

# UTMUN



## ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

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## A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UTMUN 2019, and to the Organization of American States! The dais and I are thrilled that you are taking part in this exciting experience and engaging in some of the most pressing matters facing the international community at this time.

My name is Emily Yu, and I will be your director for the OAS committee at UTMUN this year. I am currently a first year Political Science student at the University of Toronto, with several years of Model United Nations experience behind me since high school. Outside of MUN, I enjoy figure skating, as well as playing the ukulele in my residence.

Drawing from my own experiences as a delegate, I have personally encountered the difference between a lacklustre and stodgy committee, and alternatively, one that draws you in and provokes intriguing discourse among everyone. Knowing this, I hope to provide you with the latter, ensuring that you feel engaged and tethered to the meaningful discussion that will take place during this conference.

This year, the topics selected for OAS encompass urgent issues that are bound to have affected any nation in the Americas, whether it be due to its urgency or lasting effects as a result of deeply-rooted institutional neglect. As a premier forum for debate and political discussion, the OAS is a committee which seeks to promote sustainability, equality, and peace and security, whilst maintaining regional solidarity and integrity. Work with your peers to bring forward solutions that exemplify diplomacy, cooperation, and creativity, as well the goals of this organization.

On a final note, please keep in mind that this background guide is meant to be utilized as a stepping stone for your research, not a crutch. There are many facets we omit or gloss over due to generality and a considerable amount of information remains out there for you to discover. I encourage you to thoroughly conduct your own research regarding details or any relevant subtopics that may be specific to your country and its policies. In order for this committee to be successful and produce fruitful discussion, much of it relies on your ability to understand the topics and articulate the policies of the nations which you represent. If you have any questions at all concerning the topics, committee, or conference, feel free to contact me by email.

Best of luck to everyone in your research! I am looking forward to meeting all of you at UTMUN 2019 this coming February.

Sincerely,

Emily Yu  
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## TOPIC A: THE VENEZUELAN CRISIS

### INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela has maintained a grip of power over the Venezuelan state—first under President Hugo Chávez and currently via President Nicolás Maduro, who took over after Chávez died of cancer in 2013. Under Chávez, Venezuela experienced momentary prosperity. Initial economic policies were implemented with the goal of helping the poor, including the nationalization of companies or their assets, specializing the country in oil production, and instating price controls to make basic goods more affordable, although this resulted in businesses not being able to earn a profit for producing basic goods. Chávez remained popular among the lower class in Venezuela and the poverty rate decreased by 20% during his presidency.<sup>1</sup>

Hugo Chávez gradually transformed the country into an authoritarian regime, and Maduro followed in these footsteps. Chávez effectively took control of the Supreme Court, ended presidential term limits, and reduced civilian control over the military. Now, discontent from the public grows as Maduro freely jails journalists and opposition leaders, like Leopoldo López, whilst maintaining an iron fist over the press.<sup>2</sup> Journalists are faced with violence by federal security forces while attempting to cover and report on protests across the country. Many publications are in danger of closure due to the difficulty of meeting operational costs, whilst others endure robberies, vandalism, and hackings. Additionally, Maduro has increased government interference in private media, leading to employees being intimidated and threatened into publishing in accordance with the wishes of the government.<sup>3</sup>

Venezuela was once one of Latin America's richest countries. Originally, one could only exchange Bolivares, the Venezuelan currency, to U.S. dollars if there was a valid reason to buy dollars. This could occur if a person was importing goods, thus leading to a flourishing black market where Bolivares would be exchanged for U.S. dollars at a fraction of the official government exchange price. Likewise, people who could afford it would use the black market to pay higher prices for items that were unavailable in regular stores and supermarkets. The black market has led to a dual economy, giving those who have easier access to U.S. dollars a larger purchasing power than those who do not.

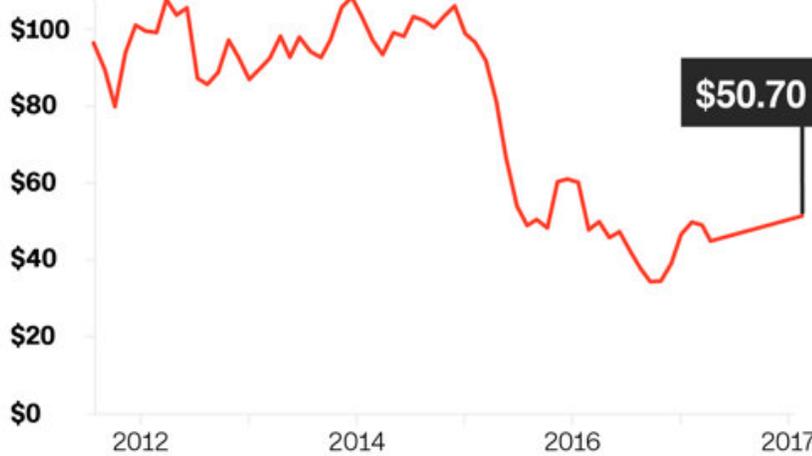
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<sup>1</sup> Danielle Renwick, "Venezuela in Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified March 23, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Laya, "Venezuela's Collapse," *Bloomberg*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/venezuela-price-revolution>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/venezuela>

### Crude oil prices over last 6 years



<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/21/americas/venezuela-crisis-explained/index.html>

In terms of natural resources, Venezuela is immeasurably rich in oil, holding the largest proven oil reserves in the world. Therefore, Venezuela has fully specialized in producing oil, and not much else. Its oil exports accounts for 95% of their export earnings,<sup>4</sup> and in return, they import other goods for their citizens. In 2014, oil prices plummeted and the country faced a shortfall in foreign currency, making it much more difficult to import necessary goods.<sup>5</sup> Critics blamed Chávez and the state-run oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), for the mismanagement, and many employees were arrested on charges of corruption and embezzlement.<sup>6</sup>

Recent protests began in January 2016, when the Supreme Court of Venezuela suspended the election of four legislators due to voting irregularities.<sup>7</sup> Out of the four legislators who were running, three of them were part of the opposition party. In defense, the legislators accused the court of attempting to strip them of their super-majority and swore in all three legislators. Moreover, the Supreme Court proceeded to supersede the National Assembly and Congress' legislative powers, thereby gaining the power to establish any and all decisions made in the name of the government. The court suspended a stay-or-go referendum against Maduro and postponed regional elections until 2017. They also prevented the state-run oil company from forming joint ventures with private companies.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ray Sanchez, "Venezuela: How paradise got lost," *CNN*, July 27, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/21/americas/venezuela-crisis-explained/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "Venezuela's crisis explained from the beginning," *Al Jazeera News*, last modified March 23, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/indepth/features/2017/04/venezuela-happening-170412114045595.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

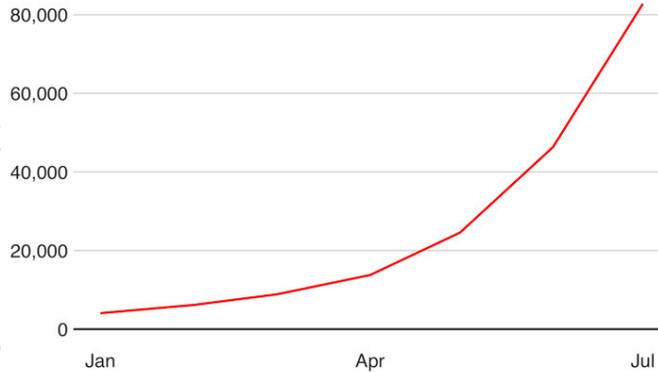
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

