

MEF SCHOOLS MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

*“Achieving SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in line
with the 2030 United Nations agenda.”*



Committee: GA4

Agenda Item: Addressing land degradation and pollution in post-conflict areas (SDG 15:Life on Land and SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation).

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals recognizes environmental sustainability as a fundamental pillar of global development. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) are closely connected as freshwater ecosystems and terrestrial biodiversity play essential roles in maintaining balance and well-being. These goals address critical issues such as water scarcity, pollution, land degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss, all of which pose significant threats to sustainable development.

This report aligns with the theme of MEFHIGHMUN'26, "Achieving SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in line with the 2030 United Nations Agenda," emphasizing the necessity of coordinated global action to address pressing environmental challenges. It aims to provide delegates with a clear understanding of the importance of sustainable water and land management, the responsibilities of governments and international organizations, and the need for long-term, inclusive strategies. Through cooperation, innovation, and effective policy implementation, progress toward SDG 6 and SDG 15 can contribute to environmental resilience, social stability, and sustainable development on a global scale.

Definition of Significant Terms

IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management)

IWRM is a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize resultant economic and social welfare without compromising sustainability.

Land Degradation

A temporary or permanent decline in the productive capability of the land, which includes its major land uses, mainly farming and irrigation. There are multiple factors which contribute to degradation, mainly being armed conflict, climate change and natural disasters.

Subsistence Farming

A form of farming where all crops and livestock are raised purely to maintain the farmer and their family, leaving little surplus to sell or trade.

SDG 6 (Sustainable Development Goal 6)

One of the 17 United Nations Development Goals, aiming to achieve clean water and sanitation for all.

SDG 15 (Sustainable Development Goal 15)

A UN Development Goal which aims to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests and halt land degradation.

Bioremediation

Bioremediation is the use of living organisms such as plants and microbes to clean polluted soil, air and water. These fungi and bacteria break down oil, chemicals and waste creating a cost efficient way to fight degradation.

Detailed Background of the Issue

The health of the planet's natural systems is directly related to sustainable development. Within the framework of the 2030 United Nations Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land) address two of the most pressing environmental challenges of the 21st century: the sustainable management of freshwater resources and the protection of terrestrial ecosystems. These goals are deeply interconnected, as land degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss directly affect water availability, water quality, and ecosystem resilience.

Land Degradation caused by heavy metals contaminates the food chain, RDX damages the central nervous system and slows or halts plant growth. Common products such as TNT turn into harmful byproducts that seep into the soil and depleted Uranium from tank and artillery shells create a risk of radiation. As well as warfare significantly affecting the landscape through the building of fortifications, heavy machinery and the impact of explosions leading to severe soil compaction, preventing water and air prevention. Munitions, unexploded ordnance and the destruction of Industrial districts release hazardous substances that persist for years. Large conflicts such as the three decades of non-stop armed conflict in Afghanistan ravage the land it happens on, turning large farmland into barren deserts, leaving the land an inhospitable wasteland. Man made disasters like the intentional flooding of the Yellow River in 1938 cause harm to the landscape that lasts for years. The UN has established many organizations such as the UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification) and launched Initiatives such as the Peace Forest Initiative to combat land degradation. We must remember that our actions during armed conflict leave a lasting mark for decades through chemicals, heavy metals, destruction of forests, cities and farmland and work towards mitigating the effects of wartime degradation.

Timeline of Key Events

1948	India and Pakistan cooperated the management of the Indus River.
1970	Decades of conflict in Afghanistan begins
1975-1990	Lebanese Civil War
1992	UN General Assembly Resolution 47/37 Passed
1994	The UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification) was established
1999	UNEP Began conducting assessments in post-conflict regions
2001	The Bonn Agreement was signed
2007	The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) was signed by the African Union
2016	The UN adopted Resolution 2/15
2019	The Peace Forest Initiative was launched at COP14
2024	UNEA adopted resolution 6/12 to provide guidance for UNEP.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

1. United Nations

The UN system utilizes instruments like the Flash Appeal, Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA), Common Country Assessment (CCA), and UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) to integrate environmental needs into humanitarian and development planning

UNEP is a central actor, having established capacity and technical expertise to conduct over twenty post-conflict environmental assessments since 1999. These assessments have covered countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Lebanon, Sudan, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). UNEP is actively involved in delivering environmental assistance, recovery, and technical guidance to countries affected by armed conflict. The UNDP works closely with the UNEP in matters that involve post conflict region

2. African Union (A.U.)

The AU launched the Great Green Wall Initiative in the Sahel region, actively aiding the restoration of land degraded by armed conflict and desertification. The Sahel region includes; Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan, where the AU aims to regreen the region, combating desertification.

