Committee: UNEP
Topic: Establishing legal accountability for large-scale environmental development.
Chair: Jimena Landeros Güitrón
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Overview of the Problem

Despite a 38-fold increase in environmental laws put in place since 1972, failure to fully implement and enforce these laws is one of the greatest challenges to mitigating climate change, reducing pollution, diminishing oil spills in the oceans, decreasing mass deforestation, and ceasing toxic dumping.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) claims that environmental law enforcement continues to be a significant worldwide issue, and inadequate institutional capacity, poor coordination between government agencies, and lax enforcement all play a part in the ineffective implementation of environmental legislation. And because of this, people and businesses that cause environmental harm could not always be punished effectively. The deterrent effect of the environmental laws is weakened by this lack of commitment, which permits detrimental practices to persevere. Therefore, safeguarding ecosystems and guaranteeing justice require the establishment of stronger legal structures to guarantee that environmental breaches are looked into and appropriately punished.

A scientific study that looked at plastic pollution in 84 countries discovered that about 3% of branded plastic items detected throughout the project's audits from 2018 to 2022 were Nestlé-branded. This raises concerns about producer accountability in the efficacy of current environmental legislation while highlighting the role of large corporations in the worldwide plastic pollution problem. Nestlé has produced huge amounts of GHG emissions and provoked water shortages through agricultural-purposed usages. (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP, 2019).

The main challenge is not only the existence of environmental destruction but also the failure of governments to consistently enforce environmental laws and ensure those

responsible face appropriate legal consequences, making the establishment of legal accountability essential to protecting the environment.

National governments, particularly those responsible for enforcing these laws, investigate violations, and the ones who ensure those accountable for environmental damage face appropriate legal consequences.

The environmental code, which provides regulations applicable to the many environmental components and includes provisions that punish violations of the above-mentioned regulations with criminal penalties, is the primary source of French environmental legislation. These provisions, with the exception of a few instances that specifically penalize environmental degradation, are primarily based on administrative regulations and include disobeying court orders or, more frequently, administrative decisions or regulations.

Enforcing environmental regulations is severely hampered by a lack of institutional resources and financing. Environmental organizations might not have the funding necessary to monitor pollution, conduct factory inspections, and look into unlawful deforestation. Furthermore, a lack of personnel may restrict the amount of inspections carried out, which could result in environmental infractions going unreported. Authorities may also be unable to recognize environmental damage and get trustworthy evidence due to inadequate training. As a result, even when environmental infractions are found, it may be challenging to obtain legal fines due to a lack of investigative resources and shaky evidence, which enables those in charge to evade accountability.

As mentioned before, failure to establish punishments and follow through has caused the ecosystem severe harm. Delegates must argue how we will punish future crimes and what will be the consequences for those delegations who don't follow through. Adding to that, delegates must take into consideration how the effects of contamination and pollution affect the different aspects of countries and decide who the consequences will fall on: deciding the fates of those global enterprises who break the established rules. In conclusion, boundaries to the crimes of pollution and contamination must be established, as well as what the sanctions will be for such activities.

“The criminalization and increasing attacks on environment defenders are clear violations of the environmental rule of law and an affront to the rights, roles, and contributions of indigenous peoples and civil society in protecting our environment." This report captures the prevailing lack of accountability, strong environmental governance, and aspects for human rights for the sustainability of our environment," said Joan Carling. This statement emphasizes the importance of protecting environmental defenders and holding governments accountable for failures in environmental governance. When those who report environmental violations face threats or attacks, it becomes more difficult to expose environmental destruction and pursue justice. Furthermore, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms may allow those responsible for environmental damage to avoid appropriate legal consequences. Therefore, strengthening environmental legislation, safeguarding environmental defenders, and ensuring that violations are thoroughly investigated are essential steps towards establishing legal accountability for large-scale environmental destruction.

Environmental law enforcement refers to the implementation of laws and regulations designed to protect the environment and ensure that individuals, businesses, and governments comply with established standards. Legal accountability is essential to ensuring that individuals, corporations, and other responsible entities face appropriate consequences when they violate environmental law, which is our main difficulty, because they are not being sanctioned as they should be. (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP, 2019).

