

United Nations Environment Programme



6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



Background Guide

Water Scarcity Crisis in the 2024 Horn of Africa Drought

Table of Contents

Welcome Message From The DAIS	1
Committee Introduction	3
Topic Introduction	5
Current Situation	9
Bloc Positions	12
Africa Union	12
Federal Republic of Somalia	13
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	14
United States of America	15
Questions To Consider	16
For Further Research	17
Bibliography	18

Welcome Letter From The DAIS

Dear distinguished and honorable delegates,

Welcome to the Model United Nations of Xiamen 2024! My name is Jiho Choi, currently studying at Manila Xiamen International School as a grade 9 student, and I will be guiding you throughout this year's conference as a director of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). I am incredibly thrilled to assist you with what promises to be an exciting and enriching experience!

MUN can be defined as a process of discussing issues of international concern akin to the United Nations (UN) Conference but built for students. It provides a platform that allows one to go beyond the improvement of oratory skills and resolution writing, herein participation embraces the interaction of people and nations. Throughout this MUNOX conference, you will meet people from diverse backgrounds, each with unique stories and points of view. Listen actively and embrace these perspectives, build alliances, and don't hesitate to reach out to fellow delegates to share ideas and resolutions! I wish this experience will stay as an unforgettable memory which you got to develop yourself together with others.

Greetings delegates! I am Noor Xu, a 9th grader at Manila Xiamen International School, and I am honored to be your assistant director for this year's United Nations Environmental Program Committee. The dais will try our best to provide all delegates with a memorable experience, and we are looking forward to interesting debates in this year's committee!

Welcome! I am Misheel Lozada Revilla, a 9th grader from Manila Xiamen International School. This year I will be the assistant director for UNEP. After my years as a delegate, I am grateful and honored to be in this position. I hope to make this year's MUNOX enjoyable for all delegates, thank you, and good luck!

This year, the UNEP committee will be covering the topic of Water Scarcity in the 2024 Horn of Africa Drought. We look forward to your amazing ideas and cooperation regarding the topic, creating an environment of collaboration and encouragement in terms of making this year's conference memorable for everyone.

Sincerely yours,

Jiho Choi, Director of the UNEP Committee

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With best regards,

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Committee Introduction

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency that, through its various initiatives, supports climate justice as well as protects the environment. Its establishment was in view of the increased global sensitivity to environmental issues, tracing back to the very first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in June of 1972. To this day, this event is regarded as one of the greatest gatherings for discussion of global environmental policies with the engagement of 193 member states, numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil groups convened to deal with issues that were rampant issues such as pollution, deforestation and the destruction of ecosystems.

The rationale for creating UNEP stemmed from the growing awareness of the need for a multitasking international agency that would harmonize environmental actions and policies. With the onset of mass industrialization after the Second World War, the limits of pursuing economic growth at all costs came to be clearly understood. Environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and other issues that affect the primary consumers began to loom as a danger to the people and the natural environment. The Stockholm Conference initiated an international debate on the coexistence of environmental care and human development, leading to the understanding of the necessity for a strategy that would meet those challenges.

Thus, UNEP is committed to providing guidance and fostering cooperation in environmental protection by inspiring, informing, and empowering countries and people to enhance their standards of life without compromising that of future generations. In pursuance of this objective, the organization deals with a number of core issues such as climate change, sustainable development, ecosystem management, and the promotion of green economies. Through knowledge integration, policy development, and promotion of sustainable practices, UNEP aims to bridge the gap between environmental science and policy-making, ensuring that ecological considerations are integral to economic and social planning.

One of the main achievements of UNEP includes the Montreal Protocol; adopted in 1987, a

landmark international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out substances that deplete it, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); established in 1992, aiming to conserve biological diversity, promote sustainable use of its components, and ensure fair sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources, leading to significant efforts in biodiversity conservation globally, and the Basel Convention; adopted in 1989, targeting to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between countries, especially from developed to developing nations, and promotes environmentally sound management of waste.

In terms of its advocacy on environmental development efforts, UNEP has placed significant emphasis on three prevailing planetary crises, namely the climate change crisis which is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, the biodiversity crisis where human habitations and living organisms have declined tremendously due to destructive practices, and the pollution crisis which affects most human beings including the general ecosystems. Further, UNEP is also instrumental in the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to align economic growth with environmental conservation by mainstreaming environmental sustainability within the development agenda.