President Maduro recently won a new six-year term in an election widely seen as a fraudulent charade. Most of the opposition boycotted the election or were banned from going in to vote, and only 48% of Venezuelans turned out to vote.<sup>9</sup>

**THE ECONOMIC SITUATION**

**Venezuela inflation**

January-July 2018 (%)



[https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/736/cpsprodpb/330D/production/\\_103096031\\_inflation-nc.png](https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/736/cpsprodpb/330D/production/_103096031_inflation-nc.png)

Venezuela has been experiencing severe hyperinflation since 2014, where the quantity demanded of goods exceeds the available amount of goods supplied. This rapid inflation rate reached 83,000% in July 2018, due in large part to the depreciation of the currency, the Bolivar, on the black market.<sup>10</sup> Since then, prices have been doubling every 26 days on average, currently making \$1 US equivalent to 280,000 Bolivares.<sup>11</sup>

The bolivar was thus renamed the “sovereign bolivar” and it is tied with the new digital currency called the Petro in Venezuela, the first state-issued cryptocurrency. This cryptocurrency is backed by Venezuela’s oil reserves, which is approximately five billion barrels.<sup>12</sup> Each coin is said to be worth the price of a barrel of oil, and is supposed to help the country overcome U.S. and European sanctions. In turn, the U.S. government has responded by calling Petro a scam and forbidding Americans from purchasing it.<sup>13</sup>

**SOCIAL RAMIFICATIONS**

While Maduro’s government controls the market price of basic goods and services, the black market continues to hold significant economic power and the ability to influence prices. Due to

<sup>9</sup> Laya, “Venezuela’s Collapse.”

<sup>10</sup> “How Venezuela’s crisis developed and drove out millions of people,” *BBC*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Laya, “Venezuela’s Collapse.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

this, prices for products often change overnight, causing widespread and disastrous food shortages. Citizens wait in long lines for hours, travel to the borders to attain basic goods, or seek the opportunity to migrate. Venezuelans currently find empty shelves in supermarkets, and encounter water shortages and power cuts caused by a lack of investment in basic goods and services; they will continue to do so until the economy stabilizes.<sup>14</sup>



<https://www.csis.org/analysis/venezuelas-crisis-now-regional-humanitarian-disaster>

According to the United Nations, since 2014, more than 2.3 million Venezuelans have left the country, mostly to neighbouring Latin American countries, the United States, and Spain. The remaining citizens have been active protestors on the streets, resulting in deadly and brutal violence. Many citizens have been killed, harmed, or arrested during these demonstrations. Likewise, many journalists have been attacked, arrested or expelled from the country for expressing opposing views.

Crime and violence are at the highest it has ever been in the nation, with robberies and murders becoming common on the streets. Poverty has increased as well; more than 87% of the population does not earn a sufficient income necessary to buy food,<sup>15</sup> subsequently leading to more violence on the streets as citizens struggle to care for their families. In addition, this crisis has had a severe impact on medical care across the country; emergency equipment is

<sup>14</sup> Ben Chu, "Venezuela: How the most oil rich nation on earth was brought to the brink of collapse," *The Independent*, August, 18, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/venezuela-nicolas-maduro-economy-crisis-oil-prices-explained-history-hugo-chavez-a8494696.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Renwick, "Venezuela in Crisis."

often unavailable in public hospitals and the result is a number of preventable deaths in instances where patients could have been saved with proper attention and resources.<sup>16</sup>

## POLITICAL UNREST

When Chavéz died of cancer at the beginning of his third term in office, Maduro, the Vice President at the time, succeeded as interim president. A year later, Maduro clinched the special presidential election with 50.8% of the vote, narrowly defeating opposition candidate Henrique Capriles. Despite allegations of voting irregularities and a demand for a recount from Capriles, Maduro was sworn as president on April 19, 2013.<sup>17</sup> Government cohesion within Venezuela began to dissolve thereafter.

Chavez transformed Venezuela's political and economic landscape through staunch, socialist means: nationalizing industries and funneling copious amounts of government money into social programs. As a result, the unemployment rate reduced by half, income per capita doubled, the poverty rate fell by more than 50 per cent, infant mortality rates decreased, and access to education drastically improved. While Maduro has attempted to replicate this success by employing the same strategy, he has not been able to produce equally successful results.<sup>18</sup> The first protests began in February of 2014, with some demonstrations turning violent and at least three demonstrators dying amid the unrest. In the face of military mobilization and lack of support from the lower-class, demonstrations waned by May. When opposition leader Leopoldo López was convicted of conspiracy and murder, only limited protests occurred. Emboldened, Maduro's government continued to silence political opposition, incarcerating several high-profile critics in July of 2014.<sup>19</sup>

As Venezuela's economy collapsed, Maduro's popularity plummeted along with it, reaching a low of 20 per cent and dipping even lower for several years. By contrast, Chavez's approval ratings rarely fell below 50 per cent. In August 2016, the government approved a petition instigating a referendum on the question of recalling Maduro, yet this too was halted by Maduro two months afterwards. To further consolidate his powers, Maduro announced the implementation of an executive order on May 1, 2017, that would alter the constitution, thus allowing him to reinvent the legislature and solidify his executive powers.

Domestic opposition to Maduro's regime is rife, with the most notable being the Democratic Unity Roundtable coalition, represented by a range of parties along the political spectrum. As

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Casey, "Dying Infants and No Medicine: Inside Venezuela's Failing Hospitals," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/americas/dying-infants-and-no-medicine-inside-venezuelas-failing-hospitals.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "Venezuela Fast Facts," *CNN*, last modified September 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/05/28/world/americas/venezuela-fast-facts/index.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Zeeshan Aleem, "How Venezuela went from a rich democracy to a dictatorship on the brink of collapse," *Vox*, September 19, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>.

<sup>19</sup> "Venezuela Fast Facts."

these parties boycotted the last municipal elections to make a statement, President Maduro has concluded that these opposition parties are no longer part of the Venezuelan political landscape and are thus unable to participate in presidential elections.<sup>20</sup> In July of 2017, opposition lawmakers organized a non-binding referendum in which nearly 7.2 million voters participated in. The results of this referendum showed that more than 98 per cent of voters rejected Maduro's constitutional changes, but once again, the government condemned these actions as illegal and continued to rewrite the 1999 constitution.<sup>21</sup>

On July 30, 2017, The National Assembly was replaced with a new pro-Maduro legislative body called the National Constituent Assembly, in spite of the protests that have taken place. Thus far, this assembly has fired the Attorney-General investigating allegations of voter fraud. The interim Attorney-General sworn in is a known supporter of President Maduro.<sup>22</sup>

Protest movements led by anti-government activists and opposition leaders have been common occurrences in the country, with participation increasing in recent months due to an influx of citizens from poor neighborhoods that had previously supported Chavez. In response, Maduro has employed a number of authoritarian tactics, including sending the military into the streets to maintain order, resulting in the further escalation of violence.

