

2nd BILMUN
United Nations Conference
Study Guide



UNEP

Tackling the Australian Bushfires and Amazonian Rainforest Fires

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1. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an initiative of the United Nations which coordinates the organizations environmental activities and assists developing states in implementing sustainable environmental practices through policies. UNEP has the primary responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies. The agency's work is categorized into seven broad thematic categories: ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, environment under review, climate change, disasters and conflicts. UNEP depends on voluntary contributions for 95 percent of its income. The United Nations Environment Assembly is UNEP governing body. It replaced the Governing Council in June 2012, as of now it has 193 members and meets every two years.

UNEPs structure is comprised of eight divisions: **Ecosystem Division, Corporate Services Division, Governance Affairs Office, Law Division, Communication Division, Policy and Programme Division, Science Division, and Economy Division.**

UNEP also hosts the secretariats of many critical multilateral environmental agreements and research bodies, bringing together nations and environmental community to tackle the greatest difficulties during our time. These include the following:

- a) The Convention on Biological Diversity,
- b) The Tehran Convention,
- c) The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions,
- d) The Convention on Migratory Species.



2. Important Terminologies

- a) **Wildfires:** A destructive fire that spreads quickly over an area of woodland or brush.
- b) **Indigenous Population:** A population that originated in that particular place or is native to it.
- c) **Biodiversity:** It is the variety and variability of life on Earth.
- d) **Environmental Non-Governmental Organization (ENGO):** It is a non-governmental organization in the field of environment.
- e) **Rainforest:** Rainforests are forest known for their conditions of high and continuous rainfall.
- f) **Amazon Rainforest:** It is a rainforest covering much of northwestern Brazil and extending into Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Suriname, Guyana and French Guiana.
- g) **Global Warming:** It is the long term rise in the average temperature of the Earth's climate system.
- h) **Black Saturday Bushfires:** They were a series of Bushfires that were either already burning or ignited across the Australian state of Victoria on Saturday, 7 February 2009.
- i) **Endangered Species:** Seriously at risk of extinction (The entirety of a population being finished).
- j) **Deforestation:** It is the clearing, cutting and removal of forests.

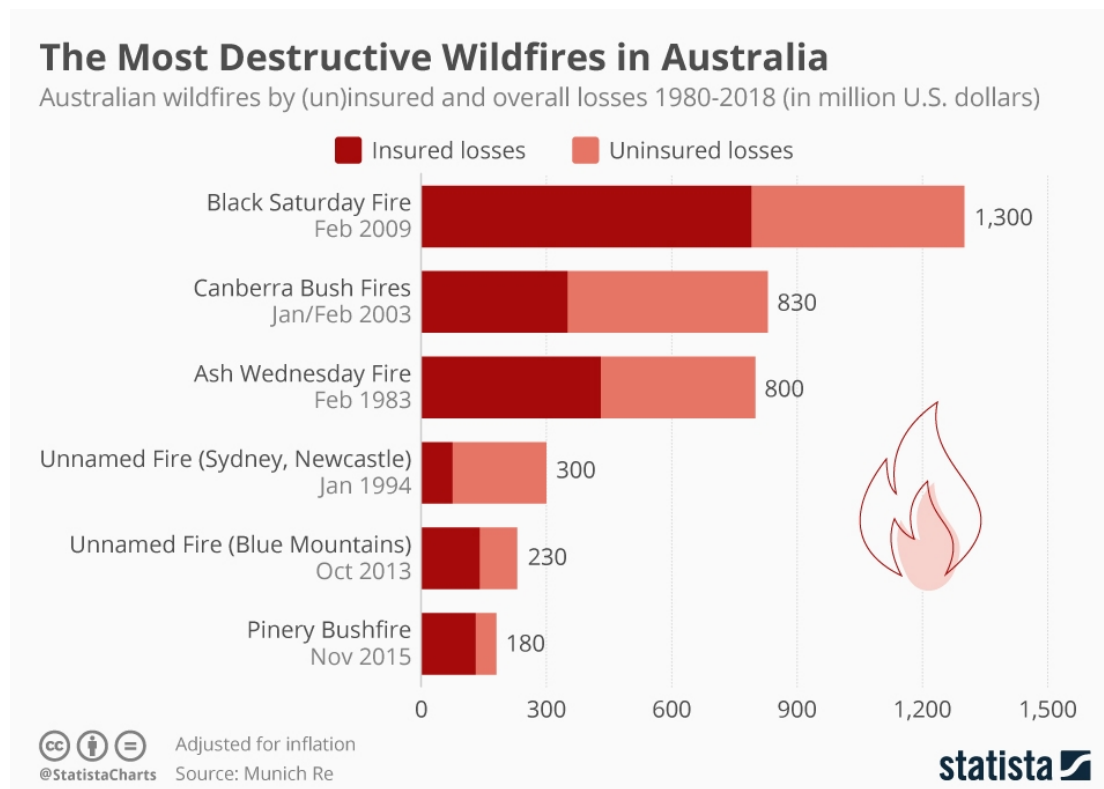
3. Introduction and Discussion of the Topic:

