

TBMUN'20

**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY
(UNEA) STUDY GUIDE**



Combating Global Deforestation

President Chair: Lidya Delfin ERASLAN

Deputy Chair: Ada TURANLI

1. Letters from the Chairs

Esteemed delegates,

As your president chair, I begin this introduction with great excitement. This year in TBMUN, we will have the pleasure of meeting in UNEA, the United Nations Environment Assembly. Considering the state of planet Earth today, there is much to be said on the subject and as the participants of a simulation of the highest body which has decision-making power about the environment, my expectations about your performance are monumental. Rest assured that my deputy chair and I will do our very best to guide you through the conference and make it a memorable experience for all. Should there be any questions you wish answered, feel free to contact one of us.

Kind regards,

Lidya Delfin ERASLAN

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to UNEA in TBMUN'20. I'm Ada Turanlı, your deputy chair. I'm a 12th grader and it's my first time chairing in a Harvard procedure conference, so I hope you'll forgive me if I make any small mistakes. I believe that we are going to have a very efficient and fun conference and I'm very excited to be chairing this committee. I'd like to remind you of a few things. Firstly, please remember the conference rules and be respectful. We want everyone to enjoy this conference and nobody has the right to ruin it for the rest of the people. Secondly, please trust yourself. I know that many of you may not be comfortable with your English, but this is an opportunity for you to practice and test yourself. Push your limits and get out of your comfort zone. My president chair and I will try our best to help you in any situation where you may need it. Don't be afraid to approach us and remember that we are your friends! We're both very much looking forward to meeting you and spending 2 days working hard as well as having fun.

Sincerely,

Ada TURANLI

2. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. UNEA enjoys the universal membership of all 193 UN Member States and the full involvement of major groups and stakeholders. It gathers ministers of environment in Nairobi, Kenya every 2 years.¹

3. Key Terms

- Deforestation: The removal of trees on a massive scale in order to use that land for other uses. Deforestation damages the quality of land, causes soil erosion and greatly affects the ecosystem of the area.
- Indirect causes of deforestation: These include insufficient political actions, inadequate land tenure systems, corruption, wrong investment plans as well as political and socio-economic reasons, such as population growth and military conflicts.²
- Direct causes of deforestation: These include natural causes and human activities. Natural causes include hurricanes, storms, fires, parasites, floods and so on, while human activities include agricultural expansion, the creation of cattle grazing areas, timber extraction, mining et cetera.
- Ecosystem: The interaction of living organisms with the abiotic (non-living) surroundings which they depend on. These abiotic surroundings include air, water, rock and soil.³
- Slash-and-burn agriculture: Slash-and-burn is a method in which vegetated land is burned and turned into plots which can be used for agricultural purposes. When the plots turn infertile, the farmer moves on to other lands.

¹ "United Nations Environment Assembly ... Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - United Nations Partnerships for SDGs Platform." *United Nations*, United Nations, sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/unea.

² "The Causes of Deforestation." *Eniscuola*, www.eniscuola.net/en/argomento/rain-forest/deforestation/the-causes-of-deforestation/.

³ Allott, Andrew. *Biology: for the IB Diploma*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

This method is commonly used by farmers in areas with tropical forests. The plots are somewhat fertilised by the ash of the forests and are relatively free of weeds, yet their fertility decreases and the amount of weeds increases as years go by. This method, while not posing much danger as a traditional method, has caused significant damage to the planet in the 21st century.

- Flora and Fauna: The living organisms that inhabit an area. These include both plants (flora) and animals (fauna.)
- Commercial Logging: Commercial logging is the action of cutting down trees for commercial use, that is, to sell the harvested timber. In 2014, global industrial production of roundwood (felled wood, prior to being processed for sawnwood, pulp, etc.) totaled 1,837 million cubic meters, with the majority of production from Europe, North America and Asia and the Pacific (amounting for 31%, 28%, and 24% of global annual production respectively).⁴
- Selective Logging: The practice of cutting down certain species of trees while leaving others untouched. This is usually done according to the value and quality of the wood. It is also considered as a better alternative compared to clear cutting.
- Clear Cutting: The removal of all trees in an area of forest. It is used when the type of harvested wood is not important. It is also used to create certain types of forest ecosystems and promote certain species. It is considered a form of deforestation and destroys natural habitats as well as greatly affects climate change.

⁴ “Yale University.” *Commercial Logging* | *Global Forest Atlas*, globalforestatlas.yale.edu/forest-use-logging/logging/commercial-logging.



