RENMUN VI

Finding Solace in Solidarity

March 6 - 7, 2021

CHAIR REPORT

United Nations Environment Programme

Chair Introduction

Greetings all! Welcome to the UN Environmental Program. I'm Michelle Geng, your Deputy Chair, and working alongside me is Ethan Yap, your Chair. We are delighted to be chairing for RENMUN VI and looking forward to fruitful debates amongst delegates.

For this conference, it may be labelled as a beginner-friendly committee, but I would like to kindly remind all delegates to do the thorough research and be well-prepared for each topic. Please make sure to read the chair reports, use the bibliography if you are unsure of where to start researching, but these documents should not be the only sources to consult with; we suggest each delegate should do additional research when preparing the materials. We hope through this conference, you will all grow and excel as delegates of MUN. So don't forget to eagerly participate and have fun!

Feel free to contact either of us if you have any questions or concerns - Ethan Yap (ethan.yap@online.island.edu.hk) or Michelle Geng (gengm1@stconline.edu.hk).

Management of Hazardous Waste in Developing Countries

In developing countries, the disposal of hazardous waste is often exacerbated by a lack of organized legislation, and poses a great environmental impact on the natural state of the country's land. The UN has defined the responsible management of hazardous waste and chemicals as a crucial part of developing a sustainable economy with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG). The poor conduct and improperly handled waste products then proceed to significantly increase health hazards and environmental pollution. This is an issue that has been prevalent across many nations and will continue to affect all surrounding areas.

Large quantities of hazardous wastes have not been documented due to the occasions where waste streams are mixed with general domestic or commercial waste. This is then disposed of in an uncontrollable manner, such as burning, burying, or placed into the sewer. The burning of hazardous waste is an extremely dangerous problem due to the flammable or explosive properties of the waste itself. The three different hazardous waste facilities are treatment, storage, and disposal facilities (TSDFs). Many of the facilities are under high security and strict safety regulations with leak detection systems, dispersal controls, and removal systems.

Currently, in developing countries, there are limited options for hazardous waste disposal, for example the lack of commercial hazardous waste collection services, periodic drop-off services, and the absence of funds for advanced technology for the management program. In many cases, acute economic related difficulties make hazardous waste management a low priority for many of these countries. As for high-income areas, many multinational companies have shifted their industrial plants to low-wage countries which have more lenient regulations for hazardous waste management in factories. This results in more waste collected and improperly disposed of in the countries that lack the technology and legislation to actively focus on waste management. .

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Hazardous Waste	Hazardous wastes are materials which are discarded after use with radioactive or dangerous properties. Explosive, oxidising, flammable, irritant, toxic, etc., are all examples of hazardous properties. Commonly found as hazardous waste after use are e-products, vehicles, clinical and medical, fuel products (e.g. oil), gas extraction.
Commercial waste	Waste generated by the operation of a business or facility.
Sustainable Development Goal 12	'To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' and one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.
Waste Trafficking	Illegal export of waste, and it is commonly found that developed countries unlawfully export wastes to countries such as China, and other Asian and West African countries.
Treatment (disposal method)	Using incernation or oxidation to alter the composition of hazardous wastes. Treatment processes often enable the waste to be reused in manufacturing or dramatically reduce the amount of dangerous waste.
Storage (disposal method)	Hazardous waste must be stored in containers, tanks, containment buildings, drip pads, or waste piles.
Disposal (disposal method)	Permanently containing hazardous wastes. A landfill created in a carefully constructed unit to protect the surrounding area.

Background Information

The universal process of the five major stages of development for the hazardous waste management program are: problem identification and legislation; selection of a lead agency; promulgation of rules and regulations; development of treatment and disposal capacity; and creation of an enforcement program. All countries follow this, however the developing countries have a shortage of resources and face another set of challenges to create a proper management system. Many suffer from waste dumping and mismanagement, and general lack of awareness from citizens.

