

# WESMUN 2021

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## SDG 13: CLIMATE MIGRATION

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CHAIR

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CO-CHAIR

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BACKGROUND GUIDE

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# Chair's Welcome

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Hello delegates,

My name is Zian Mistry and I'm delighted to serve as the chair of the SDG 13 Climate Migration Specialized Agency. I'm a first-year student at Huron University College (One of the three affiliate colleges at Western) and I'm currently enrolled in the philosophy/HBA program.

I still remember my first MUN, where I struggled to reach the podium, contradicted my foreign policy, and used informal language while addressing the committee. Even though I made a complete fool of myself, I thoroughly enjoyed the process and chose not to quit Model UN. Fast forward six years and I have served as the Secretary-General for my school's Model U.N. chaired five conferences and attended over 15 interschool, national and international Model U.N. conferences as a delegate. MUN has deepened my understanding of public policy and global affairs and has served as a means for developing essential soft skills such as problem solving, leadership, communication and teamwork. However, my favourite aspect of MUN is the ability to debate significant historical and contemporary issues and come to a consensus within two days with complete strangers that end up becoming our friends. I'm extremely excited to interact and learn from each and every one of you and I hope that we can have constructive discourse regarding climate migration, a topic that will tremendously affect all of us in the future.

I cannot determine whether our committee will pass a resolution or fail to do so as that is within the delegates' control. However, I can promise all of the delegates that my co-chair Victoria and I shall do our best to ensure that WESMUN is an extremely memorable and enriching experience, where delegates leave the conference with valuable insights, improved skills, and new friends.

All The Best,

Zian Malcolm Mistry

# Co-Chair's Welcome

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Hello delegates,

Welcome to WESMUN 2021 My name is Victoria Dai and I am proud to be one of your co-chairs for SDG 13 Climate Migration Specialized Agency. Before we begin with all the formalities, here is a little bit about myself. I am currently a first-year Psychology/HBA student at Western University and I am also part of the WMUN exec team.

In comparison to many other experienced MUNers, my MUN journey started rather late in Grade 11. Since then, I discovered a deep enthusiasm for the thrill of debating significant international topics in different committees. From participating in both local and international conferences, I quickly grew as a delegate. MUN gives me the opportunity to study global affairs, improving public speaking, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. The type of knowledge and skills I learned from MUN experiences are precious, and I hope you can also take away some from this conference. It is also a pleasure meeting like-minded people during conferences - so I am exceptionally excited to meet all of you!

This committee will be primarily focusing on one of the UN's SDGs - Climate Migration. As one of your co-chairs, I will be moderating the discussion throughout both days of the conferences. I look forward to an interesting and intense debate on this topic that is relevant to the entire human race. As a delegate in a Specialized Agency, you should be anticipating a smaller committee with a higher expectation in participation. Additionally, research is also essential. You will be expected to conduct additional research on both the topics and your delegation. However, please don't feel stressed! The chairs will be there to guide you through any difficulties. Since this is a novice committee, I hope you can have an enjoyable and memorable learning experience.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Zian or me. We are more than happy to help. Looking forward to an amazing WESMUN with all of you!

All the best,

Victoria Sichu Dai

## Introduction and Background

In 2015, all UN members committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals project that aims to improve living standards by 2030 through tackling complex socio-political and economic issues such as poverty, gender equality etc. Our committee will exclusively focus on how member states should work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Climate change is an extremely polarizing topic. A sustainable solution to such a complex topic can only be achieved through intergovernmental cooperation as it's a global and not a local crisis that could be addressed through individual government or regional bodies. However, the divisive nature of the topic along with the sheer amount of resources required makes it near impossible for governments to take coordinated and concrete action towards solving the issue. The main points of contention amongst governments is the timeframe within which action must be taken to prevent irreversible damage to our ecosystems and the extent to which developing countries should take responsibility towards shifting away from cheap fossil fuels to expensive alternative clean sources of energy.