The UNEP also underscores the significance of education and awareness-raising in promoting a culture of sustainability. Social campaigns and various programs are organized by the institution in its attempt to mobilize society, and mostly the youthful populations, on environmental issues so that they can seek positive changes within their communities. By fostering a greater understanding of environmental challenges and solutions, UNEP aims to inspire a global movement towards a more sustainable future.

Topic Introduction

• Water Scarcity in 2024 Horn of Africa Drought

For generations, the Horn of Africa, including countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, has been especially vulnerable to the variability of the climate. In recent years there has been a spate of back-to-back droughts, compounded by climate change and erratic weather. According to United Nations data, rainfall levels over the regions of the Horn have declined by about 30% since 2020. Due to this intensive decline, surface and groundwater sources are seriously affected, which are of importance in the sustenance of agricultural practices and domestic needs in the area.

Drought conditions have, besides reducing freshwater availability, degraded natural resources. Loss of vegetation cover and soil erosion further deplete the region's resilience to climate shock. As the sources of water dwindle, ecosystems become unstable, impinging on biodiversity and even the livelihoods of communities depending on such natural resources.

Social tensions and conflicts have been the result of the struggle for access to water. Very often, the communities are competing for increasingly scarcer resources of water, which creates rivalries that in many cases turn violent. The women and children, who bear the traditional responsibility for fetching water, are at heightened risk through this process of being exposed to violence on long and dangerous journeys in search of this resource. This could also dent the chances of girls going to school and further contribute to gender inequality.

Besides, one cannot refute the psychological trauma associated with lack of water. People live with perpetual fear accentuated by anxiety and heightened rates of mental illnesses due to the breakdown of communities and the uncertainty about the availability of water. Actions and events that can lead to long droughts break community cohesion and resilience contribute to a breakdown of the social structures and, in turn, increase existing vulnerabilities.

In the Horn of Africa, agriculture, which engages more than 70% of the population and

contributes 25% to 40% of GDP, is highly dependent on water availability. Drought has devastated crops and lowered the productivity of livestock, hence food insecurity and increased prices. According to the World Food Programme, in 2024, millions are facing acute food insecurity, with the projection of increasing in case of continued deterioration.

The economic ripples go beyond agriculture. A lack of water dampens industrial activities in the area and affects local markets. Companies that are dependent on water for production have shown great setbacks, causing further increasing unemployment rates, resulting in poverty and the destruction of economies. Due to the fact that families have encountered difficulties in securing basic needs, the general economy has been strained, hence reducing the capacity for investment in vital infrastructure and services.

Furthermore, clean water, which is a fundamental source for sanitation and hygiene, continues to be an unavailable resource due to the lengthened time of drought in most of these communities. In fact, this lack of access itself encourages higher rates of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea to occur, especially among the most vulnerable or sensitive group of individuals in the population, including children and older adults. This, in turn, is placing excessive demands on health systems that are already very stressed and increasing mortality rates with a decline in the quality of life.

Malnutrition is yet another major issue related to water shortage. If agricultural yields vastly decline, the food security situation will emerge as precarious, leading to widespread malnutrition, especially in children. According to UNICEF, the number of malnourished children in the region has reached alarming levels that threaten the future health and development of the next generation as of 2024.

Beyond this, the crisis in the Horn of Africa is also deeply connected with humanitarian disasters and sustained conflicts in the area. As water resources continue to diminish, competition for them necessarily intensifies, setting off settled communities against equally sharp-elbowed clashes. For example, pastoralist groups migrate in search of water, often encroaching on territories held by farming communities, leading to conflicts over land and water rights.

Political instability in the region further exacerbates humanitarian conditions. Armed conflicts in Somalia and Ethiopia have left millions of people displaced. Displacement leads to disruptions in water and sanitation services due to overcrowding in temporary settlements, which strains limited resources and increases the risk of disease, and competition for water resources between displaced populations and host communities, leading to tensions and further complicating access. This further increases levels of vulnerability among already vulnerable populations. Internally displaced persons often find themselves in overcrowded camps where access to clean water is severely limited, raising the risk of disease outbreaks.

Humanitarian assistance often cannot penetrate civilized conflicts easily; thus, the delivery of basic supplies and services to the needy becomes difficult. When organizations try to respond to the crisis, security concerns may hamper their operations and further aggravate the humanitarian situation.

