



**AIMSUN VI**  
**Background Guide**

**Committee: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

**Topic: Global Climate Reparations: Evaluating Responsibilities and Compensation from High- to Low-Income Nations**



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## Letter from Your Chairs

Esteemed delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Environment Programme committee at AIS MUN VI. We are honored to have you join us in addressing one of the most pressing issues of our world: Global Climate Reparations. As your chairs, we recognize that this topic connects environmental science, economic justice, and international law. The question of how high-income nations should compensate low-income nations for climate damages is not straightforward and has deeper ethical and political implications. Through UNEP, you will debate questions of responsibility, capacity, and equality and represent countries with vastly different perspectives. Some of you will advocate for countries facing threats from rising sea levels, while others will represent major emitters facing economic and political challenges regarding climate finance. Your challenge is to find common ground that maintains both justice and feasibility. We encourage you to engage deeply with the provided sources, understand the legal frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, and think creatively about funding strategies. Remember that successful diplomacy requires empathy, critical thinking, and the ability to build allies across divides. We look forward to strong debate, thoughtful resolutions, and innovative solutions that have the potential to influence real-world climate policy. This committee is your opportunity to shape the future of environmental justice. Best of luck in your preparations and debate.

Sincerely,

Liya and Eva, Your UNEP Chairs

## **Introduction to the UNEP**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental organization within the UN, established in 1972 following the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, UNEP was the first UN agency in the Global South, illustrating its commitment to addressing environmental challenges that disproportionately affect developing countries. UNEP's mission focuses on providing environmental leadership and encouraging partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and allowing nations to improve their quality of life without compromising future generations. The organization manages the international environmental agenda and encourages the implementation of sustainable development policies across the UN. Currently operating under its Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2025, UNEP focuses on helping member states address the “triple planetary crisis” of climate change, biodiversity, and pollution. This framework allows UNEP to address environmental challenges that require global responses, making it especially relevant for discussions on climate reparations. UNEP's governance structure includes the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), the world's highest-level environmental decision-making organization, where all 193 UN member states participate equally. This inclusive approach ensures both developed and developing nations have equal contributions in environmental policy making, creating an ideal way to address climate reparations issues that involve discussing global equity and justice. UNEP not only works towards policy development but also on capacity building and managing international environmental agreements. UNEP publishes reports such as the Admissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report, providing evidence-based analysis important for understanding the urgency of climate action. This makes UNEP able to consider various aspects of climate reparations, combining data analysis with ethical considerations for environmental justice.

## Key Terms

**UNEP:** United Nations Environment Programme

**Climate change:** “Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. The consequences of climate change now include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity.” (United Nations)

**Climate reparations:** “Climate reparations refer to compensation from the world’s largest emitters to developing countries bearing the worst and most disproportionate impacts of climate change.” (Global Witness)

**Climate justice:** As defined by the United Nations, climate justice is “the moral and ethical principle that seeks to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities and future generations.”

**High-income nations:** As defined by the World Bank, high-income nations are countries with high Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. Economies are highly developed, and high levels of human development are exhibited. Examples include the United States, France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and Australia.

**Low-income nations:** As defined by the World Bank, low-income nations are countries with low Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. Countries face extreme poverty and lack access to many resources and opportunities.

**Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** Includes 39 developing countries and 18 associate members of the UN regional commissions that are disproportionately affected by climate change, natural disasters, and economic volatility. This is all despite high contributions to global emissions, causing climate change.

## Topic Introduction

The climate crisis represents one of our biggest challenges, but its impacts do not affect everyone equally. While all countries contribute to and suffer from climate change, low-income nations face disproportionate impacts despite contributing the least to greenhouse gas emissions. Rising sea levels threaten to submerge entire islands, natural disasters destroy communities with limited resources to rebuild, and changing weather patterns affect food security in regions facing poverty. Meanwhile, high-income countries have both the economic and technological ability to adapt to climate impacts. This disparity raises questions about justice and responsibility. Should those who caused the problem face the consequences of addressing it? How do we understand the damages that go beyond economics, such as displacement, heritage, and biodiversity? The concept of climate reparations is based on the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” established in the 1992 UNFCCC, which acknowledges that all countries share responsibility for addressing climate change, developed nations hold greater responsibility due to their higher contributions to climate change. For decades, vulnerable countries have advocated for compensation. The 1991 proposal by the Alliance of Small Island States for an international insurance pool was blocked by developed countries, starting the 30 year resistance. Progress came at COP27 in 2022, when countries finally agreed to create a Loss and Damage Fund after ongoing pressure from developing countries. This fund officially launched at COP28 in 2023 as the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) with nearly \$700 in initial pledges, showing adaptation and mitigation alone cannot address all climate impacts. The fund was further developed at COP29 in 2024, with Ibrahima Cheikh Diong being appointed as Executive Director. Yet, many challenges remain unsolved due to inadequate funding. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been an advocate for climate justice, calling for funding

strategies such as taxes on fossil fuel companies to support climate reparations. UNEP's reports highlight the widening gap between climate finance needs and available resources, emphasizing the need for increasing support. This committee will address these important questions: How should climate reparations be structured? What system ensures both accountability and trust? Should financing be based on past emissions or current economic strength? And, most importantly, how can countries move from acknowledgement to action that provides real impact to the world's most vulnerable communities?

