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## “UNEP Convention on Biological Diversity”

*Topic A: “Protection of endangered animals and threatened wildlife”*

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### COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), also known as the Biodiversity Convention, is an international treaty and a part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Its three main goals are “the conservation of biological diversity”, “the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity” and “the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources”. It is generally recognized as the founding text for sustainable development with the aim of developing national policies for the preservation and responsible utilization of biological diversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity was inspired by the growing commitment of the global community to sustainable development. It represents a huge step forward in the preservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its constituent parts, and the equitable and just distribution of the benefits resulting from the use of genetic resources. The Convention was made available for signature during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on June 5th, 1992 (The

"Earth Summit" in Rio) up until June 4th, 1993, when it had 168 signatures. The Convention went into effect on December 29, 1993.

## HISTORY OF TOPIC

The evolution of humanity's economy and civilization depends on the planet's biological resources. The value of biological variation as a resource for the present and the future is therefore becoming increasingly clear. There has never been a time when species and ecosystems were more under danger. It is alarming to see how quickly species are disappearing due to human activity.

The term "endangered species" refers to plants and animals that have become so rare that they are in danger of becoming extinct. Threatened species of plants and animals are those with a fair possibility of becoming extinct soon throughout all or a large portion of their range. There are more than 40,000 different types of animals and flora on the endangered list. More than 10,000 of them face further extinction, which would prevent their species and way of life from ever being found again. The world owes it to these species to protect them and encourage their growth in order to keep them out of harm's way. The two primary factors that cause a species to become endangered are habitat loss and genetic variability loss.

A loss of habitat can be caused naturally, but it can also be caused by humans. Human activity has altered at least two-thirds of the planet's land and waters. Degradation and destruction of habitats result in the enormous loss of species that we are presently witnessing—by some estimates, 1,000 times higher than at any other point in history.

Development for homes, industry, and agriculture reduces the habitats of native animals. There are several possible ways for this to happen. Habitat destruction may lead to more interactions between people and wild animals. When development brings people closer to a species' range, they

may be exposed to wild species more frequently. Poisonous plants and fungi may grow closer to homes and schools. Additionally, it happens more frequently to see wild animals. Although exclusively policing their own region, it is potentially lethal for these animals to come into touch with people. Polar bears, mountain lions, and alligators are some of the predators that have lost their habitat due to construction, agriculture, and commercial facilities. Native species may go extinct as a result of people using pesticides to kill wild animals, accidents like collisions with cars, or hunting.

Genetic variation is a representation of the variability within a species. Genetic variety helps species adapt to environmental changes. With population expansion, a species' genetic variation frequently rises. Groups of animals that are prone to inbreeding do not get new genetic information, hence they frequently have a small genetic diversity. Inbred populations are far more prone to get illness and pass away as a result. The genetic variety required to build disease resistance is absent in inbred species. As a result, fewer children from inbred populations grow up. As well as a loss of habitat, genetic variability loss can be caused naturally, but it can also be caused by humans. Overfishing and overhunting have caused many animal populations to fall. Fewer breeding couples are indicative of a smaller population. A breeding pair is any pair of unrelated, fully developed members of the same species who are capable of having healthy offspring. With fewer breeding partners, genetic diversity declines.

Wildlife trafficking can also decrease species populations and lead to local or possibly global extinction. When endangered animals are involved, any poaching or harvesting to supply the illicit trade risks causing the species to become extinct.

If a species is listed as endangered, governments and international organizations may take action to protect it. Hunting and habitat

destruction might well be prohibited by law. People and organizations who break these rules might face harsh punishment. These programs have helped several species return from the brink of extinction.

## **CURRENT ISSUE**

### Mexico:

Mexico takes the first place in the list of countries with the most endangered species (currently 665). There are several environmental issues in Mexico. The top three factors affecting Mexico are air pollution, a lack of potable water, and deforestation. Each of these three issues is a developing concern that affects millions of people in Mexico and its environment.

### India:

India is a diverse country, and this diversity can be seen in the flora and wildlife there. In India, around 542 species of plants and animals are endangered. Protection areas like National Parks and Conservation Reserves are being created. The main reasons for endangerment are habitat destruction, massive poaching and hunting, and contamination.