## FOREIGN INTERVENTION

The U.S. has implemented sanctions on many current and former officials, including Supreme Court members and President Maduro, making him the fourth foreign leader to receive this penalty. Countries like Brazil, Canada and Chile refuse to recognize Maduro's government.<sup>4</sup> Washington has also proceeded to ban American citizens from purchasing Petro, Venezuela's cryptocurrency.<sup>23</sup>

Colombia, Chile, and other countries in Latin America have not offered much financial support to Venezuelan immigrants. The only international showcase of support was the Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region, that was held in Ecuador on September 2018. This declaration concluded with an 18-point declaration made by 11 countries from Latin America, agreeing that each of those 11 countries would cooperate and provide extra support for countries affected by the influx of migration, like Colombia.<sup>24</sup>

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recently released a report calling on countries in the Latin American region to find sustainable solutions to treat the population of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Renwick, "Venezuela in Crisis."

<sup>24</sup> Mick Bowen, "Venezuelan crisis poses economic risks to South America," *LatinFinance*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.latinfinance.com/daily-briefs/2018/6/29/venezuelan-crisis-poses-economic-risks-to-south-america>.

Venezuelans leaving the country. The report acknowledges that this request might place heavy burdens on certain impacted countries, which is why it requires further assistance from the overall international community.<sup>25</sup>

Mercosur, an economic and political bloc of many Latin American states, including Venezuela, suspended Venezuela in 2016. The Organization of the American States (OAS), suggested suspending Venezuela unless the government held fair elections. Venezuela withdrew from the OAS a month after the suggestion.

Given the depressing and essentially non-functioning state of the country, there have been growing calls for military intervention in order to reach an efficient resolution to the crisis—or at least to halt the dissolution of law and rampant crime. U.S. president Donald Trump and Florida senator, Marco Rubio, have voiced this suggestion, although the American government has yet to formally announce any surgical and strategic plans for intervention.<sup>26</sup> In September of 2018, Uruguayan diplomat and Secretary General to the OAS, Luis Almagro proposed the same inclination.<sup>27</sup> It is understandable, given the mounting calls for impactful action by the international community and the need to salvage a shipwrecked economy, poor living conditions, and an oppressive government. Despite the UN itself warning the crisis will be reaching a level akin to the Mediterranean exodus in years prior,<sup>28</sup> Latin America leaders and other scholars are staunchly opposed to the idea. In response to Almagro’s comments, ten Latin American countries with the addition of Canada, signed a statement on September 10, 2018, rejecting regime change through violent and combative means.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, there is the question of which nation’s troops would undertake the responsibility of carrying out such a task; which country would provide manpower, funds, and be willing to invade a country awash with several militias and no organized political opposition or alternative to instate afterwards.<sup>30</sup>

Venezuela still holds the support of a few allies, like Bolivia, Ecuador, and some Caribbean nations. Likewise, China is on good terms with Venezuela, as it has lent them more than \$60 billion since 2001 in order to handle their debt issue. Recently, Venezuela and Russia have created economic ties. Russia imports crude oil in exchange for them being Venezuela’s “lender of last resort”. Russia accounts for 13% of Venezuela’s oil export, while Venezuela still owes Russia more than \$3 billion.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Nathaniel P. Flannery, “Venezuela’s Economic Crisis Keeps Getting Worse,” *Forbes*, March 22, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2018/03/22/venezuelas-economic-crisis-worsens-in-2018/#298afe771f17>.

<sup>26</sup> “Military action is not the answer to Venezuela’s refugee crisis,” *The Financial Times*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/997498fa-ba82-11e8-8274-55b72926558f>.

<sup>27</sup> Jack Herrera, “As some call for military intervention in Venezuela, 10 Latin American countries reject regime change,” *The Pacific Standard*, September 17, 2018, <https://psmag.com/news/latin-american-countries-reject-regime-change-in-venezuela>.

<sup>28</sup> “Military action is not the answer.”

<sup>29</sup> Herrera, “10 Latin American countries reject regime change.”

<sup>30</sup> “Military action is not the answer.”

<sup>31</sup> Bowen, “Venezuelan crisis poses economic risks.”

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

If Maduro does not end his six-year term, it is likely that Venezuela could undergo a slow and steady economic recovery. The U.S. would have to lift its sanctions, and governments or the IMF would have to grant loans to restructure Venezuela's foreign debt. Likewise, lifting price controls that were set during Chávez's presidency will cause inflation in the short-term, but will cut in to public spending. Oil production would pick up due to the lifts on price controls, and Venezuela's exports and imports could increase again.

An economic recovery in Venezuela would significantly impact surrounding countries in Latin America. As oil exports from Venezuela flow across the region, many would gain from the added trade. However, those Venezuelans who migrated to foreign countries may choose to return home should an economic recovery occur, causing vacancies in foreign labour markets which could result in an economic slowdown for Venezuela's neighbours. Refugees and migrants are able to fill gaps in domestic labour markets, and if they return home then their former hosts may see reduced economic activity. On the other hand, a stable Venezuelan state open to transnational trade and investments would be a welcome partner, able to fill any potential gaps in other Latin American economies.

The United Nations has not formally taken a stance yet because of the divided house in the Security Council. China and Russia are still allies of Venezuela, and therefore there is little agreement occurring amongst Security Council members on the issue. Furthermore, the UN is still unsure if the level of violence occurring in Venezuela can be considered enough of a threat to international peace and security to warrant direct action on behalf of the UN Security Council.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of the Security Council's wavering inconsistency, there are other routes the UN can take to establish a crutch for fleeing refugees and the destabilizing country. Firstly, the UN High Commissioner of Refugees should officially designate Venezuela as a refugee crisis. This label will provide acknowledgement of the scale of the crisis, as well as raise public attention to the matter at hand, similar to the Syrian refugee crisis. Furthermore, refugees would be granted with international legal protection with this status and up to \$3 billion in aid per year, if the situation were to be compared with the financial assistance Syria gained.<sup>33</sup> In addition to legitimate recognition, the United Nations can act as a third-party observer to prevent conflict and corruption in electoral bodies, as well as to protect polling officials, workers, and voters from those seeking to influence or sway voting. This method is utilized in Mexico, where administration of elections falls to a permanent, non-partisan, and autonomous election management body called the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Venezuela's migration crisis: Is enough being done?," *BBC*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45546650>.

<sup>33</sup> "Military action is not the answer."

<sup>34</sup> "Electoral Management," ACE Project, <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/onePage>.

The international community should step up their role in funding and aid. To curb corruption, concerned countries should join Washington’s example in identifying officials who have offshored billions of dollars in stolen funds, and sanction them. Venezuela itself does not have to be the singular target, either—one can look towards pressuring Venezuela’s remaining allies such as China, a key business partner, and Cuba, who provides military intelligence.<sup>35</sup> There remains a multitude of solutions to consider, but all should be kept in mind with the goal of righting the country for the next decade, until it has sufficiently stabilized and its citizens feel safe again.



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<sup>35</sup> “Military action is not the answer.”

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Reflect on the nature of Venezuela's economic relationship with oil as a natural resource. Has it helped or hindered development? Should Venezuela look to diversify their economy? How?
2. What caused the fall in oil prices and why was Venezuela unable to sustain that fall and rise back to an equilibrium?
3. Can the government of Venezuela be considered an authoritarian regime? Why or why not?
4. How can the international community respond to the crisis at hand? What is the best way the international community can help innocent citizens, without directly supporting Maduro's regime?
5. Does immediate stabilization of the country take priority over long-term reconstruction?  
How would your nation approach this choice? What sacrifices would have to be made in choosing one over the other?
6. What is your country's stance on the possibility of a military intervention, either unilaterally or as part of a multinational task force? How would it feel if another nation decided to intervene in Venezuela and force a regime change?



