

Welcome Delegates to PANGEA 2020 and the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created to lead the United Nations on environmental affairs, to provide leadership and to encourage partnerships for Member States to improve their quality of life, helping them to consider carefully the impact their actions have on the environment. UNEP was created by the General Assembly in 1972 in response to the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Industrial powers, while encouraging the creation of a UN structure to coordinate environmental issues, feared the costs of creating a new bureaucracy; developing countries feared that a new agency would seek to limit their development progress. Thus, United Nations Environment was a “programme,” not an agency whose structure and duties were clearly defined, with only a “Voluntary Fund” to pay for most of its program expenses. UN Environment, in the late 1980s, worked with the World Meteorological Organization to initiate the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which led to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹

For this conference, the UNEP will focus on two topics for discussion:

- I. Promoting Global Collaboration in Combating Rising Sea Levels due to Climate Change
- II. Expanding UN-Based Green Energy Infrastructure Programs in Developing Member States

I. Promoting Global Collaboration in Combating Rising Sea Levels due to Climate Change

In 2017, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres spoke at New York University concerning climate change, highlighting the effects of climate

¹ United Nations Environment Programme.2000.http://www.unep.org/PDF/ABOUT_UNEP_ENGLISH.pdf

change, including melting ice caps and glacial retreat.² The reality of sea level rise and global warming is agreed upon by a wide range of scientists, and requires immediate attention. Numerous factors are contributing to rising sea levels, including the melting of icecaps and glaciers, but more importantly thermal expansion, which causes current ocean waters to expand and occupy more volume. As the Earth grows warmer, the oceans and seas absorb this heat, leading to greater thermal expansion.

The IPCC forecasts a global rise in sea levels of 3 - 100 centimeters by the year 2100, while other atmospheric research stations predict a rise of up to two meters. This much of a rise could push the coastline of Florida above Miami; it could completely overwhelm many low-lying islands such as the Maldives, Tuvalu, and Kiribati. This significant rise will impact human populations and ecosystems dramatically. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are disproportionately impacted, but rising sea levels are a problem for the UN and all Member States, and must be addressed. Both the UNFCCC and the IPCC have produced legislation addressing this issue, including the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.³

II. Expanding UN-Based Green Energy Infrastructure Programs in Developing Member States

With the passage of the Paris Climate Accord in 2016, the UN set ambitious goals for both mitigating and adapting to the crisis of climate change. The focus on the need for green energy began more than a decade ago, specific agreements on the development of green-energy technology in developing Member States are still difficult to achieve and implement. Four of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the General Assembly in 2015 revealed a focus on green-energy. The 2017 UN Climate Change Conference in 2017, almost USD 1 billion was announced toward green initiatives. These

² Antonio Guterres, "Address on Climate Action at New York University Stern School of Business (New York, NY, May 30,2017). <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-05-30/secretary-generals-climate-action-address>

³ "KP introduction," *United Nations Climate Change*," <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

initiatives have NGO and private industry collaborations in several programs, including the UNEP-Frankfurt School Collaborating Center for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance. The creation of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) by 153 Member States and the European Union, with the goal of promoting and encouraging the use of renewable energy, has added strength to the commitment of Member States to work together to resolve the need for green energy technology.

Projects such as the one undertaken by UN Environment and the World Bank, operated a very successful solar loan program in India for five years. Funded through assistance from the UN Foundation and the Shell Foundation worked to develop a commercial market for solar home systems in one State in India, for people over the poverty level. A similar program was launched in Indonesia by UN Environment and the Government of Germany, and programs to develop solar water heating in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Chile followed, as have more in recent years. Most of these projects have been successful, but limited in scope. Much remains to be done to address all facets of green energy development throughout the world.