

Background Guide

**International Maritime Organization
Sustainable Fisheries**



JACKRABBIT MUN VI

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CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Salutations Delegates!

My name is Janelle Rodgers, and I am so excited to say that I will be your Co-Head Chair for your IMO committee! I am currently a junior at Long Beach Polytechnic High School, and this is my first year in MUN. Model UN has allowed me to really open my perspectives to new and varying opinions, which I now believe is an essential skill for success. I truly do love MUN, and hope after being a part of this IMO room, you do too!

Some favorite hobbies of mine include photography. I have a love of being behind the camera (don't get me wrong, I also have a soft spot for being in front of it too), but something about controlling the look, vibe and feel of a photo is everything! In addition, I love fashion and claim to have a diverse sense of style. I've been styling my friends and peers ever since I was little, and like to say that I have an eye for pieces with such potential!

I hope you found some joy in reading a little about me, and I can't wait to hear all of your bright and inspiring ideas. I can't contain my excitement regarding meeting you all, and being your Co-Head Chair! If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, feel free to contact me!

Best Wishes,

Janelle Rodgers

IMO | Co-Head Chair | nellierodgers345@gmail.com



CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hello Beloved Leverets,

My name is Janice Jung and I am currently a junior at Long Beach Polytechnic High School and I will be your Co-Head Chair for this IMO Committee! I cannot express how excited I am to see you all and I hope that you share this excitement with me! I've been in Model UN for three years and I have loved every moment, and I wish that we can share this love with you all too!

When I have freetime, I love to play video games (such as R6, Hearthstone, and Hollow Knight) with my friends alongside playing tennis with my brother at a nearby park. I also love listening to music and discovering new underground artists. *If you have any, please let me know :D*

My biggest advice would be to not get too intimidated because you're going to a high school with highschoolers. We were all kids once and we all love to have fun just as much as you, and I hope that this becomes as fun to you as it is to us! And don't be afraid to come up with creative solutions - be creative! There's nothing worse than a room that repeats itself, so don't be afraid to say that weird idea! If you have any questions, feel free to email me or my Co-Chair and we would be happy to respond! I can't wait to get to know more about you guys VERY soon. Bye!

Live, Laugh, MUN,

Janice Jung

IMO | Co-Head Chair

janice.jung373@gmail.com



VICE CHAIR LETTER

Hello Lovely Delegates,

My name is Brianna Bailey and I will be your Vice Chair for your Sustainable Fisheries committee. I am currently a senior in my first year of Model UN and am very excited to be on my first dais. I initially joined and was attracted to Model UN as a way to improve my public speaking skills, and I hope that this room can do the same for you.

I love playing softball in high school and travel, and am currently committed to play in college. I also love baking and trying new recipes, watching movies with my friends and family, and listening to music. My favorite movie is *Coraline*, and some of my favorite artists include LOONA, Beyonce, and Don Toliver.

I am very excited to hear all of your contributions to this issue and debate. If you have any questions regarding Model UN or this committee, or just want to talk, my email is included below.

Sincerely,

Brianna Bailey

IMO | Vice Chair

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RAPPORTEUR LETTER

Hey Future Leaders,

I will be your rapporteur for the IMO Sustainable Fisheries room! My name is Sammantha Martinez, and I am a junior in my school's Center for International Curriculum pathway. I like to stay involved in my school, so I do this by being an ambassador for my pathway and playing the school site council chairperson role. I am passionate about helping those in the community through tutoring at my local library and planning community service projects with the Boys and Girls Club. I love planning and organizing programs that will benefit the youth, and I plan to find a job that will allow me to do that in the future. In my free time, I enjoy writing poetry and playing card games.

I joined the Model UN club in my sophomore year to increase my public speaking and research skills, but I was puzzled by the procedure and the MUN vocab. This encouraged me to take the MUN class as an elective. MUN has been a huge contributor to my growth as a student and as a person. This will be my first time rapping, so please go easy on me if I accidentally misspell countries! I am excited to meet you all and hope you have enjoyed learning a little about me!

