BACKGROUND GUIDE

UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

DPSIMUN 2026

"Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in the Age of Volatility"

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Welcome Message

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at DPSIMUN 2026. On behalf of the Executive Board, we are delighted to have you join us for a conference filled with meaningful discussion, diplomacy, and collaboration.

This year's theme,

"Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in the Age of Volatility," highlights the importance of adapting to the environmental challenges shaping our world today. UNEP plays a crucial role in addressing issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, and resource insecurity by promoting international cooperation and sustainable solutions.

Throughout this committee, delegates will explore two pressing agendas:

Topic A: Establishing Climate-Resilient Communities through Sustainable Environmental Governance

Topic B: Harnessing Innovation to Build Environmental Resilience Against Global Challenges

These topics aim to encourage critical thinking, constructive debate, and the development of practical solutions that reflect the principles of diplomacy and global cooperation.

This Background Guide serves as a foundation for your preparation, providing essential context and key areas of discussion. We encourage delegates to conduct further research into their assigned countries' policies and perspectives to actively contribute to committee proceedings.

As you participate in UNEP, remember that Model United Nations is not only about debate, but also about collaboration, understanding diverse viewpoints, and developing the skills of future global leaders.

We look forward to witnessing your ideas, negotiations, and resolutions throughout DPSIMUN 2026. We wish you the very best in your preparations and welcome you once again to UNEP.

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Meet Your Chairs

Chair

Hey everyone! It is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at DPSIMUN 2026. My name is Jairus Shaji Varghese, and I am honoured to serve as your Chair for this committee. I am a student at Delhi Private School International, Ghana, and this marks my first experience as a Chair.

Having participated as a delegate in previous Model United Nations conferences, I have gained valuable experience in diplomacy, research, and meaningful debate. I hope to bring these experiences into UNEP and create a committee environment where every delegate feels encouraged to participate and share their ideas.

I encourage all delegates to come prepared, research their assigned countries, and approach discussions with an open mind. While this is my first time chairing, I am committed to making this committee a rewarding experience, and I hope you bring the same dedication and enthusiasm.

I look forward to witnessing your ideas, negotiations, and solutions throughout the conference. Together, let us make UNEP at DPSIMUN 2026 a memorable experience.

Jairus Shaji Varghese — Chair, United Nations Environment Programme, DPSIMUN 2026

Vice Chair

Hello everyone, I'm Shachi Sangai, a student at Delhi Private School International, and I'll be serving as the Vice Chair for this year's UN Environment Programme committee.

While this will be my first time vice chairing, I've had the privilege of participating as a delegate in four prior MUN conferences, which shaped my understanding of what good diplomacy actually requires.

UNEP holds a unique place within the UN system, responsible for protecting the planet's environmental future, but only through cooperation and consensus rather than binding authority. I'd encourage each of you to come prepared with strong research on your country's stance, while staying open to collaboration, since the strongest resolutions come from delegates willing to listen and negotiate rather than hold their ground alone.

Beyond the debate, I genuinely hope you enjoy this conference — the conversations, compromises, and connections you make along the way. Looking forward to meeting you all in committee!

Shachi Sangai — Vice Chair, United Nations Environment Programme, DPSIMUN 2026

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Committee Overview

Established after the Stockholm Conference of 1972, which marked the first time the world treated environmental damage as a global issue and called for a permanent body to take direct action on it, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has been involved in environmental governance for more than five decades. Operating across 193 member states, UNEP focuses on assessing environmental challenges, strengthening scientific understanding, and creating solutions by coordinating international efforts through research, policy development, and sustainable innovation.

Since its establishment, UNEP has played a significant role in shaping global environmental discussions by supporting countries in addressing issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, ecosystem degradation, and resource management. Through partnerships with governments, scientific institutions, and international organizations, UNEP works to promote sustainable development and encourage effective environmental policies that balance human progress with the protection of the planet.

In line with the conference theme, “Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in the Age of Volatility,” UNEP provides a platform for delegates to explore how international cooperation, scientific innovation, and sustainable policies can improve environmental resilience in a more unpredictable world. Through collaborative discussions, delegates will tackle emerging environmental challenges and create strategies to build stable, adaptive, and sustainable systems that can support future generations.

