Forum: Rights and Ethics Committee

Issue: Increasing the Resilience of the Poor to Climate-Related Extreme Events

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Position: Head Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Welcome to all delegates of the Rights and Ethics Committee,

I am Charles and I will be chairing this committee at the upcoming MUN conference. It is an honour for me to oversee deliberations regarding this topic and I'm eager to see what things we get up to this year. For those of you who already know me, you will know that last year I was fortunate enough to be on the Russian delegation where I proceeded to spread my sphere of influence over all of MUN (and receive 2 diplomatic warnings in the process of doing so). The year before that I was on the Iranian delegation plotting to receive nuclear weapons from Russia.

Although this topic has only become prevalent on the international stage quite recently, there is a lot of information and knowledge that will be useful to know when we debate about it on the first day of the conference—this study guide will help you with that. It is also important to note that this study guide is to help you understand the topic better and should not be the only research that delegates do for the upcoming conference.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes on the day! Trust me when we say that we'd rather have any debate than none at all—every year we have at least one delegate propose an amendment whilst we're saying speeches or the other way round and that's OK! So please come and have a good time—we're not actually the United Nations (believe it or not) and the atmosphere in the room is only ever positive.

I look forward to meeting all of you at the conference, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me via my email; 3309@queenelizabeths.kent.sch.uk

Yours Sincerely,
Charles Alexander-Bailey

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

As global weather patterns shift, extreme climate-related disasters are produced more often. While poorer countries have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions, they are disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change. These nations commonly occupy the disaster-prone regions of the world—coastal areas, small island states, and drought-prone regions—making them particularly susceptible to the impacts of rising sea levels, severe storms, and extreme temperatures. This climate injustice is a defining feature of the global response to climate change: the countries that bear the least responsibility for the crisis suffer the most.

The poorest regions of the world, notably Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, are some of the hardest hit by climate-related extreme events. Geographic vulnerability and lack of infrastructure investment leave countries vulnerable to floods, droughts, extreme winds, heat waves, and wildfires. Most of the poverty in these regions is mainly due to insufficient infrastructure investment. The infrastructure in these areas must often be more resilient—flood-resistant, capable of withstanding extreme winds or heat or constructed with fire-resistant materials to minimise wildfire damage. However, building climate-resilient infrastructure typically requires more resources in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) than in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) due to higher costs for more expensive materials, limited technical capacity, and a shortage of skilled workers.

LEDCs face many challenges in securing investment for infrastructure. For these nations, the pressing societal issues they face—such as health crises, political instability, or food insecurity often take priority over long-term climate adaptation. Even when they seek international aid, MEDCs are usually reluctant to provide support until after a disaster strikes, after which the damage has already happened and the social & economic costs are greater. It is no surprise to find that this is unsustainable and doesn't improve resilience to climate-related events in the long term. It is the responsibility of MEDCs to provide support before a disaster strikes, not just after, by investing in climate resilience for the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations. Proactive investment is essential to saving lives and protecting livelihoods.

Currently, lack of investment sustains a cycle of poverty. Limited infrastructure development leads to fewer job opportunities, forcing families to pull their children from school to work, which reduces the future pool of skilled workers and, in turn, lowers wages—fostering poverty. With a lower-skill workforce and inadequate financial resources, LEDCs struggle to raise money for the infrastructure necessary for withstanding the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events. Hence, they become even more vulnerable, leading to more frequent disasters and worse economic & social hardships.

Overall, there are a multitude of issues that we must resolve before the world is prepared for the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related extreme weather events. This study guide will help provide a greater context and background behind global initiatives and issues that have become more prevalent in recent years. It is your job, as delegates, to try to resolve these issues for the benefit of all.

KEY TERMS

Extreme Climate-Related Event:
A weather event of which its intensity is unusually high for the time and place where the event occurs. Examples include; droughts, floods, wildfires, heatwaves, storms, and heavy/little rain.

Climate Resilience:
The ability to recover from extreme climate-related events, through the capacity to prepare for and respond to the impacts of the event.