Sincerely,

Sammantha Martinez

IMO | Rapporteur

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HOW TO MUN

So, you're probably wondering: How do I prepare for debate? Well, here are some starting points to begin your country research!

1. Read through this background guide
 - a. find your country in Bloc Positions (pg. 17) and read that paragraph
2. Look for information on your country in the CIA World Factbook and BBC Country Profiles, linked here:
 - a. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/>
 - b. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/default.stm
3. Look at the Questions to Consider (pg. 19) and try to answer them (do some research on the internet!)
4. Do more research on the internet for:
 - a. Previous country actions
 - b. Previous policies and United Nations actions
 - c. Possible solutions

During the committee, all delegates will present an “opening statement.” This is a short introductory speech and will only last about 30 seconds to 1 minute—nothing too bad! You can practice and time your speech using a timer.

These opening statements are written beforehand. They don't have to be memorized, either. You can print or write your speech, then read off the paper.

Your opening statement should include:

1. Your country's position on the issue at hand
2. What your country has done in the past
3. Possible solutions that align with your country's position

This is what you will discuss in the main part of the committee! Including this in your opening statement is a great way to let other delegates know where you stand.



COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

Approximately 3 billion people rely on seafood as a significant source of protein. From the late 19th century to the early 20th, the fishing industry evolved from small, local operations to large-scale enterprises hauling in millions of tons a year. As the hauls have increased, wild fish populations have drastically decreased to about 10% of their previous numbers. Overfishing, defined as removing fish from the oceans faster than they can reproduce, can lead to biodiversity loss, species extinction, and ecosystem destruction, especially with trawling nets. If we do not find ways to sustainably fish while still providing our growing populations with seafood, we could run out of fish as soon as 2048. Sustainable fisheries ensure that the seafood industry continues to thrive in aquatic habitats, not only benefitting marine life, but humans, too, since sustainable fishing generates less waste, minimizes energy consumption, and reduces the use of chemicals that damage the ozone layer. In addition to preventing overfishing, the IMO strives to ensure safe, sustainable, and ethical working conditions for fishers - the fishing industry provides an income for 10 to 12 percent of the world's population, so the problem of overfishing impacts more than just sea animal life. In this committee, delegates will collaborate to preserve the biodiversity of underwater ecosystems and protect the labor rights of workers in fisheries while ensuring that the billions who rely on seafood will have enough to eat.



TOPIC SYNOPSIS

A resource used since the days of cavemen – fish – has remained a crucial part of humankind's diet, but as Tragedy of the Commons states, individual access to a shared resource will lead to the depletion of the resource at the expense of other individuals. Combined with modern fishing technology, fish are being hunted at a rate faster than they can reproduce, leading to the current overfishing crisis.

The direct impact of a lack of fish in the environment is that fishermen will have little to sell, which lowers their income and the economic value of the fishing industry as a whole. For countries that rely on their export of fish, or even citizens that rely on fish sales, the diminishing population of fish is devastating and can lead to job loss for thousands.

Overfishing influences fishermen, the fish industry, and the environment and the food web, as modern fishing techniques often result in bycatch (the capture of unwanted species that can range from juvenile fish to sea turtles). These animals will either remain stuck on the net or be released with untreated injuries, both resulting in their deaths. These deaths obviously prevent bycatch creatures from reproducing, thus damaging a crucial part of the natural ecosystem.

Although there have been various attempts to implement regulations, they have generally failed due to the high costs to enforce these policies and the inability to create a global treaty – especially with countries whose economies rely on fishing. Now, it is up to you to find solutions or agreements that allow for the replenishment of fish in oceans without disturbing economies and fishermen's livelihoods.



BACKGROUND

ORIGINS OF FISH CAPTURE

Fishing is one of the world's oldest hunting and food-collecting practices, dating back to the Paleolithic era. It is thought that early humans started fishing for nourishment as long as 40,000 years ago. The first reported incidence of fishing occurred around 30,000 BC, when a group of Neanderthals was captured when illegally attempting to fish in a river in Germany. Since the 16th century, fishing vessels have been able to travel across oceans in search of fish, and since the 19th century, it has been possible to employ larger vessels and, in some cases, process the fish on board.