a) Australian Bushfire:

The **2019–20 Australian bushfire season** began with several serious uncontrolled fires in June 2019. Hundreds of fires have been or still are burning, mainly in the southeast of the country. As of 14 January 2020, fires this season have burnt an approximate 18.6 million hectares (46 million acres; 186,000 square kilometers; 72,000 square miles), destroyed over 5,900 buildings (including 2,779 homes) and killed at least 34 people. An estimated one billion animals have been killed and some endangered species may be driven to extinction. Air quality has dropped to dangerous levels which is detrimental to health. The cost of dealing with the bushfires is expected to exceed the A\$4.4 billion of



the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires and tourism sector profits have fallen more than A\$1 billion. By 7 January 2020, the smoke had moved approximately 11,000 kilometers across the South Pacific Ocean to Chile and Argentina. As of 2 January 2020, NASA estimated that 306 million tonnes of CO₂ was produced as a result of Bushfire.



b) Ecological Impacts of Australian Bushfire:

These events in Australia have had devastating consequences throughout the globe: destroying forests and parks, spreading plumes of carbon, destroying homes and killing people and animals. Pollution generated as a result of fire has spread to New Zealand and South America. Bushfires create weather systems which leads to storms. These storms that are caused by fire generate extreme winds which spreads flames and spark new fires through lightning, according to Bureau of Meteorology in Victoria. When the plume cools down it forms a cloud that acts as a source of heat. The plumes continue their path to South America 11,000 kilometer away. The year 2019 was Australia's warmest and driest year, which aided to the spread and intensity of fire.



c) Domestic Response to the Australian Bushfire:

The two most important firefighting agencies for New South Wales, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, formed the greatest number of the primary responders to the fires, mobilizing thousands of firefighters and several hundred firefighting vehicles. They were largely supported by the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service and the Forestry Corporation of NSW, who hold jurisdiction over national parks and forests across the state. Additional local firefighting resources were also utilized from agencies such as Air Services Australian and Sydney Trains.

A joint operation by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Rural Fire Service was mounted to protect the critically endangered *Wollemia* pines growing in Wollemi National Park. Fire retardant (a substance that slows the spread of fire) was dropped from air tankers, and an irrigation system was installed on the ground by specialist firefighters, who were dropped into the area by winches from helicopter.

d) International Response to Australian Bushfire:

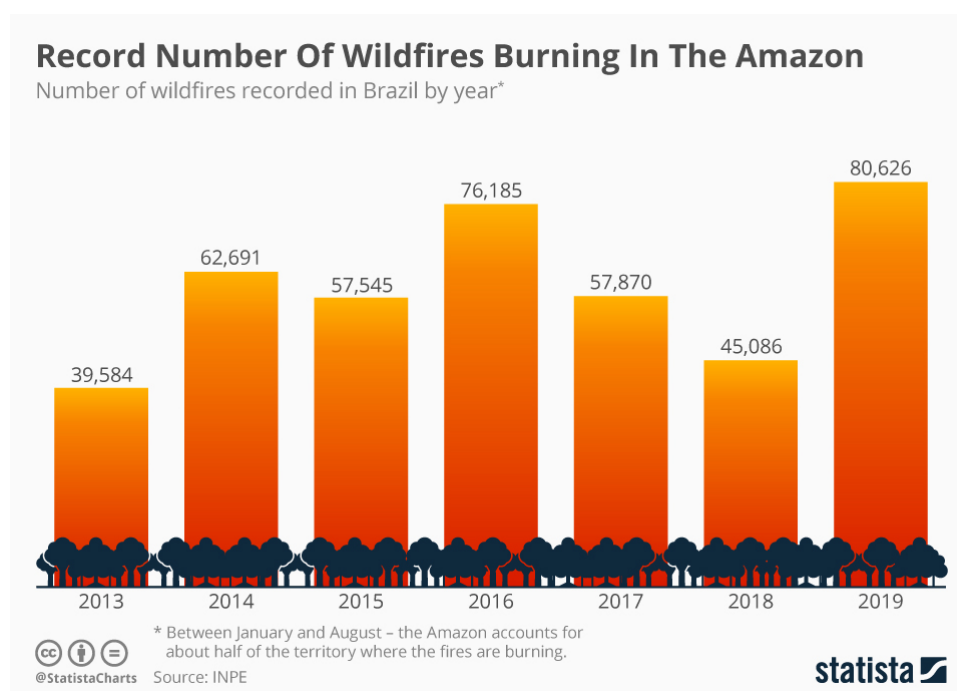
International community has contributed and extended support to Australia. Canada sent 87 firefighters to assist in the efforts. The UAE sent 200 volunteers belonging from Emirates Red Crescent to help fight the fire. United States of America deployed 20 firefighters from Department of Interior to assist the Australian Government in their efforts to combat the bushfires.

