Dear Distinguished Delegates,

Welcome to the 2019 Valdosta State University Model United Nations Conference! The students of Valdosta State University would like to thank you for participating in the General Assembly Plenary committee. My name is Maribel Sepulveda, and I am a senior political science major at VSU. Model United Nations has taught me how to negotiate more effectively and has given me the opportunity to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. Miranda Hamilton is a senior political science major with a minor in history and she is an aspiring lobbyist. William Hamilton is a sophomore, also at Valdosta State University, who wishes to be an educator for students like me and you! We all hope that you will take advantage of this unique opportunity and that you will produce work that will inspire!

The General Assembly is one of the six main organs within the United Nations which was formed in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. All 193 Member States hold representation and have a vote. During the month of September all Member States meet in the General Assembly Hall in New York for what is known as the annual GA session.

The topics for the General Assembly Plenary are:

I. The Environmental Impacts of Oil Exploration and Production

II. Worker Exploitation in Developing Countries

III. Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Girls

I wish you the very best at conference and in your future goals delegates! See you all in March!

This background guide was prepared by:

Maribel Sepulveda
Miranda P. Hamilton
William M. Hamilton
History of the General Assembly Plenary

The first General Assembly meeting happened on January 10th, 1946 in the Methodist Central Hall in London. The General Assembly currently meets under its president or secretary-general in annual sessions at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York City, the main part of which lasts from September to December. During the 1980s, the Assembly became a forum for "North-South dialogue" which is the discussion of issues between industrialized nations and developing countries. These issues came to the fore because of the phenomenal growth and changing makeup of the UN membership. In 1946, the UN had 51 members. It now has 193, of which more than two-thirds are developing countries. Because of their numbers, developing countries are often able to determine the agenda of the Assembly (using coordinating groups like the G77), the character of its debates, and the nature of its decisions. For many developing countries, the UN is the source of much of their diplomatic influence and the principal outlet for their foreign relations initiatives.

The General Assembly is the only one out of 6 main organs of the UN in which all member states have equal representation. The UN Charter states that the GA should discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues such as:

- Development
- Peace and security
- International law
- Budgetary concerns
- Suspension or expulsion of members

The Assembly may make recommendations on any matters within the scope of the UN, except matters of peace and security under Security Council consideration.

I. The Environmental Impacts of Oil Exploration and Production

"A century ago, petroleum—what we call oil—was just an obscure commodity; today it is almost as vital to human existence as water."

-James Buchan

Background Information:

The use of petroleum dates back to almost two thousand years ago when early Chinese civilizations used it to evaporate brine and produce salt. Early Japanese civilizations also have record of using petroleum—which they referred to as “burning water”—for lighting and heating purposes. The first successful and modern oil well was drilled by Colonel Edwin Drake in Titusville, Pennsylvania in 1859. During this time, gasoline was only a by-product from the production of kerosene which was used as lighting fluid in the 19th century.
By the 20th century, the invention of the automobile sparked interest in the use of gasoline as fuel. Before World War I, it was still undetermined whether automobiles would use steam, electricity, or gasoline for fuel. However, during WWI manufacturing of vehicles rose along with the demand of petroleum based fuel. Starting in the 1950s, oil and natural gas became the main sources of primary energy for the increasing world population. The benefits of petroleum consumption however, carry with it major environmental impacts on a global scale including air pollution, climate change, and oil spills.

Air pollution

Oil refineries are one of the largest sources of air pollution. Chemicals such as BTEX compounds (Benzene, Toluene, Ethylbenzene, and Xylene), nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, and sulfur dioxide are released from petroleum refineries into the environment. Exposure to these chemicals can lead to health implications such as: respiratory issues, developmental and reproductive problems, and cancer. Refineries are the single largest stationary source of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), the primary cause of urban smog.

Climate Change

The overexposure of chemicals into the atmosphere has also led to significant change in climate. Over the last decade, chemicals such as carbon monoxide have been forming a greenhouse effect in the atmosphere, trapping in the sun’s heat. This has led to an increase in the earth’s temperature as well as the ocean. The ocean has risen by .3 degrees Fahrenheit since 1969. This has led to the calcification of small marine life, thus altering the food chain, affecting more than 1 billion people who rely on the ocean for protein. A rise in temperature also leads to a rise in sea levels, which has led to the flooding of many coastal regions around the world. A rise in extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, can also be traced back to the phenomenon of climate change.

