

# IMUN Special Conference

## Officer Report 2021

### *The question of ensuring the sustainable use of non-renewable resources post Covid-19 pandemic.*

The word sustainable, or the concept of sustainability, can be defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Investopedia), which ultimately means that resources are being used at a rate that won’t completely destroy or use up said resources (Merriam Webster). This is particularly important when talking about non-renewable resources, “resources coming from sources that will run out or will not be replenished for thousands or even millions of years, they are finite” (National Geographic), seeing as these resources, if not managed sustainably, will be depleted within our lifetime and future generations won’t have equal access to these energy sources. Examples of such resources are fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas), and nuclear energy (national geographic).

Ensuring the sustainable use of non-renewable resources relies heavily on shifting our consumption patterns, namely consuming more “clean energy”, derived from renewable energy sources (solar, wind, geothermal, among others). During the Covid-19 pandemic, both the price and the demand for oil declined, which can easily be explained by the travel restrictions imposed by governments due to the pandemic. “It seems likely that the coronavirus-induced global economic downturn will cause carbon dioxide emissions to drop this year, the first time since the financial crisis of 2009,” said Randolph Bell, the director of the Global Energy Center at the

Atlantic Council. As a direct result of this, Julia Pyper, another member of this organization, commented on the fact that throughout the global “levels of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions” are reduced. Despite this being positive, it’s also a short-term reduction. Studies show that “when restrictions were lifted, air pollution returned to its pre-pandemic levels in 39 of 49 cities and large towns studied, even though none had returned to previous levels of economic activity” (Centreforcities). It’s important to note that many experts correlated use of non-renewable energy with economic activity, meaning that during a recession, such as this current one, consumption of fossil fuels would decrease. The study mentioned above, however, shows that the dependency of society on fossil fuels is so great that even with low levels of economic activity, the demand for fossil fuels still remains.

Although the demand for renewable energy sources increased during the pandemic, “COVID-19 has disrupted global supply chains, including for renewables and other clean energy technologies” (Atlantic Council), meaning the economic setbacks caused by the virus also affected the renewable energy industry. This question regarding the use of renewable and non-renewable energy sources can be tricky and complex because no sector of the economy was left unaffected, and while the reduced consumption of fossil fuels might have reduced these past two years, the world is beginning to emerge from the pandemic, and governments might be more inclined to initially invest in trustworthy, and relatively cheaper energy sources, which most often are derived from scarce fossil fuels. Consequently, this highlights the importance of this agenda issue. Delegates must research about their country’s position on the use of fossil fuels, especially during the pandemic, but also on each countries’ investments towards renewable energy sources. This agenda issue aims to find ways in which the world can start to prioritize

renewable energy sources in these following years, as well as how this trend of reduced fossil fuel consumption can be maintained in a post pandemic world with little to no restrictions.

Delegates should note that the debate should not be climate change oriented, but should rather focus on how each nation will prioritize the use of renewable energies and limit their fossil fuel consumption so that it's being used a sustainable rate, seeing as these are non-renewable, finite resources. The debate, at some point, might even steer to the question of how to ensure that future generations will have access to non-renewable resources, however, the debate must always keep a focus on how we this can be done as the world returns to "normal life" post a pandemic.

For relevant, reliable data, delegates should explore sources such as IEA, ourworlddata.org, the Eurostat website (especially EU nations), data.gov (for United States data), and generally look into governmental data websites with a simple search of "\*\*delegation\* data base". Delegates must be aware that this is a topic of much controversy, and as such, they might stumble across a lot of opinion-based articles. These undoubtedly hold value, but delegates must try to eliminate the bias and simply extract the unbiased information from the article, unless, of course, it supports the delegations' positions.

Among those most present in the debate will be countries that heavily rely on fossil fuels such as the United States, China, and India, as well as countries that heavily promote the use of renewable energy such as Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. All delegates, however, should actively participate in the debate seeing as the agenda issue is relevant to all countries.

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