Committee Guide

UNEP 2024

Envision • Engage • Empower

2024

Navigating a New Age

Environmental Consequences of Neglected Threats: Updating Guidelines for the Disposal of Chemical and Explosive Waste

OLMUN 2024
23rd International Session

Contents

1. Personal Introduction

1.1. Thubelihle Kimberly Nyoni

Dear Delegates,

My OLMUN journey started last year in 2023 when I attended my first conference as one of the delegates of Colombia in the committee UN Woman. Before I moved to Germany I had been debating in multiple international competitions and always sought after discovering new cultures and connections with people. I would consider myself an open and grounded person, and always up for a chat. I am definitely looking forward getting to know more people at this year's conference.

1.2. Clara Winnicka

Hi, my name is Clara.
I currently attend 12th grade at Bismarckschule Hannover and this will be my first time chairing at OLMUN. My MUN journey began during the Pandemic when the Berlin MUN conference was held digitally. Since then, I have attended several conferences as a Delegate and became familiar with the procedure. Besides MUN, I like to dance or play tennis and am passionate about learning new languages.
I believe that having conversations with people of all different backgrounds and nationalities and thereby connecting with those who are not part of one's usual surroundings is incredibly important in order to widen one's horizon which I reckon lays the foundation for developing a deeper understanding of international politics.
I wish you all the best for your preparation for the conference and I'm looking forward to seeing you in June.

2. How to Use this Guide

The topic for our debate will be “Environmental Consequences of Neglected Threats: Updating Guidelines for the Disposal of Chemical and Explosive Waste.” To debate successfully, it is necessary for you to really understand the topic and all its side effects. To help you, we created this Committee Guide, which will give you a short overview of UNEP and the topic in general as well as break down the most important measures already taken by the UN, possible solutions and provide you with further resources for your research at the end. In order to be fully prepared we are also advising you to read the **Rules of Procedure**, which can be found on our website.

First, we would like to state that this guide is simply to help you to get started with your research, but it should not be your only source of information. We expect you to conduct your own in-depth research, with the focus on your country’s individual point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to also do some research on your country itself e.g., its past, culture, allies, political structure, financial supporters, …. Please look into the **OLMUN Handbook** for help. Furthermore, for the sake of an interesting debate it is necessary that you stick to your country’s policy, even though it might not align with your own personal point of view.

Please keep in mind that specifically Chemical and Explosive Waste as Remnants of War is our topic. Normal waste management is not relevant to the discussion.

With that said, please prepare well for the week. For all the first timers get out of your comfort zone, the conference is much more fun by actively helping to develop a fantastic resolution. If you have any questions or concerns don’t hesitate to reach out to one of us, we’re happy to support you anytime.

3. About UNEP

In order to understand your tasks and the spirit of UNEP, we will provide you with a summary regarding the establishment of UNEP and the main concerns it targets.
The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was established in 1972 in Nairobi, Kenia and is tasked to ensure the environmental aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is the only UN-institution solely concerning environmental issues. Its focus is on dealing with the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. In this context, UNEP has a leading position as well as an advisory and

educational one. Generally, UNEP's goals can be summarized in the following quote:

> *"UNEP's mission is 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."*

More in depth that includes several aspects in particular:

- Making and sharing technological and financial progress in order to raise further public awareness, help understand climate science and to lessen the effects and causes of climate change. This includes supporting efforts to improve eco-friendliness by e.g. companies and institutions.
- Reducing the risk of crisis in areas prone to environmental disasters by providing guidance towards environment-friendly societal outlines (legislative and institutional) in affected countries.
- Promoting the protection and restoration of negatively affected ecosystems in accordance with the SDGs.
- Helping governments establish, implement and strengthen laws, programs etc., while focussing not only on global or country wide measures, but also regional ones. This improves sustainable development. UNEP also creates platforms where most of today's valid international contracts concerning our environment have been signed.
- Restricting harmful substances and hazardous waste to improve life for humans and nature and concentrating on the environmentally efficient use of resources in general.

Therefore, UNEP is of great importance to further the discussion and conversation around climate change and environmental problems. The programme's tasks are very vast and far-reaching. Thus it is not a big surprise that UNEP is the leading global authority for issues regarding the environment and sets decisively the priorities of the global environmental policy, working with major parties and stakeholders in conflicts. The governing body of UNEP is the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the successor of its Governing Council, which was composed of 58 member States. The UN Environment Assembly, with a universal membership, is now composed of 193 Member States. The UNEA is supplemented by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The current Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme is Inger Andersen.

