

Committee: United Nations Environmental Program**Topic: Managing Plastic Waste in Regards to the Pacific Garbage Patch****Report of the Chairs**

I. Theme of the Conference

Model United Nations San Antonio (MUNSA) is a conference dedicated to fostering authentic and passionate debate amongst delegates in order to generate solutions to current global issues. The theme of *MUNSA XXIV: Envision* encapsulates our mission to urge delegates to foresee a future in which these problems have been dissolved. With collaboration in mind, delegates from every committee are encouraged to visualize innovative resolutions and a prosperous world to come. Together, we will propel ourselves into an age in which brilliant ideas converge to transform our world and address its most paramount issues.

II. Rationale

Plastic is the ubiquitous item of our age; it is found in phone cases, bottles, forks, and car parts. As consumerism and demand for plastic products increase, the importance of plastic waste management grows. The accumulation of plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean, among other seas, draws attention to the critical role the oceans play in maintaining the environment and providing food and job security for millions of people. Of all plastic produced, only 30% of primary plastic is still in use, while 55% of plastic globally is discarded⁴. This percentage is smaller in high-income countries that tend to have effective waste management infrastructure. UNEP aims to assist countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices⁶. While it is near impossible to imagine a world without plastic, steps must be taken to limit our impact on the seas.

III. Background of the Topic

Plastic pollution in the ocean is divided into land-based and marine sources. While 70-80% of waste in the oceans originates from land, more than half (52%) of plastic in the GPGP (Great Pacific Garbage Patch) comes from intense fishing activity⁴. With the invention of plastic

in 1907, production has increased more than 200 fold since 1950⁵. Little thought was given to the biodegradable properties of plastic prior to the environmental movement of the 1960s & 1970s. UNEP was established in 1972 and marked the first major international effort regarding the environment. At the same time, articles published in *Science* regarding the prevalence of plastic pellets in the North Atlantic Ocean brought attention to plastic's impact on marine life⁵. In 1988, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Annex V) was ratified by 122 countries, and it has helped to reduce marine pollution². The GAP (Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities) was also established, but many sources of plastic pollution remain unregulated³.

IV. Contemporary Evidence of the Topic

To reach the oceans, plastic often travels from inland rivers. Among other major source rivers like the Amazon, the Yangtze River in China emitted 330,000 tonnes of plastic into the ocean in 2015. However, it is important to recognize that recycled plastic is traded internationally, and 72.4% of such plastic was imported into China and Hong Kong before a complete ban on plastic imports in 2017. The practice of exporting plastic has compounded the effects of inadequate waste management systems in the importing countries, and ocean-bound pollution could be reduced by 80% with improved infrastructure⁴.

In February 2017, UNEP launched the Clean Seas program (#CleanSeas on social media), aiming to reduce marine plastic pollution by targeting the production and consumption of non-recoverable and single-use plastic¹. While the GPGP is well known, several other accumulation zones exist in the Indian Ocean, North Atlantic, Medeterian Sea, South Pacific, and South Atlantic oceans⁴.

V. References and Research Resources

1. (n.d.). about. Retrieved from <https://www.cleanseas.org/about>

2. Department of Infrastructure, R. D. and C. (2018, January 2). The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). Retrieved from <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/maritime/environment/MARPOL.aspx>
3. Guern, C. L. (2018, March). When The Mermaids Cry: The Great Plastic Tide. Retrieved from <http://plastic-pollution.org/#legislation>
4. Ritchie, H., & Roser, M. (2018, September 1). Plastic Pollution. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution>
5. Rosane, O. (2019, March 22). Plastics: The History of an Ecological Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.ecowatch.com/plastics-history-ecological-crisis-2560978473.html>
6. (n.d.). Why does addressing land-based pollution matter? Retrieved from <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/addressing-land-based-pollution/why-does-addressing-land-based-pollution>

VI. Note to the Delegates

Thank you for deciding to participate in MUNSA XXIV. The experiences at MUNSA will allow you to explore the complexity of the world, accumulate knowledge, and find what you can do to take action and find solutions! We encourage you to take advantage of your time during and before the conference to actively engage in debate and to build research skills. If you have any questions, comments and/or concerns, please contact us. We look forward to meeting you come January 2019 and wish for a successful two days!

Rachel Kamata - rkamata0443@stu.neisd.net

Jared Godfrey - jgodfrey7687@stu.neisd.net

VI. Director General Contact Information

Joseph Ruelas - jruelas4856@stu.neisd.net

Dana Marion - dm Marion0455@stu.neisd.net