As representatives of different nations, delegates are encouraged to consider the diverse environmental priorities, economic realities, and technological capabilities of their countries while developing solutions. The committee aims to foster diplomatic dialogue and highlight the importance of collective action in creating a more resilient and sustainable future.

Topic 1

Establishing Climate-Resilient Communities through Sustainable Environmental Governance

Historical Context

Environmental governance did not begin as a global priority — it took visible, cross-border damage, acid rain settling over neighboring countries, pollution drifting downstream through shared rivers, before the international community was forced to see environmental harm as a problem no single nation could solve alone. What follows is the story of how that awareness slowly hardened into the frameworks this committee now operates within.

Stockholm Conference (1972): This was the moment the world first placed the environment on the international stage, treating ecological damage as a shared global concern rather than a matter for individual nations to handle on their own. The conference produced the Stockholm Declaration and initiated the creation of UNEP later that year.

Rio Earth Summit (1992): Held twenty years after Stockholm, the Rio Summit produced the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity, embedding both climate action and environmental protection into international law for the first time, alongside Agenda 21, one of the earliest global blueprints for sustainable development.

Kyoto Protocol (1997): Adopted under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol was the first international treaty to set emission reduction targets, only for developed nations. Its uneven participation, most notably the absence of the United States, exposed the difficulty of translating environmental consensus into enforceable commitment.

Paris Agreement (2015): Replacing the Kyoto model with a more flexible, universal framework, the Paris Agreement asked all parties, developed and developing countries alike, to set their own nationally determined contributions toward limiting global warming. It remains the central instrument guiding global climate policy.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015): Adopted the same year as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework shifted global disaster policy from responding after the hazard to taking precautions beforehand, through early warning systems, land planning, and resilient infrastructure standards. Running through 2030, implementation remains far more advanced in wealthy states than in those most vulnerable and prone to disasters.

Current Situation

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, created at COP27 and operationalized through COP28 and COP29, inherits the same weakness that has followed climate finance since Kyoto: commitments that are easy to announce and far harder to enforce. As of 2026, the fund's rollout has been defined more by delay than delivery. Its board has repeatedly postponed first rounds of project approvals after receiving nearly 180 proposals requesting close to three billion dollars, against roughly 250 to 350 million dollars actually available. Only about 55 percent of the pledges originally promised by wealthy governments have been fulfilled, and the United States withdrew its pledge entirely in early 2025, echoing the same pattern of uneven participation that weakened Kyoto decades earlier.

The same gap appears on the ground, long before any disaster hits. The Sendai Framework, adopted the same year as the Paris Agreement, pushed the world to shift from responding to disasters after they strike toward building resilience beforehand, through early warning systems, land use planning, and stricter building codes, the very foundation of what a climate-resilient community actually looks like in practice. Implementation, however, remains deeply uneven. Wealthier states have made real progress on early warning systems and resilient building standards, while many low income and climate exposed communities still lack the financing and technical capacity to act on the framework at all, leaving them to rebuild the same vulnerable infrastructure again and again after each new disaster.

Subtopics

Climate change adaptation and resilience

Adaptation is the work of adjusting to harm that is already here, drought-resistant crops, redesigned coastal defenses, relocated settlements, rather than addressing the emissions that caused the harm in the first place. It deals with consequences, not causes, and remains one of the most consistently underfunded areas of climate policy despite growing need. This is where the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage sits most directly.

Disaster risk reduction

Disaster risk reduction is about lowering a community's exposure before a disaster strikes, not scrambling to respond once it already has. Early warning systems, land use planning, and enforceable building codes form the backbone of this approach, guided globally by the Sendai Framework. Yet the framework's reach stops where institutional capacity does.

Sustainable and resilient infrastructure (SDG 9)

Infrastructure is where climate volatility and economic development collide most directly — power grids, water systems, transportation networks all built for a climate that no longer exists. SDG 9 calls for infrastructure resilient enough to withstand increasingly extreme weather, rather than infrastructure that has to be rebuilt from the ground up after every disaster.