## TOPIC B: MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS

### INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of Europeans and the colonization of its territory, the American continent has undergone dramatic changes that have shaped its cultures and helped form a multiethnic population. This vibrant diversity, however, came at the cost of indigenous lives and the rights of other minorities. The Americas have borne witness to a history of predominantly white and mestizo ethnic and cultural hegemony that has and continues to demand assimilation from the minorities it shares its spaces with. Similarly, this history has structuralized the ways in which American nations interact with one another, and have informed the migration patterns that become ever more evident in the later decades of our time.<sup>36</sup>

Across the American continent, different minorities have suffered for generations and continue to be subjected to poverty, violence, discrimination, lack of security, displacement and other instances of inequality due in great part, if not entirely, to their ethnic and racial background, sexual orientation, indigenous status, or migratory origin.<sup>37</sup> As the map of ethnic, cultural and social diversity in the Americas expands and shifts with the influence of progressive politics and cycles of migration,<sup>38</sup> it can be seen that the movements and the attainment of political power<sup>39</sup> by these minorities have taken long strides and achieved numerous successes in the promotion and recognition of their rights.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, it remains an ongoing mission with the specificities of each minority coming into play.

Each member of the OAS is bound by the OAS Charter, the 1948 American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, and multiple protocols and conventions specific to the maintenance of human rights<sup>41</sup>. In 2013, the OAS adopted the Inter-American Convention against Racism and all forms of Discrimination and Intolerance to address the promotion and protection of minority rights specifically—a treaty which has thus far been ratified only by the Uruguayan government.<sup>42</sup> The OAS has since adopted the American Declaration on the Rights of

<sup>36</sup> “Overview of Americas.” *Minority Rights Group International*. 19 June 2015.

<https://minorityrights.org/minorities/overview-of-americas/>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> “Promoting Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Rights in Latin America.” *Evidence and lessons from Latin America*. 20 May 2013. <http://ella.practicalaction.org/knowledge-guide/promoting-indigenous-and-ethnic-minority-rights-in-latin-america/>

<sup>40</sup> Encarnación, Omar G. “Latin America’s Rights Riddle.” *Foreign Policy*. 27 August 2018. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/27/latin-americas-rights-riddle/>

<sup>41</sup> “Protection of Minority Rights in the Inter-American Human Rights System.” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuideMinorities5en.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> “Inter-American Convention against Racism and all forms of Discrimination and Intolerance (A-69)” *Organization of American States*. 5 June 2013. [http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-69\\_discrimination\\_intolerance.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-69_discrimination_intolerance.asp)

Indigenous Peoples<sup>43</sup>, applicable to all member states. In terms of OAS bodies, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights “has made a number of important decisions that impact on the rights of minorities in the Americas” along with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights.<sup>44</sup> These two platforms are directly concerned with human rights and constitute part of the vanguard advocating for minority rights within the Americas.

## INDIGENOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

The plight of indigenous and ethnic minorities in the Americas emerged at the beginning of colonization and has remained a drawn-out, hushed issue since. Throughout history, indigenous minorities have suffered genocide, enslavement, and dispossession of their lands—even though in some cases they are the numerical majority, like in Bolivia, Guatemala, and Peru.<sup>45</sup> What’s more, whether they remain the majority or not, and despite most of them being recognized by the constitutions of the nations they inhabit, indigenous and ethnic minorities continue to face marginalisation. Despite the efforts of governments to recognize the needs and hardships of indigenous populations, they often fail to come up with appropriate strategies to deal with the issue.<sup>46</sup> In the Americas, the average minority lives on or under the line of poverty, and will often face lack of access to education and discrimination in employment, promoting a never-ending cycle of inequality.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, these minorities will usually find themselves being pressured into assimilating into urban society or threatened by parties interested in seizing their native lands.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that despite the many hardships faced by these communities, beginning in the 1990s, “a strong movement of indigenous peoples in the region seeking protection of land rights, cultural rights and self-determination [...] resulted in an awareness and acknowledgement of the existence of indigenous peoples and their concerns.”<sup>49</sup> Ever since, indigenous peoples have become increasingly more proactive in the organization of movements for the preservation of their land and ethnic identity, laying the foundations of a “more inclusive idea of citizenship based on a collective and ethnic identity that shares a common pre-colonial history, traditions and world view.”<sup>50</sup> Because of the scale of this political and social organization, it has garnered widespread local and international recognition. Still, better conditions for indigenous minorities have yet to be achieved. Under this notion, it will be important for delegates to analyze methods the indigenous community have previously utilized and the ways in which self-determination plays a role in their fight for equality.

<sup>43</sup> “American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” *Organization of American States*. 2016. <https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/DecAmIND.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> “Standards and Mechanisms of the Organization of American States (OAS)”

<sup>45</sup> “Overview of Americas.”

<sup>46</sup> “Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

<sup>47</sup> “Overview of Americas.”

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> “Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

<sup>50</sup> “Promoting Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Rights in Latin America.” p. 2

## AFRO-DESCENDANT MINORITIES

Virtually all afro-descended minorities in the Americas can be traced back to the slaves brought by colonizers from the African continent, forced to survive decades of exploitation and ultimately becoming part of the nations they inhabited after being set free.<sup>51</sup> This historical fact remains pertinent and intrinsic to afro-descendant identity,<sup>52</sup> weighing heavily even nowadays as these minorities continue to face discrimination, racism, and exclusion from society culturally, politically and economically.<sup>53</sup> Afro-descendant minorities compose about one third of the total population living in the American continent, and they constitute 50% of the population living in poverty.<sup>54</sup> This only serves to further illustrate the degree of exclusion they face, despite efforts from nations such as Colombia, Brazil, Honduras and Nicaragua to recognize land entitlements for this minority. Furthermore, the afro-descendant community remains largely invisible due to a lack of population data disaggregated by race; despite the abundant cultural contributions of afro-descendant minorities, this has not helped them in gaining political participation.<sup>55</sup> Racial profiling is a common occurrence as well, particularly in nations like the United States, where incarceration rates for afro-descendant minorities exceed the rest of the population.<sup>56</sup> For afro-descendant minorities, representation, land rights, and access to education and healthcare remain among the most important goals in the path to overcoming this disparaging socio-economic inequality.<sup>57</sup>

In order to help resolve the rampant discrimination faced by afro-descendant minorities in the Americas, many nations have started to implement policies involving the creation of institutions for representation, the collection of data, the possibility of access to employment and education, and the creation of institutions to combat against discrimination and racism.<sup>58</sup>

Nonetheless, it seems that afro-descendant minorities, more than ever, lack the tools necessary to build a foundation for sufficient and equal representation.

## LGBTQ+ PEOPLES

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) movement has made some remarkable and substantial strides in the last few decades. In Latin America, it has progressed at such a rapid pace that many see the region as a rising leader and example to follow in the LGBT

<sup>51</sup> “Overview of Americas.”

<sup>52</sup> “Promoting Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Rights in Latin America.” p. 9

<sup>53</sup> “Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> “Overview of Americas.”