### China:

The People's Republic of China's Legislation on the Protection of Wildlife requires national and local governments to designate rare or vulnerable species for special protection under the law. China's biggest risks to biodiversity include: The functions of some ecosystems are continually being degraded, the condition of endangered species is deteriorating, and erosion and loss of genetic resources are continuing.

### Madagascar:

Environmentalists in Madagascar, which has one of the world's most biodiverse jungles, are growing concerned that climate change could endanger indigenous biodiversity. The ecosystem on the island is being

challenged by narrow but widespread forest loss, mainly for firewood and charcoal production. As a result, certain well-known species that evolved here over millions of years, such as lemurs and chameleons, might become extinct by the end of the century.

#### Indonesia:

Indonesia contains the world's third largest rainforest area, behind the Amazon and Africa's Congo Basin. Unfortunately, the rapid loss of Indonesia's biologically varied rainforests is driving some species to extinction.

#### Brazil:

Brazil is one of the most diverse of 18 megadiverse countries. It has between 15% and 20% of the world's biological diversity, with over 120,000 invertebrates, 9,000 vertebrates, and over 4,000 plant species. Aside from habitat degradation, the biggest dangers to animal survival include illegal hunting and forest fires.

## **UN AND EXTERNAL ACTIONS**

#### UNEP:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosts the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife, Fauna, and Flora (CITES), which governs trade in around 5,800 animal species and 35,000 plant species to prevent overexploitation.

The benefits of a dynamic natural environment are numerous, and biological variety lies at the heart of healthy and productive ecosystems. To combat the illegal wildlife trade, UNEP is working with other United Nations agencies, governments, international organizations, and the private sector to raise awareness, enforce laws, and enlist the help of local communities.

Significant progress has been accomplished as a result of UNEP's efforts to mobilize global high-level support for environmental governance and to organize political will to achieve greater impact at the national level.

#### Convention on Biological Diversity:

The Convention on Biological Diversity has two main Programmes: Thematic and Cross-Cutting.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) has created seven thematic work programmes that match some of the world's major biodiversity. Each program develops a mission and creates significant ideas to guide future effort. They also highlight critical topics for discussion, propose potential goals, and recommend a timeframe and strategies for attaining them. The fulfillment of the work programmes is dependent on contributions from the Parties, the Secretariat, appropriate intergovernmental and other organizations.

The COP has also begun work on major issues relevant to all theme areas, as well as bridges and linkages across thematic programs. Some cross-cutting projects directly assist work under theme programs; for instance, work on indicators offers information on biodiversity status and trends for all biodiversity. Others create distinct items that are unrelated to thematic programs.

#### External Actions:

Some organizations, like the World Wide Fund of Nature, are involved in conserving wildlife. The preservation of the ecosystem in which the animals reside is one of the simplest and most effective methods for organizations to protect wildlife. Volunteers work with groups to restore natural forests, grasslands, and coastal environments by planting native species, removing invasive plant species by hand, and dismantling old fences.

Around the countries, Protected Areas, National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves, and Community Reserves have been developed to help protect animals, particularly fragile species, and their habitat.

## CONCLUSION

All species on the planet help the ecosystem. Plant and animal species serve as the basis of healthy ecosystems. When a species becomes endangered, it indicates that the environment is failing. Each species that becomes lost causes the loss of other species in its environment. Humans rely on healthy ecosystems to keep our environment healthy.

Human actions have increased the rate of extinction by 1,000 to 10,000 times. Nowadays, habitat loss and destruction (mainly deforestation), overexploitation (hunting, overfishing), invasive species, climate change, wildlife trafficking, and nitrogen pollution are the leading causes of extinction.

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- What steps is your country taking to conserve endangered and threatened wildlife?
- What are the most important environmental concerns in your country?
- What actions must be taken to conserve endangered and vulnerable species?
- In your nation, how are humans mistreating animals?
- How should countries deal with the consequences of these issues?
- How can organizations inside a country contribute to secure the preservation of this species?
- What measures may be taken to ensure that every threatened species is protected?

## RESOURCES

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