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# United Nations Environment Programme

Distr.: General  
23 May 2011

Original: English

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## MUNSA XVI

November 30-December 2

Agenda item 1

### **Identifying and analyzing the effects of overpopulation on ecosystems around the world**

#### **Report of the Chair**

#### **I. Statement of the Problem**

1. Commonly referred to as the worst environmental problem, overpopulation is not an easily solved issue. [5] If not addressed promptly, the ability to repair damages may be impaired. [6] Before any action can be taken by this committee or any other, the repercussions of overpopulation on the worlds ecosystems need to be identified so as to find ways for the population to sustain itself.

2. An ecosystem refers to the interactions of a community of living organisms in a particular area and its nonliving environment.[7]. Overpopulation is the condition of having a population so dense as to cause environmental deterioration, an impaired quality of life, or a population crash. [11] This conference will focus on the effects humans have on their physical and biological surroundings that make up the environment caused by overpopulation. Delegates should be prepared to discuss the impact overpopulation has had on the environment in past decades in addition to problems that can surface if solutions are not reached.

3. While the number of people struggling to survive increases, resource depletion is becoming more of a concern. For example, 60 percent of Indias groundwater, a primarily non-renewable resource, will be at critical levels in the next twenty years.[8] Water shortages like these are becoming increasingly common worldwide. In the United States, 40 percent of rivers and 46 percent of lakes are too polluted for fishing, swimming, or aquatic life. [1] Problems associated with pollution are of growing concern everywhere. In 64 of 105 developing countries, the population is growing faster than the food supply. [3] If solutions are not reached, the environment could be pushed to its limits. Global climate change resulting from greenhouse gas emissions could quite possibly spiral out of control. Humans could eliminate biodiversity and cause the extinction of many plant and animal species. [4] Millions could

starve from lack of food and water. Taking action to help the population to grow in a more environmentally-friendly way could prevent this from happening in the next few generations.

## II. History of the Problem

4. Although important now, overpopulation was not discussed as a major problem until recently. It is estimated that the global population will reach nine billion by 2050 from seven billion at the end of 2011, although it took eighteen centuries for the population to reach just one billion. [12] An increase in population results in an increased demand for resources and a greater strain on our environment. Damage to the worlds ecosystems could become irreparable and stunt economic, political, and industrial development.

5. Overpopulation was not recognized until the last century, and especially the past several decades. Several factors including World War II, huge industry, and a transition to a tertiary economy resulted in a population boom in the United States in the 50s and 60s. Although many core countries growth rates are slowing (including those of Germany and Italy), the population continues to grow worldwide with most of the population growth occurring in developing countries. [9] In relation to the population growth, dependence on renewable and non-renewable resources is growing. Climate change has been under speculation since the mid-1920s and has been greatly debated in recent years. Other environmental impacts, including pollution and water shortages, are becoming increasingly harmful.

6. In the past, the UN and its committees have investigated many of the environmental consequences associated with global overpopulation. The Kyoto Protocol, which is supported by most industrialized countries, was created to reduce greenhouse gas emissions internationally. [10] The Protocol worked effectively between 1990 to 2000 and decreased overall emissions by 3 percent. Despite this, rates rose again by 2001. [11] UNEP currently lists climate change and resource efficiency as top priorities. Overpopulation, however, has not been considered.

## III. Potential Solutions

7. Delegates should keep the following in mind:

- Capabilities of the UN and UNEP
- Consequences of overpopulation on the environment, such as pollution and resource depletion  
as well as:
  - How can the United Nations aid the environmental effects of overpopulation?
  - How will the solution affect all countries in the committee?
  - What will be the negative effects will be cause by the solution?

## IV. Position and research tips

8. The delegate should remember to use reliable sources when researching for the conference. Staying true to their countrys position in the position paper and throughout the conference is important.

9. The delegate should keep in mind while doing research:

- How is the country being affected environmentally?
- Is overpopulation an issue in the country?
- What has the country done to prevent or repair environmental damage?

**Useful Web Sources**

- <<http://www.unep.org>>
- <<http://www.cia.gov>>
- <<http://www.bbc.com>>

## V. Note to Delegates

Delegates,

I am so excited to be your chair next year and hear all of the interesting debate! See you at MUNSA XVI!

–Rachel Richter

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