Oil Spills

The most appalling and noticeable environmental effects of petroleum production has been oil spills into the oceans. For more than 30 years, oil refineries have been accidentally spilling tons of oil into our earth’s oceans. Apart from the mercury-contaminated drilling fluids that are released, the oil spills lead to much greater consequences. Animals both in and outside of the water are harmed and potentially killed. The dark layer above the miles of ocean prevent light and oxygen from reaching the deep-sea creatures that vitally need it. Oil spills are the type of detrimental effects that take years to restore.

Current Situation:

Currently, there are 70 million barrels of oil being produced by about 700 oil refineries in the world today. An average of 214,000 pounds of air pollutants are released into the atmosphere from each oil platform including:

- fifty tons of nitrous oxides
- thirteen tons of carbon monoxide
• six tons of sulfur oxides
• five tons of volatile organic hydrocarbons
• all precursors to smog, acid rain, and global warming

In addition, there are 492 million pounds of volatile organic compounds (precursors of liver, kidney, and central nervous system diseases), that are also being released. A single platform discharges over 90,000 metric tons of drilling fluid and metal cuttings into the ocean.\(^9\)

*Global Warming*

Global warming is at an all-time high, and scientists predict, if no action is taken, it will continue to rise. Ten out of the last thirteen years have been the warmest years in Earth’s history. Global warming has led to the increasing and strengthening capacity of natural disasters.\(^10\) The clearing of land for industrial purposes, while burning large amounts of petroleum worldwide has increased concentrations of greenhouse gases that causes the sun’s heat to stay trapped in the lower parts of the atmosphere. A warmer earth will bring about significant damages to the residents of the planet such as:

• an increase of evaporation and precipitation
• varying changes in regions, EX: some will become wetter while others dryer
• warmer oceans leading to melting glaciers, increasing sea level
• cultivation of crops will change forcing farmers to adjust and possibly relocate\(^11\)

A 2014 study by Professor of Atmospheric Science at Penn State, Michael E. Mann, states that if the world continues to burn fossil fuels at the current rate, global warming will rise two degrees Celsius by 2036, crossing a threshold that will harm human civilization.\(^12\)

*Marine Life*

As one might imagine, oil spills into the ocean have a severe impact on marine wildlife. This affects marine mammals as well as marine birds. Oil has the ability to destroy the insulating ability of fur-bearing mammals and the water repellency of bird’s feathers, thus, exposing these creatures to hypothermia.\(^13\) Oil spills can also create oil-coated shorelines that are an evident danger for all marine life animals.\(^14\)

Oil not only enters the sea through spills but also can enter in small amounts as oil is released into the air over time. This exposes marine wildlife to dangerous chemicals found within oil. Sources that exert oil is small amounts include: leaking pipes, offshore production, and non-point runoff from land-based facilities.\(^13\)

*UN Actions to Date:*

*Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*
An initiative taken by the United Nations was the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), also referred to as “2030 Agenda.” The 2030 Agenda is a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly as part of the Resolution 70/1. One of the 17 goals included in the 2030 Agenda is Goal 13, which focuses on global warming. The SDG has set 5 separate targets it hopes the world will meet by the year 2030. The goals include:

- Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.
- Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
- Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- Implement the commitment undertaken by developed country parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.
- Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.\(^{15}\)

The Paris Agreement

A total of 195 UNFCCC members have signed the Paris Agreement, which is focused on greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. The Paris Agreement’s aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degree Celsius. The agreement requires all Parties to outline and communicate their post-2020 climate actions, also referred to as “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs), in hopes of reducing emissions as much as possible each year.\(^{16}\)

The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment

This declaration was adopted by the United Nations on June 16, 1972 in Stockholm. The purpose of this declaration was to recognize the right to a healthy environment. The document is therefore, also known as the first document in international environmental law. The document consists of seven proclamations and twenty-six principles all a combination of Member States vowing to preserve and enhance the human environment and take responsibility for environmental damages caused by their countries actions.\(^{17}\)

Committee Directive or Questions to Consider:

It is evident that oil exploration and the production of oil are continuing to cause detrimental
effects to our environment. Delegates, through your research and resolution writing please consider the following: What innovative policies can be adopted by the UN to further protect our environment? How can we keep Member States committed to working towards a healthier environment? What alternatives are there to using oil as an energy source? How can we monitor that Member States stay true to keeping a clean environment? Is it possible that non-governmental organizations that advocate for the environment can provide measures to Member States that will shift our reliability on oil production? How can we allocate funds for creating an oil free or oil safe environment? Finally, allow yourselves to answer questions beyond those listed above, for this is what the UN is all about, creating innovative ways that will help us to create better world for all.