<sup>57</sup> “Promoting Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Rights in Latin America.” p. 9

<sup>58</sup> “Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

Rights Movement.<sup>59</sup> Argentina, in particular, has been at the forefront in the LGBT movement since its legalization of same-sex marriage in 2010. Other Latin American nations such as Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, as well as a few states in Mexico did not take long to follow suit.<sup>60</sup> Argentina has since also adopted progressive transgender laws, allowing transgender individuals to correct their sex on legal documents without a psychiatric evaluation or gender reassignment surgery. This has been made possible due to Argentina's success in separating the affairs of the Church from the affairs of the State, and other Latin American nations who have ruled in favour of same-sex marriage seem to have accomplished this as well.<sup>61</sup> There also appears to be significant associations between levels of economic development, which consequently reflect literacy and access to education, and the acceptability of same-sex marriage. Indeed, it seems that countries like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, which score low on the development index, seem more reluctant to adopt same-sex marriage laws anytime soon.<sup>62</sup> Regardless, most Latin American nations have eliminated all laws criminalizing homosexuality and a majority have enacted laws that prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation as well.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the numerous victories for LGBT rights in Latin America, violence against this minority continues to be perpetrated, particularly against transgender men and women. A 2015 study reported around 600 LGBT murders across Latin America spanning from January 2013 to March 2014.<sup>64</sup> In El Salvador, there were at least 38 hate crimes perpetrated against LGBT people in the last year alone.<sup>65</sup> The fight for the very right to exist and be recognized by the state still remains a prevalent issue for a number of LGBT communities.

## MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Migration undoubtedly configures a large portion of the ethnic diversity visible on the American continent. As violence and poverty persists in certain regions, it seems that immigration and the rights of immigrants will continue to be of relevance. Immigrant minorities are especially vulnerable, as they are often displaced from their homeland while escaping political persecution, poverty and violence.<sup>66</sup> Upon arrival, they become victims of racial discrimination, with undocumented immigrants being even more susceptible to harassment and the threat of deportation.<sup>67</sup> In the current political climate, there are two specific instances of displacement that seem to be pertinent for discussion: the migrant caravan of Hondurans heading to the

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<sup>59</sup> Brigida, Anna-Catherine. "Latin America has become an unlikely leader in LGBT rights." Quartz. 6 June 2018. <https://qz.com/1288320/despite-its-catholic-roots-latin-america-has-become-an-unlikely-lgbt-rights/>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Encarnación, Omar G. "Latin America's Rights Riddle."

<sup>64</sup> Brigida, Anna-Catherine. "Latin America has become an unlikely leader in LGBT rights."

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Overview of Americas."

<sup>67</sup> "Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean."

United States, and the diaspora of Venezuelan citizens into Colombia and other Latin American regions.

In the first instance, internal violence and poverty rampant in Honduras incited a large group of Honduran citizens to leave their home country in search for better living conditions in the United States, despite the countless dangers they would face along the way. Regardless of efforts by both Mexican and American governments to deter Central-American migrants from entering the U.S., the situation faced by the Hondurans was critical enough for some to make the decision to migrate through Mexico, seeking asylum in the States.<sup>68</sup> Mexican authorities have been reported to detain asylum-seeking immigrants for extended periods of time, and have been suspected of torture and the disappearance of many of the Central-American migrants as well.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, when taking into account the involvement of criminal organizations in the immigration missions carried out, it can be asserted that this is such dangerous journeys put an already susceptible minority in an even more vulnerable situation.<sup>70</sup> As the situation develops, it is crucial to think about how this situation should be dealt with by both the Mexican and American governments, as well as by the international community and other states on the continent.

The second example, the Venezuelan exodus, began early during the government of President Nicolás Maduro. As time passed and the situation grew more dire, countless men and women continued to cross the border to Colombia in search for jobs and improved living conditions.<sup>71</sup> While the majority of migrants were reported to be men of working age, more vulnerable demographics have been reported to migrate, such as pregnant women seeking access to healthcare.<sup>72</sup> Despite the efforts of hospitals, helpers, and authorities on the Colombian side of the border in helping Venezuelan refugees, Colombia has begun to observe some of the first effects of migration, with the resurgence of measles and increasing debt from hospitals.<sup>73</sup> What measures will Colombia and the international community take in order to respond to the humanitarian crisis emerging within its borders, while simultaneously protecting its own population? How can these models be applied to other states facing similar issues with refugee populations and economic migrants escaping volatile conditions at home?

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<sup>68</sup> Lind, Dara. "The migrant caravan, explained." Vox. 25 October 2018.

<https://www.vox.com/2018/10/24/18010340/caravan-trump-border-honduras-mexico>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Arsenault, Adrienne, and Gagnon, Michelle. "Leaving Venezuela: How Colombia is shouldering a migration crisis." CBC in Colombia. 20 September 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/cbc-in-colombia-venezuela-migration-1.4827124>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does your country engage with specific minority rights? What is the overall outlook for minority rights in your country?
2. What is the historical relationship between your country and indigenous, Afro-descendant, LGBT and immigrant communities? What policies has your country enacted regarding each of these minorities' rights?
3. How should the OAS address the specific nuances regarding a particular minority rights group's demands?
4. How does your country's outlook on specific minority rights seem to be influenced by other institutions, whether cultural or social?
5. How has the way in which your country engages with specific minority rights influence other nations' engagement with these rights?
6. How does your countries' policies in regard to certain minority rights influence other minorities?



## TOPIC C: CONSERVATIONISM

### INTRODUCTION

The nature of environmental conservation is a complex and difficult problem at heart, posing issues and risks on a scale like no other. It encompasses numerous different areas, such as sustainability, climate change, and deforestation, and thus requires a strong basis of cooperation and communication in order to be efficiently tackled. Because it possesses such far-reaching impacts, where greenhouse gas emissions from one country's territory can be transferred to another within a matter of weeks, no geographical sphere is left unaffected.<sup>74</sup> On the global stage, nations have discussed how responsibilities should be divided and who should bear the burden of mitigating environmental damage. Some parties state that responsibilities should be equally distributed, whilst others argue that certain countries should bear a heavier load of the burdens involved in curbing environmental damage.

In particular, the debate on conservation strongly impacts Latin America—a continent largely based on agriculture, composed of developing economies, and rich in natural resources, wildlife, and forests. Because many Latin American countries belong to the Global South, a concept used to describe and categorize nations that are developed or underdeveloped, they are even more sensitive to the effects of climate change.<sup>75</sup> Many of these countries' economies are largely based on agriculture, fishing, cattle, and other activities that are reliant on natural resources and the environment. As the continent watches these issues unravel, the complex intricacies of how to achieve real sustainability are continuously exposed.

### DEFORESTATION AND BIODIVERSITY

The advancement of deforestation has raised critical concerns in Latin America. When analyzing the decline of forested area around the globe, studies have found that Latin America has suffered the brunt, with an average deforestation index of 9% on the continent, compared to 5.2% on the planet as a whole.<sup>76</sup> Removing forest cover leads to irreparable damages for the local environment, and threatens the preservation of many regional species. It also has a direct effect on climate, farming, fishing, and access to resources. In addition, deforestation precipitates issues that have severe consequences for its inhabitants, as many Latin American communities rely on rural activities to earn their livelihood.<sup>77</sup> The loss of tropical forest has

<sup>74</sup> Will Steffen, "A Truly Diabolical and Complex Problem," *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (August 2011).

<sup>75</sup> Sivan Kartha, "Discourses of the Global South," *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (August 2011): 504-50, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566600.003.0034.