Several international organizations (IOs), notably the EEC, NATO, OECD, and WHO addressed the concerns and raised crucial questions regarding the basis of toxic waste. ALthough a collective effort has been made to pressure national authorities to gather information on the problem, little has been done. Most research has focused on Western industrialized countries as major producers of hazardous waste, however there have been many misleading figures given about how much waste is produced, as a research study used diluted dishwater for one of the factors for the United States, while not applying the same factor to other countries. One of the earliest actions taken upon hazardous waste management was when the League of Nations Health Organization suggested the waste be fed to animals, dumped into water, dumped on land, or burnt. By the early twentieth century, all methods were being practiced in industrialized areas. The toxic waste was clearly poisonous, but no action was taken upon researching and developing methods into proper disposal of the waste.

Hazardous waste began gaining public attention from industrialized countries in the 1970s due to the several incidents in former waste sites. One of the accidents was in Love Canal, a neighborhood in New York that had large quantities of chemicals and industrial waste dumped into the canal for several decades. It has been reported that when a housing community was planned on top of the capped canal, toxic wastes started seeping out the ground and caused serious health concerns, frequent miscarriages and debilitating illnesses. Similar cases also were discovered in Germany and the Netherlands. The second incident was near Nuneaton, Britain. Drums of cyanide waste were discovered on a site used as a children's playground, this led to the Parliament to pass *The Deposit of*

Poisonous Waste Act, which was regarded as the first piece of legislation that mentioned hazardous waste at the time.

Currently, the situation of toxic waste in underdeveloped management systems in low-income countries is addressed through the UN committees and IOs who are continuously pressuring national governments to take action on the environmental impacts. Many developing countries still do not have dedicated hazardous landfill disposal facilities. The challenges the countries face include social acceptance, regulatory, technically skilled manpower, financial resources, and limited technology. It has been confirmed that an important fraction of hazardous waste is still mixed with non-hazardous wastes, found through landfilling, now further producing serious impacts on the environment. With the government rarely addressing this issue, it will make it more difficult for local authorities to identify areas with problems and create achievable solutions.

Potential Clashes

Political Tension Between High-income and Low-income Countries

A political outraged happened when an internal memo of the World Bank, written in 1991 by Lant Prichett and signed by chief economist, Larry Summers, wrote to call for moving 'dirty' industries into 'under polluted' low-income countries because 'the economic costs would be lowest in low-wage areas', 'costs of pollution were lowest', and 'poor societies with high infant mortality rates had other concerns than those regarding the risks for cancer at old age.' This memo was then leaked to the Brazilian minister for the environment and has been the object of outrage by politicians and activists alike. According to Prichett, this was meant to be a sarcastic text commenting critically on the economics of 'supposed ubiquitous benefits' of free trade and was taken out of context. However, Pellow, a specialist in Environmental Justice Studies, argued that in practice, the World Bank has encouraged the transfer for Western industrial waste to low-income countries.

Movement of Large Enterprises to Developing Countries

The manufacturing sector provides opportunities for economic growth in low-income countries, however it comes with the risk of increase of pollution and destruction of the natural environment. A prominent recent report of the

manufacturing pollution in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. "Polluting industries are increasingly prevalent in lower-come countries, where environmental and public health protections are limited, and there are few resources to implement cleaner methods of production," stated by Alessandro Moscuzza, a environment advisor at Foregin, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom. This addresses the concerns of waste being mismanaged in developing countries, which relates to how hazardous waste dangerously impacts the environment and the health of citizens in the country with a steep increase of waste output due to the rise of large industries migrating. These countries also do not have the funds to create a complex management system that can sustainably regulate all the waste coming in.

Illegal E-Waste from the EU

The UN has released a statement touching upon the electrical waste (e-waste) that is being illegally exported and dumped in developing countries. Electronic goods are made up of hundreds of different materials, and many often contain toxic substances such as lead, mercury, arsenic, etc. When these wastes are improperly disposed of, the toxic materials can seep out into the environment and destroy natural land.