Water scarcity in the Horn of Africa is both a local crisis and an area where regional and worldly stability may be affected. Since communities have grown more desperate, so too would the prospect of conflict and destabilization in the region, making an impact on countries near and far. Such instability can force displacements and increased migration, where persons would flee from drought-affected areas for perceived better livelihoods. The influence of this shortage of water in the Horn of Africa is echoed even beyond the region as a whole. Global supply chains are disrupted, especially in agriculture; food shortages from that particular region make their way into markets around the world. Humanitarian crises often call for international intervention to divert resources and attention from other global priorities.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced by the United Nations in the year 2015, constitute a universal framework in an effort to overcome insurmountable global issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change among many others. In this respect, SDG 6, which is clean water and sanitation, is specifically directed towards the provision of sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. This goal seeks to ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene while promoting the protection of water-related ecosystems.

In the context of the 2024 drought in the Horn of Africa, SDG 6 is critically relevant. More than 50 million people in the area are suffering from extreme water scarcity with the average rainfall level shot down by almost 30% from 2020. Presently, safe drinking water is accessible to only approximately 60% of the population, raising health concerns about waterborne diseases. The drought also restricts the efforts to maintain even the basic level of sanitation and hygiene, therefore affecting the public health system.

Achieving SDG 6 is essential for addressing this crisis. It aims to encourage proper water management and increase clean water accessibility while encouraging sanitary and hygienic practices to avert health threats. Furthermore, SDG 6 supports community resilience by fostering sustainable water resources and infrastructure, essential for economic stability and food security. Thus, SDG 6 is not only a target but a vital component of a comprehensive response to the water scarcity crisis affecting the Horn of Africa.



Current Situation

The 2019-2024 drought within the Horn of Africa has affected more than 36.5 million people in the area. In the region, five consecutive rainy seasons have been declared failed, and this has led to the worst form of drought in over 40 years. It has been reported in 2023 that as of December 2022, over 36.5 million people are predicted to be adversely affected by the extreme levels of drought while more than 20 million people are estimated to be in acute hunger as a result of the drought. Additionally, over 16.3 million people in the Horn of Africa region do not have sufficient amounts of water for drinking, cooking, and sanitation, creating high demands for Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), nutrition, and health support.

The food insecurity has engulfed the Eastern Horn of Africa, comprising Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, escalating to worrying heights due to unending drought, with estimates showing that 7 million people are affected. The World Food Programme (WFP) reports that in many regions there have been several seasons of rainfall deficits of greater than 70% causing loss of crops. For instance, regions that are normally maize and sorghum belts have seen production decline by nearly 50%. The southern part of the Horn of Africa, which includes Ethiopia and parts of South Sudan, is drought-stricken as well, and around 20 million people are suffering from the acute food crisis. Similar to the eastern region, agricultural production has taken a significant hit, along with reports indicating the failure of beans and cassava due to long dry-out periods. As stated by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) some regions in this area, have recorded a 60% rainfall deficit. The Horn of Africa's northern region which comprises countries like Kenya and some areas of Tanzania is grappling with severe drought conditions that are affecting the pastoral communities a great deal. Presently, about 4 million people are at risk, with reports indicating that in some regions, up to 60% of the livestock have been lost. The National Drought Management Authority has pointed out that the present drought has resulted in a substantial decline in livestock's productive capabilities, leading to an economic crisis in the country. Within the core of the Horn of Africa, which also extends to the regions of Sudan and South Sudan, the impacts of drought are mixed with high climatic variability, resulting in both droughts and floods over the areas respectively. About 8 million people are experiencing food insecurity due to severe space-time climatic extremes. The Integrated Food Security Phase

Classification (IPC) notes that while some farming households have reported crop losses owing to dry spells, other households have identified incidences of flood which caused displacement and infrastructure damage.