<sup>76</sup> Rhys Manners and Consuelo Varela-Ortega, "Analysing Latin American and Caribbean forest vulnerability from socio-economic factors," *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences* 14, no. 1 (October 2017): 119, DOI: 10.1080/1943815X.2017.1400981.

<sup>77</sup> Arild Angelsen and David Kaimowitz, "Rethinking the Causes of Deforestation: Lessons from Economic Models," *The World Bank Research Observer* 14, no. 1 (February 1999): 73-98.

already altered numerous Latin American ecosystems. Firstly, it has a direct impact on bodies of water in the tropics, where it can cause flooding. Moreover, the removal of forest cover can lead to soil degradation and siltation, which is characterized as the process by which bodies of water become contaminated with mineral particles from the soil. This in turn causes the loss of marine life and of the wetlands, and affects fish migratory patterns.<sup>78</sup>

In 2017, the New York Times published an article on an environmental report from Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research. It outlined how the Amazon rainforest, known to be the largest on the planet, saw a 29% increase in deforestation within two years alone, from 1.2 million acres in 2015 to two million in 2017.<sup>79</sup> In Bolivia, an average of up to 865,000 acres of Bolivian land is deforested every year. This number has been steadily increasing with time: from 366,000 acres annually between 1990 to 2000, to at least 667,000 acres every year since the 2000s.<sup>80</sup>

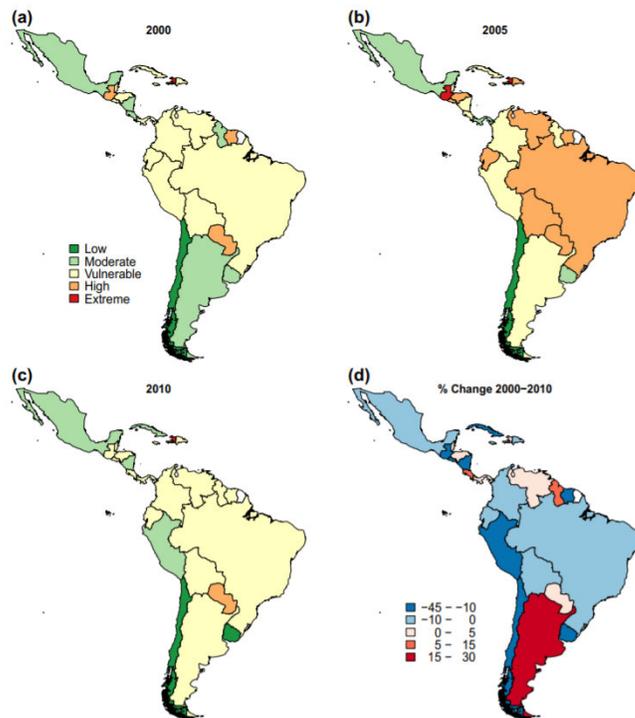


Figure 1: Deforestation Vulnerability Index (DVI) results for Latin American and Caribbean countries; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1943815X.2017.1400981>

<sup>78</sup> Rolando Wee, “What Is Silt, And How Does it Impact the Environment?,” worldatlas, last modified April 25, 2017, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-silt-and-how-does-it-impact-the-environment.html>.

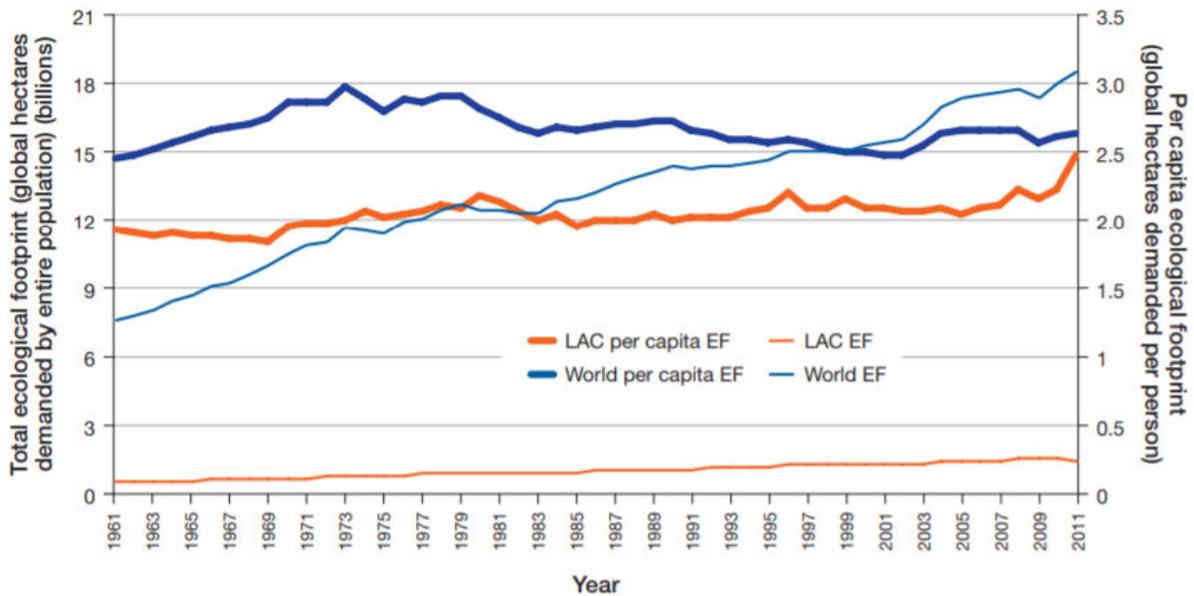
<sup>79</sup> Hiroko Tabuchi, Claire Rigby, and Jeremy White, “Amazon Deforestation, Once Tamed, Comes Roaring Back,” *The New York Times*, February 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/business/energy-environment/deforestation-brazil-bolivia-south-america.html>.

<sup>80</sup> Tabuchi et al., “Amazon Deforestation.”

In essence, the preservation of Latin American forests and their biodiversity is a pressing issue that requires strong action. Alerts have been made about the past destruction that forests have encountered, but projections also indicate that even higher areas of damage are to come. Although there exists a general consensus that deforestation causes irreparable damages to wildlife, bodies of water, and ecosystems, there is still wide debate on both domestic and international fronts regarding how the issue should be addressed and who should bear responsibility.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

As Latin America is primarily composed of developing nations, the debate on conservation is largely focused on the extent to which promoting conservationism will affect economies. Consequently, the concept of green economies and sustainable development has come to the spotlight on the domestic stage. The overarching issue at hand is striking an equilibrium between industrial activity and the environment. Much of the debate on sustainable development in Latin America is centered around how to fuel economic progress, whilst still maintaining a reduction of its ecological footprint. The term ‘ecological footprint per capita’ is defined as an index that “reflects the goods and services used by an average person in the region, and the efficiency of the resources used to provide those good and services”.<sup>81</sup> A smaller ecological footprint not only means a lower environmental impact, but also a more productive output for every unit of resource used.



Latin America; <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo4/outlook-grulac-en.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “The State of Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean,” May 2016, <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo4/outlook-grulac-en.pdf>.

