

Committee: United Nations Environmental Programme

Country: Brazil

Topic: Droughts and fires: How to prevent, prepare for, and respond to extended episodes of uncharacteristically low precipitation and their associated increased fire risk

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Droughts and fires have become an increasing problem in today's world, with climate change playing a substantial role in this. Although climate change may not cause droughts, it exacerbates them, stressing the importance of addressing climate change in order to better tackle the issue of droughts and fires. There is also an increase in carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere due to biomass burning, portraying the cyclical nature of fires and the causes of climate change (O.C). Desertification and deforestation both contribute to less rainfall, thus increasing the likelihood of droughts. The impact of droughts is widespread, causing destruction of wildlife habitats, new diseases in wild animals, and erosion of soil that can lead to damaged crops (NDMC). They can also have detrimental impacts on human life, leading to instances of thirst, hunger, and disease. It is important to prevent, prepare for, and respond to droughts in order to minimize their effects, including their associated fire risks.

The United Nations has previously adopted actions and resolutions to address droughts and fires. Instituted in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was the sole legally-binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management (UNCCD). It mainly focused on drylands, home to valuable ecosystems and people. The United Nations General Assembly had also declared 2010 to 2020 as the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification, where all actors were called upon to raise awareness about land degradation, desertification, and droughts (United Nations). The United Nations also established a World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in order to promote public awareness of international efforts to address desertification and droughts, with a different theme every year (United Nations). These previous actions can be taken into consideration when determining different solutions for the problem of droughts and fires.

In order to prevent droughts from occurring, there needs to be action taken to address the issue of climate change, which, while outside the scope of this committee, is still important to take into consideration with policy plans. Brazil, home to the Amazon rain forest, is directly impacted by droughts and fires, with major droughts in 2005, 2008, and 2010, as well as the recent fires in 2019 (Bagley). The creation of the Extractive Reserves statutes, the Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest, and Ecological-Economic Zoning project have been implemented in Brazil to improve sustainable development and territorial planning in the Amazon, and similar programs can help preserve the Amazon Rainforest and its rich habitats (O.C). Brazil proposes a multi-faceted solution in order to address the issue of droughts and fires. It is important to collect and keep tabs on more data about factors such as atmospheric water, precipitation, and reservoir storage, and make that data publicly available. This allows for the assessment of areas which can help countries better prepare for predictable droughts. The utilization of technology satellite remote sensing can also be beneficial, as it allows for scientists to gain a better understanding of drought phenomenon within the scope of a cost efficient method (Wilhite). The importance of increased communication between scientists and policymakers should not be overlooked, as it allows for government initiatives to have a better understanding of the processes that can lead to droughts and fires. A drought plan should be implemented, with three primary components: monitoring or early warning, assessment of impact, and response. During times of shortages, it is important for the public to be informed of the changing conditions through an informed media source, which can help keep the situation under control, for which educational programs need to be implemented in order to have well-educated citizens of the country. Different initiatives to address

climate change should also be included in these plans, as preventative measures can often have more of an impact than allowing the droughts to happen and then responding to them.

Works Cited

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