According to The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), almost one in three containers leaving the EU contained illegal e-waste. This caused a launch of criminal investigations into 40 different companies. Although it is legal to export discarded goods to developing countries, only if they can be reused or refurbished, most of it is sent under 'false pretenses'.

Furthermore, Greenpeace (2010) reported that between 1988 and 1994, 94 attempted or actual cases of illegal export of a total of 10 million tons of hazardous waste residues were identified. Few countries understand the scale of the problem due to no track being kept on how much e-waste and other toxic wastes are produced.

Hazardous Waste Sites in Low-income, Minority Neighborhoods

A study from researchers at the University of Michigan and Montana has discovered that the placement of U.S. hazardous waste facilities are generally in low-income neighborhoods. There are clear patterns of racial and socioeconomic disparities in the distribution of these faculties. Hazardous waste sites and polluting industrial factories are disproportionately located in nonwhite and

low-come areas. The explanation of these patterns is the fact that there would be the 'least resistance' from the people who lived there and land is much cheaper in those areas. However, people who live near these sites also have an increased risk of contracting illnesses and often would be unable to afford the right healthcare to cure or treat the specific disease.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	**Involvement with the Issue**
The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	OECD was one of the first international organizations to bring up the seriousness of hazardous waste mismanagement. This IO has created the OECD Control system for waste recovery. This is to facilitate the trade of recyclables between OECD member nations and aims to transport it in an environmentally sound and economically efficient manner. OECD also reviews the member nation's activity in waste trade and creates Council Decisions i.e the Control of Transboundary Movements of Wastes Destined for Recovery Operations; where nations would have to agree upon.
European Union (EU)	The EU is one of the biggest waste exporters, about 21 million tonnes in 2018, with 7.8 million being hazardous waste. In the EU, transboundary shipments of waste are regulated by the Waste Shipment Regulation (WShipR). The EU has companies which have also illegally trafficked wastes to developing countries in South Asia, Turkey, and Africa.
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	In 2018, the US exported 1.1 million tonnes of waste with 78% that went to regions with poor waste management systems, such as the Southeast Asian countries.

	The US also has the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) which is controlled by the EPA. The RCRA was used to address the increasing problems the US faced as there was a growing volume of municipal and industrial waste. It created the framework of hazardous waste disposal, constantly regulates, and reviews the management.
China (+ Taiwan, SAR)	China has one of the biggest hazardous waste management industries, and is often the target country which hazardous waste is disposed to, taking in nearly half of the global output. However, recently (2017) China has reduced the purchased amount of wastes, and will limit the entry of 'foreign waste' by banning two dozen types of materials that often contain 'dirty wastes' or hazardous waste. This is a consequence of heavy pollution and an increase of illegal dumping of chemical waste in China from the past few decades.
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	South-East Asia is a main area where waste from the EU, US, and other developed countries are commonly illegally transported to. ASEAN countries face serious challenges in chemical waste management, and with its adverse impacts on human health and the environment, this issue has been put as a priority. The trash influx in the nations have significantly increased after China's ban of recycled imports. Now, ASEAN parties are urged by Greenpeace to start partially or fully banning waste imports from other countries, as it is rapidly becoming a site of most of the global waste.

Possible Solutions

Strict Global Regulations of Import and Export of Waste

As hazardous waste transboundary activity is often overlooked by governments, implementing stricter regulations and increasing penalties for illegal waste trafficking would hopefully decrease the amount of illegal and unmanageable waste to travel to developing countries. For example, an action that could be taken is to provide means for waste producers to be able to identify more easily and get in contact with trustworthy waste handlers through an accreditation system, therefore there is a decreased likelihood of illegal and non-recyclable waste reaching other countries. Furthermore, establishing a formal international organization or body for the coordination of enforcement related to fighting waste trafficking, which can be implemented under the UNEP or Interpol.

