

Background Guide

General Assembly

AlexMUN 2023

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Members

Hello delegates, I'm Lorena Maldonado and I will be the president for the General Assembly Committee for the 2023 Alexmun. Along with the other chair members, we will help you throughout all of the sessions with any doubts you have, so we can all have a successful debate. You can contact me via email and I am happy to work with you.

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Hello delegates, my name is Martha Cruz. I will be your Moderator for the General Assembly Committee of the 2023 Alexmun. I am here to help you through the debate. If you need anything or have any doubts you can contact me by email.

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Hello delegates, I'm Ana Paula Clemente. I will be your Conference officer for this year's Alexmun. You can contact me via my email in case you need anything, I will be glad to help.

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This year the General Assembly Committee will be debating two important topics:

Topic A: Repartition of the responsibility of climate change.

Topic B: Addressing the cost of living crisis.

These topics will be discussed in a multilateral way and with the end goal of reaching a possible solution for the problems proposed.

The recommended level for this committee is Easy.

Introduction

The major decision-making body of the UN is the General Assembly (UNGA). It was established under the Charter of the United Nations in 1945; it has an important position as the policymaking, chief deliberative, and one of the 5 main bodies of the UN. It is a unique platform for the discussion of a big range of international issues covered by the United Nations Charter. The 193 Member States of the UN are compromised and everyone has an equal vote.¹

Permanent members:

- China
- France
- Russian Federation
- United Kingdom²

The General Assembly makes necessary decisions for the United Nations, including assigning the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Security Council and electing their non-permanent members, as well as approving budgets. They also discuss questions relating to international peace and security, except if it is currently being discussed by the Security Council, in which case they may make recommendations on it, like peaceful settlements; they may take action when the Security Council has failed to act.³

As mentioned previously, each member has one equal vote, and it is a requirement to have a two-thirds majority for decision making in the election of members in the Security Council, Economic and Social Council, as well as for the peace recommendations and approvals of budget. However, for informal consultations, most resolutions are reached without a vote.

They meet in regular sessions each September to December as a main part, and then from January to September, as a resumed part, in which they debate the most relevant issues; as for the main part, they discuss selected topics in the agenda items or sub-items, and look to come to a resolution; this agenda has more than 160 points to be discussed and only a few items are added or deleted from it each year. They currently are in session 77th.

¹ UN. (n.d.) Workings of the General Assembly. *United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>

² UN. (n.d.). Current Members. *United Nations*. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members#:~:text=Five%20permanent%20members%3A%20China%2C%20France,Albania%20\(2023\)](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members#:~:text=Five%20permanent%20members%3A%20China%2C%20France,Albania%20(2023))

³ CFR.org Editors. (2022, September 7). The Role of the UN General Assembly. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/background/un-general-assembly-unga-role#chapter-title-0-3>

The annual general debate allows the Member States to express their views on international issues, and the Secretary-General presents their report on the Organization's on the opening day of the debate.

There are six main committees in the General Assembly:

1. Disarmament and International Security
2. Economic and Financial
3. Social, Humanitarian and Cultural
4. Special Political and Decolonization
5. Administrative and Budgetary
6. Legal⁴

⁴ UN. (n.d.). Functions and powers of the General Assembly. *United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

TOPIC A: Repartition of the responsibility of climate change

Introduction:

First, it is important to start by explaining the reality and the severity of this problem. In a few words: the fuel we are using as energy for our homes, our cars, and businesses are making our planet heat up faster than anyone was expecting it to.

Global warming is causing extreme weather events such as El Niño. It is making the seas get higher, it causes the glaciers to melt. But the thing is that the temperature on Earth is getting so hot so fast that some creatures are not getting adapted to these new conditions. According to National Geographic levels of greenhouse gasses have been higher now than in the last 800,000 years.

Unfortunately the responsibility is not being distributed equally throughout the parties involved. The vulnerable population is put at risk, such as those who live in small state islands and low-lying coastal areas.

It is a reality that Earth is just going to keep getting warmer and warmer. The question is, how hot and why? According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), if we keep the greenhouse gasses going up, the world will be more or less 4°C warmer than it was before 1760. The models this scientist created are predicting that by 2200 Earth's temperature will reach 7°C. This is happening, simply, because humans are addicted to fossil fuels, and the burning of these fuels like coals, oil, gasoline, and gas and the greenhouse gasses they produce, are the main cause of global warming.⁵

Causes of this problem go even larger than this, they are extremely complex and the responsibility for eradicating and adaptation to its effects requires the cooperation of all nations. In this background guide we will explore the **Repartition of the responsibility of climate change**. And look for different possible solutions to this problem with the help of all countries and international organizations.

