

Committee Guide

UNEP 2023

Our World at a Turning Point

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BREAKING OLD PATTERNS

***Protecting Fragile
Ecosystems from
Exploitation***



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1. Personal Introduction

1.1. Lenja Hinrichs

Dear Delegates,

My name is Lenja Hinrichs and I feel honoured to welcome you to OLMUN 2023. I am 17 years old and am in grade 12 at the Cäcilienschule Oldenburg. This OLMUN will be my third time participating, but it's my first conference as a Chair. In 2021, during my first MUN, I was a delegate in UNEP myself and was excited to witness many interesting debates. I enjoy doing sports and I play the piano and more recently have started playing the guitar. I take a great interest in the environment and have participated in my school's projects multiple times, which is why I look forward to chairing UNEP. I am excited to see all of you soon and wish you all the best for your preparation for the conference!

Yours,

Lenja Hinrichs

1.2. Kim Lea Schneider

Dear delegates of this year's UNEP,

My name is Kim Lea Schneider and I am delighted to welcome you to UNEP at OLMUN 2023. I'm 20 years old and I graduated from the Gymnasium Cäcilienschule in Oldenburg last summer. Right now, you can find me travelling in Seoul, South Korea, but I'll be back just in time for the conference. When I have time, I love to do Yoga, listen to music, take photos with my aunt's old analog camera or do other creative things. In the morning my brain can't focus without coffee, so you'll probably never see me without my coffee cup in the committee sessions.

I attend OLMUN regularly since 2019 and I have already experienced the conference from the perspective of a delegate, a normal IC member and a student officer. But my first MUN experience was actually at the SPIMUN in St. Petersburg a few years ago.

For me, OLMUN is not only about the debates, but meeting new people, building new connections, taking personal challenges and having a good time. Since it is my first time as a Chair this year (and Lenja's as well) please be patient with us, if we have not everything figured out yet. We're ready to take this great challenge and to work hard to ensure you the best experience possible.

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With this said I would like to encourage everyone of you to really contribute to the discussion. If you are well prepared, you'll easily be able to take part in hot debates and interesting committee sessions. I'm eager to get to know all of you and your ideas at this year's conference!

Sincerely,
Kim Lea Schneider

2. How to use this guide

The topic for our debate will be "Protecting Fragile Ecosystems from Exploitation". To debate successfully, it is necessary for you to really understand the topic and all its side effects. To help you, we created this Committee Guide, which will give you a short overview of UNEP and the topic in general as well as break down the most important measures already taken by the UN, possible solutions and provide you with further resources for your research at the end. In order to be fully prepared we are also advising you to read the **Rules of Procedure**, which can be found on our website.

First, we would like to state that this guide is simply to help you to get started with your research, but it should not be your only source of information. We expect you to conduct your own in-depth research, with the focus on your country's individual point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to also do some research on your country itself e.g., its past, culture, allies, political structure, financial supporters, Please look into the **OLMUN Handbook** for help. Furthermore, for the sake of an interesting debate it is necessary that you stick to your country's policy, even though it might not align with your own personal point of view.

Finally, we would like to inform you that **we limit our topic "Protecting Fragile Ecosystems from Exploitation" to the sub-point "Protecting terrestrial Ecosystems from Exploitation"** so that we can keep our debate within the given time frame. We also recommend that you focus only on the most important ecosystems in your own country. An all-encompassing resolution with detailed measures for all countries can emerge later during the exchange in the lobbying phase.

With that said, please prepare well for the week. For all the first timers get out of your comfort zone, the conference is much more fun by actively helping to develop a superb resolution. If you have any questions or concerns don't hesitate to reach out to one of us, we're happy to support you anytime.

3. About UNEP

In order to understand your tasks and the spirit of UNEP, we will provide you with a summary regarding the establishment of UNEP and the main concerns it targets.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was established in 1972 in Nairobi, Kenya and is tasked to ensure the environmental aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is the only UN-institution solely concerning environmental issues. Its focus is on dealing with the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. In this context, UNEP has a leading position as well as an advisory and educational one. Generally, UNEP's goals can be summarized in the following quote:

“UNEP’s mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.”