Geographical Vulnerability:
The potential harm that people or property may receive as a result of its geographical location, such as near an arid area, on low-lying land next to a water body, in an area which experiences monsoon weather patterns, etc.

Economic Vulnerability:
The potential economic damage that people or property may receive and the risk of livelihood loss due to lack of preparation for an extreme weather event. This also translates to the inability to repair damages due to lack of financial resources.

Social Vulnerability:
The potential social harm which may be inflicted on a population, usually due to loss of life, livelihood, or injury as a result of an extreme climate-related event.

Food Security:
When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Cycle of Poverty:
A self-perpetuating pattern in which individuals or families experience poverty and find it difficult to escape from it.

Investment:
The commitment of money usually in order receive a financial return. Most common examples are investments into infrastructure or businesses.

International Aid:
The international transfer of capital (money), goods, or services from one country to another, usually in an attempt to support the development and growth of a less developed country.

LEDC:
Standing for Less Economically Developed Country, it has the same mean as the term "Developing Country" although we do not use this term in the UN. It means a country which is less economically developed in comparison to others.

MEDC:
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South-South Cooperation:
A term used to describe the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries in the Global South, used to increase development and promote economic growth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Until the 1970s, Climate Change & Global Warming were largely overlooked. It was still a matter of dispute until the 1990s when international concern over the state of the ozone grew after public outcry became great. Efforts to raise awareness over the effects of climate change progressed at the second **World Climate Conference**, held from 29 October to 7 November 1990. In its Ministerial Declaration, the Conference stated that climate change was a global problem of unique character for which an international response was required. It called for negotiations to begin on a framework convention without further delay.

The cornerstone of the climate change action was the adoption of the **Kyoto Protocol** to the **UNFCCC** in Japan in December 1997, the most influential climate change action taken so far. It aimed to reduce industrialised countries' overall carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases by at least 5% below the 1990 levels in the commitment period of 2008 to 2012. The protocol opened for signature in March 1998 and passed on 16 February 2005, seven years after it was negotiated by over 160 nations. The USA, however, refused to ratify their signature of the protocol as, at the time, they considered it too lenient on India and China and harsh upon themselves, despite being one of the largest CO2 emitters of the time. With this said, the USA has been an important leader in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions since 2000.

China has influenced decisions made by the **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)**. This led to questions regarding the autonomy of the forum in making international decisions after Chinese diplomats pressured the forum to remove a line reaffirming the involvement of Taiwan in Pacific Island states. China has been very active in removing Taiwan's influence on the international stage through the threat of embargo on other nations alongside other influential actions they can make.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Germany

Germany has been a major contributor to climate adaptation initiatives, particularly in developing countries. The **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** has been actively involved in promoting the development of poorer countries, especially in Africa. This year the **Sahel Alliance** General Assembly occurred in Berlin to discuss initiatives and ways in which the Sahel region of Africa can grow to overcome existing conflicts and developmental issues—exacerbated by climate change.

United States

The **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)** has been crucial in increasing the climate resilience of vulnerable regions around the world and has helped to diversify sources of income in these regions, ensuring that if one disaster occurs there are still other forms of income for the population.

The U.S. also funds the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, the world's largest climate fund, whose objective is to assist developing countries with climate change adaptation and mitigation activities.

France

France funds climate adaptation projects across the world in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean through the **French Development Agency (AFD)**. France focuses on supporting education, biodiversity, health and urban development in particular.

Sweden

The **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)** works towards reducing poverty, making Sweden a leader in climate finance. The main project of SIDA is creating better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression.

Sweden has also been a prominent figure in addressing the issue of Climate Change—they held some of the first international conferences highlighting the issue—most famously the **First Earth Summit** was held in Stockholm. Sweden has also been a major scientific contributor to the topic, and was first responsible for recognising the potential issue with increasing carbon dioxide emissions, linking it to a possibly substantial change in the planet's surface temperatures.