- Financial incentive: Money that a person, company, or organization offers to encourage certain behaviors or actions. Specifically, behaviors or actions that would not otherwise have occurred.⁶
- Oil palm: Oil palm is an African tree cultivated for oil. Palm oil is used in many industries including cosmetics and biofuels. According to the World Wildlife Foundation, the product is in nearly 50% of packaged products. Its harvesting is a major cause of slash-and-burn agriculture in Africa and Malaysia. Although attempts have been made to certify sustainably grown palm oil, corporate buyers have been slow to support those endeavours; some environmental groups have urged individuals to avoid products with palm oil altogether.⁷ Other such plans with similar effects on the environment exist, such as cocoa and pulpwood.
- The High Carbon Stock (HCS) Approach: It is a methodology that distinguishes forest areas for protection from degraded lands with low carbon and biodiversity values that may be developed. The methodology was developed with the aim to ensure a practical, transparent, robust, and

⁵ An example of the results of clear-cutting.

⁶ Nordqvist, Christian. "What Is a Financial Incentive? Definition and Examples." *Market Business News*, Market Business News, 26 Jan. 2020, marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/financial-incentive/.

⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Oil Palm." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 11 Jan. 2016, www.britannica.com/plant/oil-palm.

scientifically credible approach that is widely accepted to implement commitments to halt deforestation in the tropics, while ensuring the rights and livelihoods of local peoples are respected.⁸

- High Conservation Values (HCVs): HCVs are biological, ecological, social or cultural values of outstanding significance at the national, regional or global level or of critical importance at the local level. All natural habitats possess inherent conservation values, including the presence of rare or endemic species, provision of ecosystem services, sacred sites, or resources harvested by local residents.⁹

4. The Topic at a Glance

Forests carry great importance for humans. They cover 31% of land area on the planet and help humans thrive by purifying water, air and providing people with jobs. It is estimated that 13.2 million people work in the forest sector, and about 41 million work in jobs related to it. Apart from that, 80% of land-based species live in forests. However, they are not only habitats and places to live, but also play a critical role in combating climate change due to the fact that they act as a carbon sink. That means, they absorb carbon dioxide and turn it into other molecules, and give off oxygen gas as a byproduct.

Despite these benefits, forests around the world are still under threats such as deforestation and forest degradation. According to UNEA, Global deforestation continues at an alarming rate: 7 million hectares of forest are destroyed every year, an area roughly the size of Portugal.¹⁰ Poorly planned infrastructure and underpar agricultural planning cause forest degradation, with the main direct cause being illegal logging. 18.7 million acres of forests are being destroyed annually. The aforementioned deforestation particularly concerns tropical rain forests such as the Amazon. 17% of the Amazon rainforest has been lost in the last 50 years, mostly due to deforestation for cattle ranching. It is also important to note that deforestation in the Amazon is particularly rampant near populated areas, roads and rivers.

⁸ High Carbon Stock Approach, highcarbonstock.org/the-high-carbon-stock-approach/.

⁹ "How It Works." HCV, hcvnetwork.org/how-it-works/.

¹⁰ Un. "Forests." UNEP - UN Environment Programme, www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/forests.

However, remote areas are still being destroyed when valuable materials such as mahogany, gold or oil are discovered. This is particularly alarming because these forests are home to a vast majority of the world's biodiversity.¹¹

Forests also carry great importance for the 13th, 6th and 15th sustainable development goals of UNEA, which are Climate action, clean water and sanitation and life on land respectively. Targets set for sustainable development such as Target 6.6., which is “by 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes,” as well as Target 15.2 which is “by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally” tie into these goals. More information can be found on the UNEA website.

5. Key Actors and Stakeholders¹²

- Amazon (Brazil): Brazil is home to the world's largest tropical forest, the Amazon Rainforest. Amazon Rainforest has been facing an accelerating amount of deforestation since 1991 and it has been slowing down only since 2004, when activities to reduce deforestation were implemented. These efforts are a reflection of the growth of the environmental and social movements in Brazil in the last two decades. Luis Inacio Lula da Silva's election as the President was one of the factors that established such improving measures.
- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FOA): FOA is an organization that is taking progressive steps towards ending deforestation. It publishes Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) every 5 years in order to “provide a consistent approach to describing the world's forests and how they are changing”. They also publish The State of the World's Forests (SOFO) every two years. In the SOFO report of 2018, they stated that;

¹¹ "Deforestation and Forest Degradation | Threats | WWF."
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/deforestation-and-forest-degradation>. Accessed on 27 Feb. 2020.

¹² Any person or group that positively or negatively affects or is affected by a specific issue.