Municipalities Working to Raise Awareness and Small-scale Collection Services for Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste sites also occupy large regions of land, which cannot be residentalized or commercially used due to the dangerous nature of the waste. This means that countries with a small land mass will struggle to implement a waste site. The introduction for hazardous waste management to become more public and community centered since it is an issue that could impact all people who live near a waste site. For household toxic wastes like used batteries, pesticides, e-waste, etc. can be regulated within a community to prevent illegal dumping and polluting the nearby environment. For example, a plan to create collection services that can safely collect and bring the hazardous waste to treatment facilities, which ultimately leads to a cleaner and less dangerous surrounding to reside in.

Increase Global Funding for Technology and Research into Hazardous Wastes

Since many developing countries suffer from the challenges to provide adequate technology to dispose of hazardous wastes safely. An act where companies or nations that export waste should set up treatment facilities in the receiving countries. This eliminates the lack of sufficient technology in the developing country, and allows for more regulated and low-risk transport of such wastes. The exporting nation will also receive the benefit of being able to export the waste into

another country which has bigger land mass to contain and control all the imports. If a country is unable to provide funding or infrastructure for the facility, then there should be a type of treaty or legal negotiation between the two countries.

Past Actions

The Basel Convention

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was a multilateral agreement negotiated by the UNEP in 1989 in Basel, Switzerland. As of February 2019, it has 187 parties, which is near global coverage. The objective of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment against the negative effects of hazardous wastes. The principal aims of the Basel Convention are: reduction of hazardous waste generation and the promotion of environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, wherever the place of disposal; the restriction of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes except where it is environmentally sound to dispose of; and a regulatory system applying to cases where transboundary movements are permissible. There are prohibitions for example, parties are not allowed to export any waste to Antarctica, a country that is not a party of the Basel Convention, or to a party that has denied the import of any hazardous wastes. It strives to protect countries and their people from unwanted hazardous waste which they lack capacities to manage in an environmentally sound manner.

The Waigani Convention

The Waigani Convention is to ban the importation into forum island countries of hazardous and radioactive wastes and to control the transboundary movement and management of hazardous wastes within the South Pacific Region. It came into force in 2001, and targets waste control in the South Pacific. The main effect is to ban all hazardous wastes and enable Australia to receive hazardous wastes exported from the South Pacific Island Countries which are not parties to the Basel Convention.

Guiding Questions

- How would developing countries get funds to create infrastructure for hazardous waste sites?
- Are developed countries partially responsible for the waste and pollution generated in developing countries?
- How should the UNEP act upon nations who do not comply with the rules and regulations?
- Is the focus on waste disposal or waste generation?
- What solutions can be implemented to control present hazardous waste pollution?
- Why are there still illegal exports, even when countries are legally bound to the Basel Convention?
- How should developed countries provide adequate service for countries that import their wastes?
- How should the people of a country help to fight the issue of waste trafficking?

Bibliography

- https://www.worldwidewastejournal.com/articles/10.5334/wwwj.39/
- https://www.investopedia.com/articles/markets-economy/090716/5-countries-produce-most-waste.asp
- https://www.intechopen.com/books/management-of-hazardous-wastes/the-management-of-hazardous-waste-in-developing-countries
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_waste_trade
- https://www.epa.gov/hwpermitting/hazardous-waste-management-facilities-and-units
- http://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c09/e1-08-03-00.pdf
- https://blog.sharpsinc.com/history-hazardous-waste-rcra
- http://doi.org/10.5334/wwwj.39
- https://unctad.org/news/report-maps-manufacturing-pollution-in-sub-saharan-africa-and-south-asia
- https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/toxic-e-waste-dumped-in-poor-nations-says-united-nations

- https://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/hazardous_index.htm
  https://environment.asean.org/awgcw/
- https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-3&chapter=27&clang=_en