The UNEP engaged in action through initiatives aimed at preserving the eco-balance and improving the water management system. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has been one of the major strategies for improving water utilization and enhancing the resilient capabilities of societies. Water catchment areas have been installed, and rainwater harvesting techniques have been introduced in different countries. Such interventions have restored clean water supply to more than 1.5 million individuals and improved over 30,000 hectares of land that was previously destroyed. Moreover, UNEP has taken a multi-faceted approach to address the challenges in this region, focusing on promoting sustainable land management and climate adaptation strategies. A new program launched in 2018 known as Resilience Building in Ethiopia is stepping into the gap of enabling communities to adapt to climatic changes. As a result of the program, climate-smart agriculture practices have been implemented with over 400,000 farmers, increasing their crop yields by as much as 30%. In addition, UNEP has facilitated the training of local communities in sustainable land management techniques, leading to the restoration of approximately 250,000 hectares of land. UNEP's intervention in this region has focused on improving communities' resilience through sustainable pastoralism initiatives. The Pastoralist Knowledge Hub develops and disseminates livestock and livelihood best practices. Together with local Non-Governmental Organizations, UNEP has implemented training courses that have reached more than 50,000 pastoralists, helping them learn how to implement sustainable grazing and livestock health. It has been indicated in the reports that these measures led to an increase in milk production in some communities by 20%. The UNEP has paid a great deal of attention to disaster risk reduction and building climate resilience in this region. South Sudan's Climate Resilience Program has introduced climate-smart agriculture such as crop diversification and soil conservation techniques to over 10,000 farmers. These techniques have led to food security attainment for almost 150,000 people mitigating the risk of both droughts and flooding.

Despite the efforts, the ongoing chaos and strife in certain areas of the Horn of Africa, such as Somalia, hampers the humanitarian aid hence making it a challenge for the agencies to provide

their services. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), levels of malnutrition among children are at emergency threshold levels with some areas reporting that 30% of children less than five years old are acutely malnourished. The coming together of these elements depicts a bleak scenario of the health status within the eastern region and emphasizes the need for comprehensive intervention to prevent any further damage. Additionally, there has been a steep increase in the livestock's mortality rates which has made many households sell their animals at losses in order to meet basic hunger needs exacerbating the economic conditions. The drought being experienced has a lot of immediate consequences in terms of humanitarian assistance but also there are lasting effects towards rebuilding and having resilience in these communities. Numerous households remain on the verge of starvation owing to a lack of food and water, with children in those regions suffering from malnutrition, having a rate above the emergency rate of 15%. Humanitarian agencies are making every possible attempt to help but face challenges in delivery and the resources at hand. Though the scoring of water and emergency food feeding programs has been rolled out, the nature of the problem surpasses the help given. Although efforts to provide emergency assistance are in progress, the nature of the situation calls for responses that deal with both the present crisis and future rehabilitation. More than ever, the necessity for improved water management systems and the development of climate-resilient agriculture is pronounced, as communities work to enhance their preparedness against such shocks in the future.

Bloc Positions

Africa Union

The African Union considers the magnitude of the environmental impact brought about by the 2024 drought in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. Its 36 million people are at risk from a lack of water, ecosystem disruption, and desertification; as such, the AU marks urgent needs for short- and long-run environmental interventions.

The drought has increased soil erosion, desertification, and loss of biodiversity, turning millions of hectares of farmland into unproductive ones. This process has contributed much to threatening food security and wildlife habitats while increasing regional vulnerability and deepening the ecological crisis.

The AU identifies climate change as a key factor in the drought. But even as the African continent contributes just about 3.8% of the carbon emissions into the atmosphere, it suffers disproportionately from climate-related disasters. Recent reductions in rainfall, combined with rising temperatures, have increased stress on ecosystems and impeded economic development-in fact, the ghost of a future climate crisis.

The African Union calls for regional and global cooperation in taming both the immediate effects and root causes of the droughting of the environment. The AU supports sustainable water management, reforestation, and climate-resilient agriculture while calling for enhanced international climate finance to support African nations in renewable energy and climate-adaptive infrastructure.

Under the aegis of Agenda 2063, the emphasis is on achieving environmental sustainability. The AU underscores strong global climate action and cooperation towards not only arresting the environmental challenges in the Horn of Africa but also increasing resilience in the face of future climate catastrophes.

Federal Republic of Somalia

Somalia is experiencing the most severe water crisis, considering the Horn of Africa was hit by drought conditions in 2024, which left approximately 7.7 million people – slightly over half of its population – suffering from food insecurity and a shortage of water. What this means is that the government needs to come up with all-rounded response mechanisms that handle not only the immediate needs of its people but also their long-term sustainability.

Somalian economy relies on agriculture and pastoralism, and such a drought naturally caused considerable damage to these fields. Clean water became a priority, and the government planned to construct 500 new boreholes and water purification systems in the most affected areas. At present, about 6.1 million people do not have clean drinking water, and accordingly, they are exposed to waterborne diseases.