The question of legal accountability for extensive environmental degradation must be addressed by the international community because its effects transcend national boundaries and have an impact on people’s quality of life everywhere. Environmental harm can jeopardize the livelihood of communities who rely on natural resources, degrade ecosystems, imperil access to clean water and air, and weaken local economies. Additionally, when environmental rules are not properly enforced, those who cause such harm may avoid the proper legal outcomes, which weaken public confidence in legal institutions and encourage more infractions.

The United Nations Environment Programme can contribute to addressing this issue by supporting stronger environmental legislation, improving institutional capacity, and promoting international cooperation. The committee could encourage member states to establish transparent reporting mechanisms and strengthen protections for environmental defenders. Furthermore, UNEP could help facilitate the exchange of information and best practices between countries to improve the investigation of environmental violations and promote effective accountability mechanisms.

The nature of widespread environmental degradation, its effects on ecosystems and populations, and the reasons why current environmental laws don't always stop it, are all examined in this background paper.

Historical Background

The historical challenge of establishing legal accountability for large-scale environmental destruction, often referred to as "ecocide," began to formalize during the early 1970s following the severe ecological decline caused by military conflict and the following 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. During this foundational era, legal diplomats introduced the concept of recognizing mass environmental harm as an intentional crime like genocide. While the creation of laws like the 1972 London Dumping Convention and the 1982 UNCLOS. However, these laws remained chained to individual compliance rather than real criminal punishment. In 1998 delegates debated the critical inclusion of ecocide as an independent crime against peace in the International Criminal Court.

In the following decades, the global governance structure has suffered from a free-for-all gap, since the existing environmental legislation lacks enforcement mechanisms or criminal sanctions. As a consequence, multifunctional corporations and

government bodies responsible for major industrial disasters like deforestation and toxic waste disposal regularly avoid legal consequences, facing minor fines like a simple inconvenience rather than giving the importance it deserves. Responding to these issues, contemporary efforts led by groups like civil advocates, indigenous organizations, and states vulnerable to climate have pushed to consider genocide as a formal crime. Integrating human rights protection into environmental governance is still an important step for establishing firm legal accountability and preventing more widespread ecological deterioration.

Simultaneous to debates held in the international criminal court, regional human right defenders and international legal institutions began to separate the gap that exists between environmental protection and essential human rights over the early 21st century. High-profile indictments by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights set a rule where deteriorating the environment violates basic human rights, as well as the rights to life, health, and clean water. Furthermore, key international policy frameworks, like the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, were presented to establish corporate due persistence and accountability. Despite these theoretical advances, the weak laws required binding judicial enforcement, allowing corporate agents working in transboundary settings to avoid explicit jurisdictional omissions and avoid systematic criminal environmental harm.

Responding to the limitations of established frameworks, recent historical developments have focused on establishing concrete legal definitions and specialized institutions for environmental justice. A major goal occurred in 2021 when an independent expert panel drafted a structured legal definition of ecocide as “unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and other widespread or long term damage to the environment being caused by those acts." This precise farming has since provided the foundation for national legislation in several jurisdictions and fueled ongoing simultaneous discussions at the UN level. Today, delegates face a landscape where historical precedents show that voluntary guidelines and minor civil

remedies are insufficient: creating an applicable legally binding framework remains essential for holding polluters accountable and safeguarding global economic stability.

Numerous nations exert significant influence in confronting extensive environmental degradation, driven by their distinct ecological vulnerabilities, economic stakes, and stances regarding international environmental legislation. As a nation harboring the vast majority of the Amazon rainforest, Brazil stands as a critical global entity; however, this irreplaceable ecosystem confronts escalating perils driven by deforestation, illicit mining operations, and the relentless encroachment of agricultural expansion. Admits a delicate equilibrium between safeguarding the Amazon's ecological integrity and advancing economic pursuits, Brazil has articulated a commitment to intensifying enforcement mechanisms against illicit deforestation, bolstering the defense of indigenous lands, and fostering robust international collaboration. Colombia confronts formidable obstacles, namely illicit mining operations, rampant deforestation, organized environmental criminality, and the targeted violence inflicted upon environmental defenders. The initiative advocates for the imposition of more stringent penalties for environmental offenses, the enhanced safeguarding of defenders, and the fostering of international collaboration to combat illicit activities. France is another key player because it has passed laws that deal with edifice and major environmental harm. It backs stronger rules to protect the environment, holds companies responsible, and works with other countries to stop bug damage to the environment. The Democratic Republic of the Congo wants to keep the Congo Basin rainforest safe from cutting down trees, mining, and taking resources, while also supporting development that is good for the environment. It also helps in identifying ecocide as a crime that affects the entire world. Vanuatu, a small island country that is especially at risk from environmental and climate problems, is one of the main nations pushing for the world to officially recognize ecocide and hold those responsible for major environmental harm more accountable. Fiji and Samoa have similar worries because they are very affected by climate change and environmental harm. They both want more strict international rules to protect the environment and for ecocide to be recognized as a crime under the Rome Statue.

