LATINMUN 2026

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Developing Sustainable Frameworks for the Prevention of Industrial and Domestic Waste Discharge in Asian Waterways

LatinMUN

Director: Rebecca Aviña
Moderator: Sara Covarrubias

Welcoming message from the chair:

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to LATINMUN 2026! It is an honor to have you in the United Nations Environment Programme, where we will be discussing environmental challenges that demand cooperation and innovative thinking.

You are encouraged to participate actively, share your perspectives, and work collaboratively with fellow delegates to develop effective solutions. A respectful and organized debate will be key to the success of this committee. Additionally, we encourage you to remain open minded and consider diverse viewpoints throughout the discussion. Your ability to think critically and adapt will strengthen the quality of the debate.

The chair wishes you a productive and successful experience.

Sincerely,
UNEP Chair 2026

Committee's Background:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established in 1972 following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden. This conference marked a turning point in international relations, as it was the first time that environmental issues were recognized as a global concern requiring collective action. UNEP was created to serve as the leading global authority on environmental matters, with the responsibility

of monitoring environmental conditions, providing scientific guidance, and coordinating international responses to environmental challenges.

Since its creation, UNEP has worked closely with its 193 Member States. It also collaborates with scientists, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors. Its main functions include environmental monitoring, policy development, and capacity building, specifically in developing countries that lack the resources to address environmental issues. Additionally, UNEP plays a key role in raising awareness and promoting international cooperation. One of its most important roles is being part of various Multilateral Environmental Agreements, ensuring that global efforts remain aligned and effective.

UNEP has always focused on several key areas, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and sustainable resource management. Addressing climate change, UNEP supports global initiatives such as the *Paris Agreement,* providing data, research, and policy recommendations to help countries reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also contributes to the protection of ecosystems through its support of agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity. Also, UNEP addresses pollution in all its forms, including air, water, and land contamination, with priority on plastic pollution and waste management.

UNEP has played a significant role in shaping major environmental achievements over the past five decades. One of its most notable successes is the Montreal Protocol, which led to the global phase-out of ozone-depleting substances and is widely regarded as one of the most effective environmental treaties in history, and UNEP has contributed to the development of global environmental assessments, such as the Global Environment Outlook reports, and has supported the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to environmental sustainability.

Despite its achievements, UNEP faces several ongoing challenges. Environmental degradation continues to accelerate, with rising global temperatures, increasing pollution levels, and rapid biodiversity loss causing serious threats to ecosystems and human well-being. A issue presented is the resources between developed and developing countries in terms of resources and capacity to address these issues. Another limitation is that UNEP does not have enforcement power,

meaning it relies heavily on the political will and cooperation of Member States to implement its recommendations and agreements.

In the context of Model United Nations, UNEP provides delegates with a platform to address some of the most urgent global challenges of our time. Delegates are expected to represent their countries' interests while working collaboratively to develop realistic and effective solutions. This includes balancing economic development with environmental protection, promoting international cooperation, and proposing innovative policies that can be implemented at both national and global levels. Ultimately, the work of UNEP highlights the importance of collective action in ensuring a sustainable future for all.

Topic Background:

The water pollution crisis in Asia is a result of economic development that started in the mid-20th century. In this era, many Asian countries were focused on "industrialization," building thousands of factories to produce goods for export to other nations. However, in this process, they ignored environmental protection to save money and increase production. Usually, factories were constructed near big rivers to utilize water for production and to dispose of extra chemicals. In this era, no "Sustainable Frameworks" or strict policies were implemented, and therefore, decades of chemical accumulation have been left behind in the soil and water, causing a long-term crisis that is not easy to address.

The term "waste discharge" refers to the discharge of unwanted materials into the environment. This has undergone tremendous changes in the last fifty years. In the past, the main issue was the discharge of heavy metals like mercury and lead from large factories. However, as cities grew in population, a new issue was created by the discharge of "domestic waste" from millions of homes. Statistics from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reveal that across the globe, 80% of wastewater is discharged into the environment without being treated. In South Asia, past records reveal that only 7% of the discharges have been treated properly. This means

that the majority of sewage and soapy water has been flowing into the lifelines of South Asia, like the Ganges River and Mekong River.