SOFO 2018 shines a light on the profound interlinkages that exist between forests and many other goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, enabling policymakers to strike the right balance in actions, investments and partnerships directed towards food security, poverty alleviation, ecological conservation and, ultimately, to find pathways to sustainable development.¹³

- United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA): While they do not specifically tackle deforestation, the UNEA-4 did receive a resolution specifically on combating deforestation. This resolution focused mainly on palm oil and soy, causing some developing countries to feel unfairly targeted.

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- World Wildlife Fund (WWF): In the fight against deforestation, the role of WWF is crucial. The organization funds many projects such as Zero Net Deforestation and Forest Degradation (ZNDD) and they are to be fulfilled until 2020. The World Wildlife Fund works with governments, companies, communities and other stakeholders such as Marks & Spencer, The Coca-Cola Company and Knorr¹⁵ to protect the world's forest by promoting certification and responsible forest management, combating illegal logging, reforming existing trade policies and protecting forested areas among others.¹⁶ They also fund projects, such as Zero Net Deforestation and Forest Degradation (ZNDD). In general, they aim to end deforestation and begin restoring forest landscapes by 2030.¹⁷

¹³ Fao.org. "SOFO 2018 - The State of the World's Forests 2018." *Wwww.fao.org*, www.fao.org/state-of-forests/en/.

¹⁴ Iisd. "Policy Brief: What Did UNEA-4 Do for the Environment?: SDG Knowledge Hub: IISD." *SDG Knowledge Hub*, sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/what-did-unea-4-do-for-the-environment/.

¹⁵ "Who We Work With." *WWF*, www.wwf.org.uk/who-we-are/who-we-work-with.

¹⁶ "Deforestation and Forest Degradation." *WWF*, World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org/threats/deforestation-and-forest-degradation.

¹⁷ "Forests for Life." *WWF*, wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/.

- Asia Pulp & Paper: Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) is one of the major paper industries in the world, based in Indonesia. In 2013, APP committed to halt deforestation under its Forest Conservation Policy (FCP)¹⁸. However on the sixth anniversary of the FCP, WWF-Indonesia, together with many local and international NGOs, raised strong concerns over the lack of progress by APP to remedy its negative environmental and social impacts from the huge deforestation it caused in the past. They also expressed increasing concerns over the company's recent global expansions and possible risk to comply with its zero-deforestation promise.¹⁹

6. Key Happenings

- *Natural Deforestation*
 - Amazon Fires: In August 2019, the burning of the Amazon rainforests reached a peak. There were thousands of individual fires, almost three times more than normal that month - 30,901 - compared with the same period in 2018.²⁰ These fires usually take place during the dry season, between July and October. While they can be caused naturally by lightning strikes. It is also believed that a large amount of them are started deliberately by farmers or loggers, using this technique to clear land for crops or the meat industry. The importance and negative effects of these fires is that the Amazon rainforests are a vital carbon store that slows down the pace of global warming.
 - Australia Fires: In November 2019, dozens of bushfires started in New South Wales, Australia caused the government to declare a state of emergency. Fires rapidly spread across all states to become some of the most devastating on record. An area of 25.5 million acres, about the size of South Korea, has burned. Around 3,000 homes have been

¹⁸ "Sustainability - Asia Pulp and Paper." <https://asiapulppaper.com/sustainability>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2020.

¹⁹ "NGOs raise serious concerns six years into Asia ... - Panda.org." 15 Mar. 2019, https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?344616/NGOs-raise-serious-concerns-six-years-into-Asia-Pulp-and-Papers-commitment-to-reforms. Accessed 27 Feb. 2020.

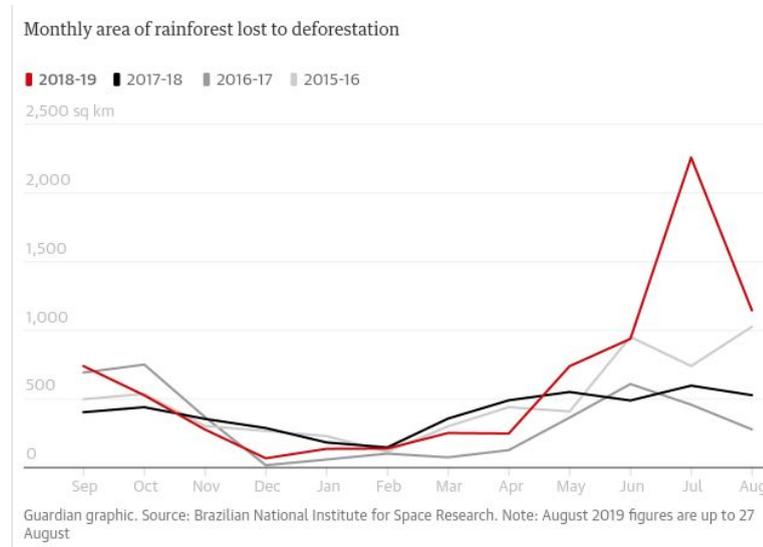
²⁰ "Amazon fires - BBC." 12 Eki. 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49971563>. Accessed on 27 Feb. 2020.