Bloc Positions

Developed Countries

Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, United Kingdom, and United States (G8 countries). These countries tend to focus on environmentalism, green technology investment, and international cooperation.

Emerging Economies

Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, and Russian Federation. These countries are focused on balancing environmentalism with economic productivity, and advocate for technology transfer, investment, and climate justice.

Climate Vulnerable and Developing Countries

Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Maldives, and Chile represent a group of countries particularly vulnerable to climate change and advocate for increased international aid, nature preservation, and climate adaptation initiatives.

Energy Exporting Countries

Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and other petroleum-rich states. Generally focused on preserving the environment while investing in alternative energy sources; may have different approaches toward climate change than the blocs above.

[Topic 2]

Harnessing Innovation to Build Environmental Resilience Against Global Challenges

Historical Context

Scientific and technological innovations are an integral part of modern society. Renewable energy sources, climate-friendly agricultural production methods, new information technologies, innovative recycling techniques, and other developments can help ensure environmental sustainability while contributing to economic growth. At the same time, innovations also bring new challenges linked to the management of natural resources, unequal access to cutting-edge technologies, investment attractiveness, and environmental security.

There is still an urgent need to ensure that developing countries gain greater access to innovative technologies, since significant disparities in absorption capacity still exist at the global level. The role of international cooperation, partnerships between governments, private businesses, and academia, as well as technical and financial assistance, should not be understated.

By promoting such policies, UNEP aims to contribute to stimulating environmentally friendly innovation, participating in various international agreements, and fostering synergies between different sectors and organizations. Delegates should consider how to harness the potential of modern innovative technologies to ensure environmental sustainability while promoting such goals as economic development, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

Current Situation

The renewable energy transition now runs into the same extraction politics it was meant to move past. Meeting rising demand for cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper has pushed serious attention toward deep sea mining, particularly in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, as an alternative to land-based mining tied to labor and environmental harm in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo. The International Seabed Authority remains under pressure to finalize exploitation regulations, while a 2026 Greenpeace-backed study argues the transition does not require seabed mining at all if states invest instead in recycling, public transit, and improved battery chemistries, leaving green energy's next phase caught between two unresolved paths rather than one clear one.

Climate-smart agriculture faces a quieter but equally persistent problem: techniques that raise yields and build resilience in one region's soil and market conditions rarely transfer cleanly to another, leaving adoption fragmented and often donor-driven rather than locally led. Meanwhile, public-private partnerships have become the default mechanism for funding resilience projects governments cannot finance alone, but they bring their own unresolved question of accountability, since private partners answer to returns rather than public mandates. Underlying all three is the same governance lag visible elsewhere in UNEP's mandate: the UNEP-convened Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, stalled since 2024, only saw a new negotiating chair elected in February 2026.

Subtopics

Green energy and sustainable technologies

The shift toward renewable energy depends on critical minerals — cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper — whose extraction carries its own environmental and social costs, whether mined on land or increasingly considered for extraction from the seabed. This subtopic asks whether the green transition can scale fast enough without simply relocating environmental harm from the energy sector to the extraction sector.

Climate-smart agriculture

Climate-smart agriculture aims to do three things at once: raise agricultural productivity, build resilience to climate shocks, and reduce emissions from farming itself. The challenge is that techniques suited to one region's soil, water availability, and market structure rarely transfer cleanly to another.

Public-private partnerships for environmental resilience

Governments alone rarely have the capital to fund resilience technology or infrastructure at the scale required, which has pushed UNEP and member states toward partnerships with private actors. These raise real questions of accountability, since private partners are ultimately driven by returns rather than public mandate.

Bloc Position

Innovation Leaders

Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, UK, and the US are mostly focused on promoting renewable energy, green technologies, artificial intelligence, and other research that would lead to substantial innovation growth and stronger involvement of various sectors in ecological issues.

Emerging Economies

Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Russia are considering dual-use technologies and less capital-intensive breakthroughs that allow them to enter the race without limitations and promote sustainable development.

