

GMUNC XII

**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

**Anun Amgalan • Head Chair
Taylor Bisbee • Co-Chair**



About Chairs

Head Chair

Anun Amgalan is a junior at Henry M. Gunn High School. She first participated in Model U.N. in sixth grade and has been attending conferences since. She served as co-chair for the BREXIT crisis committee at GMUNC last year, and crisis committees are her favorite to participate in. She plays mainly the violin and guitar, and is a member of the Gunn Chamber Orchestra. In her free time, she enjoys playing online Sudoku and Minesweeper, as well as other small puzzle games.

Co-Chair

Hi, I'm your Co-Chair, Taylor Bisbee. I just started Model U.N. last year, at the beginning of my sophomore year. Although I am new to M.U.N., I am very passionate about it, and go to as many conferences as possible. I mainly have experience in regular GA committees, but I'm very excited to work on my first DD GA. In my free time, I am very dedicated to Gunn Theatre and have been committed to theatre since the 5th grade. I love movies - especially thrillers and horror - and watch T.V. shows regularly through the school year, and I am big into rock music.

About Committee

The UNEP committee focuses on promoting international cooperation on environmental issues, developing sustainable policies, and supporting countries in implementing eco-friendly practices. It works to address global environmental challenges through consensus-building and policy recommendations.

Foreword

Welcome to the Gunn Model United Nations Conference XII and the UNEP committee. Having previously attended GMUNC, I am honored to be a part of this conference again and excited for another memorable year.

This committee explores the international drug trade and how it affects the climate around the globe. The focus for this committee will be on environmental protection and restoration, with an emphasis on upholding human rights and ethical policies. Since this is a GA, all writing will be done in the form of resolutions.

Position papers are due on October 3 to be considered for a research award, with the final deadline on October 10. If you do not submit a position paper by this date, you will not be eligible for any committee awards. Please send position papers and committee-specific inquiries to the committee email address: gmuncunep.climateanddrugtrade@gmail.com. Additionally, all delegates are required to complete contact and medical forms to participate in the conference. Please confirm with your delegation that the required documents have been submitted.

I wish you the best with writing your position papers, and I look forward to seeing everyone on October 11, 2025 for GMUNC XII.

Anun Amgalan

Head Chair

Introduction



U.S. Forest Service rangers and others work to reform a drug grow site

The international drug trade is a worldwide system involving the growing, processing, distributing, and consuming of illicit substances. Drug trafficking involves not only criminal enterprises and illegal financial flows but also affects the lives of rural and indigenous populations, regions with

weak regulations, and areas prone to conflict. In the majority of countries that produce drugs, the cultivation of drugs occurs in remote, forested, or otherwise ecologically sensitive areas, mainly because of the ease of concealment and limited state presence. Efforts to disrupt the trade, such as eradication campaigns, search tactics, and law enforcement pressure, often push cultivation or smuggling into even more remote areas, which increases pressure on ecosystems that are more vulnerable.

The environmental consequences of this trade are also becoming increasingly evident, with significant implications for climate change. Deforestation amplified by drug cultivation, trafficking routes, and other illegal activities contributes to carbon emissions and the loss of carbon sinks. For example, in Central America, cocaine traffickers have contributed to substantial forest loss, especially in protected areas, leading to the known degradation of the ecosystem, such as impacting water regulation, soil stabilization, and biodiversity. Meanwhile, the policies meant to combat the drug trade can also worsen these impacts when prohibition forces traffickers into even more remote and vulnerable ecosystems to evade detection.

Historical Context

The international drug trade has deep historical roots, originating in colonial trades of substances such as opium, coca, and cannabis, to become a multibillion-dollar global industry today. In the 19th century, the British Empire's opium trade with China played a central role in influencing international commerce and even started the Opium Wars, highlighting how drugs influence geopolitics and shift global power balances. By the early 20th century, rising concerns over addiction and social order led to the first international agreements to restrict narcotics, such as the 1912 Hague Opium Convention. These efforts laid the groundwork for strict drug prohibitions, leading to United Nations conventions that still structure global drug control today.



The First Opium War

During the Cold War and into the late 20th century, the drug trade expanded rapidly, fueled by rising demand in the United States and Europe. Cocaine networks in Latin America, heroin routes through Southeast and Southwest Asia, and cannabis cultivation across multiple continents became sources of income for organized crime groups and cartels. Throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, drug cartels in Mexico, Colombia, and Afghanistan gained enormous wealth and power, challenging governments and intensifying corruption, conflict, and militarization. U.S.-led initiatives such as the “War on Drugs” intensified eradication efforts, but often displaced production to new regions rather than eliminating it completely. This shifting of

drug cultivation and trafficking has had lasting social, political, and environmental consequences.

Past U.N. Action

Beginning with the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, followed by the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the U.N. established a strict prohibitionist framework. These treaties aimed to criminalize production and trafficking, standardize drug laws across member states, and empower enforcement efforts. In 1991, OzonAction trained around 2,000 customs officers in 70 countries to monitor and control illegal trade and restrict the use of ozone-depleting substances. Later, institutions like the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) promoted large-scale eradication campaigns, particularly in Latin America and Asia, aimed at reducing coca, poppy, and cannabis cultivation. The Rotterdam Convention was implemented in 2004 as an international treaty focused on facilitating decision-making between countries regarding trade in hazardous chemicals, with the goal of protecting human health and the environment.