Japan

The **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** provides support and aid toward Pacific islands and states, promoting peace & development alongside the provision of sustainable, clean water.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

It oversees various climate funds such as the **Adaptation Fund** and **Green Climate Fund**, critical in financing climate resilience projects across the world. It supports many different initiatives, from infrastructure development, re-education, renewable energy projects, etc.

World Bank

Through its **Climate Change Action Plan** it focuses on many ways to increasing the resilience of vulnerable populations through agriculture programs & inclusive development schemes.
Other programs like the **Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)** helps middle/low income countries to understand and reduce vulnerability to climate-related events.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations' lead agency on international development, there to support countries as they eradicate poverty and tackle more sustainable ways of living. There are multiple initiatives from this UN branch however notable ones include increasing food security & sustainability and regional stabilisation in the face of regional issues.

African Union (AU)

The only African country not in the African Union is Morocco, making the AU an extremely influential organisation. **The African Risk Capacity (ARC)**, overseen by the AU, helps countries improve their disaster risk management and response capabilities.
Current projects include the **Great Green Wall**—a natural barrier focused on preventing desertification within Africa and keeping the Sahara at bay.

Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)

Consisting of 68 countries, the CVF advocates for increased global action on resilience and adaptation to climate change. It concentrates on economic growth, investment, and debt solutions alongside other commitments in developing countries.

Pacific Island Forum (PIF)

Consists of many small island states in Oceania and Southeast Asia, advocating for greater international support amid rising sea levels & storms. A large percentage of the workforce is employed in fishing, which faces many issues due to fish migration and habitat loss.

MINOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Oxfam International

An international confederation of 21 NGOs (Non-governmental Organisations), working with partners in 85 countries to end injustices which lead to poverty. It works towards promoting the voices of those most impacted by climate change and creates risk & development plans to ensure impoverished countries are better adapted to the climate crisis.

Farm Africa

This organisation is dedicated towards sustainable farming to increase food security and reduce poverty. It works by improving the yield from crops and thereby improving incomes whilst protecting the environment in rural Africa.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

The **IRFC** leads disaster response and preparedness programs across the world, working with communities at a local-scale to improve climate resilience and continue to support vulnerable areas affected by disasters.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Supported by other organisations such as the **UN** and the **World Bank**, this organisation consists of roughly 12 Caribbean states working towards long-term sustainability in the face of ever-escalating tropical storms.

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

A specialised agency of the **United Nations** whose mandate covers weather, climate and water resources. This agency works towards increasing the global cooperation of countries towards climate-related events and issues.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Event	Date
Cyclone Sidr hits Bangladesh, killing over 3000 people	November 2007
Cyclone Nargis hits Southeast Asia, one of the worst natural disasters in regional history, killing an estimated 138,000 people—most notably in Myanmar	April 2008
Sichuan Earthquake in China—heavy rain coupled with the earthquake leads to severe landslides, killing nearly 90,000 people	May 2008
Severe Flooding in West Africa displaces over 430,000 people and disrupts the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands more	June 2009
Typhoon Ketsana hits Southeast Asia, displacing over 4 million people in key countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos	September 2009
Major Floods occur in Pakistan as unusually heavy monsoon rains causes the Indus River to overflow, submerging ⅕ of the country (affecting 20 million)	July & August 2010
Drought in the Horn of Africa, causing widespread famine particularly in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. Over 12 million people affected and killing tens of thousands	July 2011
Drought in the Sahel Region of Africa exacerbates food insecurity in the region especially in Niger, Mali and Chad	2012
Superstorm Sandy hits the Caribbean and Eastern USA, causing damages of over $70 billion	October 2012
Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded, hits the Philippines, displacing millions	November 2013
Heatwaves in India and Pakistan see temperatures above 48°C, killing thousands in poorer regions where water access is limited	May & June 2015
El Niño event causes severe droughts in Ethiopia, affecting millions of people	2015-2016
Cyclones Idai & Kenneth hit Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, causing catastrophic flooding and widespread displacement	2019
Cyclone Amphan, the strongest recorded hurricane in the Bay of Bengal, hits India and Bangladesh, displacing millions and causing over $13 billion in damages	May 2020
Typhoon Goni hits the Philippines, displacing over a million people and causing widespread damage	November 2020

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There have been multiple attempts to resolve the issue and ensure impoverished nations of the world are well-adapted to climate-related extreme weather and climate change as a whole. In this section, I will focus primarily on recent attempts to resolve the issue rather than older, usually outdated endeavours frequently created in review of another natural disaster.