Historical context:

“We need to cut CO2 emissions almost in half (45%) by the end of the next decade,” says Kimberly Nicholas, associate professor of sustainability science at the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS), in Sweden.

⁵ Feinstein, D. (2006). *Retoricas*. Los Angeles: “es tiempo de actuar”.
<https://www.retoricas.com/2010/05/discurso-cambio-climatico-dianne.html>

With the burning of fossil fuels over these past few decades humanity has been producing a huge amount of greenhouse gasses, this is causing the greenhouse effect to work more effectively which makes the Earth get warmer in significant ways.

And as mentioned before there will be serious consequences for our planet unless we make serious changes to our ways of living.

The thing is that all this is happening way too fast. According to National Geographic, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by more than a third since the 18th century. This change is supposed to happen over thousands of years, but we are making them over just a few decades.⁶

Investigation about climate change has been done by scientists since the early 19th century. Scientists started to understand the impact of carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere and how truly dangerous this was for our planet. In the middle of the 20th century there was a panel established for the assessment of climate change and its implication. "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change" (IPCC)

The issue of climate change has been discussed for a really long time, with a repartition of responsibility between nations, blaming or rather calling responsibility for the more developed countries that are historically responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions. Both the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC have attempted to solve this issue by establishing responsibility of various countries. Nevertheless, this issue continues to be complex, with no easy solution, and contribution is needed to address the critical impacts of climate change.⁷

Relevant international action:

Since climate change has been affecting every country in the world during the last years, and increasing every couple of years, In 2015, an agreement was signed in Paris, saying that the global temperature limit will be below two degrees. Many of the UN climate change parties entered this agreement and are doing everything possible so that everyone can help. Its purpose is to help as much as possible by creating strategies that will help end the main goal. The United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand committed to achieve a balance so that we can end climate change, agreeing to limit the increase of global warming. They also want to

⁶ Peinado, F. (2019). *El Pais*. Madrid: Greta Thundberg: "cada gran cambio en la Historia ha venido del Pueblo". Retrieved from https://elpais.com/sociedad/2019/12/10/actualidad/1576011896_293446.html

⁷ Villareal, A. (2019). *El Confidencial*. España: el 97% de los científicos esta de acuerdo con Greta Thunberg. https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/ciencia/2019-09-29/cientificos-escepticos-climaticos-greta-thunberg-188_2258679/

achieve a balance between human emissions and the greenhouse gasses effect in the atmosphere.

The countries agreed on adapting their emissions to climate change so that they can be lowered. An international mechanism reviews the progress and it is known as a global stocktake that will be happening subsequently every five years. The countries submit their pledges due to the Paris agreement. The global stocktake pressures the countries to increase their help by reviewing their progress.

Many of the countries are taking action in this agreement because it has affected our way of living and will continue if we don't do something to stop it. Since it has been a problem that has been happening for many years, we have to start taking action now, that is why this agreement was created.

Some of the solutions that the countries have been applying to their action progress, are the use of renewable energy, as well as other sources.

The main purpose in the Paris agreement is to strengthen global response to the problem that we are now facing. It has been threatening and it makes people worry. What this agreement is trying to do, is to take action so that we can stop the global temperature from growing.

Countries & organizations directly involved:

Some of the countries that have been taking action with the Paris agreement are the United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand. They are all taking part in this agreement, hoping that more countries could join them to create this impact.

Another organization that is focused on helping resolve climate change is the UNFCCC (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), is a constitution created in in march 1994, responsible to treat climate change,

Analysis:

As established before, climate change has been an issue discussed in the UN for several years, calling for the need to create new organizations, agreements, and events to take a stance on the problem and reach a solution as soon as possible. Every country is affected by this issue, and climate change is threatening to have even more consequences on our planet, that will likely be irreversible if we do not start acting on it now.⁸

⁸ UNDP. (n.d.). Goal 13 Climate Action. *UNDP*. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/climate-action?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwo7iiBhAEEiwAslxOEfELbHFvtXYxEreB2z5Qd1gQAYV6z7_0WShMTsizYE585RKuu0HY0hoCVSIOAvD_BwE

It is difficult to measure by country which ones are the most affected by climate change, since there are many different aspects to be considered in this debate, however, if we take into consideration which countries are more vulnerable to suffer from climate disasters, the countries that we get are undeveloped; most of the countries that are considered to be the most “vulnerable” are from Africa, and some of the from the middle east. Countries like Chad, which is considered to be the most vulnerable country on the planet, Somalia, and Syria.

