PAMUN XV—SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE: COP21—MEASURES TO REDUCE GLOBAL WARMING

Introduction of Topic

From 30th November 2015 - 11 December 2015, France will be hosting the 21st Session of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC is an international treaty adopted in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit which sets out the framework for action with aims to reduce the effects of Climate Change. This involves reducing the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. Even if emissions are stabilized soon, the effect of Climate Change is expected to persist beyond the 21st century. According to the AR5[1], the rate of global mean sea level rise has continued to increase since the early 20th century and will continue beyond the year 2100.

The UNFCCC, now has a membership of 195 parties. The COP is made up of all the "Parties" and every year, there is a global session where decisions are taken in order to reduce the impacts of Climate Change. COP21 is a crucial conference as it aims to achieve an international agreement on the climate, involving all countries, to keep global warming below 2°C. 40,000 participants attend the conference and it is one of the largest climate conferences to be organized.

In the committee, delegates must create clauses with this fundamental goal in mind. During lobbying and caucus time, delegates will separate into their three Groups. Here, delegates can collectively create clauses with other delegates or discuss their own clauses with others to ensure that solutions aim to solve issues which countries are facing collectively. Clauses for COP21 will not begin with the usual phrases. An example of this is: "From its first session, the Conference of the Parties shall arrange for the provision to developing country Parties of technical and financial support, on request, in compiling and communicating information under this Article, as well as in identifying the technical and financial needs associated with proposed projects and response measures under Article 4. Such support may be provided by other Parties, by competent international organizations and by the secretariat, as appropriate." [2]

> At PAMUN delegates will be amending/adding clauses to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Here, delegates must come up with creative and innovative solutions with the overall goal to keep global warming below 2°C. Clauses can focus on a variety of issues such as the integration of the civil society, technological transfers, as well as methods to avoid empty declarations. In keeping with the theme of the committee, delegates must keep the overall goal of reduction in mind.

[1] The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the fifth in a series of such reports.

[2] Article 12, clause 7 of the UNFCCC

Country Division

In the period running-up to the Conference, countries are working and lobbying in "interest groups". We have taken this as the basis of inspiration to constitute three such groupings: The Small Island Developing States (SIDS), The Least Developed Countries and Group 3 which includes members from Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union, the Umbrella Group, the Environmental Integrity Group and the BRICS members.

Small Island Developing States:

SIDS are low-lying coastal countries which all have similar sustainable development challenges. These include: sinking terrain, limited resources, susceptibility to natural disasters, growing populations and fragile environments.

Least Economically Developed Countries:

According to the United Nations, LDCs are countries which exhibit the lowest socio-economic development with the lowest Human Development Index[3]. A country will be classified as an LDC if there is major poverty, human resource weakness and economic vulnerability. Though the official UN list is shorter, we have included here all countries widely held as LDCs.

Group 3:

Group 3, consists mainly of MEDCs which are the "most economically developed countries" and more successful developing countries. These countries can be classified through their highly developed economies and advanced technologies. Other countries on the list are members of the BRICS group: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Background Information

"*They say that time changes things, but in fact, time is only passing and we have to change things ourselves*".

- Andy Warhol

The 2°C of reduction is especially hard due to that fact that countries desire to develop. Without the use of fossil fuels, economic development is restricted to a great extent for developing countries. Oil is the biggest single energy source and replacements for this energy-dense, easily transported fuel are hard to find. Coal is the next biggest and, gas is the third of the fossil fuels, and the only one predicted to rise in use by 2035. Shale gas, extracted from rock by the controversial process of fracking, will make up a fifth of supplies by that date.[4] Thus, there is a large necessity for these fossil fuels. Alternative energy is another option, however, several countries cannot afford an abundance of this, due to their high prices. Therefore there should be a leeway on environmental policies for the sake of development between LDCs and MDCs. However, such declarations are international agreements and some MDCs believe that such a leeway would not be "fair." This was the case with the Kyoto Protocol. Consequently, reduction of fossil fuels to such an extent, continues to be an issue.

[3] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistic of life expectancy, education and per capita income.