One initiative was the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)**, an international agreement endorsed by the United Nations—aimed at reducing risk and increasing resilience to disastrous events. It outlines four key priorities to achieve this goal:

1. **Understanding disaster risk**

2. **Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk**

3. **Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience**

4. **Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction**

The initiative lays out plans to increase the resilience of all countries to disasters by 2030. It plans to do this via the creation of pre-disaster risk assessments, increasing cooperation between stakeholders, particularly in introducing new technologies, investing in structural and non-structural methods to enhance economic, social, health and cultural resilience, and expanding capacity & preparedness for disasters to ensure a country can rebuild after a disaster.

Another initiative was the **Paris Agreement (2015)**, a legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21). Its overarching goal was to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing **more extreme climate-related extreme weather events,** including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall.

Current pledges and targets still put the world on track for around 2.1C of warming by 2100, the independent Climate Action Tracker. To limit global warming to 1.5°C, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and decline 43% by 2030.

The last initiative we will mention was the **Global Commission on Adaptation's flagship report,** released in September 2019 that made the case for climate adaptation, providing specific insights and recommendations in several key sectors:

- **Food Security & the Natural Environment**
- **Water Scarcity**
- **Cities & Infrastructure**
- **Disaster Risk Management & Finance.**

Coupled with the Year of Action organised by the same institution, it aimed to inspire action among heads of state and government officials, mayors, business executives, and investors.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUE

Political stability and good governance are critical to the success of any resilience initiative. Poor management, corruption, and political instability can undermine infrastructure projects and climate adaptation efforts. Transparent and accountable governance structures are essential for managing international aid, coordinating resilience-building efforts, and maintaining projects in the long term.

MEDCs must aid vulnerable nations before and after a climate-related disaster. Aid can improve infrastructure and education on extreme weather events, increasing preparedness for a disaster to help rebuild faster after such an event happens. Japan is a prime example of a country that adapts to the hazards associated with its location through resilient infrastructure and Disaster Prevention Day once a year, among other programs. Using the policies of countries such as Japan to help write a resolution is a brilliant way to support your resolution and ensure it passes.

In addition to financial and technological support, capacity building is essential for long-term resilience. LEDCs face a shortage of skilled workers to construct and maintain resilient infrastructure. International programs that provide vocational training in construction, engineering, and disaster risk management can help create a workforce capable of implementing climate-resilient projects. Educating and training the local population can also create jobs, reduce poverty, and foster a sense of ownership over resilience initiatives, breaking the cycle of dependency and underdevelopment. Community-driven projects, where local populations are involved in decision-making and project implementation, ensure that infrastructure solutions are culturally relevant and sustainable.

Regional cooperation and South-South collaboration are other crucial aspects of building resilience. Countries facing similar climate threats—such as droughts in East Africa or monsoons in Southeast Asia—can benefit from regional partnerships that pool resources, share knowledge, and coordinate early-warning systems. Successful projects like the African Union's Great Green Wall initiative, which aims to combat desertification, demonstrate the power of regional collaboration. Moreover, South-South cooperation, where developing countries share best practices and technical expertise with others, can accelerate resilience-building efforts.

Detection of extreme weather formations before they reach land is crucial for disaster preparation. International agencies, such as the World Meteorological Organization, are effective at providing reports on these extreme weather formations and can often deliver early warning several days before a disaster strikes—allowing evacuation and distribution of provisions to the population. However, communication is necessary to alert the population of danger—evacuation must be in a suitable, safe location. Preparation is vital to ensure the poor are resilient to climate-related extreme weather events—response is insufficient in dealing with the topic alone.

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