

Forum: United Nations Environment Assembly

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TOPIC 2: The question of mandating green practices

I. Introduction to the Topic

Green practices, sharing similarity to sustainability, encompasses the idea of establishing lasting processes or systems that fosters environmentally responsible activity. Green practices can be utilised on different levels through an individual, corporational, or national level. Examples of these scales exist in simply taking shorter showers to reduce one's own carbon footprint, selecting less resource intensive materials for manufacturing garments, or granting subsidies to sustainable alternatives within the country. It may be easy to simply mandate this green transition for everyone, but this only goes so far without considering the different factors contributed by different stakeholders in trying to save the common earth.

At the current rate, by 2030, irreversible damage from climate change will be done across the globe unless met with a steep decline in carbon emissions. The fate of the world simply lies in everyone's collective consumption of resources around the world. From finding the area on the Earth to produce the goods to the point of after consumption, every point plays a crucial role in how the world turns out in a few years time.

With this 2030 goal in line, many committees, organisations, and conferences on a global level have taken place, in which the Net-Zero Coalition is one of the most prominent. On a smaller scale, many nations and smaller collectives individually have taken on this challenge of reaching the 2030 mark. Through all of this, many regulations and guidelines have been made to tackle this ongoing problem; and to a certain extent, they have provided some feedback, but for the most part – have not encouraged much.

This is where the different scales of stakeholders must assess mandating green practices to collectively contribute to this green transition in society.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Definition of Key Terms

Green practice - environmental friendly actions employed by an organisation that can help to environment protection and sustainability development by lowering carbon emissions.

Sustainability - meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Stakeholder - a person involved with an organisation, society, etc. and therefore has responsibilities towards it and is positively or negatively affected by its performance.

III. Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholder 1: United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is among the leaders in taking action regarding this issue. It is apparent that the country takes this responsibility very seriously as they are the first major economy to pass net zero emissions law. Not only that, but also that they published a Net-Zero strategy called Build Back Greener that sets out policies and proposals regarding the decarbonization of all sectors to meet the Net-Zero mark. With these initiatives, the UK is on track to cutting all carbon emissions by 2050, and that other nations should follow in their footsteps. It is important that larger and more influential nations take the lead in

Key stakeholder 2: European Union

Similar to the Net-Zero Coalition, the EU has signed their own ‘European Green Deal’ in 2019 “striving to be the first climate-neutral continent”. The Green Deal with the addition of the Climate Law provides a roadmap on how exactly the different EU nations will tackle the different sectors, pillars, and economy in reaching a 55% drop in carbon emissions by 2030, and ultimately – carbon neutrality by 2050. The Green Deal is a strategy that encompasses all changes and transformations needed for all people in society to live healthier and happier lives. Taking initiative, it is admirable what the EU is currently doing for other nations around the world as they are committed to a vision and acting upon it.

Key stakeholder 3: United Nations

The United Nations has been a significant catalyst to all climate change action; namely the United Nations Environmental Assembly, which is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. The United Nations deals with all world issues, but has always shed extra light on climate change. Recognizing the depletion and degradation of natural resources, the different counsels, organisations, committees, and countries have formed more of their own targeting these areas. The United Nations is a place of interglobal cooperation with representation from nearly all nations and regions of the world, which is crucial when trying to find solutions to these global issues. Examples can be cited through COP, SDG’s, UNFCCC or Kyoto Protocol. The world would have been vastly different had the United Nations not taken action on climate change in the ways they have.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Key Issue 1: Delayed actions

Currently, many countries have taken actions regarding the environment through signing various treaties, joining coalitions, reaching different agreements – but all lack a sense of urgency. Countries are promising action and results late in the future, but not doing too much now. Take the projection of Net-Zero Coalition, which requires emissions to be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. From what was projected in 2010, global greenhouse gas emissions will increase by 10% by 2030 based on available national action plans – keeping in mind that irreversible damage to the environment will occur in that same year. These national action plans are ineffective as they have proven a step in the opposite direction. Instead of speaking for the future, there must be agendas to implement immediately as the environment cannot afford to wait any longer. Prolonging this period only lessens the time to take action, if any will be even taken at all with these empty promises.

Key Issue 2: Rising Inflation

There is no doubt that inflation has been affecting everyone. Either it be the absurd pricing of housing in certain areas, increase in utility bills, food shortages, and overall, quality of life, many of the lower class are struggling during this time. Taking this into consideration, mandating individuals to live life differently during a time of struggle is not going to be the best solution, and would receive mass negative reception. Mandating green practices may come in the form of requirements of buying certain products, specific restrictions, or .. that creates changes in one's lifestyle. But exploring beyond that, corporations are experiencing the same hardship as the prices for materials and equipment needed are rising as well, which makes it incredibly difficult to bring in any positive return.