3. European Union

The EU is a key benefactor to the funding of projects such as the GGWI. The findings of UNEP's environmental assessments are used to inform the post-conflict needs assessment process of the EU, ensuring that environmental and natural resource management needs are reflected in subsequent relief, recovery, and development plans.

In contexts like Ukraine, recommendations emerging from assessments have led to work toward establishing an environmental protection authority consistent with EU environmental standards for a green recovery. The EU works as a major partner alongside the World Bank in undertaking Post Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNA's)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. UN General Assembly Resolution 47/37

Adopted in 1992, specifically urged states to ensure compliance with existing international law applicable to the protection of the environment during times of armed conflict

This resolution served as a foundational text that later framed international efforts, as it was recalled in 2016 during the adoption of UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 2/15. By urging compliance, Resolution 47/37 helped embed the issue of protecting the environment in conflict areas within the intergovernmental environmental process.

2. The Bonn Agreement

Signed on December 5th, 2001, following three decades of conflict in Afghanistan, made for the international community to provide aid to the long term reconstruction of the land. The Bonn Agreement helped structure the future of Afghanistan's recovery plan. Crucially this plan incorporated findings that emphasized the need to address environmental issues, explicitly showing that land degradation threatened to undermine the peace process by contributing to economic instability, disease and famine.

3. Great Green Wall Initiative

The Great Green Wall Initiative or The Great Green Wall is an ambitious African led initiative that aims to restore land that face land degradation, climate change and desertification. the initiative spans the vast Sahel-Sahara region, covering an 8,000 km long corridor across 11 countries from Djibouti in the east to Senegal in the west.

Between 2007 and 2018, the initiative reported that 20 million hectares of land had been restored, and 350,000 jobs were created through economic diversification and income regeneration, generating \$90 million in revenues across the participating countries. The strategy emphasizes the use of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), such as promoting indigenous species and utilizing traditional cultivation techniques like Zai pits and half-moons. These methods are crucial for increasing water storage and infiltration, reducing stormwater runoff, and limiting erosion, thereby maintaining water availability for plants during drought periods.

4. UN Resolution 2/15

Resolution 2/15 furnished the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with a focused mandate to continue and enhance effective assistance to countries affected by armed conflict. This assistance includes post-crisis environmental assessment and recovery. Recalling the 1992 Resolution 47/37 and underscoring the importance of protecting the environment during times of armed conflict.

5. UN Resolution 6/12

Resolution 6/12 was adopted by consensus at UNAE's sixth session in 2024, providing focused guidance for the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to enhance its support to affected countries. Specifically it mandates UNEP to develop technical guidance on the collection of data and emerging practices related to environmental damage associated with armed conflict. Resolution 2/15 furnished the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with a focused mandate to continue and enhance effective assistance to countries affected by armed conflict. This assistance includes post-crisis environmental assessment and recovery.

Alternative Solutions

The Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) framework could be used to quantify degradation and guide sustainable practices to mitigate and reverse the effects of degradation. A formal policy that systematically integrates environmental protection and restoration to peacebuilding efforts could be signed by nations. The Green Recovery Strategy would offer reconstruction plans that minimize environmental and social impacts, establishing sustainable usage of resources which would ensure a more stable recovery period

The usage of bioremediation would act as a cost efficient way to detoxify land contaminated by munitions and restore microbial balance required for cultivation. During the process of clean-up, the full lifecycle of hazardous waste must be considered, utilizing internationally accredited treatment facilities to prevent secondary contamination. After an armed conflict, the state of the land must be assessed and checked for undetonated munitions and chemical weaponry that could plague the land for years. The removal of landmines, traps, fortifications must be done thoroughly to ensure none are left behind that would further endanger the lives of the inhabitants and pose a threat to the soil it stands on.

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