Sustainable development is also under fervent discussion within the international community. Compared to the domestic stage, it entails equity issues on how the burden of mitigating global warming and deforestation should be distributed. Different countries are affected by environmental changes in different ways, with some inarguably being forced to withstand much stronger impacts. Latin America's Amazon Rainforest, for instance, is projected to face increased threats due to climate change, with its biome significantly transitioning into that of a Savanna.<sup>82</sup> This upheaval will harm a large portion of its wildlife, as well as affect its underground bodies of water, the Amazon River, and the soil on which the rainforest stands.

Latin America's economy will inevitably destabilize from these environmental changes. Current projects being implemented in many of the continent's economies, such as export-oriented farming developments, are strongly based on agriculture and extractivism. Unfortunately, both of these foundations are climate-sensitive. Development programs for many Latin American countries have been carried out with the idea of "extractivism to get out of extractivism", which means the investment of primary-resource exports to attain the money necessary in order to spearhead national industrial projects.<sup>83</sup> Since the foundations of these aforementioned economies are so strongly based on resource-centered activities, balancing domestic development with the needs of the environment has become a sensitive issue. While the economic advances in Latin America have put forward a new horizon for development and prosperity, much of the progress that has taken place at the expense of preserving the continent's fauna and flora. The question remains: can economic progress and environmental protection in Latin America go hand in hand?

## THE DEBATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The debate on climate change is complex and pressing, leaving much of the international community divided. Now, the overarching question at hand is how to distribute the task of curbing climate change. Some communities believe that responsibilities should be divided equally. This is argued on the principle that all nations inhabit earth, and subsequently all of them should cooperate to preserve its resources. Proponents of this argument contend that a solution to climate change should be pragmatic and facilitate compromise, and that differentiating responsibilities hinders effective cooperation. On the other hand, other nations state that action should be centered around the "common but differentiated principle", in which all nations promote conservation, but with differing responsibilities on a basis of capabilities, development conditions, and historic actions.<sup>84</sup> This argument is formed from the principle that some nations, in the course of their own industrialization, have historically emitted more carbon and damaged the environment to a greater extent - such as the United

<sup>82</sup> Steffen, "A Truly Complex and Diabolical Policy Problem," 25.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Tilzey, "Neo-Extractivism, Populism, and the Agrarian Question in Bolivia and Ecuador," *BICAS Working Papers 2017*, no. 4 (October 2017): 641.

<sup>84</sup> Paul G. Harris, "Reconceptualizing Global Governance," *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (August 2011), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566600.003.0043.

States and Europe. Although all countries should contribute to climate action, some believe that the nations that have reaped the most benefits from polluting should bear most of the costs when countering environmental damage.

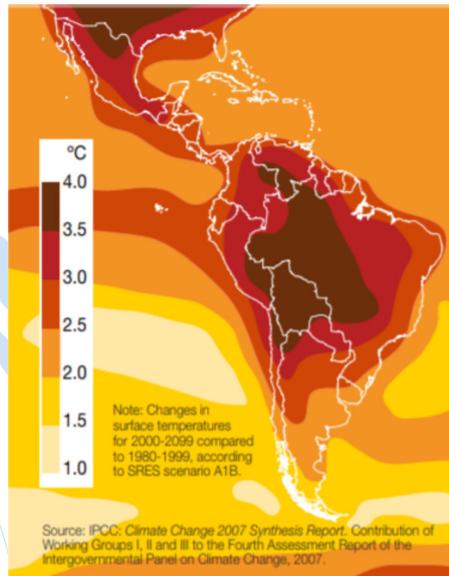


Figure 3: Warming of the Earth's Surface; <http://www.grida.no/publications/211>

In addition, the protection of small island states is an important topic to address within international discourse. Because they are surrounded by water and are low-lying, they are highly vulnerable to rising sea levels. Most island states have already experienced changes in their climate system, underlining the need for fast and effective action.<sup>85</sup> Without the assistance of other nations, it is unlikely they will be able to react with enough competence to halt the situation altogether.

Within Latin America, countries are at a crossroads on how to deal with the issue. One the one hand, the need to fuel economic growth and prosperity is crucial, but this industrial and agricultural activity comes at the cost of increased carbon emissions. Throughout the late 20th century and early 21st century, many of the large nations in Latin America underwent a left-wing movement named ‘the pink tide’, with the purpose of using the continent’s abundant resources in order to supply the widespread need for growth, employment, and development. With President Evo Morales in Bolivia, Lula in Brazil, Chavez in Venezuela, and Kirchner in Argentina, the pink tide soon gained momentum and space within the continent’s fervent political arena. This movement took place during the 1990s and early 2000s. Because political governance and policy centered around extractivism and agriculture were foundations for economic progress, countries such as Venezuela and Brazil have been shown to rely on constant agricultural and petroleum exports and struggle with their economies’ overdependence on raw materials and the continuous need for more resources.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Steffen, “A Truly Complex and Diabolical Policy Problem,” 24.

<sup>86</sup> Tilzey, “Neo-Extractivism in Bolivia and Ecuador.”

## Emissions by sector (CO2 equivalent)

Average 1990 - 2016

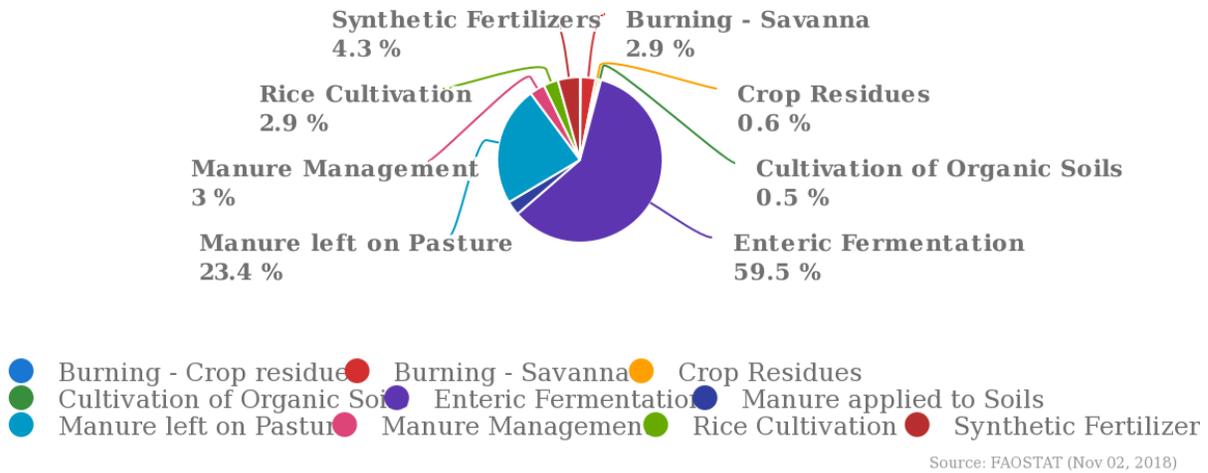


Figure 4: Carbon Emissions in Venezuela (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization); <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/236>

The debate on climate change will only continue to intensify with drawn-out disagreement among the political community. Despite these disagreements, there is consensus that a compromise must be reached as urgently as possible to curb the threat of climate change, and to stop further damage not only in the coming decade, but also for many future generations to come.

### PAST INITIATIVES AND FUTURE RESPONSES

Although forestry legislation began during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in countries such as Mexico (1909), Guatemala (1921), and Belize (1929), it was not strongly consolidated and considered by governments until the late half of the century.<sup>87</sup> Action on the issue of climate change is even more recent, and its outcomes are in many ways uncharted territory. The first major organizations and conferences—such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—were only established during the late 1980s. Since then, the global community has united to create responses such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1994), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the Copenhagen Accord (2009), and the Paris Agreement (2015). However, the success of these agreements in mitigating climate change has been controversial.

