



General Assembly

Thirteenth Session

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Second Committee – Economic and Financial

This committee wants to improve the world economy to help the poor. They discuss how national, regional and international economies affect the world. They also focus on countries that have special needs. Some examples are the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) or the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

This group believes people in poverty do not have to be poor forever. For this reason, they focus on how developing nations can improve their economies. They also find ways to directly help people in poverty. They might talk about how to help countries get access to money. Or, they might find ways that technology can help countries develop faster.

This committee works closely with the UN Economic and Social Council. Some of the resolutions they have passed deal with sustainable development, harmony with nature, and migration.

Agenda Item 19.F – Convention on Biological Diversity

Focus Questions

Biological diversity is important to keeping the Earth healthy. Our environment is more interconnected with our activities than we know. With your fellow delegates you need to find a way to work towards making the following goals a reality.

- How can the environment and human activities co-exist in a way that supports each other?
- What laws or agreements can states allow in order to protect biodiversity around the world?
- How can states work together to protect ecosystems that are part of many states?

Background

Have you ever heard the term biodiversity? It is a combination of two words: biological and diversity. It means that there is a variety of florae and fauna in an area (florae is plant life and fauna is animal life). This is beneficial because it means there are different kinds of plants available for us to grow and use. We can also use animal life for some of our needs. In addition, all animals and plants help contribute to an ecosystem. If one or more of them disappears it could put the whole ecosystem at risk.

In the past, many human societies did not care or did not know the importance of biodiversity. Many animals became extinct because humans hunted them for food, or because they thought they were dangerous, or humans thought they were pests. Maybe you have heard of the dodo bird? In 1662, it became extinct because of loss of habitat and the introduction of non-native species. In North America, settlers killed 50 million American bison in 100 years until there were less than 1000 left. Programs in the United

Background

States helped save the bison from extinction and now there are around 150 000.

We are now living in a period of time known as the Holocene extinction. Sadly, this extinction started as soon as early humans began spreading out across the Earth. It is caused by human impacts such as overhunting and habitat destruction. However, humans now know they are responsible for these extinctions. Also, they now know how important biodiversity is to the Earth. Global and local groups are doing a lot to protect biodiversity for the future.

Some people think that biodiversity or environmentalism means leaving the Earth alone. This view has some problems. For one, humans are part of nature too! We have a right to use nature to meet our needs. We just need to find a balance.

High levels of biodiversity happen mainly in the tropics. Tropical forest rain forests occur mainly around the equator. Although this is only 10% of the land on Earth, 90% of the world's species live there. Because these areas are so dense with life there is a lot we still do not know about them. Most people think that scientists have discovered all the animals in the world. That could not be further from the truth! Over 86% of the world's animals are waiting to be discovered – and most of them are in this zone!

Forests play an important part of biodiversity. They house most of the world's land animals. But, they also help slow down climate change. Trees hold onto carbon. In 40 years one tree can take 1 ton of carbon dioxide out of the air. Also, deforestation causes 10-20% of the global greenhouse gases per year. States can use sustainable forestry to take some trees but keep the forest alive. 1.6 billion people rely on forests for their living – so it is important to keep them safe for humans and the environment.

The Sustainable Development Goals are also working towards biodiversity. These goals started in 2015 in order for states to come together and build a better world by 2030. Countries do this by working together to meet the goals of the program. Part of Goal 15 is to “halt biodiversity loss”. States support each other in meeting these goals.

There is also an economic aspect to biodiversity. Insects such as bees and others pollinate flowers, trees, and other plants. This is work that needs to be done. In the US, this “work” is worth US\$29 billion. Some people have talked about using artificial pollination. This is expensive and not as effective. Why would we build something that the insect world will do for free? We just need to protect the environment so they are free to continue their jobs!

States have the right to use the resources they have. Other states cannot tell other states they cannot mine or cut down forests. This would not be fair. However, states need to make sure that how they treat the environment does not cause damage to the environment in other states. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s smoke from a Canadian factory blew into the US and damaged forests and crops. It was finally decided that Canada was responsible for the damages. This was one of the first times international law dealt with air pollution. It found that states are responsible for the pollution they create.

5% of the people in the world are indigenous and they live in 90 countries around the world. Indigenous people are very important when it comes to biodiversity. 22% of the world is land used by indigenous people. Interestingly, the land they inhabit accounts for 80% of the world's biodiversity. Because many indigenous people live closely with the land, it is important that governments work with them to protect biodiversity. Many indigenous groups have knowledge about how to live in harmony with nature. This is called traditional knowledge. Maybe, more people need to listen to indigenous people about how to have a healthy relationship with the Earth?