The UN intergovernmental panel on climate changes (IPCC) reported that if nations fail to limit global warming-related increases in temperature to +1.5c within 12 years, even a half-degree rise in temperature could significantly increase the risk of a climate-related disaster such as droughts, floods, heatwaves etc. The global average temperature is 1.1c degrees above pre-industrial levels, hence, member nations are unlikely to achieve the Paris climate agreement goal of only a 1.5-2 increase in annual temperature. The fact that 2019 was the second hottest year on record and that new forecasts indicate that global temperatures are likely to increase by +3.2c is reflective of the failure to address the pressing issue. Additionally, member nations that committed to increased investments in renewable energy under the Kyoto Protocol haven't followed as data from 2018 indicated that nearly \$800 billion were invested in fossil fuels, while investments in renewable energy totalled \$650 billion.

However, in 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 6% and air quality improved significantly due to travel bans and economic slowdown. Although the reduction in emissions is temporary, delegates could rely on the progress made in 2020 to create systemic shifts that would make their economies greener and aligned with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Delegates are expected to research their countries' policies and past actions taken by their governments towards the issue as it will shape their stance and policy in committee. However, delegates are expected to cooperate as the committee is an intergovernmental organization that aims to pass a comprehensive resolution, which would serve as a framework for addressing current and future climate-related issues

## Background

The Scientific discovery of climate change first occurred in the nineteenth century, where ice ages, changes in paleoclimatology and the greenhouse gas effect was observed. However, climate change was viewed as a natural phenomenon that wasn't impacted by human behaviour and it wasn't considered a threat to humanity. In 1995, the Intergovernmental panel on climate change's Second Assessment Report concluded that the balance of evidence suggests "a discernible human influence" on the Earth's climate. This is the first formal recognition of the manner in which human behaviour serves as a catalyst for climate change.

The realization that human behaviour influenced climate change resulted in the United Nations Framework On Climate Change (UNFCC), a convention ratified by 197 nations that recognized the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As the name suggests, the UNFCC served as the framework for the international treaty signed by 192 nations, the Kyoto Protocol.

The Kyoto Protocol is based on the principles and provisions of the Convention and follows its annex-based structure. It only binds developed countries and places a heavier burden on them under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities", because it recognizes that they are largely responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere. The Kyoto Protocol sets binding emission reduction targets for 37 industrialized countries and economies in transition and the European Union. Overall, these targets add up to an average 5 percent emission reduction compared to 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008–2012 (the first commitment period). As mentioned earlier, the burden placed on developed countries is a significant point of contention and considered as a major drawback of the Kyoto Protocol. Stricter limitations are imposed on developed economies as it is assumed that they have higher greenhouse gas emissions. However, China is considered a developing economy according to multiple metrics but it has the highest greenhouse gas emissions. The underlying principle of the Kyoto Protocol is that countries responsible for creating the problem to a great extent should play a larger role in resolving it. In accordance with this principle, developing economies like India and China that rank within the top 3 for greenhouse gas emissions, should also bear an equally heavy burden. Developed economies often complain that they lose their competitive edge on the international market due to the stricter regulations that increase their costs of production while developing countries that earlier lacked a competitive advantage capture their market share.

Delegates should review the Kyoto protocol and other significant climate change-related agreements such as the Montreal Protocol and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Migration decisions are complex and are linked to multiple vulnerabilities, including changing ecological conditions precipitated by climate change, which is the main focus of the SDG-13.

In general, greater frequency and intensity of climate hazards are more likely to prompt people to migrate when the population is more vulnerable and has a lower capacity to adapt. There are various climate hazards to take into consideration, including both short-term and long-term risks. Some examples of short-term climate hazards include tornadoes, wildfires, droughts, and floods. These instant incidents are capable of destroying homes, properties, and income, causing the victims to move out of their original habitats. Long-term hazards include rising sea levels, long-term rainfalls, temperature rise, and ocean acidification. They are slow in their impacts, but can eventually force people out of their homes. On the aforementioned occasions, there is also the social vulnerability of the population to be examined. Social vulnerability is a function of the population's sociodemographic characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, race, education, and major livelihoods, as well as its access to financial and other capitals and adaptive capacity. Therefore, it is important to recognize the emigrated countries' both economic and environmental status, which may count as contributing factors to climate migration.