We should also consider countries like the United States and Australia, which unfortunately suffer from a large sum of wildfires, however, these countries have the economic capacity to respond to these events.⁹

Possible solutions:

We have come to some possible solutions:

1. Measure and disclose to the public the environmental impact and carbon dioxide emission rates of large corporations, to improve awareness of climate risks, and maintain the Earth's warming levels at 1.5°C.¹⁰
2. Impose the commitment of developed countries, with enough resources to respond to climate crises, to collect and mobilize money to help undeveloped countries, and vulnerable countries like Chad, address their needs to prevent devastating consequences due to climate crises.
3. Enlist countries who benefit from greenhouse gas emissions and collect a fine for the damage caused, taking into consideration the amount of damage caused by each one compared to the others, and the amount of money they will have to pay. This money will be exclusively used for the development of countries to adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Enforce countries with a larger need to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions to work more on the development of their country to reach their goal. Meaning,

⁹ Iberdrola. (n.d.). Which countries are most threatened by and vulnerable to climate change? *Iberdrola*. Retrieved from <https://www.iberdrola.com/sustainability/top-countries-most-affected-by-climate-change>

¹⁰ CDP. (n.d.). CDP and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *CDP*. Retrieved from https://www.cdp.net/en/policy/program-areas/sustainable-development-goals?cid=7855922375&adgpid=85519956647&itemid=&targid=kwd-298336206415&mt=b&loc=9047091&ntwk=g&dev=c&dmod=&adp=&gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwo7iiBhAEEiwAsIxQEWxLX8_Yrq1VP_ulhYv7aDqui9mc0P4GZ5riJa-DSwvU8248aK2uYBoCBU8QAvD_BwE

countries with more risks of being affected by climate change will need to focus more on their measures to avoid it.¹¹

5. Upgrade technology that will allow the implementation of sustainable energy services in developing countries, and rural areas like small islands that currently do not have access to this type of energy.¹²

Conclusions:

Climate change is an issue that has concerned us all for decades now, however, there are countries that contribute more to the increase in, for example, greenhouse gas emissions, and on the other hand, there are also countries that are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the crises that could come with it. There is a giant list of factors to be considered and discussed before deciding how the responsibilities of climate change and its effects on our planet should be distributed among countries, and this is what this committee intends to do.

Our main goal would be to reach a resolution that accommodates all of the countries involved on how to keep climate change from increasing its threat, while fairly distributing the responsibilities of each country to deal with the consequences of their greenhouse gas emission, and other factors that contribute to global warming and climate change.

¹¹ Persson, E., Eriksson, K. & Knaggård, A. (2021, August 10). A Fair Distribution of Responsibility for Climate Adaptation-Translating Principles of Distribution from an International to a Local Context. *Philosophies*. Retrieved from <https://philarchive.org/archive/PERAFD-4>

¹² UN. (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals. *United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/>

TOPIC B: Addressing the cost of living crisis

Introduction:

According to the United Nations Development Programme almost 71 million people could be suffering to fall into poverty within the next few years. This has a lot of reasons, one of them being the sudden increase in cost of food and energy that has been affecting people globally. One more recent factor that is extremely important to talk about is the economic impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This event has been really important in the sense of the living crisis of millions of people being pushed into poverty.¹³

“Unprecedented price surges mean that for many people across the world, the food that they could afford yesterday is no longer attainable today,” says UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner

According to the UNDP the countries that are suffering this crisis most are: Armenia, Uzbekistan, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Haiti, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. But even in more developed countries there are still problems, people going on without food, because of their high prices. The poorest families are the most affected, when prices go up for food and energy, people’s monthly wages go down and it is even more difficult to pay for these basic services.

Historical context:

Across the OECD, the cost of living has been discussed endlessly, with it rising incredibly quickly, the inflation in the majority of these nations hitting levels unseen in the previous 40 years. Sharp rises in the cost of food and energy are particularly difficult for those with low incomes, therefore preserving living standards requires careful consideration of social and labor market policy. They are also required to distribute the costs of rising inflation across consumers, businesses, and governments. These succinct OECD policy papers examine three crucial policy areas: minimum wages, income support, and pensions. These areas are crucial as nations react to the cost of living problem.

The increase in chain prices has been pushing the world towards a really dangerous place. This can become extremely devastating for households. Those in poverty or near poverty are

¹³ UNDP. (2022, July 7). Addressing the cost-of-living crisis in developing countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses | United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/publications/addressing-cost-living-crisis-developing-countries-poverty-and-vulnerability-projections-and-policy-responses>

the ones that are hit the hardest. This will signify policy changes within the government as a response.

