

Rafael Saperstein
UNEP: Welcome Letter
YUNMUN XXXIV

Dear Delegates of UNEP,

Welcome to YUNMUN XXXIV!! My name is Rafael (Rafi) Saperstein, and I'm super excited to be your UNEP chair this year!

First, a bit about myself: I grew up in Brooklyn, New York and went to MTA for high school before spending a gap year in Israel learning at Yeshivat Har Etzion. It's now my third year in YU where I'm studying biology with a minor in music. This is my fifth year doing YUNMUN, ever since I started the YUNMUN journey as a sophomore in high school in IMO, followed by DISEC and WHO. Coming to YU and getting the opportunity to be a staff member on the Security Council last year has made for a great experience seeing all of the delegates have an awesome time while involving themselves in learning how the UN works, and I'm so excited for you all to experience that together this year!

Some of the history behind UNEP: In 1968, Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, addressed the degradation of the environment of our planet, declaring that "if current trends continue, life on Earth could be endangered." The first step that he took towards protecting life on Earth from the threat of environmental collapse was to establish UNEP, or United Nations Environment Programme, at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. Since then, UNEP has been a forum for all nations to come together and take steps towards ensuring a viable future for humanity with regards to the environment, signing conventions regarding ship pollution, endangered plant species, protecting migratory species, air pollution, and more. Further details about these conventions can be found on the UNEP 50th anniversary website.¹

¹<https://www.unep.org/environmental-moments-unep50-timeline#:~:text=Founded%20in%201972%20following%20the,to%20the%20world's%20environmental%20challenges.>

For YUNMUN XXXIV, we will focus on two of the most pressing issues relating to the environment facing the world today. One topic we will discuss is the rising damage that climate change is causing, specifically through the lens of deforestation. Every year, the devastating effects of deforestation contribute to the increasing pressure that climate change is exerting on the environment, with large-scale communication and cooperation by the international community required to solve this issue.

Secondly, we will discuss the availability of clean water. Millions of people die every year from a lack of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. The lack of clean water disproportionately impacts the poorest countries, resulting in a phenomenon termed “water inequality,” where water supply is cut off from those who need it the most. If UNEP cannot develop a new plan to address these issues, millions more will die in the coming years from a lack of clean drinking water.

While researching these topics in preparation for the conference, make sure to keep in mind that you are representing the views of your country in your statements. Additionally, make sure to cite sources that you use in your research, as all submitted papers will be run through Turn-It-In to check for plagiarism, which will not be tolerated.

I’m looking forward to hearing all of your ideas and having an awesome time at the conference! If you have any questions, comments, concerns, or just want to say hi, please feel free to email me at rsapers1@mail.yu.edu.

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Chair, UNEP
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