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TISKLMUN'26

Addressing Unsustainable Mining Activities and Their Environmental Impact

Strengthening Global Responsibili to Combat Coral Reef Bleaching and Protect Marine Biodiversity

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Dais Introduction

Head Chair - Yu An

Morning delegates! Or if you are reading at any other time in the day, good afternoon and good evening! I'm Yu An, serving as your chair during your time here in UNEP at TISKLMUN 2026! This seems to be my 20th MUN conference, but fret not! I am still relatively new to chairing! So yes! Much like most of our fellow delegates, I will be learning with y'all as well.

Nope, I am no longer studying, but I have a background in finance and economics. Of course, having an economics background really prompted my motivation in conducting research related to the topics and fields that interest me. Environmental affairs may not necessarily be one of them, but throughout the time I am writing this, I find it to be quite interesting! So please, make sure y'all READ THIS RESEARCH REPORT!!!!!

I am eager to know what cards everyone will pull out through the conference. I wish you the best of luck after reading this Research Report, and till then, we shall meet in person!

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Co-Chair - Annie

Hello delegates!

Welcome to UNEP! Thank you for choosing this council, and I look forward to overseeing the exciting debate.

A little about me — I've been involved in MUN for quite some time now, having participated in conferences across Malaysia and Singapore. Throughout my experience, I've come to appreciate how the essence of MUN isn't just about debate, it's also about fresh perspectives being brought to light by young minds, being able to find a common ground even when opinions differ vastly, and most importantly: having fun and debating to your heart's content. So, using this Research Report as a starting point, I hope delegates can dive deeper into the topics and gain a unique perspective and understanding of their country's distinctive stances and potential actions.

Feel free to reach out if you've got any questions at all, any clarifications about the topics and general questions about ROP will be fine too. Looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

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Introduction to Council

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority within the United Nations system. It was established in June 1972 following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, marking the first major international effort to place environmental protection on the global agenda. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, the UNEP serves as the central coordinating body for environmental matters across the UN system, promoting sustainable development by encouraging environmentally sound policies and practices among Member States.

UNEP plays a critical role in addressing global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and unsustainable resource use. Through research, policy guidance, and international cooperation, it seeks to align environmental protection with economic and social development.

Duties & Responsibilities

UNEP's primary duty is to set the global environmental agenda and support Member States in implementing environmentally sustainable policies. It conducts scientific assessments, monitors environmental trends, and provides early warnings on emerging environmental risks. These assessments inform international decision-making and contribute to the development of global environmental norms and standards.

UNEP is also responsible for facilitating international environmental cooperation. It supports the negotiation and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and assists countries in fulfilling their environmental commitments. Additionally, UNEP engages in capacity building, particularly for developing countries, by providing technical assistance, policy advice, and institutional support.

Another key responsibility of UNEP is to promote the integration of environmental considerations into development planning. It works to ensure that economic growth, resource use, and environmental protection are addressed in a balanced and coordinated manner, consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

Powers & Authority

UNEP does not possess legislative or enforcement powers over sovereign states. Instead, its authority is primarily normative, advisory, and coordinating in nature. UNEP can propose policies, guidelines, and frameworks, but their adoption and implementation depend on the voluntary cooperation of Member States.

Through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), UNEP has the authority to convene all UN Member States to discuss and adopt resolutions on global environmental issues. While UNEA resolutions are not legally binding, they carry significant political weight and often influence national policies and international negotiations.