Belgium has also made a big move by officially recognizing ecocide as a crime in its new Criminal Code in 2024, which helps ensure stronger legal responsibilities for major environmental harm. Indonesia is dealing with big environmental problems like deforestation, palm oil farming, illegal logging, and mining. It aims to keep its forests and wildlife safe while still supporting growth and businesses that rely on natural resources. These countries have different focuses, but they show how important it is to work together internationally, create better environmental rules, and make sure those who cause environmental damage are held responsible.

Global entities—including UNEP, INTERPOL, UNODC, and the World Bank—work to strengthen regulatory frameworks, crack down on environmental offenses, deliver funding, and foster cross-border collaboration. In specific-high gravity cases, the International Crime Court (ICC) holds authority to prosecute individuals responsible for severe ecological devastation. Advocacy groups like Global Witness, Greenpace, WWF, and human rights watchdogs drive accountability by uncovering environmental abuses, exposing corrupt practices, rallying public support, safeguarding frontline activists, and holding leadership accountable.

Addressing large-scale environmental destruction requests coordinated action across every level of society. International organizations, nonprofits, private businesses, and local communities each serve vital, distinct functions in combating widespread sociological damage and ensuring accountability. Global entities, including UNEP, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Bank, work to strengthen regulatory frameworks, crack down on environmental offenses, deliver funding, and foster cross-border collaboration. In specific high-gravity cases, the ICC holds the authority to prosecute individuals responsible for severe ecological devastation.

Working alongside these global bodies, advocacy groups like Global Witness, Greenpace, World Wildlife Fund, and Human Rights Watch drive accountability from the outside. They uncover environmental abuses, expose corrupt practices, rally public support, safeguard frontline activists, and pressure both governments and corporations

to accept responsibility. Meanwhile, commercial sectors, especially agriculture, extraction, energy, and manufacturing, bear a direct responsibility to minimize their footprint. These industries must adhere to strict environmental standards to curb pollution and deforestation and remedy any harm linked to their operations. Forward-thinking companies go a step further by embracing sustainable supply chains and driving investment into clean, eco-friendly technologies.

“At least 124 land and environmental defenders were killed in 2025, bringing the total documented killings and disappearances since 2012 to 2,375, a new report by Global Witness reveals.” In 2025 , Latin America remained the world’s deadliest region for environmental defenders, accounting for 85% of all documented killings, with Colombia ranking as the most dangerous country for the fourth straight year at 39 deaths, followed by Brazil, which saw its killings more than double to 26. Globally, over three-quarters of the victims were small-scale farmers, indigenous people, or Afro-descended people , and attacks were heavily concentrated around land disputes as well as commercial sectors like mining, logging, and agribusiness. Furthermore, over a third of these attacks across Latin America, Asia, and Africa were linked directly to organized crime or hired hitmen. (Global Witness, 2026)

These numbers demonstrate the link between human right abuses, environmental degradation, and ineffective judicial accountability. Investigations are further complicated by the presence of organized crime and people hired to carry out attacks, making it challenging to guarantee that those involved face punishment. Furthermore, the disproportionate effect on small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples shows how environmental disputes can put already disadvantaged populations at further danger. In the absence of efficient investigations, sufficient legal safeguards, and collaboration among national agencies means these infractions can persist without suitable repercussions.