History of Overfishing

Whaling was one of the first recorded cases of overfishing in the 1800s when whales were intensively hunted for meat and oil. Humans destroyed the whale population off Cape Cod's Stellwagen Bank in search of fat for lamp oil. By the 1930s, an estimated 50,000 whales had been killed per year, and the International Whaling



Commission stopped commercial whaling in 1986 due to catastrophic overfishing. Some fish species consumed in the United States, such as Atlantic cod, herring, and California sardines, were also harvested to the point of extinction by the mid-1900s. However, by 1989, when approximately 90 million metric tons of fish were removed from the ocean, the industry had peaked, and yields have since stagnated.

Why is this a problem?

Fishing is not inherently harmful to the ocean unless vessels catch more fish than the population can naturally replenish – if overfishing occurs, it can harm entire ecosystems. It has the potential to alter the size of remaining fish, as well as their reproduction and maturation rates. When too many fish are removed from the ocean, an imbalance can damage the food chain and lead to the extinction of other essential marine life, particularly sensitive species such as sea turtles and corals. Overfishing directly connects to bycatch. This is also a severe marine threat, resulting in the unnecessary deaths of billions of fish, as well as hundreds of thousands of sea turtles



and cetaceans. Many long-term repercussions of overfishing may take years to manifest, but remain substantial. These include trophic cascade, which occurs when a predator is removed, resulting in an imbalance in the food web and even influencing local tourism.



Environmental Impacts

Coral reefs are critical to marine ecosystems because they protect coastal communities from flooding, offer habitat for numerous ocean species, and support the tourism industry. The blast fishing method utilizes dynamite, or any other explosive, to stun and kill schools of fish, which would then be manually retrieved by fishermen. This method is a common commercial fishing approach, especially in Southeast Asia and coastal Africa, but it leads to the destruction of coral reefs. Overfishing is a major cause of coral reef damage, as it reduces the number of grazing fish that clear coral reefs of stifling algae growth. If algae becomes abundant in coral, it competes against the coral for space and vital nutrients, negatively impacting coral growth. Additionally, the ocean stores more than 50 times more carbon dioxide (CO₂) than the atmosphere, and removing such valuable marine ecosystems exacerbates climate change and ocean acidification. A specific impact would be at the bottom of the ocean, also known as the twilight zone, which stores CO₂ and is home to the majority of the world's fish population. If it continues to be interrupted and displaced at its current rate, the atmosphere's CO₂ levels could increase by nearly fifty percent – an increase in CO₂ never seen before since the dawn of humankind.

Regulations

Efforts to regulate the institutions that manage industrial fishing operations have generally failed. Still, new research is being financed to develop technology that can monitor, track, or avoid bycatch and promote practices that cause less harm to marine environments. After five years of intensive discussion and preparation at IMO, the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 amended the 1993 Torremolinos International Convention to include a passage regarding the Safety of Fishing Vessels, as mentioned



in the previous Torremolinos Protocol of 1977, in order to pass this protocol. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping



for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F 1995), which went into effect on September 29, 2012, establishes the certification and minimum training requirements for crews of seagoing fishing vessels 24 meters or longer. In partnership with the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), the IMO created a variety of non-mandatory instruments. These include the FAO/ILO/IMO Document for Guidance on Fishermen's Training and Certification, the updated Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction, and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels, all from 2005.



UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

Many of the United Nations (UN) agencies are involved in addressing the sustainable use of the ocean, seas, and marine resources. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is dedicated to improving the efficient use of fisheries on a global scale. Through the FAO collaborating with the Working Group on Fishing Technology and Fish Behaviour (WGFTFB), essential measurements and scientific observations of fishing technology, including design, statistical methods, operations, and fish responses, have been conducted. Improving the reliability of fishing technology and gear is necessary in order to maintain sustainable fishing practices. The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call to action for all countries, detailing



the ultimate objectives of the UN. These goals aim to tackle global issues such as poverty through addressing its contributing factors. The SDGs display the interconnectedness of several worldwide issues including gender inequality, hunger, and lack of education. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger, and 14: Life Below Water relate directly to the problems that will be