The background to this issue spans decades and can be traced to the "biological cost" that has been exacted from Asia's ecosystem. When chemicals and sewage are left in a waterway for a long time, they create "dead zones" in the water that have zero oxygen and cannot support life. This has ruined the habitats of thousands of species of fish and birds. In addition to this, Asian waterways have historically been the main transportation route for plastics that now contain an estimated 2.4 million tons of plastics entering the ocean annually. This is not a new problem; it is one that has been created by years of plastics being used and discarded without proper recycling facilities being in place.

Throughout history, the populations living in the Asian waterways have been the hardest hit by the lack of protection. The World Health Organization has monitored the water-borne diseases in this region for decades and has found that contaminated water is one of the main reasons for illness in children. This has created a cycle of poverty and illness for the population because they use the water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. In some of the Asian waterways, the bacteria in the water is 100 times greater than what is considered safe. This demonstrates that the water crisis is not just a problem for the environment but has also been a threat to life and safety for a long time.

In the past, different nations have attempted to solve their own water crises, but this has not worked well due to "uncoordinated action." This is because some of the biggest rivers in Asia are international rivers, meaning that if a factory pollutes water in one country, everyone will be affected if they live in another. This "uncoordinated action" has meant that factories have exploited "loopholes," which are ways of breaking the rules. Knowing this, UNEP was formed to help nations develop a single plan. This problem still exists today in Asia and other nations around the globe.

Current Situation:

Across many parts of Asia, water pollution caused by industrial and domestic waste has become a major environmental and public health concern. Rapid urbanization and industrial growth have significantly increased the amount of waste being produced, while infrastructure and regulation have not always kept up. As a result, large volumes of untreated or poorly treated waste continue to be discharged directly into rivers, lakes, and coastal areas.

In several countries, industrial waste is one of the main contributors to water contamination. Factories in sectors such as textiles, chemicals, and manufacturing often release harmful substances, including heavy metals and toxic chemicals, into nearby waterways. Although regulations exist in many places, enforcement is often inconsistent, allowing companies to continue harmful practices without facing serious consequences. This has led to long-term damage to ecosystems and drinking water sources.

At the same time, domestic waste also plays a significant role in water pollution. In densely populated urban areas, sewage systems are frequently overwhelmed or underdeveloped, leading to untreated wastewater being released into rivers. In rural areas, the lack of proper sanitation infrastructure further worsens the problem. This not only pollutes water sources but also increases the spread of waterborne diseases, affecting millions of people.

Another important factor is the lack of coordinated regional efforts. Many rivers in Asia cross national borders, meaning pollution in one country can directly impact another. However, cooperation between countries is often limited, making it difficult to create unified solutions. Without shared standards and stronger collaboration, pollution continues to move across borders, complicating efforts to control it.

Despite these challenges, there is growing awareness of the need for more sustainable frameworks. Governments, organizations, and communities are starting to push for better waste management systems, stricter regulations, and more investment in water treatment infrastructure. However, progress remains uneven, and significant gaps still exist. Overall, the current situation highlights the urgent need for coordinated, long-term strategies that balance economic development with environmental protection.

Chair/Moderator Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is evident that the restoration of Asian waterways is no longer a goal, but a necessity for human survival. As evident from the historical data provided by UNEP and WHO, it is clear that the current trend of dumping 80% of wastewater untreated into the environment is causing a global health and economic crisis. For a better future, it is necessary for countries to look beyond the conventional trend of "growing now and cleaning later." By adopting a Sustainable Framework, it is possible for a nation to safeguard its resources, yet continue to grow. It is high time for these rivers to be transformed from toxic waste disposal routes to life-giving sources for billions of people.

To all delegates, the responsibly now lies on you. As a committee, we encourage you to develop bold and realistic resolutions that bridge gaps in waste management, safeguard vulnerable groups, and ensure that environmental protection is integrated into all phases of industrial and urban development. You must build a framework where economic development and healthy waterways move forward side by side, with justice, fairness, and respect for the right to clean water at its core. Your success in creating a united plan of action for a better Asia will determine the future of Asia's ecosystems.

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