[4] http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/nov/09/why-hard-stop-climate-change

Key past meetings and their outcomes

Why past attempts have failed

So far, there have been 20 COP meetings. Each COP has one essential goal: to counter the effects of climate change. Several Declarations and documents have been adopted and enacted, yet, SIDS are on the verge of sinking, LDCs face tremendously dismal repercussions and the planet has reached a critical stage. So, the biggest question is: despite all the Conferences and Resolutions, why? One major reason, among others, is the difference in development and emissions between countries. Quite logically, the poorer nations ask: why must their countries have to bear the consequences and pay expenses for climate change related issues for which they are not directly responsible, as they emit comparatively, low GHG emissions. Fast developing nations such as China and India, which are heavily dependent upon increased fossil fuel usage for ongoing growth, also protest at actions that would stop them from their development and the sentiment is that major emitters such as the US, the EU, Japan etc. should also cut back. However, developed countries believe that climate change is an international issue which requires universal support and that it is 'unfair' that only a few countries have to bear the consequences. In addition, since a decade, the world economy has been straitened which has eroded the financial capacity of the developing countries and thus, has led to a reluctance on the part of developed nations to contribute to climate change.

Furthermore, there is a tendency of 'free-riding' amongst countries on such an international level. Here, countries benefit from the work that other countries have done, without any action or measures taken on their part. This leads to the fact that only a fraction of countries are responsibly taking action for climate change. Such inevitable 'egoism' between states is holding back progress on climate negotiations.

Moreover, there is also a difference between the views of experts and politicians. Experts are those who provide technical perspectives and knowledge to the issue while politicians can hold back progress due to issues such as: egoism, free-riding, national interest and realpolitik.

Lastly, another of the myriad of reasons why past attempts have failed is the issue of "empty declarations." Empty declarations has been a great issue in the past. Declarations, funds or documents have been created, yet, their creation has had minimal impact, such as the Green Climate Fund (which will be discussed in detail later in the report). Delegates may wish to introduce the concept of creating repercussions for countries not following or abiding to declarations.

Clearly, climate change is an issue which requires major collaboration and cooperation between nations and peoples, therefore countries must cooperate amongst themselves to ensure any actual progress.

December 1997: COP3, Kyoto, Japan

COP3 led to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty which set internationally binding emission reduction targets to reduce the concentration of GHGs by 6% to 8%. The treaty follows the main principles of the UNFCCC. However, major countries such as the United States - who were asked to reduce their emissions by 7% - have not signed the Kyoto Protocol. The United States expressed its disapproval and did not sign the Protocol. They believed that an international agreement did not require LDCs and DCs to reduce its

emissions and stated that the adoption of the Protocol would lead to a great dent in the US economy.

November 1998: COP4, Buenos Aires, Argentina

It had been expected that the remaining issues unresolved in Kyoto would be finalized at COP4. However, agreement from all countries proved to be almost impossible and instead, a 2 year "Plan of Action" was adopted. This was primarily to accelerate efforts and to devise methods for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, which was to be completed by 2000.

November 2000 & July 2001: COP6, The Hague, Netherlands and Bonn, Germany

There were two meetings for COP6: the first in The Hague and the second in Bonn. During COP6 in 2000, there was major controversy over the United States' proposal to allow credit for carbon "sinks" in forests and other lands. Additionally, there were difficulties in resolving how developing countries could obtain the financial stability to reduce their GHG emissions.

Due to the major controversy and political issues, the conference was resumed in 2001 as there had been close to no progress in the first COP6. The second COP, contrary to popular expectation, covered decisions in four principal areas relating to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol: operating rules for emissions trading established under the Kyoto Protocol; the sequestration of carbon by forests and other “sinks” that would be credited towards Kyoto emission targets; funding to help developing countries cope with climate change, and mechanisms to enforce compliance with the Kyoto targets.

October - November 2002: COP8: New Delhi, India

Here, the Delhi Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development was adopted. This Declaration, much like many others, stated that developed countries would transfer technologies and resources to developing nations in order to counter climate change.