discussed in this committee. SDG 14 focuses primarily on the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas, and marine resources. Through cooperation between international bodies and establishing government-protected areas, fish industries can continue operating while protecting fish habitats. The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement in 2023 is an example of a legal framework



which establishes an international standard for all activities in the ocean and seas. This Agreement was adopted on June 19, 2023 when countries met at UN Headquarters in New York, making history regarding advancing conservation and sustainability of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction. The United Nations serves a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of fisheries worldwide in order to combat world hunger, marine biodiversity, and unemployment.



BLOC POSITIONS

African Bloc:

Africa is one of the places most vulnerable to overfishing and its consequences. This can be seen within the local fishermen population where baskets that were once bringing home pounds of fish are now bringing home nothing. To elaborate in a social perspective, fishermen are having trouble trying to find fish to feed their families, which results in African economies declining due to loss of jobs and a lower income. Out of desperation, fishermen are now resorting to more invasive and detrimental methods of fishing that harm oceanic ecosystems in order to make ends meet - something we strive to stay away from.

Asia-Pacific Bloc:

Asia-Pacific lands are territorial over their seas, for their fishing industry is one of the most successful in our world today. However, 34% of waters that border Asia-Pacific countries are overfished, with an additional 60% being at risk of getting maximally fished - a situation that occurs where an increase in catch rate will result in the water being overfished. Due to Asia-Pacific countries contributing to 55% of global fishery production, they experience a pressure to maintain this harsh and unsustainable amount of overfishing. These countries play a major role when creating and reinforcing laws to prevent overfishing, as without the alliance of these countries, the economic and environmental state of our world could be completely thrown off.



Western European and Developed Bloc:

The Mediterranean is greatly affected by the overfishing crisis. Statistics show that fishing stocks in the Mediterranean Sea are way below sustainable biomass levels, which not only affect economies, but also the biodiversity of the oceans. The unstable rate of marine life being unnaturally thrown off contributes to a risk of collapse. Although the EU has implemented various protective measures and laws, they still remain plagued by illegal and over-exploitive fishing.

Latin American and Caribbean Bloc:

As previously mentioned, Latin America and the Caribbean heavily contribute to the overfishing crisis. Specifically in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing has forced them to increase imports of fish and seafood, with the hopes of naturally catching more fish while also sustaining the economy. Ultimately, this method does not solve the problem of oceans having less and less biodiversity as it now relies on overfishing in another area. The solution must be a global one, that accounts for not only the livelihood of the people living there while also not by moving the problem to another area.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which countries are most vulnerable, and what actions can be taken to protect them during this shift away from overfishing?
2. How should issues surrounding overfishing be addressed to ensure the conservation of vulnerable fish populations?
3. How can advanced fishing technologies be implemented while preserving the jobs of individuals?
4. How can international legislation satisfy the specific concerns of each country or bloc?



WORKS CITED

More on Environmental Impacts:

- https://www.sustainweb.org/goodcatch/environmental_impacts/
- <https://earth.org/what-is-tragedy-of-the-commons/#:~:text=The%20definition%20of%20the%20Tragedy,underinvestment%2C%20and%20depletion%20of%20resources>
- <https://www.dw.com/en/high-and-dry-african-fishermen-feel-the-burn-of-the-ir-own-practices/a-65582428#:~:text=In%20some%20countries%20along%20the%20harmful%20practices%20among%20local%20fishermen.&text=Baskets%20filled%20with%20beautiful%20fresh%20fish%3A%20a%20mouthwatering%20sight%20for%20many.>
- <https://thediplomat.com/2024/02/the-asia-pacific-holds-the-key-to-tackling-overfishing/>
- <https://europe.oceana.org/overfishing-crisis-o/>

More on the UNs' Involvement :

- https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Marine-Biodiversity_Explainer.pdf
- <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/mobilizing-global-community-achieve-sdg-14>
- <https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGFTFB.aspx>
- <https://www.fao.org/responsible-fishing/en/>