4. About the Topic

4.1. What is Chemical and Explosive Waste?

Explosive and chemical waste refers to materials that pose significant risks to human health and the environment due to their explosive or toxic properties. These wastes can originate from various sources, including industrial processes, manufacturing facilities, military operations, and even household products. Explosive waste typically includes unused or expired munition, fireworks, and other explosive materials, while chemical waste encompasses substances such as solvents, acids, heavy metals, and pesticides.

Improper handling, storage, or disposal of explosive and chemical waste can lead to severe consequences. Accidental explosions, fires, and chemical releases can occur, resulting in injuries, fatalities, and extensive environmental damage. Additionally, these wastes can contaminate soil, water bodies, and air, posing long-term health risks to both humans and wildlife.

The presence of explosive and chemical waste in the environment requires careful management and remediation efforts to mitigate potential hazards and protect public safety.

To address the challenges associated with explosive and chemical waste, governments and regulatory agencies usually enforce strict regulations and guidelines for its handling, transportation, and disposal.

Proper management practices involve identifying, segregating, and securely storing these wastes to prevent accidental releases. Furthermore, recycling, treatment, and incineration technologies are utilized to neutralize or minimize the hazardous characteristics of these materials before their ultimate disposal. Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives also play a crucial role in promoting responsible waste management practices and reducing the environmental impact of explosive and chemical waste.

4.2. Usual Sites of Chemical and Explosive Waste and Origin

Abandoned chemical and explosive waste can occur through various mechanisms, often stemming from wartime activities, industrial accidents, or improper disposal practices.

During armed conflicts, military operations frequently result in the deployment and use of explosives, munitions, and chemical weapons.

When conflicts end or military bases are decommissioned, significant quantities of these materials may be left behind, either due to logistical challenges, oversight, or deliberate abandonment. Similarly, industrial accidents, such as chemical spills or explosions at manufacturing facilities, can lead to the release of hazardous materials into the environment,

creating abandoned waste sites.

Abandoned chemical and explosive waste resulting from wars or conflicts can be found in various locations around the world, particularly in regions with a history of military activity or armed conflicts. One good example is the aftermath of World War II, where unexploded ordnance and chemical weapons were left behind in many European countries, such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. These remnants of war continue to pose risks to civilians and the environment, requiring ongoing efforts for detection, removal, and safe disposal.
Similarly, conflicts in more recent decades, such as those in the Middle East, have left behind significant amounts of abandoned chemical and explosive waste. A few countries have experienced extensive contamination from abandoned munitions, landmines, and chemical weapons, resulting in civilian casualties and environmental degradation. The past of war in these regions underscores the urgent need to address the humanitarian and environmental consequences of abandoned military materials.

In addition to conflict zones, abandoned chemical and explosive waste can also be found in former military bases, training grounds, and storage facilities worldwide. Decommissioned sites may contain buried or improperly disposed of munitions, chemicals, and hazardous materials, posing risks to nearby communities and ecosystems. Effective management of these abandoned sites requires comprehensive surveys, risk assessments, and remediation strategies to mitigate potential hazards and ensure the safety of surrounding areas.

Moreover, inadequate waste management practices, including illegal dumping and lax regulations, contribute to the accumulation of abandoned chemical and explosive waste. In some cases, companies may choose to disregard environmental regulations to reduce costs, leading to the improper disposal of hazardous materials. Additionally, conflicts and political instability can disrupt waste management infrastructure and governance systems, making it difficult to enforce regulations and ensure proper handling of hazardous waste.
The existence of abandoned chemical and explosive waste is often a result of complex socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors. In conflict-affected regions, warfare and military operations create conditions conducive to the proliferation of hazardous materials, as armed groups may prioritize strategic objectives over environmental and humanitarian concerns.
Furthermore, the legacy of past conflicts and historical military activities can leave behind a legacy of contamination, as seen in areas where munitions and chemical weapons were used extensively during wars. Additionally, rapid industrialization and technological advancements have led to the production and use of a wide range of hazardous chemicals

and explosives, contributing to the accumulation of waste over time.