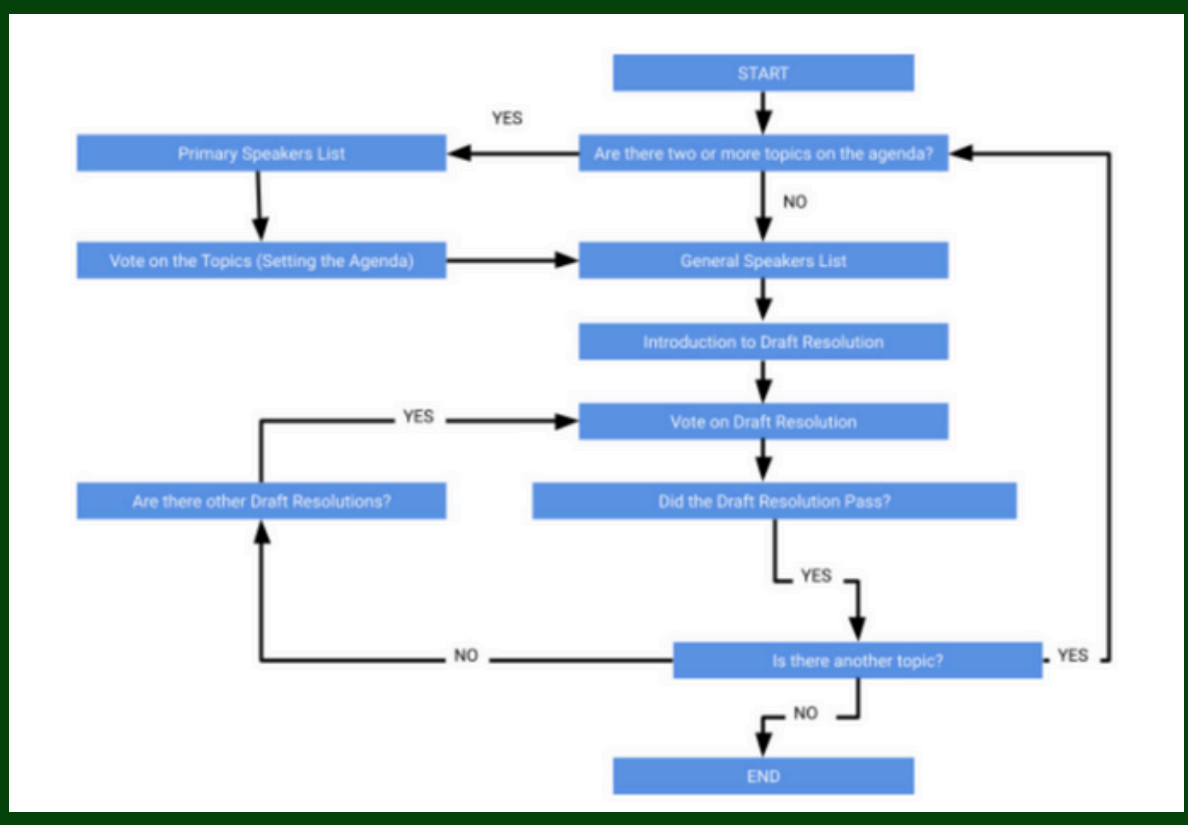
UNEP also holds the authority to coordinate environmental activities across the UN system, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication of efforts. It serves as a platform for scientific expertise, policy dialogue, and partnership-building, enabling states and non-state actors to collectively address environmental challenges.

Rules of Procedure

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) of TISKLMUN 2026 will be following the Standardised Harvard Model United Nations (HMUN) Rules of Procedure, which has been written and published by the Malaysian Youth Association for Diplomacy and Policy (MYADP).

The process flow chart below shows a simplified flow of debate conducted under the HMUN Rules of Procedure.

The official version of the MYADP HMUN ROP can be found here. https://www.my-adp.org/_files/ugd/88a5d7_c97b2fea1652401f8d11eec09b3afeab.pdf



Kindly note that the Board of Dais retains the right to modify the Rules of Procedure if deemed necessary for the progression of the council.

Position Paper Guidelines

Position Papers are documents that detail your country's stance towards a particular issue. They are compulsory for the purposes of evaluation and potentially, for any awards. Being a key pre-conference feature of the Harvard Model United Nations (HMUN) Rules of Procedure, they allow for an overview of your country's stance and its suggested courses of action towards these issues that are being addressed by the council. On the chairing front, it assists us in understanding your stance prior to the conference, thus allowing us to cross-reference as needed. Undoubtedly, it also assists you as a delegate, being an important document for you to refer to during the conference, so that you can always align yourself with your country's stances, be it during speeches or when proposing ideas!

Structure

The following is a simple overview of the typical structure of a Position Paper:

1. **Describe the topic in general.** It could be a description of the issue's history or its current implications across the globe.
2. **Describe how your country has been affected by the topic.** Identify examples in which the topic has affected your country. If there are no such equivalents, you may describe how it has affected supranational organisations that your country is part of (of which, you should explicitly mention your country is in fact part of it).

3. Describe your country's stance towards the topic. Speeches from its leaders (which should come from its current government), enacted policies or any material that can indicate your country's position should be stated here. You may split this section into actions taken in the domestic political arena or on the international stage.
4. Describe what solutions your country would propose. They need not exactly be proposals that have been published by the actual government, but instead, perhaps a solution that a member of your government could potentially propose. Under no circumstances, however, should you propose a solution that is against your country's stance and interests. You would be sacked if this occurred in real life!
5. Finally, have a conclusion. You may summarise your stance or solutions once more.