Several major hurdles hinder environmental legal accountability. Corporate lobbying often blocks the passage of stricter green laws, while complex networks of companies and subcontractors obscure who is actually responsible for large-scale damage. Because environmental crimes regularly cross international borders, holding polluters accountable requires seamless coordination between different countries' legal systems. Finally, ongoing threats to environmental defenders pose a serious crisis, as these activists are vital for undercovering abuses and fighting for vulnerable communities. To address these systemic barriers, international legal frameworks must be strengthened and modernized. Establishing binding treaties that standardize corporate liability across borders would prevent companies from exploiting jurisdictional loopholes. In contrast, granting specialized legal protections and resources to environmental defenders is essential to ensuring that those on the front lines can continue exposing violations without fearing for their safety.

These challenges surrounding environmental legal accountability vary across different regions of the world, depending on their economic activities, natural resources, and institutional capacity. In Latin America, countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Peru are facing serious environmental damage due to illegal mining, particularly in the Amazon rainforest. This activity causes trees to be cut down, harms rivers, and pollutes with mercury, which creates major dangers for the health and ways of living of indigenous people and local communities. After the presidential summit in Belém, Brazil, in August 2025, research done in Amazonian communities showed that mercury levels in hair and blood samples were higher than what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) considers safe. A separate study in Suriname found that 97% of pregnant women tested had blood mercury levels that could pose a risk to their babies' brain development. Illegal mining has grown more widespread as good prices go up and criminal groups get involved. From 2021 to 2022, the count of mining fats close to Amacayucu National Natural Park went up by 150% in Colombia and by 410% in the nearby country of Brazil. These changes show how illegal mining and logging can harm

wildlife, people's health, the rights of indigenous communities, and the safety of a region. (World Bank, 2023).

In Indonesia, indigenous communities face significant challenges in protecting their ancestral lands from large-scale resource extraction. In March 2024, Sorbatua Siallagan, an indigenous elder from North Sumatra, was arrested after being accused of theft and arson in connection with a dispute over land claimed by a major pulpwood company. Although he was initially sentenced to two years in prison, Indonesia's Supreme Court acquitted him in June 2025, recognizing that ownership of the land was disputed. According to Human Rights Watch, his case reflects a broader pattern in which indigenous leaders and environmental defenders face intimidation and prosecution while opposing activities that threaten their communities and the environment. Such cases demonstrate that environmental accountability must also include the protection of indigenous land rights and the people who defend them. Without these protections, communities may face legal pressure for speaking out against environmental destruction rather than receiving justice for the harm affecting their lands. (Human Rights, 2025).

In Europe , the illegal trade of fluoridated greenhouse gases (F-gases), particularly hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), presents another challenge to environmental protection. Although HFCs do not deplete the ozone layer, they are potent greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. Despite European Union regulations introduced to limit their availability, criminal networks have developed illegal markets to bypass these restrictions. According to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), its 2024 Joint Customs Operation Khoine intercepted F-gases equivalent to more than 400,000 tonnes of CO_2, with an estimated value of 4.5 million euros. Investigations also uncovered methods used to conceal illegal shipments, including falsely declaring gas cylinders as steel construction materials or mislabeling the gases they contained. This case highlights how environmental crimes can cross national borders and exploit weaknesses in customs controls, demonstrating the importance of international cooperation, effective investigations, and stronger measures to prevent environmental violations. (European Anti-Fraud Office [OLAF], 2025).

The UN has been working on environmental issues since 1972, when the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm, Sweden. As the organization's first big international event about the environment, it led to the creation of the Stockholm Declaration and the start of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). These changes showed big moves towards working together on environmental issues around the world and setting up groups focused on protecting the environment.

In 1992, a big movement happened at the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), which is also called the Earth Summit. It took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The conference led to the approval of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environmental Development. These documents set out key principles for achieving sustainable development, encouraging global teamwork, and promoting responsibility for protecting the environment. Principle 13 is especially important for legal responsibility, as it asks countries to create their own laws about who is responsible and how victims of pollution and environmental harm can get compensation. The summit also started the process for countries to sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which aims to improve global teamwork in protecting the environment.

In the following years, the United Nations continued expanding its commitment to sustainable development. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, resulted in an implementation plan designed to advance the objectives established at the Rio Earth Summit. In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, encouraged countries to strengthen global environmental governance and advance sustainable development. This process contributed to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which became the world’s highest-level decision-making body on environmental matters.