Addressing the root causes of abandoned chemical and explosive waste requires comprehensive strategies that address both immediate risks as well as underlying factors. This includes strengthening waste management systems, improving regulatory frameworks, enhancing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and promoting sustainable practices in industries and military operations.
Additionally, international cooperation and assistance are essential for supporting affected communities, providing technical expertise, and mobilizing resources to mitigate the environmental and humanitarian consequences of abandoned waste sites. By addressing the factors contributing to the existence of abandoned chemical and explosive waste, this year's UNEP committee at OLMUN can work towards preventing future contamination and safeguarding public health and the environment.

4.3. The Disadvantages and/or Dangers of Abandoned Chemical and Explosive Waste

The disadvantages of abandoned chemical and explosive waste are multifaceted and of enormous proportion in various sectors.
Firstly, these hazardous materials pose immediate risks to human health and safety, as well as to the surrounding environment. Exposure to toxic chemicals can lead to acute and chronic health effects, including respiratory problems, neurological disorders, and cancer.

Explosive waste, on the other hand, presents the constant threat of accidental detonation, resulting in injuries, fatalities, and property damage. Moreover, the presence of abandoned chemical and explosive waste can contaminate soil, water sources, and air, affecting ecosystems and wildlife and diminishing biodiversity.

Furthermore, abandoned chemical and explosive waste can impede socioeconomic development and recovery efforts in affected regions. Contaminated land may be rendered unusable for agriculture, residential, or industrial purposes, hindering local livelihoods and economic growth. The presence of unexploded ordnance and chemical hazards can also deter investment, tourism, and infrastructure development, perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability.
Additionally, the financial burden of managing and mitigating the risks associated with abandoned waste falls disproportionately on governments, humanitarian organizations, and local communities, diverting resources away from other pressing needs and priorities.

4.4. Dangers of Chemical and Explosive Waste for Human Health

Abandoned chemical and explosive waste is indeed harmful, posing significant risks to both human health and the environment. These hazardous materials can cause a range of adverse effects through various pathways of exposure.

Firstly, abandoned chemical waste often contains toxic substances such as heavy metals, solvents, pesticides, and industrial chemicals. When improperly managed or disposed of, these chemicals can leach into soil and groundwater, contaminating drinking water sources and agricultural land. Human exposure to these contaminants through ingestion, inhalation, or dermal contact can lead to acute and chronic health effects, including respiratory problems, neurological disorders, reproductive issues, and cancer.

Similarly, abandoned explosive waste presents immediate dangers due to the risk of accidental detonation. Unexploded ordnance and munitions left behind from conflicts or military activities can remain volatile and unstable for long periods, posing a threat to civilians, infrastructure, and wildlife. Accidental detonations can result in injuries, fatalities, and property damage.
Furthermore, the presence of abandoned chemical and explosive waste can degrade ecosystems and biodiversity. Contaminants released into the environment can harm plant and animal species, disrupt ecological processes, and contaminate food chains. This can have a cascading domino effect on the ecosystem's stability, leading to declines in biodiversity, habitat degradation, and loss of ecosystem services essential for human well-being.

In conclusion, abandoned chemical and explosive waste is harmful due to its potential to contaminate the environment, endanger human health, and disrupt ecosystems. Effective management and remediation efforts are essential to mitigate these risks and prevent further harm to communities and ecosystems affected by abandoned waste sites.

5. Measures Taken to Ensure the Proper Disposal of Chemical and Explosive Waste

Certain measures that have already been taken to ensure proper disposal of explosive and chemical waste include a combination of regulations, enforcement mechanisms, technological advancements, and international cooperation. A few of these measures are as follows:

- The UN has established a thorough framework for the disposal of remnants of war. For example in 2018, the UNEA recognizing 'the need for the swift identification, assessment and remediation of pollution in the areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism in order to protect human health and the environment', decided on a resolution stressing the importance of including local stakeholders in the information gathering process and more. (United Nations Environment Programme (2017) Resolution 3/1. Pollution Mitigation and Control in Areas affected by Armed Conflict or Terrorism - [UNEA Resolution UNEP/EA.3/Res.1]. Available at: https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/30792 (Accessed: 7 May 2024).
- The UN Mine Action Service UNMAS "ensures an effective, proactive and coordinated response to the problems of landmines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions. It assesses and monitors the threat posed by mines and unexploded ordnance on an ongoing basis and develops policies and standards."(https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/disarmament#:~:text=UNMAS%20ensures%20an%20effective%2C%20proactive,and%20develops%20policies%20and%20standards).
- The UN has eliminated the additional possibility of chemical warfare, thereby reducing dangerous chemical waste in the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993.
- Regulatory Frameworks: Governments have enacted laws and regulations that outline specific requirements for the handling, transportation, treatment, and disposal of explosive and chemical waste. These regulations set standards for waste management facilities and establish penalties for non-compliance.
- Waste Management Plans: Industries and organizations that produce explosive and chemical waste are often required to develop and implement waste management plans. These plans detail procedures for safe handling, storage, and disposal of waste materials, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Monitoring and Inspection: Regulatory agencies conduct regular inspections and monitoring of waste management facilities to verify compliance with regulations and standards. Inspections help identify potential violations and ensure corrective actions are taken.
- Technological Solutions: Advances in waste treatment technologies, such as high-temperature incineration, chemical neutralization, and bioremediation, enable the safe and efficient disposal of explosive and chemical waste while minimizing environmental impact.

By implementing measures like these, governments, industries, and communities are able to work together globally to ensure that the disposal of explosive and chemical

waste is carried out safely, responsibly, and in compliance with environmental regulations.

6. Further Research

6.1. General Information

It is absolutely crucial that this committee guide is not your only source of research! It is merely a starting point that gives you a broad overview over the issue at hand. Please do your own research, in particular about the position of the country you are representing!

Written UN documents about the guidelines of the disposal of chemical and explosive waste are very informative about general international policies as much as your own country's opinions. Try finding out what resolutions your country has supported, which policies have been implemented and in which committees concerning the topic your country is active in!

Looking through past treaties and guidelines are a great help in providing you with research evidence and a further view on the stance your country has on the given topic. The United Nations is a good way to start your research, as it has addressed the disposal of chemical and explosive waste in various documents and agreements, primarily focusing on ensuring safe and environmentally responsible practices. One significant document is the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which aims to minimize the generation and movement of hazardous wastes and ensure their environmentally sound management.

Additionally, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) targets the elimination or restriction of the production, use, and release of persistent organic pollutants, many of which are found in chemical waste. Furthermore, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has established guidelines for the safe handling and disposal of chemical and hazardous wastes generated by ships, particularly through the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). These documents provide guidelines and frameworks for the safe disposal of chemical and explosive waste.

6.2. Specific Information about Individual Countries

Finding specific information about guidelines for neglected explosive and chemical waste disposal in individual countries can vary based on their transparency and available resources.

However, here are some suggestions that could help with your research:

- Government Websites: Many governments provide information on environmental regulations and waste management guidelines on their official websites.
- Environmental Agencies: Contact or visit the websites of environmental agencies or ministries in the country of interest. They often oversee waste management policies and may publish detailed guidelines and regulations related to explosive and chemical waste disposal.
- International Organizations: Check the websites of international organizations such a the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or the World Health Organization (WHO). They may provide country-specific reports, assessments, or databases related to environmental regulations and waste management practices.
- Legal Databases: Some countries make their laws and regulations accessible throughonline legal databases.
- Consult Local Experts: Try reaching out to environmental consultants or NGOs working on environmental issues in the country of interest.

By conducting some of your research through these sources, you can gather information about the guidelines and regulations specific to neglected explosive and chemical waste disposal in individual countries.

7. Helpful Links

- https://www.unep.org
- https://www.iucn.org/news/world-commission-environmental-law/202101/a-new-framework-assisting-victims-toxic-remnants-war
- https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/20298/PERSPECTIVE%2024%2008.pdf?sequence=1&amp%3BisAllowed=
- https://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/publications/trends/trends_Chemicals_mining_transport_waste/ch4_waste_management.pdf
- https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/29611
- https://www.undrr.org/understanding-disaster-risk/terminology/hips/so0004
- https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/disarmament#:~:text=UNMAS%20ensures%20

an%20effective%2C%20proactive,and%20develops%20policies%20and%20standards.

- https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.46_CCW%20P-V.pdf
- https://www.olmun.org/uploads/2024/Downloads/RulesOfProcedure2024.pdf
- https://www.olmun.org/uploads/2024/Downloads/Handbook.pdf.


OLMUN 2024
23rd International
Session