Another factor that has a big influential problem is of course the COVID-19 pandemic, that has been pushing up prices, inflating the risk of further crisis. Even though this pandemic is almost over, the problems that it brought since it started are still affecting today, like a chain reaction.¹⁴

Relevant international action:

This issue has been present all around the globe, and each government has been trying to help ease this crisis for its own country.

In 2022, the United States helped by cutting down the payment on student loans by \$10,000. Brazil announced tax cuts to fuel and raised social welfare payments; other countries like India and South Africa took a similar approach.

Turkey increased its minimum wage by about 30%, while the former President of Kenya increased the monthly minimum wage by 12%.

In Spain, for 4 months, train travel over 300km was free, and Germany introduced a \$9 monthly public transport pass.

Lastly, the UK gave a direct payment of \$780 to 8 million low income households.¹⁵

Countries & organizations directly involved:

As mentioned above, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been involved and discussing this issue for decades now. It is an international organisation that works to create policies that encourage prosperity, equality, opportunity, and well being. They work with governments, policy makers and citizens which try to find solutions for different social, economic, and environmental issues. They have 38 member countries.¹⁶

¹⁴ Whiting, K. (2022, November 21). The cost-of-living crisis is having a global impact - here's what countries are doing to help. *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/cost-of-living-crisis-global-impact>

¹⁵ Jones, S. (2022, September 7). Cost of living crisis: what governments around the world are doing to help. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/05/cost-of-living-crisis-what-governments-around-the-world-are-doing-to-help>

¹⁶ OECD. (n.d.). Who We Are. *OECD*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/about/>

Analysis:

As it was previously mentioned, there are a number of reasons why millions of people around the world are suffering from the effects of climate change on the costs of living. Increases in the cost of food and basic services due to inflation, which has also decreased minimum wage, can be observed in many developing countries, mostly in Africa and Asia, like Armenia, Ghana, and Sri Lanka; and even though poverty is seen the most in this countries, it is a problem present in all the world.

Recently, the events of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, has forced millions of people into poverty, which has only made the cost-of-living crisis worse, not only for Ukrainians and Russians, but it has also affected the economy of other countries.

During these increases and inflation, families that were already struggling with money are of course the most affected, and with the minimum wage decreasing, their situation doesn't seem to get better.

It is also important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on global economy since it started, and its effects are still present today.

Possible solutions:

We have reached some possible solutions for the problem:

1. Lower taxes on petrol, gas, and electricity to help reduce temporary inflations and the price for consumers. A temporary tax cut until petrol prices fall again into a reasonable price for consumers, considering minimum wages in each country.
2. Government support (rebate) for each household. Every household would receive a rebate to help pay for energy, gas, and other basic services. It would be important to take into account the economic differences between each family and between countries, giving priority to low income households. The rebates would be equal to the cost of cutting down taxes.
3. Relocate a percentage of some budgets into welfare spendings. This spendings could be used to give rebates to low income families for them to cover basic needs and services like food and energy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Pettinger, T. (2022, July 22). Policies to reduce cost of living crisis. *Economics.help*. Retrieved from <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/170554/economics/policies-to-reduce-cost-of-living-crisis/#:~:text=Increase%20other%20taxes%20%E2%80%93%20e.g.%20windfall,this%20is%20off%20the%20table>.

Conclusions:

Throughout the years, the world has suffered from different events that have affected many aspects of our lives, including our economy. This has led to a cost of living crisis, which impacts people globally everyday; however, there are some countries and families that continue to be affected more by this crisis. Developing countries and low income families are constantly struggling to afford their basic needs to support their families; things as simple as food and energy can be difficult for most to buy since prices keep rising. We can observe how the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent Russian intervention have affected millions of people that have fallen into poverty.

As a committee, we hope to reach a resolution that can help these people get out of a difficult situation, and look out for the welfare of all countries, especially the ones most affected by this crisis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, climate change has been a delicate topic throughout the last years. Knowing this information, we as a committee want to find solutions to resolve climate change and the crisis and challenges that come with it. We hope to reach the main goals that we have so that we can help the affected countries, as well as their people, especially the countries that seem the most affected by climate change. Our goal is for the world and its different nations to cooperate so we can achieve this as fast as possible.

For the last few years, the whole world has suffered from different events that have made already existing crises worse, or even have created new ones; and either way it is urgent that we find viable solutions to these issues, by discussing them in a multilateral way.

Climate change has affected every country in a different way, however, it is important to recognize that some communities have been more affected than others, and also that some countries contribute more to the damages caused by climate change, due to higher greenhouse gas emissions. This is why it is important to discuss all factors involved in the crises impacting each country; it is important to take into consideration that there are countries which are much more vulnerable to encounter greater challenges from the consequences of climate change, and also think about the resources that this same countries have to battle and solve the issues.

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