Key Issue 3: External Pressures

When making decisions for a people, governments have many other factors outside their control. Each government will have their own list of priorities and allocations of resources that may hinder any progress or changes from occurring. In this respect, mandating green to corporations, to lower carbon emissions, could mean a disruption to the aviation industry, the manufacturing industry or energy industry, in lowering job opportunities or running the business completely out, which all indirectly affects the government. Additionally, with governments being adaptive to better serve for the people's good, regulations, budgets, targets, or policies find themselves in a position of indecisiveness since it is very

much dictated by the people or factors otherwise. This all influences how progress can be tracked as it is changing and hindered due to surrounding factors.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1972	The Stockholm Declaration, with 114 nation signatories, was the first United Nations and international document to recognize the right to a healthy environment through 26 principles, many of which have played an important role in the subsequent development of International Environment Law. It declared sustainability across the world in that the use of current resources does not affect that of future generations.
1994	Global Footprint Network is a research organisation that measures the human use and demand of natural resources. The Global Footprint Network popularised the method of measuring human demand for natural capital to the rest of the world. With this statistic, it was clear that humans were overburdening the earth and something had to be done. This measure was very shocking to the general public, and is now taught as one of many measures of one's environmental impact.
2007	The paradigm of CO ₂ pricing is introduced to the world. The introduction of CO ₂ pricing is supposed to make corporations pay the social costs on society and the environment. But in attempts to lower carbon emissions of corporations, they have placed a monetary value on emissions, which is rather regressive.
2012	The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio +20, outlined a global agenda for sustainability. In their document, "The Future We Want" is roughly 50 pages outlining just that, discussing that a "green economy" is something countries should strive for and that pursuing economic growth has to be in line with minimization of ecological dangers.
2016	At COP 21, the Paris Agreement was a legally binded signature of 195 parties in limiting the global temperature from exceeding 2.0 degrees celsius, preferably 1.5 degrees. With carbon emissions growing at exponential levels, this agreement gives nations a collective goal to reach with steps regarding climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance – which included reducing emissions, combating effects of climate change, and global cooperation. This agreement also brought attention to the Net-Zero Coalition, which is still growing at this moment to reach net-zero emissions by 2030, and the establishment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Key Issue 1: Implementing flexible policies and guidelines

When talking about countries regulating green practices to its people, it is important to keep in mind the differences in context between the people. Having rigid and concrete mandates may cause different outcomes to varying extents on individuals. Instead, governments should accommodate for the differences with additional details pertaining to stakeholders and their situation, which reduces the command-and-control approach in this process. The account of cost-effective environmental policy instruments is crucial in helping people better accommodate the abilities of the larger people. Increasing the flexibility in meeting these standards will put them in feasible hands, and possibly encourage one to push towards them if an attempt is possible.

Key Issue 2: Market-based incentives

On the lines of having flexibility, creating market-based incentives will only further encourage people to possibly turn to making changes to their current processes. To anyone, change is not welcome when processes are going without any hindrance, so introducing strict mandates will be counterproductive and only raise negative reception by the public and further reluctance to cooperate with such measures. This type of policy interventions brings many benefits such as changing behaviour, more efficiently using resources, and reducing their negative environmental impacts. This dynamic approach to government intervention is what is needed in order to foster further change and innovation all while being cost-effective and sustainable.

Key Issue 3: Government Intervention

Without government direction, the people's individual contributions will not account for much collectively – rather the government must take initiative to lead their people in whatever way. Government intervention may be a solution as the people will listen and abide by the regulations or guidelines set out by the government. In that case, looking at possible solutions, any of which around policy interventions and financing measures can all help. Examples could be a possible green tax on negative environmental impact, tighter regulations about emissions, material and equipment standards on efficiency, or subsidies and tax rebates can also be other viable options. Governments need to intercept and guide the progress towards the future, as without a lead, the people are left directionless and hopeless on the dying earth.

Key Issue 4: Regulation of Financial Systems

Many corporations require financial support from central banks and governments. Without the support of these financial institutions, corporations are unable to grow. This creates a dependency of corporations on these institutions, in which these systems can alter or regulate. These financial institutions can now steer economic growth and transformation in the direction of sustainability.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

It may be hard to get direct searches on green practices, so the chair recommends broadening their search to green regulations, government intervention pertaining to environmental action, or going green fully. On these lines, delegates should have a variety of sources to work with to contrast and compare ideas across. When writing your resolutions, the delegate should consult various outlets of information from different perspectives and organisations. It may be helpful to consult different coalitions and agreements to gain an understanding where their country stands on these issues. Additionally, the chair highly recommends doing additional research into the delegate's own country's environmental efforts, which then will help connect with other countries around. Seeing what the delegate's country has done currently can give an indicator for the types of resolutions to write in representing the nation. Finally, having a general idea of countries relations outside of this may be helpful during the debate in order to accurately represent the country's values during the debate. Good luck in doing your research and writing your resolutions!

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