Format

The following are the requirements you must follow for your Position Paper:

1. Position Papers are to be written in English only with a competent degree of formality. Any other languages applied throughout the papers will not be considered.
2. You must write for both agendas, in one single document. Submissions of more than one document will not be accepted.
3. Your Position Paper is limited to **four pages**, inclusive of the bibliography.
4. You must **cite your sources**. The citation style of Harvard or APA is preferred, but you are free to use any style as desired as long as it is proper.

5. You must include your full name, the name of the committee and your country in the headers of the position paper. It may be presented as a small subscript text.
6. You must answer in the view of the country that you are representing, not through the view of your personal opinions.
7. You must use the font Arial at Size 11, in which the alignment must be Justified (on Google Docs, it is simply called 'Justify'). All other options are at your convenience.
8. Usage of Bold, Italic, and Underline is allowed.
9. Please submit the Position Paper as a PDF file (.pdf) only.
10. Prior to submission, kindly name the Position Paper as "TISKLMUN 2026 - UNEP - [YOUR COUNTRY]", not inclusive of the quotation marks or brackets.

Submission

Kindly upload the document through the following Google Form.
https://forms.gle/31z6DJe1zR6tchDZ6

Any other method of submission shall not be accepted. The due date for submission shall be the 3rd of February, Tuesday at 12:00 PM.

Please do take note that the submission of any plagiarised and/or AI-generated work will be penalised, which may extend to the reduction of scores or disqualification for awards, depending on the severity.

Kindly keep in mind that completion is required in order to be evaluated. Do remember that completing your Position Paper will provide you with a basic level of knowledge for you to excel within the council. We wish you all the best in your research!

Agenda 1: Addressing Unsustainable Mining Activities and Its Environmental Impact

Keywords

Unsustainable Mining Activities	Mining operations that extract mineral resources in a manner that causes long-term or irreversible environmental damage. These activities often involve poor land-use planning, inadequate waste management, lack of post-mining rehabilitation, and weak regulatory oversight.
Environmental Impact	The cumulative effect of mining on ecosystems, including deforestation, soil erosion, contamination of water bodies, air pollution, habitat destruction, and contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.
Mine Tailings	Residual materials left after the extraction of valuable minerals. Tailings often contain toxic substances such as mercury, cyanide, or heavy metals and pose serious environmental risks if improperly stored or managed.
Mine Rehabilitation	The process of restoring land and ecosystems after mining activities have ceased, including reforestation, soil stabilisation, and water treatment.

Introduction to Agenda

Unsustainable mining refers to extractive activities that actively degrade ecosystems, pollute water and air, and harm communities. Each type of mining activity, including surface and underground mining, artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and deep-sea mining, can each cause a range of environmental issues, such as soil erosion, heavy metals contamination, and biodiversity loss in affected areas. The issue of this agenda arises from global concerns that the rapid expansion of the mining industry, driven by the constantly increasing demand for metals and minerals essential for infrastructure and technology, has already far outpaced the policymakers' ability to put forward new sustainability regulations and frameworks. There must now be a global effort to re-evaluate current frameworks to ensure current and future regulations will be upheld and respected by institutions, with a push to transition away from unsustainable mining.

Environmental damage from mining hardly occurs in isolation. Water source pollution caused by improper tailings disposal is one of the most common unsustainable mining practices in relation to waste disposal, leading to groundwater sources and rivers—key water sources that are essential for the survival of reliant local communities—becoming poisoned by heavy metals and leading to significant health risks for exposed people and wildlife. These issues are especially severe in developing countries and in artisanal and small-scale mining sectors, where mining regulations are poorly enforced, and safety standards are low. This also makes mining a major concern within the broader discussion on how to properly implement international regulations while being considerate of the situation and struggles of developing nations, where finding multilateral, low-cost solutions to improve sustainability could be deemed more effective.

Brumadinho Tailings Dam Disaster (25 January, 2019)
Structural failure caused the dam to collapse, killing 272 people and severely damaging the local environment and ecosystems.