INTERPOL has helped fight environmental crime by working with law enforcement agencies and improving their ability to investigate such cases. In 2025, INTERPOL led Operation Madre Tierra VII, which brought together nine countries from Latin America and the Caribbean. The operation led to 225 arrests, helped identify over 400 people suspected of wrongdoing, and resulted in the seizure of illegally traded wildlife, timber, and other natural resources. Through Project Gaia, INTERPOL has helped countries by offering training, forensic help, and sharing intelligence to investigate illegal mining, deforestation, and other environmental crimes. These efforts show how working together with countries can help find criminal groups, make investigations better, and make sure people who break environmental laws face consequences.

Despite these efforts, several limitations remain. Despite the fortification of global collaboration via synchronized operations and intelligence exchange, INTERPOL's efficacy in combating environmental offenses remains contingent upon the commitment and enforcement capabilities of individual nations. Besides that, INTERPOL can’t hold companies responsible or face legal action against them, because those jobs are up to the country’s own legal system. Its efforts also don’t directly address the dangers and threats that environmental activists face. So, even though INTERPOL has made things better for international investigations and cooperation, more needs to be done to fix the legal and system issues that still stop people from being held responsible for environmental harm.

Although considerable advancements have been achieved through international collaboration and law-enforcement programs, there are still several deficiencies that affect the process of tackling mass environmental degradation. First, different legal standards from country to country can hinder the investigation and prosecution of such crimes that occur on an international level. Moreover, although international bodies like INTERPOL can cooperate in these investigations and provide assistance, they cannot charge or punish those individuals or organizations that are guilty. Corporate responsibility is another aspect that should be addressed since it is not easy to impose

liability on those corporations that act illegally in multiple countries and in complicated business relationships. Finally, inadequate resources, poor law enforcement measures, and the danger to environmental activists also make existing efforts ineffective. Future international action needs to address several aspects, including improvement of national law-enforcement systems, international collaboration, standards of corporate responsibility, and imposing penalties on those that violate environmental rules.

Challenges and Complications

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has the mandate to assist with international environmental cooperation, to give technical assistance, and to help member states develop environmental policies and strengthen them. It can use the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) for negotiating and adopting resolutions on the global environmental priorities and suggested solutions to environmental problems. UNEP can also help with the exchange of scientific information, offer institutional assistance, and motivate states to make improvements in environmental legislation and enforcement. However, UNEP has no mandate to enforce national legislation, to punish anyone, or to carry out legal proceedings against individuals, companies, or governments.

UNEP Committee delegates are supposed to negotiate and formulate draft resolutions on the presented environmental issues. They contain ideas on how the problems could be solved by adopting recommendations and initiatives, which will enable member states to improve the state of the environment through cooperation. On the question of responsibility for large-scale environmental destruction, delegates might come up with suggestions on how environmental law enforcement and investigations could be enhanced, how corporations can be made to show their responsibility, and how environmental defenders can be protected. The draft resolutions undergo discussion and are finally passed as committee resolutions. They are not legal acts, but rather recommendations.

UNEP cooperates with various United Nations institutions, international organizations, and governmental agencies to solve those environmental problems that require a joint effort across different fields of expertise. As environmental destruction is closely linked to problems like human rights, economic development, public health, international security, and organized crime, UNEP cooperates with the institutions that perform different tasks and exercise their power in different fields. In this way, UNEP can offer its environmental expertise and coordinate efforts on the international level to help countries adopt new policies. One of these institutions is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It strives to fight against organized crime, corruption, and various illegal activities, including environmental crimes. Cooperation between UNEP and UNODC may include information exchange, research support, and adoption of new laws to counter attack environmental crime, like illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, illegal mining, and hazardous waste illegal trafficking. While UNEP is responsible for the environment and policy-making, UNODC brings its experience in criminal justice and law enforcement to the partnership. Such cooperation becomes especially relevant in cases when there is an involvement of organized crime in environmental destruction and its activities across state borders.

Moreover, there is cooperation between UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This organization is dedicated to sustainable development, reduction of poverty, and institution-building. Collaboration with UNDP will allow countries to improve environmental governance, taking into account the economic and social needs of their populations. For instance, UNDP may provide assistance to countries in building up their public institutions, creating sustainable economic opportunities, and increasing the capacities of communities that suffer from environmental devastation. The collaboration is important because effective environmental governance needs not only stronger laws but also institutional capabilities and money to execute those laws. The other organization that may collaborate with UNEP is the United Nations.