II. Worker Exploitation in Developing Countries

“When knowledge is limited—it leads to folly—when knowledge exceeds a certain limit, it leads to exploitation”

-Abu Bakr

Background Information:

Proponents of workers’ rights argue that trading nations should be held to strict labor standards. Countries all over the world struggle to enforce safe laws that benefit workers safety and well-being. The Global Compact, which is an initiative to encourage businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation. The Global Compact contains ten principles that are the goals and motives of the organization. They are separated in four sub categories as well. Global Compact the world's largest corporate sustainability (a.k.a. corporate social responsibility) initiative with 13000 corporate participants and other stakeholders in over 170 countries has two objectives: "Mainstream the ten principles in business activities around the world" and "Catalyse actions in support of broader UN goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

Global Compact Principles

Human Rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

Labour

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
**Principle 5:** the effective abolition of child labour; and

**Principle 6:** the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

**Environment**

**Principle 7:** Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

**Principle 8:** undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

**Principle 9:** encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

**Anti-Corruption**

**Principle 10:** Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

**Current Situation:**

A study in 2015 lead by Tomoko Nishimoto, UN International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, found that although an estimated 20.2 million migrant workers originating from South east Asia have equal access to labour rights and social protections in the countries in which they work. They frequently experience unequal and discriminatory treatment in practice. The study is based on complaint case data gathered by Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) from 2011 to 2015. Detailed information on over 1,000 cases involving more than 7,000 women and men migrant workers was documented in Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, establishing the largest regional dataset of migrant complaints compiled within South-East Asia. Migrant workers’ vulnerability to exploitation is exacerbated by the absence of fair, efficient and accessible means to resolve grievances when they occur, said says Ben Harkins, ILO Technical Officer. There is only so much the Global Compact can do. Most migrant workers who are faced with situations of exploitation and abuse seek practical resolutions, such as disbursement of unpaid wages, deployment to destination countries and return of identification documents, ILO reported.

**UN Action to Date:**

Previously stated, the United Nations Global Compact is the leading charge in stopping any worker exploitation. The principles within the subcategories of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption are implemented every day, but they still fail; to prevent all abuse.

**Committee Directive:**
III. Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Girls

“When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous”

-Michelle Obama

Background Information:

Education is the acquisition of knowledge beyond what is instinct. Education is acquisition of skills such as reading, writing, problem solving techniques, and so on. Children are the future’s most valuable assets and should be treated as such despite being male or female. In some places, girls are receiving an inferior education to their male counterpart. In other places, young girls are being denied education based solely on gender. To learn and grow, children depend on adults to teach them, to show them affection, and most importantly be their voice. Almost 30 years ago, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was created. The CRC advocates for the rights of children, one of the things they fight for is education for children, not just boys but girls too. What are some barriers to girls’ education?

- Poverty and child labor
- Caring for relatives
- Water and sanitation
- Conflict and emergencies
- Child marriage
- Pregnancy
- Disability

It is difficult to mention this topic without talking about Malala Yousafzai. Malala Yousafzai is a young woman born in 1997 in Mingora, Pakistan. Malala’s father, Ziauddin Yousafzai taught at and ran an all-girls school in their village. When the Taliban took control of their town, they said girls were no longer allowed to go to school. At only 11 years old Malala was being denied an education. She began speaking out on behalf of all young girls and their right to learn. At only 15 years old, Malala was riding the bus when a masked gunman got on and asked for her and shot her on the left side of her head. People all around the world heard about Malala and her bravery and were rooting for her recovery. After a long 10 days in a hospital in Birmingham, England, Malala woke up and heard of the vicious attack. This was not just an attack on Malala, but an attack on all young girls and their right to an education. After many surgeries and months’ worth of rehabilitation, Malala decided to continue her fight for girls everywhere. She started the Malala Fund, a charity that strives to give every girl access to a future they choose for themselves, the opportunity to receive an education. In December of 2014, Malala Yousafzai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, Malala is continuing her education at the University of
Oxford and continues to fight daily for girls all over the world. Her goal is to “create a world where all girls can learn and lead.”