Addressing unsustainable mining is closely linked to the wider global goals of UNEP, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Clean Water (SDG 6), Responsible Production (SDG 12), Life Below Water (SDG 14), and Life on Land (SDG 15). While mining currently plays a significant role in the economies and development of resource-rich countries, the benefits must be weighed against the long-term socioeconomic and environmental costs. To summarise, this agenda calls for stronger cooperation and more concentrated international efforts, clearer environmental standards and regulations, and greater accountability to make sure that the mining sector continues to thrive while also supporting sustainable development rather than diminishing it.

Alluvial gold mining — example of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM)
Widely considered harmful towards the environment, also involving human health risks from water contamination and exposure to heavy metals.

Background

Historically, mining has been associated with severe environmental degradation. Large-scale deforestation for open-pit mines, contamination of water sources, and the displacement of ecosystems have been observed across multiple continents. In many cases, environmental damage persists long after mining operations end due to insufficient rehabilitation.

In recent decades, globalisation and increased demand for minerals have intensified mining activities, particularly in developing countries rich in natural resources. While mining can contribute significantly to national economies, weak regulatory frameworks often result in environmental exploitation. Artisanal and small-scale mining, though economically important, frequently operates outside formal regulations, contributing to mercury pollution and land degradation.

Emerging forms of extraction, such as deep-sea mining, raise additional concerns. Scientists warn that seabed ecosystems are poorly understood and may suffer irreversible damage if mining proceeds without comprehensive environmental safeguards.

Past and Current Actions

Internationally, action on unsustainable mining has been largely focused on reducing pollution and improving waste management by strengthening environmental governance overall, rather than focusing directly on creating better regulations for mining itself. These early efforts and proposed solutions, though proven effective in certain scenarios, have made no significant impact towards alternate situations where the problem lies in the mining industry itself.

All in all, this reflects a growing recognition in the international community that mining-related environmental harm cannot be addressed through vague or isolated measures alone.

In more recent years, there has been a more coordinated approach with UNEP and UNEA, with resolutions on minerals & metals having greater emphasis on the need for sustainable management, environmental awareness and protection, and the urgent need for better data and monitoring systems. Certain key areas are actively being researched to be implemented into policy, including ways to mitigate the harmful impacts of mining across the entire life cycle of the minerals, from the process of extraction all the way to waste disposal and site restoration.

This agenda pertains to a vast area of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

- SDG 6 Clean Water
- SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 15 Life Below Water
- SDG 16 Life on Land

The United Nations currently also have existing frameworks relevant to mining and mining pollution.

Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal

The Basel Convention regulates the international movement, handling, and disposal of hazardous wastes, including certain mining wastes such as tailings containing heavy metals. It aims to prevent the dumping of hazardous waste in states with limited environmental regulation and encourages environmentally sound waste management practices.

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

The Stockholm Convention restricts and eliminates the production and release of persistent organic pollutants, some of which are used or released during mineral extraction and processing. By controlling these toxic chemicals, the convention reduces long-term environmental contamination and health risks associated with mining activities.

UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions on Minerals and Metals

UNEA resolutions, including UNEA-5/12 (2022) and discussions at UNEA-6 (2024), emphasise environmentally responsible management of minerals and metals throughout their life cycle. These resolutions promote sustainable extraction, improved waste management, circular economy approaches, and stronger international cooperation, while reaffirming UNEP's coordinating role in mineral resource governance.

Minamata Convention on Mercury

The Minamata Convention seeks to protect human health and the environment from mercury pollution, with particular attention to artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), which is the largest source of mercury emissions globally.

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

The EITI is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder framework adopted by 55 countries to promote transparency and accountability in the extractive sector. It requires participating states to disclose information on revenues, contracts, and governance in mining and resource extraction, helping to address corruption and improve public oversight, though it does not impose environmental standards.

Points of Contention

The core tension of this agenda is the conflict between economic development and environmental protection. Many mineral-rich developing countries rely heavily on mining for employment, export earnings, and national development strategies. For these states, imposing strict environmental safeguards may increase production costs, reduce competitiveness, and discourage foreign direct investments. Conversely, environmentally vulnerable states and developed countries argue that unsustainable mining imposes long-term costs through ecosystem collapse, public health crises, water scarcity, and climate impacts that far outweigh short-term economic gains. This debate centres on whether environmental protection should be treated as a prerequisite for development or a constraint upon it.