However, these U.N.-backed strategies, such as forced eradication campaigns, especially those involving aerial fumigation of coca crops in countries like Colombia, damaged soil, polluted water systems, and destroyed biodiversity. While the U.N. has more



The UNODC

recently acknowledged the need to consider human rights and sustainable development in drug policy, its historical emphasis on prohibition has linked international drug control to long-term ecological harm.

Current Situation



Today, the international drug trade remains one of the largest illicit industries in the world, with cocaine, heroin, opioids, and methamphetamines in networks across every continent. Despite decades of eradication and enforcement, global drug demand continues to rise, particularly in North America and

Europe, while new markets in Africa and Asia are rapidly expanding. Cartels and trafficking organizations have adapted by diversifying their operations, investing in synthetic drug production, and exploiting weak governance in fragile states.

The environmental consequences of today's drug trade are increasingly alarming. Coca cultivation in the Amazon basin, methamphetamine production in Southeast Asia, and trafficking routes through Central America all leave significant ecological footprints. Deforestation, pollution from chemical dumping, and the disruption of protected ecosystems continue to accelerate. Additionally, climate change itself is reshaping the landscape of drug trafficking. Extreme weather, droughts, and shifting agricultural zones are affecting where and how drugs are produced, while climate-related instability makes vulnerable regions more attractive to

traffickers. The current situation shows a dangerous feedback loop, where drug trafficking fuels environmental degradation, and climate change in turn creates conditions that sustain the drug trade.

Goals for Committee

- Form regional blocs to address shared issues and develop partnerships between countries
- Create policy recommendations for reducing the use of harmful chemicals and unsustainable practices in drug production
- Develop strategies to restore ecosystems and rehabilitate land damaged by drug production, including funding mechanisms
- Suggest new UNEP pilot projects in affected areas

Questions to Consider

- How does the international drug trade directly or indirectly contribute to environmental degradation and climate change?
- What role can UNEP play in addressing the environmental consequences of the drug trade, while staying within its mandate?
- What environmental guidelines should be applied to prevent ecological harm? How should international drug policy change to reflect climate and sustainability goals?
- How can we make sure that environmental solutions to the drug trade don't cause harm or violate human rights?

References

Garcia, Sierra. "Where Drug Trafficking and Climate Change Collide." JSTOR Daily, 26 Mar. 2021, daily.jstor.org/where-drug-trafficking-and-climate-change-collide/.

Gomes, André. "War on Drugs Drives Environmental Damage Says New Report." TalkingDrugs, 5 Oct. 2023, www.talkingdrugs.org/war-on-drugs-drives-environmental-damage-says-new-report/.

McSweeney, Kendra, and Erik Nielsen. "Climate Change in Central America: The Drug War Connection." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 13 May 2020, gjia.georgetown.edu/2020/05/13/climate-change-in-central-america-the-drug-war-connection/.

Sorberg, Kjersti. FINAL PROJECT: DRUG TRAFFICKING the Nexus of Drug Trafficking and Climate Change Kjersti Soberg PS 620 -Transnational Crime and Corruption. 2024, kjerstiportfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Nexus-of-Drug-Trafficking-and-Climate-Change.pdf.

UNODC. "World Drug Report 2022." United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2022.html.

"Drugs and the Environment." Wwww.gdpdp.org, www.gdpdp.org/en/drug-policy/drugs-and-the-environment.

"Illegal Pot Farms on Public Land Create Environmental Hazard." Mynews13.com, 2019, mynews13.com/fl/orlando/ap-top-news/2019/11/17/illegal-pot-farms-on-public-land-create-environmental-hazard.

Committee Members

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. United States | 23. Australia | 44. New Zealand |
| 2. Brazil | 24. Myanmar | 45. UAE |
| 3. Colombia | 25. Thailand | 46. Egypt |
| 4. China | 26. Nigeria | 47. Fiji |
| 5. Mexico | 27. Argentina | 48. Maldives |
| 6. Russia | 28. Ethiopia | 49. Morocco |
| 7. India | 29. Türkiye | 50. Sweden |
| 8. Germany | 30. Democratic | |
| 9. Peru | Republic of Congo | |
| 10. Afghanistan | 31. Italy | |
| 11. France | 32. Switzerland | |
| 12. Indonesia | 33. Portugal | |
| 13. South Africa | 34. South Korea | |
| 14. United Kingdom | 35. Japan | |
| 15. Pakistan | 36. Saudi Arabia | |
| 16. Philippines | 37. Jamaica | |
| 17. Canada | 38. Guatemala | |
| 18. Bolivia | 39. El Salvador | |
| 19. Iran | 40. Vietnam | |
| 20. Venezuela | 41. Kenya | |
| 21. Netherlands | 42. Ghana | |
| 22. Spain | 43. Lebanon | |