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Research Brief LIPAMUN - UNEP

1) Brief overview of your committee and its history - why was it created? What is its purpose in the UN? What is its power and how is it limited? How does voting work?

UNEP or the United Nations Environment Program, is an environmental authority that was established by Maurice Strong after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, in June 1972. Its main purpose is to coordinate the UN's environmental activities. Additionally, in recent years, UNEP has helped countries transition to low-carbon and resource-efficient economies, to limit the effects of climate change. As an authority of the UN, UNEP has the power to organize responses within the UN, lead conventions and treaties, and give policy advice to governments. Although UNEP has these powers, it is, however, limited by its dependence on voluntary contributions and consensus within its member states. As UNEP is the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), its governing body, voting works on a "consensus basis". Each member state possesses one vote, requiring collaboration between countries in debate and the creation of resolutions. However if a total consensus cannot be attained, a two-thirds majority is necessary to pass any resolution

2) Recap of your topic: any important dates/events relating to the question / how has this problem evolved over the past few years? What are the main issues this committee should be trying to solve?

The desertification of the Sahara is an issue that has occurred over thousands of years, due to climate change and more recently, human activities. The issue of desertification signifies the expansion of arid conditions, threatening biodiversity, food security, and livelihoods. In the past 50 years, the Sahel drought in the 1970s highlighted the vulnerability of the region to desertification and raised global awareness about the impacts of desertification. In 1977, the United Nations Conference on Desertification in Nairobi was one of the first International efforts to address the issue, as it led to the development of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In 2007, the African Union launched the Great Green Wall initiative, which aimed to combat desertification by planting a wall of trees across Africa, from Senegal to Djibouti. This plan intends to restore biodiversity throughout all Africa and slow down desertification. In 2015, the Paris Agreement included a provision to address land degradation and desertification and in 2021, the UN declared this decade as the "Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.

In the past 50 years, the Sahara desert has increased approximately 10%. Rising temperatures have worsened desertification and have led to more frequent and intense droughts.

Although awareness and initiatives to slow desertification have increased, the problem remains present.

Delegates must focus on creating new initiates to slow desertification in the Sahara but have to take into account the current problems originating from the topic, such as the migration and urbanization of populations searching to flee the desert, the effects on agriculture lure and food supply, and the rise of conflicts related to resources, such as the Darfur conflict, in southern Sudan. The increased arid land has led to resources, such as water, to become scarce. This has led to a conflict between rebel groups such as the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese government and militias.

Sources:

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