

LATINMUN 2026

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)

**Taking accountability for greenhouse gas
emissions made by post-war side-effects due
to armed conflicts.**



LatinMUN

Director: Santiago Salazar Narváez

Moderator: Andrea Giselle Hernandez Flores

Welcoming message from the chair:

Dear delegates,

Welcome to LatinMUN! As your chair, we're excited to share this experience with you. We hope we can have a great time together, learn about each other, and get to know new friends. While also maintaining a safe and respectful environment. Remember this MUN simulation promotes collaboration and cooperation between delegates.

We encourage you to collaborate effectively with your fellow delegates, propose creative solutions, ask thoughtful questions, challenge yourselves, and speak your mind. Most importantly, we invite you to confidently defend your point of view while remaining respectful of others.

We look forward to seeing your ideas, passion, and dedication throughout this committee. Best of luck to all of you.

Sincerely,

Santiago Salazar and Andrea Hernandez

Committee's Background:

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the world's highest-level decision-making body on environmental matters, bringing together all 193 United

Nations Member States. Its primary purpose is to set the global environmental agenda and guide the development of international environmental policy. UNEA plays a key role in advancing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as environmental protection and sustainable resource management are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNEA was established in 2012 during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, through the outcome document *The Future We Want*. This marked a significant reform in global environmental governance, as the former Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was expanded into a universal body with full participation from all Member States.

The Assembly is responsible for setting priorities, providing policy guidance, and addressing emerging environmental challenges. It fulfills these functions through the adoption of resolutions, declarations, and decisions that shape international environmental action. Additionally, UNEA promotes dialogue, cooperation, and the exchange of experiences among Member States, while encouraging partnerships to support environmental initiatives.

The Bureau of UNEA, composed of a President, Vice-Presidents, and a Rapporteur, oversees the organization of the Assembly's work and ensures balanced regional representation. Supporting this structure, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) plays an important role in preparing the Assembly's sessions, including the development and review of draft resolutions.

UNEA also recognizes the importance of inclusivity by allowing participation from intergovernmental organizations, major groups, and other stakeholders such as youth, women, indigenous communities, and non-governmental organizations. Although these actors do not have voting rights, they contribute to discussions and help shape more comprehensive and representative environmental policies.

UNEA sessions are held regularly in Nairobi and bring together world leaders, ministers, and stakeholders to address pressing global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and sustainable consumption. Through its work, UNEA continues to strengthen international cooperation and drive collective action toward a more sustainable future.

Topic Background:

One of the biggest environmental problems today is the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. These gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, makes heat get stuck in the atmosphere and cause global warming. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, human activities have significantly increased these emissions, leading to rising temperatures and an increase in extreme weather events.

However, something that is often ignored is the impact of armed conflicts on the environment. Wars don't just affect people, they also affect the environment. Military operations use large amounts of fuel, destroying ecosystems, and releasing harmful substances into the air. An example is the Gulf War oil fires, when retreating forces set fire to hundreds of oil wells, releasing into the atmosphere massive amounts of pollution and greenhouse gases.

After wars end, the situation doesn't just improve immediately. Post-war recuperation requires a lot of energy and resources, which can increase the pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases even more. Even with all this evidence, there are currently no international rules that clearly measure or assign responsibility for these type of emissions.

Agreements like the Paris Agreement aim to reduce emissions globally, but they don't fully address emissions caused by conflicts. This creates a change in how the world deals

with climate change, especially when it has to do with the issues in the aftermath of a conflict.

Current Situation:

The current global situation regarding accountability for greenhouse gas emissions linked to armed conflicts reveals a critical gap between environmental impact and legal responsibility. Contemporary conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, demonstrate how warfare significantly accelerates climate change while remaining largely unregulated in international climate frameworks.

Recent analysis of the US-Israel conflict involving Iran highlight the magnitude of the issue. Within just the first 14 days, the conflict generated approximately 5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions, an amount comparable to the annual emissions of dozens of low-emitting countries combined. These emissions stem from multiple sources, including the destruction of civilian infrastructure, combustion of military fuel, burning of fossil fuel facilities, and the use of ammunition and military equipment. Notably, the destruction of buildings alone accounted for nearly half of total emissions, reflecting the long-term carbon cost of urban devastation and subsequent reconstruction.

Beyond immediate emissions, armed conflicts produce extensive indirect and long-term environmental consequences. Post-war reconstruction, supply chains for weapons production, and humanitarian aid delivery significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions, often surpassing those generated during active combat. These “full-cycle” emissions, covering pre-conflict, active conflict, and post-conflict phases, remain largely underreported and insufficiently studied due to limited access to military data and lack of standardized methodologies.

A major challenge in addressing this issue lies in the lack of transparency and accountability within international climate governance systems. Although the Paris

Agreement requires states to report greenhouse gas emissions, military emissions are frequently excluded or underreported, often justified by national security concerns. As a result, global emissions inventories remain incomplete, undermining efforts to accurately assess and mitigate climate change. Current estimates suggest that global militaries account for approximately 5.5% of total emissions during peacetime alone, with significantly higher figures during periods of conflict.

From a legal perspective, international humanitarian law (IHL) and environmental law provide limited and fragmented frameworks for addressing environmental damage caused by war. Existing rules, such as the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity, offer some level of environmental protection but were not designed to address large-scale climate impacts or transboundary environmental harm. Consequently, environmental damage is often treated as collateral rather than a central concern.

The issue becomes even more complex when considering transboundary environmental damage, harm that affects states not directly involved in the conflict. While principles such as the “no-harm rule” and state responsibility suggest that countries should not cause environmental damage beyond their borders, their application in wartime remains unclear and inconsistent. Historical precedents, such as oil spills during the Gulf War, demonstrate that environmental damage can extend far beyond conflict zones, yet accountability mechanisms remain weak and rarely enforced.

Overall, the current situation is characterized by three key challenges: insufficient data and transparency regarding military emissions, weak and outdated legal frameworks, and a lack of clear accountability mechanisms for both direct and indirect emissions related to armed conflict. As global temperatures continue to rise and the carbon budget for limiting warming to 1.5°C rapidly diminishes, the environmental impact of warfare represents an urgent and largely unaddressed dimension of the climate crisis

Chair/Moderator Conclusion:

This thorough research has made one thing clear: war is not only a humanitarian crisis, it is a climate crisis. Armed conflicts are accelerating greenhouse gas emissions at a scale that rivals entire nations, yet they remain largely invisible within global climate accountability frameworks.

The international community cannot continue to ignore this gap. The lack of transparency, weak legal structures, and absence of clear responsibility mechanisms allow one of the most destructive sources of emissions to go unchecked.

If climate action is to be taken seriously, it must include the environmental cost of warfare. The consequences of inaction will not remain confined to conflict zones, they will be global, long-term, and irreversible.

The chair urges delegates to confront this reality with urgency and responsibility.

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