Apart from firefighters and volunteers, states have extended support in other form such as Singapore which has sent two Chinook helicopters. Indonesia and sent medical personnel to Australia. New Zealand also showed its support by sending veterinarians (medical personnel for animals) and animal management officers.



e) Amazon Rainforest Fire:

The **2019 Amazon rainforest wildfires** season saw a year to year increase in fires occurring in the Amazon Rainforest and within Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru during that year's Amazonian tropical dry season. Fires normally occur around the dry and hot season as slash and burn methods are used to clear the forest to ensure availability of area for agriculture, livestock, logging, and mining, leading to deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest. Such activity is generally illegal within these nations, but enforcement of environmental protection can be careless. The increased rates of fire counts in 2019 led to international concern about the fate of the Amazon rainforest, which is the world's largest terrestrial carbon dioxide sink (Amazon are known as the Earth's lungs) and plays a significant role in tackling global warming.



F) Causes of Amazon Rainforest fire:

The continuous increase in the rate of deforestation for conversion into farmland has aided in forest fire. Ever since the election of Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, many environmental regulations have been removed as he has argued that federal conservation zones and hefty fines for cutting down trees leads to stagnation of economic growth. Moreover, there also have been increasing concerns that these fires are government backed in its efforts against indigenous people.



G) Response to Amazon Rainforest fire:

Brazil at the start of the fires, rejected international call for taking action however due to increasing diplomatic pressure from the international community, Bolsonaro deployed 44,000 troops and allocated funds to fight the fires, and later signed a law to prevent such fires for a sixty-day period.

At G7 summit, French President negotiated for allocation of funds to combat the fires and an amount of US\$ 22 million was agreed upon as a form of emergency aid to the Amazon countries.

An Amazon Summit was held on 6th September 2019, in which all countries sharing Amazon forest, excluding Venezuela, were to attend. Ambassadors from seven countries attended: Peru, Colombia, Suriname, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana, and Brazil. The outcome was **The Amazon Pact** to coordinate effective disaster plans through having a better information network. The pact also aims to tackle illegal deforestation.

4. Research Steps

The study guide is intended to provide a basic idea to all the delegates in order to ensure that they understand what premise the committee would function. It is of utmost importance that the solutions and frameworks that delegate present in the committee is in line with mandate of the committee. Moreover, while presenting the solutions the delegates must ensure their policy is line with states actual foreign policy regarding the topic and agenda of the committee.



Question a Resolution Must Answer:

- a) What role can UNEP play in stopping the spread of these fires?**
- b) How can global environmental standards be upheld without compromising any states policy?**
- c) How developing countries having lack of resources will be able to deal with these fires and contribute to global efforts?**
- d) Can there be an investigation into the cause of forest fire in Amazon?**
- e) Can there be accountability for the illegal deforestation and complicit parties?**



5. Material for further reading and references:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/amazon-fires-cause-deforestation-graphic-map/>

<https://earthsky.org/earth/amazon-rainforest-fires-burning-4-reasons-why>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Amazon_rainforest_wildfires

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-51024904>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019%E2%80%9320_Australian_bushfire_season

<https://multimedia.scmp.com/infographics/news/world/article/3046510/australian-fires/index.html>

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/hottest-of-the-hot-extreme-heat-in-australia/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Environment_Programme

<https://www.unenvironment.org/>