

Committee: United Nations Environment Programme

Agenda : Discussing challenges faced while implementing measures to combat climate change with special emphasis on the economy of the member states.



INTRODUCTION TO UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UN Environment work encompasses:

Assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends

Developing international and national environmental instruments

Strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment

Mission:

"To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations."

MANDATE:

The mission of the UN Environment Evaluation Office is to provide strategic information to Member States, UN Environment senior management and other UN Environment managerial and project staff to enable them to review progress made by the organization and to reflect critically on the constraints and challenges of delivering a quality global environmental programme.

The mandate for conducting evaluations in UN Environment derives from several UN General Assembly Resolutions, summarized in the regulations and "Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation". The rules and regulations require all UN programme activities to be evaluated and that evaluation findings are communicated to Member States through intergovernmental bodies. This mandate is further supported by a number of UN Environment Governing Council decisions. These decisions authorize evaluation of UN Environment activities.

The objective of evaluation is:

(a) To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives;

(b) To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives" and that the associated rules require all UN programme activities to be evaluated.

The United Nations Environment Assembly has recognized the importance of evaluation as an integral part of the programme planning cycle, and has requested the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation unit be made more managerially independent of the programming and project implementation and that it continue to refine evaluation methodologies in collaboration with Governments and partners within the United Nations system. The mandate covers all programmes and projects of the Environment Fund, related trust funds, earmarked contributions and projects implemented by UN Environment under the

Global Environment Facility and under partnership agreements. The Evaluation Office reports directly to the Executive Director, works independently from the substantive programmatic divisions and reports of evaluation activities are submitted to the governance function of the organization.

ABOUT THE AGENDA

What is climate change and how do we know it's real?

The Earth's climate has changed throughout history. Just in the last 650,000 years there have been seven cycles of glacial advance and retreat, with the abrupt end of the last ice age about 7,000 years ago marking the beginning of the modern climate era — and of human civilization. Most of these climate changes are attributed to very small variations in Earth's orbit that change the amount of solar energy our planet receives.

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The current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is extremely likely (greater than 95 percent probability) to be the result of human activity since the mid-20th century and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented over decades to millennia.

Earth-orbiting satellites and other technological advances have enabled scientists to see the big picture, collecting many different types of information about our planet and its climate on a global scale. This body of data, collected over many years, reveals the signals of a changing climate.

The heat-trapping nature of carbon dioxide and other gases was demonstrated in the mid-19th century. There is no question that increased levels of greenhouse gases must cause the Earth to warm in response.

Ice cores drawn from Greenland, Antarctica, and tropical mountain glaciers show that the Earth's climate responds to changes in greenhouse gas levels. Ancient evidence can also be found in tree rings, ocean sediments, coral reefs, and layers of sedimentary rocks. This ancient, or paleoclimate, evidence reveals that current warming is occurring roughly ten times faster than the average rate of ice-age-recovery warming.

The evidence for rapid climate change is compelling:

SEA LEVEL RISE:

Global sea level rose about 8 inches in the last century. The rate in the last two decades, however, is nearly double that of the last century

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE RISE:

The planet's average surface temperature has risen about 2.0 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degrees Celsius) since the late 19th century, a change driven largely by increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere.⁵ Most of the warming occurred in the past 35 years, with 16 of the 17 warmest years on record occurring since 2001. Not only was 2016 the warmest year on record, but eight of the 12 months that make up the year — from January through September, with the exception of June — were the warmest on record for those respective months.

WARMING OCEANS:

The oceans have absorbed much of this increased heat, with the top 700 meters (about 2,300 feet) of ocean showing warming of 0.302 degrees Fahrenheit since 1969.

EXTREME EVENTS:

The number of record high temperature events in the United States has been increasing, while the number of record low temperature events has been decreasing, since 1950. The U.S. has also witnessed increasing numbers of intense rainfall events.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, climate change is still a topic that is debated upon. There is still a doubt amongst many people if Climate change is in fact a hoax. The major reasons behind the dismissal of climate change is that it would force governments and their people to adopt cleaner sources of energy, which would require corporate and domestic restructuring on a large scale. Nevertheless, a majority of the world's population has come together to try and fight climate change.

THE CHALLENGES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE:

Adaption by people

The greatest impediment in implementing policies to counter climate change is the magnitude of the change in lifestyle that is required at the least period of time. As we all know changes in the individual thinking and social way of life is moulded over a period of years and decades. The greatest challenge faced by the green movements and environmentalists around the world is to convince the importance of change to a society, which since generations have been following a specific model of development.

Socio-economic challenges:

The enormous disparities between the rich and the poor and the concentration of wealth among a small percentage of the global population have created vast inequalities in the distribution of opportunities in the society in general and a feeling of insecurity among the common people. The poor and deprived that are facing the brunt of the natural calamities due to climate change are unable to ignite change as they are always on the receiving end. At the same time, the middle class of the society that are making a hand to mouth sustenance are not prepared for a huge transformation, since it will affect their only source of income. This feeling of insecurity and uncertain future played an important obstacle to change. Hence, to

overcome the new challenges and crises that mankind will face due to the new policies to counter climate change, the governments will have to implement essential policies that will provide financial security and take necessary confidence-building measures in the society.

Economic problems.

Controlling climate change will be costly. The costs will have to include higher energy prices for traditional carbon based fuels. Tax increases are being proposed to help finance research into alternatives and to reduce consumption. This will make it more expensive to drive your car, heat your home, and warm your water. It will also add to the cost of all goods that need to be transported to you, the consumer. Cost of living will rise for everyone.

It is a fiction to believe that creating new technologies to combat climate change will be good because it will create new industries and new jobs. This belief is based on a misunderstanding of “opportunity cost.” All of the money spent, and jobs created to produce more fuel efficient cars, carbon-capture technologies, wind and geothermal electricity plants, etc., etc., is money that will not be spent on other things, like food, clothing, health care and entertainment. In order to make one thing available – i.e., clean the environment – it is not possible to make other things available – i.e., provide other goods and services that people want.

Challenge of reducing carbon emission and greenhouse gases.

Difficulty in policy making by governments:

Policy makers all over the world are facing similar challenges. While we certainly know that the climate will change, there is great uncertainty as to what the local or regional impacts will be and what will be the impacts on societies and economies. Coupled with this is often great disagreement among policy makers about underlying assumptions and priorities for action. Many decisions to be made today have long-term consequences and are sensitive to climate conditions – water, energy, agriculture, fisheries and forests, and disasters risk management. Therefore, it is essential that the decisions made are sustainable and accurate.

Debating upon the reality of climate change.

Ever since the President of USA declared that climate change is a hoax, many people are still debating the phenomenon is actually real. This itself is one of the major challenges in combating climate change. If people are not ready to accept that climate change is actually happening then they won't be willing to take action against it. While consensus among nearly all scientists, scientific organizations, and governments is that climate change is happening and is caused by human activity, a small minority of voices questions the validity of such assertions and prefers to cast doubt on the preponderance of evidence. Climate change deniers often claim that recent changes attributed to human activity can be seen as part of the natural variations in Earth's climate and temperature, and that it is difficult or impossible to establish a direct connection between climate change and any single weather event, such as a hurricane. While the latter is generally true, decades of data and analysis support the reality of climate change—and the human factor in this process. In any case, economists agree that acting to reduce fossil fuel emissions would be far less expensive than dealing with the consequences of not doing so.