December 2009: COP15: Copenhagen, Denmark

COP15, commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit aimed to establish an ambitious global climate agreement for the period from 2012 when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol expires. However, on November 14, 2009, the New York Times announced that "President Obama and other world leaders have decided to put off the difficult task of reaching a climate change agreement, agreeing instead to make it the mission of the Copenhagen conference to reach a less specific "politically binding" agreement that would punt the most difficult issues into the future.”[5] Ministers and officials from 192 countries took part in the Copenhagen meeting and in addition there were participants from a large number of civil society organizations.

The conference did not achieve a binding agreement for long-term action. However, the Copenhagen Accord was established. The Copenhagen Accord was drafted by the United

[5] Cooper, Helene (November 14, 2009). "Leaders Will Delay Deal on Climate Change". New York Times. Retrieved December 5, 2009.

States, China, India, Brazil and South Africa. It was not adopted as it was not passed unanimously. The document recognized that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the present day and that actions should be taken to keep any temperature increases to below 2 °C. The document is not legally binding and does not contain any legally binding commitments for reducing CO_2 emissions.

November - December 2011: COP17, Durban, South Africa

The Green Climate Fund was created. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund within the UNFCCC created as a mechanism to ensure that developing nations receive money from developed nations in order to assist such countries to acquire technologies and other resources to adapt to climate change. It is intended to raise climate finance of $100 billion per year till 2020. The GCF is currently active, however, a multitude of issues are attributed to this. Some include: how will the funds be raised; the role of private finance in this; and the level of "country ownership" of resources. Additionally, there are issues regarding the necessity of another new international climate change institution which many fragment public dollars put towards combating climate change.

November - December 2012: COP18, Doha, Qatar

Little progress was made towards the GCF. In addition, the Doha Climate Gateway was produced. This document amended the Kyoto Protocol by extending the commitment period from 2012 to 2020 to reduce carbon emissions up to 15%.

November 2013: COP19, Warsaw, Poland

Several agreements were at the forefront of the talks, including: unused credits from phase one of the Kyoto Protocol, improvements to several UNFCCC action mechanisms, and a refinement of the measurement, reporting, and verification of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

December 2014: COP20, Lima, Peru

The “Lima Call For Climate Action” was established and includes a draft form of the global deal on climate change that countries are expected to agree in Paris late 2015. The document also includes a goal for limiting temperature rises to 2ºC. In addition, the European Union aims to drop 40% in emissions by 2030.

Main Issues

Being one of the biggest existentialist crises of our generation, there can be a myriad of solutions to deal with the question of Climate Change. Each group (SIDS, LDCs and Group 3) faces vastly similar and different problems.

Evidently, the similarities faced by all countries is the effect of the greenhouse gases. As the usage of GHGs increases, global warming becomes a greater threat every day to life on earth. The three groups all face the common threats of a rise in sea levels, increasing acidity in oceans and other water bodies, extreme weather conditions, a greater occurrence of natural disasters etc. However, the groups also face their individual issues which must be focused on.

Challenges faced by SIDS

The Small Island Developing States: Although SIDS themselves emit negligible amounts of greenhouse gases, they face the worst of Climate Change. For example, while the global mean sea level rise is 3.2mm per year, in Micronesia sea level is rising at a rate of 10 mm per year. Climate change also poses a major threat to coastal ecosystem in SIDS. This is disastrous as these countries depend on their coastal ecosystems for food and livelihood. Most notable are the coral reefs and mangroves, which are already severely degraded by rising sea surface temperatures.

With limited opportunities in SIDS and the prospect of increased opportunity and support in foreign countries, the emigration rate from SIDS have increased *due to the evident effects of Climate Change* being felt. The environmental degradation as well as climate change and sea level rise are the primary reasons for why skilled and educated people are emigrating. This results in the outcome of islands becoming uninhabitable, which in turn increases the emigration rate. This causes a number of issues for the island and of course, for the country where the islanders are emigrating. Island countries have to cope with the 'brain drain[6]' and maintain island heritage and cultural unity despite the diaspora. The receiving country, on the other hand, must deal with the immigrants.