In this matter, research of countries can be separated into two categories: developed nations and developing nations. Research in developing countries found large linkages between climate change and migration as a form of adaptation. Hence, climate migration in these countries serves several purposes. First, migration to a more stable environment can reduce the family's exposure to climate hazards. Second, the migration of one or more individuals in a household can increase diversification in financial opportunities. If climate hazards do exist in their original hometown, this individual would be able to bring their family to a safe place. Third, returning migrants can bring skills and technologies back to rebuild their community, increasing their wealth and resilience to climate hazards. Overall, most of the research focus on climate migration has occurred in developing countries, but there is emerging work in developed countries. Scholars are interested in any possible retreat from more climate exposed regions, especially the coastal regions, in North America. These regions are more prone to climate hazards, such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and volcano eruptions. However, the research found that there is no evidence of any migration pattern out of those areas. On the contrary, at least in the United States, these areas generally have seen above-average population growth as so-called "amenity migrants" move to the coast and into the urban-wildland interface. Nevertheless, this situation may begin to change.

During the past few waves of climate migration, there had been several impacts worth noting. The first impact would be its effect on the immigrated country or region. In the first half of 2019, some 420,000 people entered Mexico without documentation, according to Mexico's National Migration Institute. Many floated across the Suchiate on boards tied atop large inner tubes, paying guides a couple of dollars for passage. In Ciudad Hidalgo, a border town outside Tapachula, migrants camped in the square and fought in the streets. According to the town's director of public security, Luis Martínez López, armed robberies in the town rose 45 percent; murders increased 15 percent. Although there is no clear evidence linking the crimes and the migrants, it caused riots between the local communities and the newcomers. Second, the health impacts and risks of climate-related migration are not yet fully examined by the international community, whether the migrants are facing planned relocation and forced displacement. Hence, this topic will also need further discussion in this committee.

## Introduction to the Topics

### *What is a Climate Migrant?*

Climate migrants are referred to as people forced to move from their homes due to climate stressors such as droughts, floods, and storms. Climate stressors make homes inhabitable, hence pressuring people to migrate to safer areas for a better livelihood. Although climate migrants are also called “climate refugees”, they are not legally considered as refugees. ‘Refugee’ is a legal term that has a very specific meaning centring on a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Art. 1, 1951 Refugee Convention). According to this convention, people leaving their countries for reasons related to climate stressors may not be considered refugees because the Convention does not recognize the environment as a persecuting agent. Currently, there are no reliable estimates of climate migrants around the world both today and in the future. On a large scale, countries with poor economics, vulnerable geographics and fragile ecosystems are the most likely to face climate migration. The majority of environmentally-induced migrants are likely to come from rural areas, as their livelihoods often depend on climate-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture and fishing. However, climate migration out of urban areas is also possible as sea-level rise affects the densely populated coastal areas.

### *Who should be responsible for their care/resettlement?*

The United Nations (UN) predicts that up to 250 million people might be displaced by climate change by the year 2050. Climate migration is and will be impacting the whole planet, raising the risk for hunger and conflicts. Therefore, it is important for the UN and this committee to discuss who should be responsible for the climate migrants. Research shows, only 10 countries or regions (China, the USA, European Union, India, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Canada) in this world are responsible for 69% of the world’s total carbon dioxide. This caused the less developed nations to carry the burden of the polluters in the form of climate-change impacts. As a result, most of the climate migrants come from less developed countries with a more fragile economy and environment. As delegates, you should also take moral responsibility into consideration. As climate change is a consequence of modern industrialization, there should be actions taken to compensate for the harm it caused.

### *How to face domestic ethno-nationalist pressures?*

This topic can be linked to anti-immigration and nationalistic movements in many countries. According to a 2019 paper from Tel Aviv University, the most significant factors in opposing immigration include economic competition, cultural competition, racial attitudes, and fear of crime. Every nation has its unique arguments on anti-immigration views. For example, some Canadians argue that immigration is unsustainable and puts pressure on resources such as further worsening the country’s current housing crisis. On the other hand, the Europeans’ main concern revolves around nationalism, cultural and economic conflicts, and the difference in religion. Delegates are required to research your delegation’s immigration policies, in addition to its national anti-immigration perspective.



