Accord was a breakthrough because, for the first time, all major economies including the U.S., China, Brazil, India, Russia, Japan and the European Union, made commitments to curb global warming pollution and report on their actions. Yet many were disappointed with the Accord because it was not legally binding, sets no real targets to achieve emissions reductions, and no decision was taken whether to agree a legally binding successor or complement to the Kyoto Protocol. Developing countries believe that an accord was drafted that is being forced upon other countries. As delegates, it is important to discuss whether the Copenhagen Accord bullies the poorest and most vulnerable countries? The fight for environmental sustainability has never been more urgent. The fight for environmental justice has never been more timely. As delegates, it is your responsibility to find a way forward and help build that movement.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Preventing Threats to Vulnerable Populations

ActionAid. (2010). *Climate change and reducing risk*. Retrieved July 11, 2010, from the ActionAid website at: <http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=188>.

This non-governmental organization (NGO) focuses on the vulnerable populations that are affected by the natural disasters caused by climate change. ActionAid's primary focus on the humanitarian effects of climate change is their work in disaster risk reduction through grassroots activism and work. They focus on enabling and advocating on behalf of the vulnerable population and their program emphasizes the importance of eradicating poverty.. ActionAid views poverty as one of the key elements that must be addressed in combating climate change.

IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis. (2010). *In-Depth: Gathering storm – the humanitarian impact of climate change*. Retrieved from IRIN website at: <http://www.irinnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?InDepthId=73&ReportId=78246>.

This provides a developing country perspective of the humanitarian effects that are caused by climate change. This focuses on the economic loss and poverty developing nations face after experiencing disasters that affect agricultural production. IRIN news focuses on the vulnerable populations that have suffered through many disasters caused by climate change. These issues include: migration, food security and loss of agricultural production due to climate change.

ReliefWeb. (2009). *Humanitarian implications of climate change*. Retrieved July 11, 2010, from the ReliefWeb website at:

http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/hlp.nsf/db900ByKey/climate_change.

This outlines the impact climate change can and will have on humanitarian efforts. It primarily gives the basic effects that climate change will have, including: impacting public health systems, disruptions in ecosystems, food security, and migration. The vulnerability of certain populations is discussed, and those among the most concern are the populations that are already in need of humanitarian efforts. The issue of climate change is whether or not it will prevent humanitarian aid from reaching populations who will need it the most.

United Nations. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2009). *Climate change – Coping with humanitarian impact*. Retrieved July 11, 2010, from the OCHA website at: <http://ochaonline.un.org/News/InFocus/ClimateChangeHumanitarianImpact/tabid/5099/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

This gives the specific impact climate change can have on humanitarian efforts. It provides information on the populations most vulnerable to the effects of disasters caused by climate change. These populations

include those that have been devastated by extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS, and environmental degradation. The OCHA promotes a multilateral effort to curb the impacts of climate change through partnerships with UN agencies, regional organizations, Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector. The OCHA promotes a strategy that restrains the impact of climate change at all stages: from curbing climate change itself to providing the humanitarian aid to those in need after a natural disaster.

United Nations. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). (2009). *Disaster risk and climate change*. Retrieved from ISDR's website at: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/risk-reduction/climate-change/climate-change.html>.

The ISDR examines the role that climate change has on the frequency of disasters. Climate change is expected to increase the severity and frequency of weather-related natural disasters such as storms, high rainfalls, floods, droughts, rising sea levels, and heat-waves. This will lead to more disasters in the future unless immediate action is taken. The ISDR estimates that from 1995-2004, a total of 2,500 million people were affected by disasters. This will only increase unless prompt actions are taken.

Advancing the Copenhagen Accord: Path Towards Greater Climate Security

United Nations Environment Programme. (2010). *Buildings and Climate Change: A Summary for Decision-Makers*. Retrieved July 18, 2010 from:

<http://www.unep.org/climatechange/Publications/Publication/tabid/429/language/en-US/Default.aspx?BookID=4113>

This publication highlights the potential of more efficient buildings in addressing climate change. The report argues that a failure to encourage more energy-efficient and low-carbon buildings will lock countries into the disadvantages of poor performing buildings for decades. This report will illustrate to delegates ways forward on how governments can have the potential to deliver greenhouse gas emissions cut.

United Nations. (2009). *Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Retrieved June 25, 2010 from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/107.pdf>

This document is known as the Copenhagen Accord, in which world leaders met to underline that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. This document will illustrate to delegates the importance of political will to urgently combat climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.