destroyed or damaged. Summer in Australia is roughly from December to February, with fire season peaking in late January or early February. The fires in New South Wales, the state most affected, were finally declared “contained” on February 13th. The smoke became another disaster. On January 1st, Australia’s capital recorded the worst pollution it’s ever seen, with an air quality index 23 times higher than what’s considered “hazardous.” More than 1 billion mammals, birds, and reptiles likely lost their lives in the blazes, according to one estimate from the University of Sydney. Around 25,000 koalas were feared dead on Kangaroo Island. Eight thousand koalas, a third of all the koalas in New South Wales, are believed to have perished, and about 30 percent of the koalas’ habitat has also been wiped out. The devastation only adds to existing pressures on Australia’s unique ecosystems. Some ecosystems, like eucalyptus forests, are prone to fires and will come back. But Kolden points out that Australia is also home to pockets of vegetation, inhabited by species that have managed to survive for millions of years. “These really incredible remnants of, you know, the era of the dinosaurs essentially, [are] not adapted for fire and when it burns, it will be gone. Another noteworthy aspect of the fires is their extremity compared to previous fire seasons. This was likely caused by global climate change, where the summers are hotter, dryer and longer, making it easier for fires to start and spread.”²¹

- *Human Deforestation*
 - Brazilian Amazon: Cattle ranching is the leading cause of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. In Brazil, this has been the case since at least the 1970s: government figures attributed 38 percent of deforestation from 1966-1975 to large-scale cattle ranching. Today the figure in Brazil is closer to 70 percent. 1,114.8 km² of forest was down in

²¹ "What you need to know about the Australia bushfires - The" 13 Feb. 2020, <https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/3/21048891/australia-wildfires-koalas-climate-change-bushfires-deaths-animals-damage>. Accessed on 27 Feb. 2020.

August 2019, the same area as Hong Kong. This data excludes the forest lost in fires.



- Sub-Saharan Africa: At the end of 1990, Africa had an estimated 528 million hectares, or 30 percent of the world's tropical forests. In several Sub-Saharan African countries, the rate of deforestation exceeded the global annual average of 0.8 percent. While deforestation in other parts of the world is mainly caused by commercial logging or cattle ranching the leading causes in Africa are associated with human activity. Developing countries rely heavily on wood fuel, the major energy source for cooking and heating. In Africa, the statistics are striking: an estimated 90 percent of the entire continent's population uses fuelwood for cooking, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, firewood and brush supply approximately 52 percent of all energy sources. Land clearing by farmers may contribute as much as fuelwood gathering in the depletion of tree stocks. According to Porter and Brown, conversion of forests for subsistence and commercial agriculture may account for as much as 60 percent of world-wide deforestation.⁴ An estimated 20 to 25 percent of annual deforestation is thought to be due to commercial logging. The remaining 15 to 20 percent is attributed to other activities such as cattle ranching, cash crop plantations, and the construction of dams,

roads, and mines. In Africa, governments invest substantially more in cash crops than in food crops as reflected in pricing and marketing policies. However, deforestation is primarily caused by the activities of the general population.²²

7. Questions to Answer

- What are the roles of farmers' unions in combating deforestation? [This link](#) will be useful in beginning a research on such a question.
- To what extent can we effectively combat deforestation through initiatives such as The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative? You will find [this link](#) to be a helpful guide.
- How can NGOs such as the Sustainable Agriculture Network be ideally utilised?
- How can the logging industry be better regulated to minimise deforestation?
- In which ways can UNEA combat the deforestation of mangroves and other endemic flora? [This link](#) is related to the topic.
- How can companies be persuaded to commit to sustainable development?
- What can be done to avoid the economic harm caused by deforestation? Check [this link](#).

8. Further Research & Works Cited

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²² "Deforestation in Sub-Saharan Africa - MIT." <http://web.mit.edu/africantech/www/articles/Deforestation.htm>. Accessed on 27 Feb. 2020.

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