The Committee's Role and Powers

The UNEP works to drive and facilitate international collaboration on environmental issues. Provides technical and policy advice for countries wishing to develop their environmental legislations and infrastructure. The UNEA is an environmental decision-making body within the UN that consists of universal membership. As such, it can decide on priorities, pass resolutions, and ask the UNEP to undertake more work. This provides delegates with power in formulating global policies. However, the UNEP cannot conduct criminal trials, fine private companies, revoke national permits, or force a sovereign state to bring prosecution against a certain party (UNEP, n.d.; UNEA, 2024).

Delegates will be expected to negotiate and propose draft resolutions within the committee. In relation to the topic, realistic proposals could include suggesting model guidelines for environmental impact assessment, improved transparency and due diligence requirements for corporations, guidelines for enforcement (both administrative and criminal), training for enforcement officers and prosecutors, regional collaboration for sharing evidence, funding technical support for developing countries, and safeguards for environmental defenders. Delegates might also recommend that more research is done on the issue of ecocide and/or that discussions are held about any future international instrument. These suggestions can be described as requiring further negotiation and agreement from states.

Resolutions passed by the UNEP are usually policy recommendations and requests for collaboration. Any binding treaties would need to go through a further negotiation process and would require agreement from the states. They would also need to be adopted by domestic authorities to make national legislation. Therefore, delegates should suggest solutions that the UNEP can realistically support in the form of research, information sharing, partnerships, capacity building, and collaboration with relevant states.

Guiding Questions for Debate

To encourage the debate, these are some guiding questions.

1. How should international environmental laws be structured so that large-scale developments are considered lawful/unsuitable environmental damage?
2. Should there be some uniformity in countries' environmental assessments, consultation, and transparency processes, which are carried out prior to approving large projects? How can this balance out by considering each country?
3. If environmental damage is caused across borders, which state(s) should carry out the investigation? How can they collaborate?
4. In which instances should parent companies, sub companies, contractors, investors, and lenders be held liable for environmental damage relating to a large project?
5. What is an effective method of imposing administrative fines, civil liability, ecological restoration, and criminal charges for serious environmental breaches?
6. How could developing countries receive the resources required to research and enforce their environmental legislation? Including financial resources, laboratories, technical expertise, and trained individuals.
7. Should there be a legal definition for the term “ecocide” globally? What would be needed to ensure the defendant receives a fair trial?
8. How can states ensure that Indigenous people, local communities, journalists, and environmentalists are protected during investigations? Ensuring these individuals are independent.
9. What should happen if a state does have legal legislation but does not enforce it? What sort of support should be given internationally?
10. How can UNEP, UNEA, UNDOC, INTERPOL, regional bodies, and financial bodies work together to ensure that the different mandates of national courts and regulators are respected?

Conclusion and Call to Action

The importance of legal accountability will ensure large-scale development does not cause damage to the environment and uphold human rights and economic stability on a long-term basis. Since the Stockholm Conference in 1972, there have been huge improvements globally with many environmental treaties, national legislation, public agreements, corporate responsibility, and international collaboration in place. However, there is still a large issue with the implementation of laws. There has been recent evidence to show that laws cannot be effective unless there is a system in place for investigation, witness protection, and just redress of wrongdoing. Attacks on environmentalists have been recorded as well as international collaborations to tackle illegal trade.

Actions are needed to prevent damage to the environment. Once ecosystems have been destroyed, contamination has occurred, or communities have lost access to their land and resources, it can be very difficult to reverse. Proposals should be put forward by the delegates to ensure that the countries can develop their national abilities, increase transparency and environmental assessment, clarify corporate responsibility, work together internationally to investigate issues, protect environmentalists, and ensure victims can get redress. Fair access to funding and technology should be provided for developing countries, and all states should ensure due process.

While UNEP cannot punish offenders, it can help countries put in place systems that will allow legal accountability. The role of the committee is to ensure that these common principles can be put into practice to ensure development can benefit people in the long term and environmental issues do not get overlooked, covered up, or passed onto future generations.

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