Contextually, the North-South Divide and historical responsibility add to this debate. Many developing states argue that industrialised nations have historically benefited from resource extraction and industrial growth while externalising environmental damage. As a result, they call for financial assistance, capacity building, and leniency in implementing environmental standards. Developed countries often counter that environmental degradation is a present governance issue and that all states share responsibility for sustainable practices regardless of historical context.

There is also significant division over whether international environmental standards for mining should be **legally binding or voluntary**. Supporters of binding frameworks argue that voluntary guidelines lack enforcement and allow corporations to evade accountability.

Opponents warn that binding regulations could infringe on state sovereignty, limit national policy flexibility, and be impractical to enforce across diverse legal systems.

A complex area of contention surrounding this issue is that mining operations are frequently conducted by multinational corporations operating across multiple jurisdictions. This raises disputes over accountability when environmental damage occurs. Questions arise over whether corporations should be held liable under international mechanisms or solely under national law. Therefore, we expect debate on the extent to which UNEP should engage with private actors and whether international oversight of corporate behaviour is appropriate.

Disputes also arise over responsibility for post-mining rehabilitation. Many abandoned mines continue to pollute ecosystems decades after closure. Countries may disagree on whether international funds should be established for rehabilitation, whether corporations should be required to post financial guarantees, and how long environmental monitoring should continue after mining operations cease.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How can UNEP support the adoption of environmentally sustainable mining practices without undermining economic development?

2. Should international environmental standards for mining remain voluntary or become more binding?

3. How can effective mine rehabilitation and long-term environmental monitoring be ensured?

4. What role should UNEP play in addressing emerging risks such as deep-sea mining?

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Agenda 2: Strengthening Global Responsibility to Combat Coral Reef Bleaching and Protect Marine Biodiversity

Keywords

Coral Reef Bleaching	A biological stress response in corals caused primarily by elevated sea surface temperatures, where corals expel their symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae). This results in loss of colour, reduced energy intake, and increased susceptibility to disease and mortality if stressful conditions persist.
Marine Biodiversity	The diversity of life forms in marine ecosystems, including genetic diversity, species diversity, and ecosystem diversity. Coral reefs are among the most biodiverse marine ecosystems despite occupying a small fraction of the ocean floor.
Ocean Acidification	A decrease in ocean pH caused by the absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide, which weakens coral skeletons and disrupts marine food chains.
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	Designated ocean regions where human activities are regulated or restricted to conserve marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and ecosystem services.

Introduction to Agenda

Coral reefs are key marine ecosystems in the world's oceans, supporting roughly a quarter of all marine life despite covering less than 1% of the sea floor. To survive, corals build symbiotic relationships with algae, and when stressed by warmer water and pollution, the corals expel these algae, causing them to lose colour and die in a process known as coral bleaching. A variety of marine species are reliant on corals for food and shelter, so the death of corals translates to habitat loss and a decrease in marine biodiversity. With an increase in sea temperatures across the globe, the process of coral bleaching has been accelerated, meaning a large majority of coral reef ecosystems have been compromised and are now facing bleaching.

Coral ecosystems also provide vital resources and services to millions of people around the world, with the risk of things such as food security, coastal protection, and tourism income being lost. Many coastal and island communities rely directly on coral reefs for their fisheries to sustain their livelihoods, and as natural barriers to reduce the impact of storms and coastal erosion. As the reefs die out, these communities become far more vulnerable to economic instability and climate disasters, which highlights the fact that coral bleaching is not solely an environmental issue, but also a social and developmental concern, indicating that the depletion of coral reefs is not only a loss for marine life, but also a big loss for reliant local communities.

This agenda explores how global responsibility and cooperation must be used to combat coral bleaching and protect the dwindling marine biodiversity.

Scientific networks report ongoing mass bleaching affecting almost all reef areas worldwide, with these events being observed across multiple ocean basins. Efforts to protect coral reefs must therefore involve an understanding of both the underlying causes and the social, economic, and ecological consequences of coral bleaching and address each accordingly. Coral bleaching is directly caused by rising ocean temperatures and climate change patterns, and so this issue leads us to a bigger, global effort that must be made. Scientists and policymakers can agree that protecting marine biodiversity concerns not just local conservation efforts, but global climate action to limit global warming, along with combating other stressors such as pollution and overfishing.

Background of the Agenda

Over the past several decades, rising global temperatures have led to increasingly frequent and severe coral bleaching events. Mass bleaching events have affected major reef systems, including the Great Barrier Reef, reefs in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia. Recent global bleaching events demonstrate that coral reef decline is no longer a localised problem but a global environmental crisis.