The government of Somalia is also considering training programs that would equip around 300,000 farmers and pastoralists with the skills to adapt to unpredictable climatic conditions. The state encourages sustainable farming practices and crop cultivation that are resilient to drought; it thus sets a goal of boosting agricultural productivity by 30% over the coming year. These initiatives, therefore, aim at attending to pressing needs and making communities resilient against future climatic shocks.

Community involvement is also the key to the approach of Somalia. The government encourages dialogue among various community members to concertedly manage the natural resources to reduce conflict over basic resources, aiming at creating social cohesion and building resilience within the communities. The government, meanwhile, has been highlighting the integration of indigenous knowledge into environmental governance and natural resource management as an avenue to show how positive change is achieved with the support of homegrown solutions.

Essentially, the Somalia response puts front and center the immediate needs of the drought response while continuing to look at sustainable and resilient models of development. The

government is appealing for more cooperation with the international community in responding to the complex challenges posed by the drought in line with humanitarian needs through an ecological perspective.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The severe drought has had devastating effects on Ethiopia, putting an estimated 23.4 million people in acute food insecurity, while 5.1 million children are suffering from malnutrition. This disaster has displaced about 2.7 million and seriously affected animals: some 2.4 million livestock were affected and brought serious losses to pastoral communities. The poor state of the livestock has paralyzed production, while successive harvests below the average and rising transportation costs have caused food price spikes, continuing to erode household purchasing power and access to nutrient-rich foods.

With the prospects of an El Niño event and in light of the improved rains witnessed during the March-to-May 2023 season, the aftereffects of the 2020-2023 drought are likely to continue well into the foreseeable future, hence making the interventions that are both immediate and long-term very timely and urgent. Because of the tendency of droughts to be more frequent and intense with climate change, full recovery by the populace will take longer.

Following this crisis, several initiatives have been set up by Ethiopia: the distribution of 667 tonnes of fertilizers and 136.3 tonnes of seeds targeting almost 8,000 households and, the provision of 1,036 tonnes of supplementary feed to more than 11,500 households. An unconditional cash transfer of USD 1.58 million is supporting 20,026 households.

To this end, key policies like the National Disaster Risk Management Policy were put in place and investment in sustainable agricultural practices was made to enhance community resilience. Secondly, water management programs and social protection initiatives, such as the Productive Safety Net Program, further support vulnerable populations. What's more, community-based approaches and regional collaboration form part of the efforts Ethiopia is making to build resilient communities for the long term against recurrent drought challenges.

calling for sustained effort in the region affected by this unprecedented drought.

United States of America

The United States has recognized the urgency of this humanitarian crisis and has actively engaged in a multifaceted response aimed at alleviating suffering and promoting resilience.

Acute food insecurity from this drought puts over 20 million people at risk of famine. To this end, USAID has provided significant humanitarian assistance, including nearly \$1.3 billion in 2023 to help supply emergency food assistance, clean water, and health care services. The direct support has been important, buffering the impact of the drought and helping to prevent rampant starvation and illness.

Apart from the humanitarian assistance, the U.S. has begun development assistance that promotes long-term resilience among the affected communities. This is through the support of more sustainable agriculture, like drought-resistant crops and better irrigation techniques. The U.S. has increased such investments to enhance food security and reduce vulnerability to future droughts.

For effective on-the-ground support, the United States works with NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee and Save the Children, which tap into the local expertise and resources to ensure contextual relevance and impact of the interventions. The U.S. also supports regional stability efforts, knowing full well that conflict can heighten the impacts of drought. Ensuring these objectives – peace and cooperation among the nations in the Horn of Africa – are pursued through diplomatic initiatives creates an enabling environment for humanitarian and development efforts.

Questions To Consider

1. How has the 2024 drought specifically exacerbated water scarcity issues in the Horn of Africa compared to previous droughts?
2. What are the social and economic impacts of water scarcity on communities living in the countries of the Horn of Africa?
3. How does water scarcity affect food security and agricultural practices in the Horn of Africa?
4. What role do local communities play in developing and implementing solutions for water scarcity, and how can their knowledge be integrated into larger policy frameworks?
5. To what extent can regional collaboration for the management of water resources address environmental challenges and benefit the countries in the Horn of Africa?
6. What is the role of technology and innovation in addressing the challenges of accessibility and management of water resources in the region?
7. What sustainable water management strategies can be implemented to foster water security and mitigate the effects of future droughts in the region?

For Further Research

East Africa's Grapple with the Drought

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