Current Situation:

There are currently 130 million girls out of school around the world. At our current rate of progress, it will be a full 100 years, an entire century, 1,200 months before the girls in the most poverty stricken, remote, and rural areas in the world have the opportunity to go to school for 12 full years. By failing to educate the female population, some countries are losing up to $1 billion a year. This is because educating the female population not only has the ability to increase a country’s productivity but also the ability to fuel economic growth. Educated girls have the ability to make better informed choices, educating girls can lead to women who build families that are stronger, supportive communities, and growing economies.

Some benefits of educating girls include:

- Economic Growth
  Educating girls increases and promotes growth of the economy. Men are in the formal job market much more often than women. Statistics show that the economy benefits from women joining this same job market.

- Health knowledge saves children’s lives
  There is a 50% higher chance of survival past the age of five when the child has a literate mother. Studies show that more than four million child deaths have been prevented due to educating women and girls.

- Smaller and more sustainable families
  Educating girls helps to reduce population growth. Educated women become pregnant less often and are less likely to have a teen pregnancy.

- Reduced infection rates for HIV/AIDS and malaria
  Researchers found that due to increased levels of girls completing secondary education led to the declining rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Zimbabwe.

- Fewer girls in child marriages
  Educated girls are less likely to be married as a child. Girls without an education are up to 6 times more likely to marry as children than girls with a secondary education.

- More leadership skills
  Educated girls have learned more leadership skills than girls with no education.

Girls are four times less likely to receive an education than boys and even more less likely to receive an education if they come from a poor family. If education is available it is not always affordable, it is not always accessible, and can be unsafe or not inclusive for girls.

What are some ways to improve girls’ access to education?
Involvement from both parents and community - work with schools in developing the curriculum and managing the child’s education

Same-level education - give girls a level of education consistent with the education boys receive

Low-cost education should be free or extremely low cost, stipends and scholarships should be given to families when there is loss of household labor

Flexible timetables - would allow children the opportunity of education while still being able to help at home

Schools at reasonable distance, with women teachers - children should not have to travel long distance for their education, parents would be more willing to send their daughters to school where they are being taught by women

Relevant curriculum - girls should be receiving a beneficial education taught in their local language

UN Actions to Date:

In 2015, Member States of the United Nations created 17 Sustainable Development Goals to work towards and achieve by the year 2030, some of which apply to the education of girls.28

- Goal 4- Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
  - According to the UN, more than half of people under the age of 18 are not meeting the very minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. This calls for efforts that are refocused to improve the quality of education.29

- Goal 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
  - Gender inequality continues to hold women and girls back, depriving them of basic rights and opportunities. Empowering women requires addressing unfair social norms and attitudes and promoting equality in all aspects of life for both women and men.30

- Goal 8- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
  - On a global level, labor productivity has risen while the unemployment rate has fallen. More progress is still required to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce the pay gap between men and women, promote a safer working environment, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive growth economically.31

Committee Directive:

What is your country’s stance on girls receiving education? Do Girls already receive the same level of education as boys in your country? If so, what initiatives can your country take to improve the education girls receive on a regional or international level? What steps have already been taken to increase education for girls? What could be done to improve these techniques? What new steps can be taken to increase education for girls worldwide? How does the lack of education for girls impact our world? Why are girls still being left out of education? Consider impoverished countries that may not have the same resources as wealthier countries?
Bibliography

General Assembly Overview and History


I. The Environmental Impact of Oil Exploration and Production


4 “Petroleum History.” The Environmental Literacy Council, enviroliteracy.org/energy/fossil-fuels/petroleum-history/.


8 Curve Coventry “Oil Exploration” Jun. 2018 https://curve.coventry.ac.uk/cu/file/644cece4-02fa-1c30-313d-

9 Curve Coventry “Oil Exploration” Jun. 2018 https://curve.coventry.ac.uk/cu/file/644cece4-02fa-1c30-313d-


II. Worker Exploitation in Developing Countries


III. Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Girls