Presently, we can see that perspectives are divided between those that believe that responses should be equal between countries, and others that posit some nations should carry greater responsibility in regards to conservation. The varying degrees and ways in which environmental

<sup>87</sup> World Conservation Monitoring Centre, *Assessing the conservation status of the world's tropical forest. Part 1: subregional reviews, tropical Latin America (Sections 11-13)*, (1992), 430.

damage affects regions also showcases how equity issues are inherent to the discussion of conservation within the international community.<sup>88</sup> Preserving the environment poses the challenge of creating resolutions that are effective and binding. Commitment and accountability are especially hard to foster with so many players involved, and may face the danger of not being fully put into domestic practice, as has previously occurred with accords such as the Kyoto Protocol. Any proposed solutions will have to take into account the ability and political will of the individual member-states of the OAS to take on the myriad issues of conservation facing the Americas.



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<sup>88</sup> Steffen, “A Truly Complex and Diabolical Policy Problem,” 24

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How should the international community strike a balance between industrial development and conservation? Should all parties contribute equally, or should some countries take up more responsibility? Why?
2. How does the topic of conservation within the Organization of American States relate to other international organizations? How is problem-solving in OAS similar to them? How is it different? You may find it relevant to look into organizations such as United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), the Center for Sustainable Economy (CSE), the World Bank, as well as various domestic ministries in Latin American countries.
3. How has your country addressed the issue of conservation in the past? What were the results? What are its current views? Is there a general pattern in foreign policy when it comes to environmental matters?
4. What resources, skills, background, or knowledge could your delegation offer to assist in resolutions for conservation? This can include funds, organizations, ideas, as well as many other kinds of aid.
5. When designing policy, it is important to take into consideration the specific conditions of each case. How should initiatives to conserve biomes in Latin America be similar to responses carried out in the rest of the world? How should they be different?
6. How do distinctions between Latin American countries affect international policy-making? Are there any patterns of groups or coalitions that tend to form? What characteristics determine them?

## ADVICE FOR RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

*Step 1: Background research.* Start off with a rudimentary and general exploration of the topic—a good resource is this background guide! It will give you an overview of the situation, as well as any necessary history you might need to know before delving into the current state of the issue. Another gateway to comprehending the topics found within this guide are the Key Resources listed below. Compiled by topic are a number of resources that highlight key points or provide an overarching summary to assist you in further familiarizing yourself with the subject matter. After this, I recommend beginning your Google searches or starting at the UN website at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org). On this site, you will find helpful links to UN documents and resolutions, committee homepages, and more.

*Step 2: Country research.* One of the most critical determinations of your success during committee is your understanding of your country and its current platforms. The more knowledge you have of the state you represent, the better you will be able to accurately formulate your country's opinions and stances regarding the topics at hand. Country research should include investigating the political and economic systems of your country; resources, whether it be an industry, money, or influence; demographics; prominent political, social, or economic issues; international policy; notable allied or adversary countries; and international and regional organizations you partake in. Although this should give you a solid basis of your country's policy, each country will differ and I encourage you to research what is necessary at your discretion.

*Step 3: Topic research.* Admittedly one of the most daunting tasks in your research, topic research will form the bulk of your knowledge and what you can deliver both verbally and in resolutions during committee session. Instead of approaching it all at once, I highly recommend you break it down. A straightforward way is to think of it as if you are brainstorming topics you would propose as moderated caucuses during the committee, or simply just breaking the topic down into subtopics. Can this topic be broken down into categories? Perhaps it can be characterized politically, socially, economically, or even geographically. What do you think your country would find relevant to discuss? By creating a list of subtopics and researching those specific categories, your research will become exponentially more detailed and specific.

*Step 4: Foreign policy.* Now that you have accomplished the above steps, what remains is to become familiar with your country's stance on the issues you plan to discuss in committee. Recognizing previous international involvement and noting any past statements made by government officials will provide a solid basis of your country's foreign policy. If you find it difficult or near impossible to find a resource that even hints at your country's stance at an issue, there are roundabout ways to formulate a plausible opinion. Research the policies of allies, see if there are any issues similar to the topic that your country has previously addressed. If all else fails, employ some creativity and apply the knowledge you have garnered

from every other aspect of your research to reach a reasonable and appropriate conclusion on your country's foreign policy.

### TOPIC A KEY RESOURCES

Renwick, Danielle. "Venezuela in Crisis." Council on Foreign Relations. Last modified March 23, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>.

*If you're looking for a broad overview of events that have occurred during this crisis, look no further. This site also incorporates a helpful timeline of Hugo Chavez's rise to power and impacts of his presidency.*

"Venezuela's crisis explained from the beginning." Al Jazeera News. Last modified March 23, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/indepth/features/2017/04/venezuela-happening-170412114045595.html>.

*Another great stepping stone, this article will catch you with latest developments and outline some of the major problems the country is presently facing.*

Shifter, Michael. "Venezuela's Meltdown Continues." *Foreign Affairs*, March 10, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/venezuela/2016-03-10/venezuelas-meltdown-continues>

*Solid article for providing some viewpoints into how international actors are reacting, as well as defining a solution that is necessary for Venezuela.*

### TOPIC B KEY RESOURCES

"Marginalized Minorities in Development Programming."

[http://w02.unssc.org/free\\_resources/MarginalisedMinorities/](http://w02.unssc.org/free_resources/MarginalisedMinorities/)

*This is an incredible resource to enhance your understanding of minority issues, as well as to familiarize yourself with potential strategies or frameworks in progress.*

Minority Rights Group International. Accessed November 8, 2018. <https://minorityrights.org/>.

*With this resource, delegates can access minority rights informations and data for their specific country.*

"Promoting Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Rights in Latin America." Evidence and Lessons from Latin America. 20 May 2013. <http://ella.practicalaction.org/knowledge-guide/promoting-indigenous-and-ethnic-minority-rights-in-latin-america/>.

*This specific document goes into great detail of countries and their relations in indigenous and ethnic minority rights.*

## TOPIC C KEY RESOURCES

Climate Change Knowledge Portal. Accessed November 8, 2018.

<http://sdwebx.worldbank.org/climateportal/>.

*A resource compiled by the World Bank. While immense, it contains very specific sets of information. First, read more general sources such as UN reports or news articles, and then take a look at the World Bank's different information tools when you have a more specific area to focus on.*

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Accessed November 8, 2018.

<http://www.ipcc.ch/>.

*Established by the UN. It provides reports on research and knowledge on climate Change. Because of reputability and lack of bias, it is also a good resource to indicate what is a consensus and what is still under debate in this topic.*

“UN Environment Yearbooks/Global Environmental Outlook Yearbooks.” UN Environment.

Accessed November 8, 2018. <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/year-books>.

*The UN's annual reviews on progress and issues within environmental policy. It is especially relevant if you need to look at past information and compare it within a timeline. It is comprehensive and also quite detailed, so be sure to look for key topics in the table of contents.*

Worldwatch Institute. Accessed November 8, 2018. <http://www.worldwatch.org/>.

*A good resource if you're looking for words rather than numbers. Worldwatch is an organization that publishes reports on sustainability, as well as different articles.*

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