# Timeline of Key Events

## 1989: Malé Declaration

- A conference by the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in the Maldives
- The present threat of rising sea levels was highlighted and discussed

## 1991: "Loss and damage" proposal

- An international insurance pool to compensate vulnerable states for rising sea levels proposed by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
- The inclusion in the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) text blocked by developed countries

## 1992: UNFCCC

- “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities” (CBDR) is established
- Acknowledged that developed nations bear the largest share of historical emissions and therefore greater responsibility for addressing climate change.

## 2015: Paris Agreement

- An article on loss and damage is included in the Paris Agreement
- However, this article does not include or involve a basis for any liability or compensation

## 2022: COP27

- Parties agree to plan and create “Loss and Damage Fund” after decades of unmet demands from developing countries

- “Loss and Damage Fund” is a climate finance instrument that assists developing nations with climate-related disasters

#### 2023: COP28

- Official launch of the Loss and Damage Fund with almost \$700 million of initial pledges were made
- The World Bank was designated as the interim host
- Official name: Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)

#### 2024: COP29

- Fund is further operationalized
- Key agreements signed
- Ibrahima Cheikh Diong appointed as the Fund's Executive Director

## Key UN Suggestions and Actions

Predominantly through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN has played a key role in the debate on climate reparations. Below are key UN suggestions and actions regarding climate reparations, compensations, and responsibilities under the umbrella of “loss and damage”.

**Warsaw International Mechanism (2013):** Addressed loss and damage related to climate change, specifically those that cannot be combated or prevented through mitigation or adaptation. This conference did not include a finance mechanism, but laid a foundation for technical discussions.

**Paris Agreement (2015):** This conference acknowledged the importance of loss and damage and the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR), which refers to the law that all countries have a shared responsibility for combating global challenges like climate change, but that degree of responsibility varies depending on factors like historical contributions and national circumstances. This concept was originally defined in 1992 at the Earth Summit.

**Loss and Damage Fund (COP27, 2022):** In response to loss and damage, a dedicated fund was established, marking a historic breakthrough for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), who have long demanded such a fund. Discussions about the scale of funding, sources of finance, and governance models remain ongoing.

**UN Secretary-General’s Advocacy:** Secretaries-General like Antonio Guterres and Ban Ki-moon have been vocal advocates for climate justice and climate finance mechanisms. Guterres has called for taxes on fossil fuel companies to fund climate reparations and finance.

### **UNEP specific:**

- The Emissions Gap Report and the Adaptation Gap Report both emphasize the widening gap between needs and available resources when it comes to climate change prevention.
- Stresses for predictable, grant-based finance instead of loans, in addition to innovative financing mechanisms. Examples being carbon border taxes, levies on shipping and aviation, or fossil fuel subsidy redirection.
- Calls for greater inclusion of vulnerable communities in decision-making.

## Possible Solutions

Addressing global climate reparations requires a multifaceted approach that balances justice, feasibility, and effectiveness. Delegates should consider the following potential solutions based on existing frameworks.

### 1. Strengthening the Loss and Damage Fund

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage provides an existing infrastructure that can be expanded and improved by:

- a. The initial \$700 million pledged at COP28 isn't enough to address needs. Delegates should develop ways to obtain larger, sustainable contributions from high-income nations.
- b. As UNEP emphasizes, climate reparations should not increase debt of already vulnerable nations. The fund should prioritize grants over loans to avoid worsening dependence.

### 2. Innovative Funding Strategies

Other than government contributions, delegates should research alternative funding sources such as:

- a. Implementing fees on imports from countries with underdeveloped climate policies could incentivize emission reduction and generate revenue for reparations.
- b. Taxing fossil fuel companies could generate increased revenue while holding major contributors to emissions financially accountable
- c. Reinvesting the subsidies that support fossil fuel industries into climate funding could provide significant resources without needing to implement new taxation.

### 3. Increasing Participation

UNEP emphasizes the importance of including vulnerable communities in decision-making allowing for:

- a. Providing support to help developing countries track the impacts of climate change and implement solutions effectively
- b. Ensuring that SIDS and LDCs are involved in decision-making processes

Delegates should consider these approaches that address the diverse aspects of climate reparations while remaining socially and economically feasible.

## Guiding Questions/Sources to Use

- How should the Loss and Damage Fund be managed, and who should have decision-making power?
- What should climate reparations cover? Only economic losses or also non-economic losses like cultural heritage, displacement, and biodiversity loss?
- How should this system be structured so that high-income/developed countries accept responsibility?
- Should contributions to climate reparations be mainly based on responsibility (historical emissions) or capacity (current economic strength)?
- What new funding sources or mechanisms should be created?

### Sources to Use:

- Article 8 of Paris Agreement (2015) on loss and damage
- Decisions of Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (2013)
- Secretary Guterres' speeches at COP27 and COP28
- Annual UNEP reports (ex, Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report)
- [Official Website of Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage \(FRLD\)](#)
- [Fund for responding to Loss and Damage | UN](#)
- [UNEP Annual Report 2024](#)
- [COP29: Loss and Damage Fund fully operationalised](#)
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