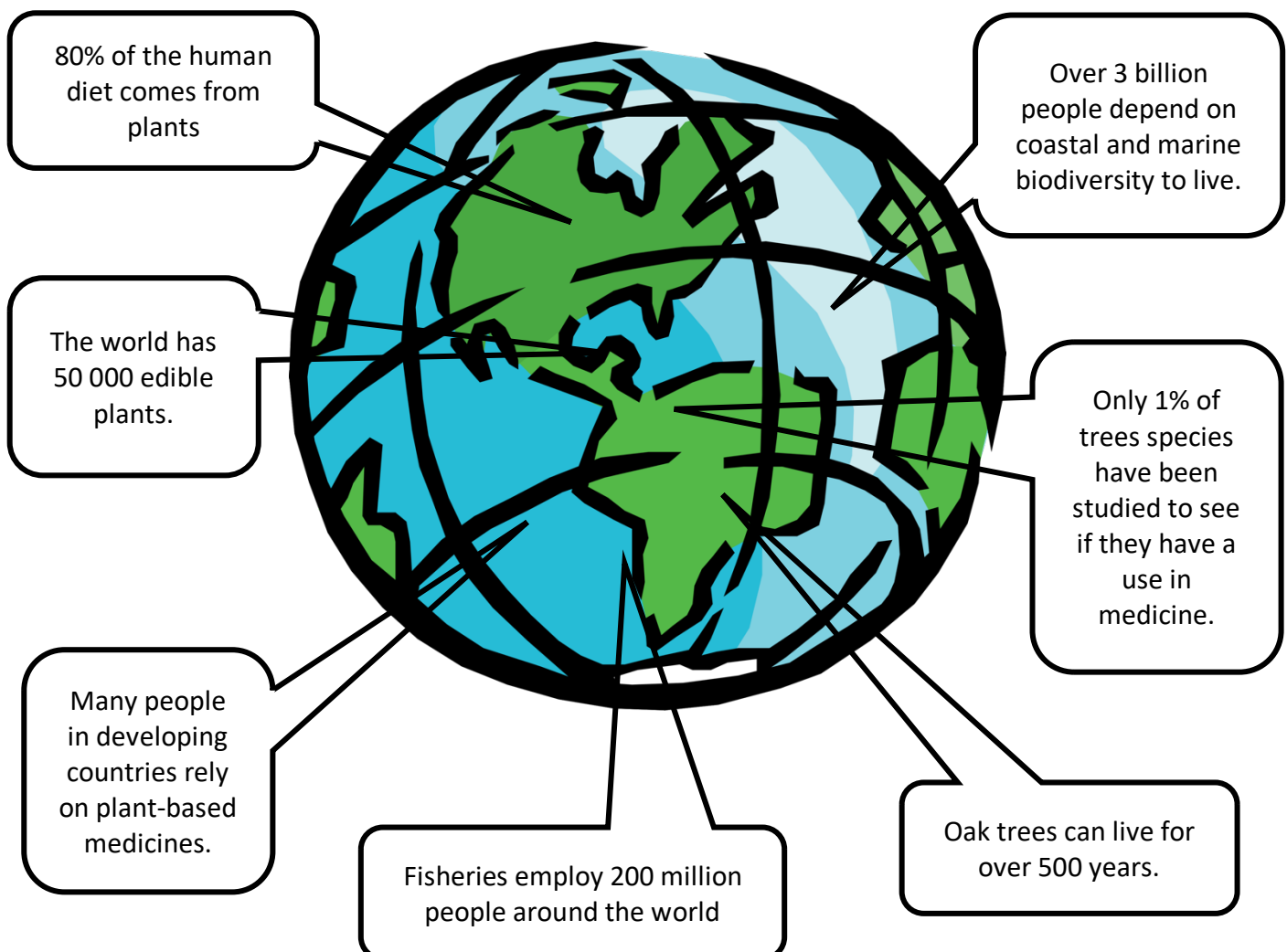
Recent Developments

Sustainable Development Goals

This movement began in 2016 to replace the Millennium Development Goals. These goals are much broader and tackle the causes of poverty. The first goal is to end poverty in all its forms. This is a very ambitious goal. Many of the goals relate to ending poverty. Goal 15 is to “Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss”. Countries will work together to reach the goals by 2030.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

This is an international agreement by 183 countries that regulates the international trade of animals and plants. This document wants to keep people from buying and selling animals and plants that are endangered. It became effective in 1975. It is important to note that it does not ban the trade of animals or plants. It only bans trade that is unsustainable. This is one of the complaints about this convention. It does not do anything to protect nature.

Some Facts about Biodiversity

Research Questions

1. Research your state's environment. What steps is your state taking to protect biodiversity?
2. Do the actions of your neighbors have an effect on your environment? How?
3. Research the Holocene extinction. How are humans responsible for this extinction period?
4. What are some species that have become extinct because of human activity?
5. Why is it important to also think about jobs when talking about biodiversity?
6. How can countries develop their economy while also maintaining biodiversity?
7. Why might some countries have difficulty protecting biodiversity?
8. Does the problem exist in your community?
9. Who is working on it? NGOs, not for profits, other groups or individuals?
10. Knowing about this problem, how does it impact your world view?
11. How could you make an impact on this issue through your life choices?

Resources

Website Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<i>Convention on Biological Diversity</i>	https://www.cbd.int/	Official webpage of the convention.
<i>Global Issues</i>	http://www.globalissues.org/article/170/why-is-biodiversity-important-who-cares	Very thorough overview of the issue of biodiversity.
<i>Cornell Chronicle</i>	http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2012/05/insect-pollinators-contribute-29b-us-farm-income	Information about pollination and how it connects to the economy.
<i>The Guardian</i>	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/25/forests-land-rights-deforestation-climate-change	Discusses how communities can protect forests and reduce climate change.
<i>Wonderopolis</i>	https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/how-many-animals-are-there-in-the-world	Information about the numbers of animals living in the world.
<i>Aichi Biodiversity Targets</i>	https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/	Information on the biodiversity targets the Convention would like to reach.
<i>Rainforest Alliance</i>	https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/articles/what-is-sustainable-forestry	Talks about how people can harvest trees in a sustainable way.
<i>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora</i>	https://www.cites.org/	Official website on the CITES convention.
<i>Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 15</i>	https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/	Official site for Goal 15 of the SDGs.