Developing Countries and Those Vulnerable to Climate Change

Bangladesh, DRC, Kenya, Maldives, Nigeria, Philippines, and Chile are focusing predominantly on innovations that secure food production, climate adaptation, protect ecosystems, and build resilient infrastructure with extensive international aid and technology transfer.

Energy-Producing States

Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE are investing in developing technologies that reduce emissions while maintaining profit, security, and sustainability. Many states may fit more than one category, so research your country's policies, technologies, and goals carefully.

Guiding Questions

Topic 1: Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Sustainable Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies

1. How could nations promote climate change adaptation and mitigation while ensuring economic development and environmental conservation?
2. What financial, technological and institutional supports would developing countries need to engage in sustainable adaptation and mitigation measures?
3. How might countries promote the transition to clean energy while ensuring energy security and cutting emissions?
4. What role can international agreements play in addressing climate change implications in both developed and developing countries?
5. How could disaster management and nature-based approaches contribute to long-term climate resilience?

Topic 2: Combating Environmental Degradation Through Sustainable Resource Management and Pollution Reduction

1. How could countries address environmental degradation and pollution while promoting sustainable development?
2. What strategies would help promote sustainable resource management and pollution reduction at various levels?
3. What role can international partnerships play in tackling environmental degradation and global pollution?
4. How can industries, governments and individuals reduce environmental harm and promote sustainable resource use?
5. How can countries promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of their ecosystems?

Further Research

Delegates should further research on:

1. Triple Planetary Crisis

- Climate change
- Biodiversity loss
- Pollution and waste

2. Plastic Pollution

- Negotiations on the Global Plastics Treaty
- Reducing the use of single-use plastics
- Improving recycling

3. Biodiversity

- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
- Aiming to protect and restore ecosystems and species
- Establishing protected areas

4. Circular Economy

- Closing loops in production processes
- Reducing waste
- Promoting sustainable resource use

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Glossary — Topic 1

Climate adaptation: *Taking action to adjust to climate change or reduce its effects.*

Climate Resilience: *The capacity of systems, communities, and individuals to withstand, respond to, and recover from climate-related stresses and disturbances.*

Environmental governance: *The processes and policies used in managing environmental issues.*

Mitigation: *Any action taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and their effects.*

Nature-based solutions (NbS): *Solutions to societal and environmental challenges provided through the use of nature.*

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs): *The mitigation targets that countries have laid out in the Paris Agreement.*

Paris Agreement: *An international agreement aimed at controlling global warming.*

Sendai Framework: *The international agreement on disaster risk reduction.*

Sustainable infrastructure: *Infrastructure that promotes development with minimal negative environmental effects.*

Glossary — Topic 2

Circular economy: *An economic system that prioritizes eliminating waste and promoting reprocessing, recycling, and repairing goods.*

Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA): *Approaches that promote sustainable development of agriculture while building resilience to climate change.*

Critical minerals: *Elements that are used in industrial processes and the manufacturing of modern technologies.*

Deep-Sea Mining: *Mining activities that take place on the ocean floor.*

Green technology: *Innovative technology designed to reduce adverse environmental impact.*

Public-Private Partnerships (P3): *Partnerships between the public and private sectors to achieve specific goals.*

Renewable energy: *Energy that is obtained from natural resources such as sunlight and wind.*

Sustainable resource management: *Managing resources in a way that ensures their availability for future generations while promoting sustainable development.*

Triple planetary crisis: *Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.*

Technology transfer: *The process of transferring technology from one entity to another.*

2.0

Closing Remarks

As delegates prepare for committee, they are encouraged to approach these topics with a spirit of collaboration, innovation, and diplomacy. The environmental challenges facing the international community are complex and interconnected, requiring solutions that balance environmental sustainability, economic development, and social equity. Delegates should thoroughly research their assigned country's policies, priorities, and international commitments, while considering both global cooperation and national interests. Through informed debate and constructive negotiation, the committee will strive to develop practical, inclusive, and forward-looking resolutions that contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future for all.