## Committee Structure

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals in 2016. While both projects were committed towards improving living standards, the SDGs serve as a more extensive plan for development as it includes fields that weren't addressed in the MDGs such as gender equality, climate change and equitable access to healthcare and education.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is considered as the lead development agency of the UN. The agency has undertaken development projects across 170 countries and territories, its involvement in local projects and close work with governments make the organization a key player in aligning and implementing public policy in accordance with the SDGs. If our committee focused on the implementation of all 17 SDGs, then the committee could've been akin to a generalised assembly or may have even been the UNDP itself. However, our committee only focuses on SDG 13 only and tackling the question of climate migration.

Hence, our committee mirrors the features of a specialized agency. The UN maintains close working relationships with 15 international organizations that have been designated as "specialized agencies" of the UN, even though they are independent legal entities. Each specialized agency operates autonomously under the UN's umbrella, with its own governing body, procedural rules, membership, and funding mechanisms. These specialized agencies coordinate their work with the UN primarily through negotiated agreements. Disclaimer: The SDG-13 committee on climate migration isn't one of the 15 specialized agencies that work with the UN but our committee mirrors the characteristics of the 15 specialized agencies, which is why we can consider it as a specialized agency.

Although our committee is a specialized agency, delegates should expect to encounter a few crises through the course of the committee. Unlike a crisis committee, the frequency, pace and importance of crises will be far lower. The purpose of crises in our committee is to steer discussions in the right direction and to streamline discourse as well since climate migration is an extremely broad topic. Moreover, unlike a crisis committee, where individual delegates can resolve crises through private communiques or private directives, all crises in our specialized agency can only be resolved through working papers, directives and public communiques.

Individual delegates cannot influence the direction of committee through private directives and private communiques. The committee is an intergovernmental organisation that aims to solve a global problem that humanity faces, which is why coordinated action is the only acceptable means of solving an issue. All specialized agencies work with the United Nations through negotiated agreements and passed resolutions. Individual action undermines the proceedings of a specialized agency and lacks the scale of mobilization required to solve global problems.

As mentioned earlier, the committee will rely on paperwork to solve the crises and develop an extensive framework for solving climate migration-related issues. Delegates will write working papers based on topics discussed in the committee, these working papers will be voted upon and accordingly passed or failed by the committee. The working papers that are passed would serve as a framework for the final resolution that shall encompass passed working papers and solutions to significant topics discussed in committee. If the draft resolution passes, then the committee is considered a success as it would've drawn up concrete solutions that answer the question of climate migration. However, if the committee fails to pass a resolution, then the committee would technically have failed as there would be no agreed-upon resolution that would solve the question of climate migration.

## **PART 5**

# **Countries**

*Please Note: Delegates are expected to conduct in-depth research about their countries*

**USA**

**Canada**

**Russia**

**Saudi Arabia**

**China**

**India**

**UK**

**Germany**

**Mexico**

**South Korea**

**Japan**

**Afghanistan**

**Ethiopia**

**Philippines**

**Sudan**

**Bangladesh**

**Somalia**

**Australia**

**Rwanda**

**Kenya**

**Madagascar**

**Sri Lanka**

## Closing

We expect all delegates to come well prepared as we're looking forward to passionate speeches, constructive discourse, and creative solutions. Due to the ongoing pandemic, WESMUN will be conducted online this year on the 27th and 28th of February. The opening and closing ceremony will take place via Zoom, while committee sessions will be conducted over Discord. While we're aware that a virtual MUN does come with multiple obstacles and may not be as fulfilling as an in-person experience, we will be extremely accommodating when it comes to logistical issues and we are committed to making WESMUN an extremely valuable and memorable experience for our delegates.

# Research Links

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<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-climate-crisis-migration-and-refugees/>

<https://ehs.unu.edu/news/news/5-facts-on-climate-migrants.html>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5035111/>

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCCSM-10-2016-0149/full/html>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/only-2-countries-are-meeting-their-climate-pledges-heres-how-the-10-worst-could-improve>

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/SDO\\_BP\\_Swain.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/SDO_BP_Swain.pdf)

<https://www.iberdrola.com/environment/top-countries-most-affected-by-climate-change>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/6/130630-immigration-reform-world-refugees-asylum-canada-japan-australia-sweden-denmark-united-kingdom-undocumented-immigrants/#close>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S09593780110015>

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5753535/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/impacts-climate-change-drivers-migration#:~:text=In%20general%2C%20greater%20frequency%20and,%2D%20and%20slow%2Donset%20events.>