Challenges faced by LDCs

Least Developed Countries: Recognized by the UNFCCC in Articles 4.8 and 4.9, LDCs are countries which are the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of Climate Change. Similar to SIDS, LDCs comparatively, emit relatively small amounts of GHGs, however are vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change as they lack the resources necessary to adapt.[7] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that Africa was the most vulnerable continent to climate change and variability.

Challenges faced by Group 3

Group 3 consists of MDCs and developing countries such as India and China. These countries produce the majority of greenhouse gases. The capitalist economies in these countries, influence intense economic production which consequently leads to industries with heavy emission rates through the burning of fossil fuels. However, an increased number of developing nations are surpassing MDCs in the GHG emissions. MDCs can potentially induce Climate Change.
MDCs and developing nations face the same effects of GHGs. Those being: extreme weather conditions, higher flood risks, an increased severity of drought, and rise in sea levels.

Carbon dioxide emissions

As emissions increase, a linear relationship between warming and cumulative emissions is created. For example, as the level of CO2 emissions increase, there is less of an effect on global warming (the strongest absorption bands are already saturated). However, many carbon sinks (e.g. the ocean) become less effective at absorbing carbon dioxide at higher concentrations of dissolved CO2.

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[6] The emigration of highly trained or qualified people from a particular country.

[7] Office Of The High Representative For The Least Developed, Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries And Small Island, and Developing States (Un-Ohrlls). *THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES*. Web.

These effects roughly balance each other out, meaning, a direct relationship between carbon dioxide emitted over a given time period and the global warming, which is is created.[8]

Possible Solutions

Solutions vary depending on economic stability and geographic locations of countries. Additionally, reducing GHG emissions for developing countries and MDCs will be a challenge as the goal is to keep global warming below 2°C. Alternative energy is the key to ensuring reduction in GHG emissions. As the Earth is currently at a critical stage, everyone must come to the realization that the biggest issue the world is facing, is how long human beings will be able to sustain the planet? The only problem with alternative energy is that the cost is far too high for many governments to purchase because they are produced by the private sector; whose aim is to make enormous profit. In MDCs and developing countries, by only slightly and marginally increasing taxes, the government can use this money to create affordable alternative energy resources. In the long run, this would greatly benefit countries. Additionally for SIDS, countries who emit a negligible amount of GHGs, there is not much these countries can control or can take control of, therefore they must adapt to Climate Change and aim to reduce its impacts, rather than anything else. Early warning systems should be implemented, as well as mitigation, adaptive and technological measures funded by the UN. These measures should be tailored to the specific needs of SIDS such as resilience, to withstand natural disasters such as earthquakes.
In addition, there could be subsidies or tax breaks provided for corporations who cut by on their emission rates or are eco-friendly.

And of course, awareness of the issue must be spread to the maximum. Students from kindergarten and the first grade should be made aware of this at the very roots, so as to ensure the development of responsible, caring individuals and citizens. Furthermore, during the conference, each Group will first come up with solutions and create their clauses together during lobbying and cacus time. Once the Groups have consolidated their clauses, then the Groups will collectively come together as a Committee during debate time.

Important websites:

http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en
The official COP21 website.

http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Impact-of-Climate-Change-on-The-Development-Prospects-of-the-Least-Developed-Countries-and-Small-Island-Developing-States1.pdf An incredibly useful document outlining problems faced in LDCs and SIDS.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Climate_Change_conference
A list of all COP meetings and their outcomes.

[8] "World's Carbon Budget to Be Spent in Three Decades." *World's Carbon Budget to Be Spent in Three Decades*. N.p., n.d. Web.

http://www.publicagenda.org/files/globalwarming_guide.pdf
Outlines issues of Climate Change faced by MDCs, LDCs and SIDS. This document brings up some great points.

https://prezi.com/lxedjknp15nv/effects-of-climate-change-on-globalization/
Effectively analyses cause and effect of the usage of GHGs.

http://www.resilience.org/stories/2013-11-04/why-united-nations-climate-change-conferences-will-always-fail
An interesting and perceptive text on why past meetings have failed.