Climate change is the primary driver of coral bleaching, as elevated sea surface temperatures disrupt the symbiotic relationship between corals and algae. However, local stressors such as nutrient runoff, plastic pollution, sedimentation, overfishing, and coastal development exacerbate coral vulnerability and reduce recovery potential.

Small island developing states and coastal developing countries are disproportionately affected by coral reef degradation due to their reliance on marine ecosystems for food security, tourism revenue, and coastal protection.

Past and Current Actions

Current efforts to address the issue of coral bleaching have involved a combination of international conservation initiatives, climate policy integration, and legal frameworks. One of the longest-standing partnerships is the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), which was established in 1994 as a collaboration between nations and organisations to increase reef conservation awareness and implement best practices worldwide. Other international efforts focus on integrating reef conservation into the large scope of biodiversity and climate commitments. One such example is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), encouraging the development of plans to increase cooperation with climate conventions, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities in marine environments and improve monitoring and response.

Organisations such as UNESCO's Resilient Reefs Initiative build on existing conservation strategies to further support coral reefs and support communities impacted and adapting to the consequences of climate change. These projects involve scientific expertise without leaving out the voices of local stakeholders, allowing environmental protection and social adaptation to happen together.

The following describes various international efforts and initiatives introduced to combat this issue.

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

The ICRI is a global partnership involving governments, international organisations, scientists, and civil society aimed at promoting the conservation and sustainable management of coral reefs. It facilitates knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and coordination of reef-related policies, while supporting national and regional coral reef action plans.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Under the Convention, coral reef protection is addressed through its programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity. The CBD promotes ecosystem-based management, reef resilience, and restoration efforts, and calls for integrated action with climate-related agreements and wetland protection frameworks to address multiple stressors affecting coral ecosystems.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The UNFCCC indirectly supports coral reef conservation by addressing the primary driver of mass coral bleaching: climate change. Through mitigation policies aimed at limiting global temperature rise, particularly under the Paris Agreement, the UNFCCC framework seeks to reduce ocean warming and acidification that threaten coral reef survival.

High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement)

The Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), commonly referred to as the High Seas Treaty, is a legally binding framework designed to strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

While coral reefs are predominantly located within national waters, the treaty contributes to broader ocean health through mechanisms such as marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments, and international cooperation.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolutions on Coral Reef Protection

UNGA resolutions on coral reef protection encourage Member States to integrate coral reef conservation into national sustainable development strategies, climate action plans, and ocean governance frameworks. Although non-binding, these resolutions help elevate coral reef degradation as a global concern and promote coordinated international responses.

Points of Contention

A central dispute lies in determining which states bear the greatest responsibility for combating coral reef bleaching. Developing coastal states argue that major industrialised emitters should take primary responsibility due to their historical contributions to climate change. Whereby developed countries often emphasise shared responsibility and national-level action.

Another point of contention is whether one should advocate for prioritising global emissions reductions as the only long-term solution to coral bleaching, or instead focus on adaptation strategies such as reef restoration, pollution control, and local resilience-building. The fact that there are scarce resources should force debate around which approach deserves priority in funding and call to action.

Which effectively leads us into the next area of contention: funding and financial commitments. The committee ought to determine whether funding for coral reef protection should be voluntary or mandatory. This shall also take into account the amount of responsibility that should be borne by coastal and non-coastal countries.

Perhaps another area of contention is the conflict between sovereignty and international oversight. International cooperation in marine conservation is likely to clash with the principle of protecting national sovereignty. Some states resist external monitoring or binding commitments within their territorial waters, while others argue that global environmental threats require stronger international governance.

Lastly, in resolving this agenda, a balance must be struck between economic livelihoods and conservation measures. Strict marine protection policies may restrict fishing, tourism, or coastal development, affecting local livelihoods. Balancing ecosystem protection with economic survival is a major source of tension, particularly for small island and coastal developing states.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer(QARMA)

1. How should global responsibility for coral reef protection be fairly distributed among states?

2. What mechanisms can ensure sustainable and predictable financing for reef conservation and restoration?

3. How can UNEP strengthen cooperation between global, regional, and national marine conservation efforts?

4. What balance should be struck between climate mitigation and adaptation strategies to protect coral reefs?

5. How can conservation measures protect marine ecosystems while safeguarding local livelihoods?

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