More in depth that includes several aspects in particular:

- Making and sharing technological and financial progress in order to raise further public awareness, help understand climate science and to lessen the effects and causes of climate change. This includes supporting efforts to improve eco-friendliness by e.g. companies and institutions.
- Reducing the risk of crisis in areas prone to environmental disasters by providing guidance towards environment-friendly societal outlines (legislative and institutional) in affected countries.
- Promoting the protection and restoration of negatively affected ecosystems in accordance with the SDGs.
- Helping governments establish, implement and strengthen laws, programs etc., while focussing not only on global or country wide measures, but also regional ones. This improves sustainable development. UNEP also creates platforms where most of today's valid international contracts concerning our environment have been signed.
- Restricting harmful substances and hazardous waste to improve life for humans and nature and concentrating on the environmentally efficient use of resources in general.

Therefore, UNEP is of great importance to further the discussion and conversation around climate change and environmental problems. The programme's tasks are very vast and far-reaching. Thus it is not a big surprise that UNEP is the leading global authority for issues regarding the environment and sets decisively the priorities of the global environmental pol-

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icy, working with major parties and stakeholders in conflicts. The governing body of UNEP is the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the successor of its Governing Council, which was composed of 58 member States. The UN Environment Assembly, with a universal membership, is now composed of 193 Member States. The UNEA is supplemented by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The current Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme is Inger Andersen.

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The whole surface of our Earth is a series of connected ecosystems. They include biotic (living) parts such as animals, plants, and other organisms as well as abiotic parts (nonliving) like the weather, the temperature and landscapes. Every factor in an ecosystem depends on every other factor, either directly or indirectly and all together they are the basis of human life. Examples of ecosystems are among others the tundra, tropical rainforests, mountains, grasslands, taiga, deserts, temperate deciduous forests, and marine ecosystems. As explained above we will focus on the terrestrial ecosystems, therefore any mention of marine ecosystems is irrelevant for our discussions.

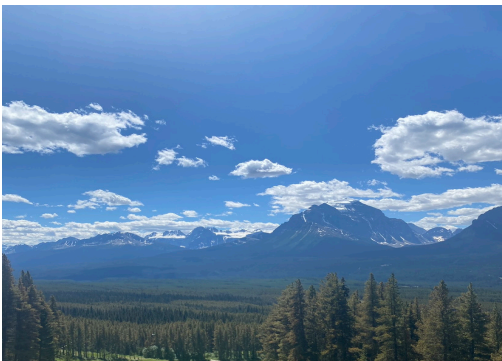


Image © Lenja Hinrichs

While there are various ecosystems on land and in the oceans around the world, terrestrial ecosystems are those that primarily live on land. The type of terrestrial ecosystem found in a particular place is dependent on the temperature range, the average amount of precipitation received, the soil type, and amount of light it receives. Altogether, terrestrial ecosystems cover 144,150,000 km², or 28% of the Earth's surface. Despite the fact that terrestrial ecosystems provide multiple functions for example, resource use and potential uptake of carbon dioxide, among others and other ecosystem services on which society depends, today humans pose a great threat to them.

For thousands of years, humans have interacted with ecosystems. Many cultures developed around nearby ecosystems and have adapted their lifestyle to the natural conditions of their environment. As human populations have grown, however, people have overtaken many ecosystems. The destruction of entire ecosystems by human beings has been called ecocide, or murder of the environment. The strategic destruction of e.g. forests

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(deforestation), that contain a lot of biodiversity and affect the environment positively, for short-term profit results in degradation and climate change. Furthermore, global warming also has an impact on the increasing desertification on Earth. In the same way as the increasing number of forest fires are changing our desert landscapes sustainably and unsustainable forms of agriculture in corresponding regions lead to increasing salinization of the soil and in the next step endanger local vegetation.

These are only a few examples of the effects humans have on terrestrial ecosystems. However, humans have influenced every ecosystem in this world, if only by the influence of the general rising temperatures through the burning of fossil fuels and the growth of animal agriculture, which has led to large amounts of greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide and methane) in the atmosphere.

Some ecosystems can recover from destruction. However, irreparable damage has been caused to many and the exploitation doesn't seem to stop. Even though healthy ecosystems are necessary for producing ecosystem services essential for human survival, such as the production of oxygen. The protection (and in some cases restoration) of the ecosystems is crucial to achieve set goals as the SDGs. We advise you to look carefully, which ecosystems exist within the country of your delegation and where their issues with human-made exploitation lie.

The United Nations have certainly taken measures to protect the ecosystems. For example, the General Assembly has announced the “UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030” on 1 March 2019. This is supposed to be a “rallying call for the protection and revival



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of ecosystems all around the world, for the benefit of people and nature.” By restoring and protecting ecosystems, global goals can be met, and humanity's standard of living is improved, so the idea.

The UN task force on financing for development has issued that more financial means are to be invested into protecting ecosystems through multiple commitments. Not to mention the establishment of goal 15 “Life on Land” of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has made the protection and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems a global issue.

5. Possible Solutions

- Species protection is one way to help combat extinction.
- The creation of local, national, and international legislation can help prevent the loss of endangered species. In addition, captive-breeding programs may help protect endangered species by maintaining a healthy population of endangered species in captivity.
- The outlawing or condemning of practices as for example 'slash and burn agriculture' and ensuring constant forest growth through legislative powers is crucial in protecting ecosystems connected to or consisting of forests.
- Planting leguminous plants, which extract nitrogen from the air and fix it in the ground, can help restore soil fertility.
- A further approach would be finding new ways of rotating crops to protect the fragile soil in forest, grassland as well as desert areas and searching for more sustainable forms of agriculture, which do not include or rather limit the amount of used toxic pesticides and mono-cropping.
- Habitat protection, preservation, and restoration is essential in protecting biodiversity. This ensures that the protected species have places to live that can support them.
- Recycling products made from nonrenewable resources (such as plastic, which is made from oil) is one way to reduce the negative impacts of this resource exploitation. In addition, the development and use of renewable resources, like solar or wind energy, can help decrease the harmful effects of resource exploitation.
- Ensuring the goals regarding fossil fuel emissions, rising temperatures etc. are met is an important step to protect all ecosystems.



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As you can see, our topic this year is quite large and multifaceted, and depending on the ecosystem, there are many different problems and approaches to solutions. We tried to list some of them, but the list is by far not complete. We once again remind you to conduct your own research based on the country of your delegation, our Committee Guide should merely

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act as a guideline. Please also remember that the first step towards protection from exploitation is always awareness and education of society.

Furthermore, it would be useful to consider possible partner delegations that might support your views and resolution, as well as countries that are less likely to agree with your actions, in order to have an interesting debate later. The financing of your ideas also plays an important role in the drafting of your resolution, so keep that in mind. Although the precise amount does not matter, make sure your ideas are attainable.

If you have any questions whatsoever regarding the conference or your research, please do not hesitate to ask us for help!

We look forward to see you at the conference and wish you a successful research and preparation time!

Lenja and Kim

6. Helpful Links

- <https://jo.chm-cbd.net/biodiversity/main-jordanian-ecosystems/major-threat-ecosystems/major-threat-to-ecosystems>
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-terrestrial-ecosystem/>
- <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30919/UNDecade.pdf>
- <https://unece.org/un-decade-ecosystem-restoration>
- https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Protecting-Ecosystems_WBG_IATF-Issue-Brief.pdf
- <https://developmentfinance.un.org/protecting-ecosystems>
- [HandbookOLMUN2023](#)

Please check out the **Rules of Procedure** and the **OLMUN Handbook** too.





OLMUN 2023

**22nd International
Session**