

Forum:*Environment Commission*

Issue: ***The Question of taking measures to protect the Amazon Rainforest from disappearing any further due to human activities***Student Officer: *Ghena Dabbas*

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1. **Introduction**

Five decades ago, the country of Brazil encouraged its citizens to colonize the Amazon; the world’s largest tropical rainforest, that is widely known for its forestry, exotic animals, rich biodiversity, and the fact that it produces around 6% of the earth’s oxygen. Ever since, the Amazon has been filled with humans taking part in activities such as selective logging, hunting, deforestation, and other forms of habitat degradation.

Each day, these activities are becoming more and more prevalent, and each day, the future of the Amazon becomes less clear. Scientists have warned that these activities are bringing the forest near a ‘tipping point’, which refers to its disappearance over time. Not only is the atmosphere above it becoming extremely dry, where experts warn that soon the water cycle will be broken, creating a trend of declining rainfall and longer dry seasons in the forest, but it is as well losing a lot of its land at extremely fast rates. With as much as 17% of the rainforest lost already, experts believe that by 2030, 27% of the rainforest will be without trees. The Amazon is vanishing at a rate of 20,000 square miles per year, and this number will only increase with the continuation of these activities.

In August 2019, there were record breaking fires that raged across the forest, started due to a few farmers taking part in ‘the slash and burn’ technique for agricultural purposes. More than 7,200 square miles were lost in just a few months, and millions of trees were killed. The atmosphere became even drier, and the entire situation of the rainforest became way worse. These fires have highlighted the idea that the Amazon Rainforest is at more risk now, than it has ever been, which is why extreme measures should be taken as soon as possible in order to protect it, before it’s too late.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

Colonize

The settlement of people in a land which they then establish political control over.

Biodiversity

The variety of plants and animals in the world or a particular habitat, where a huge amount of these plants and animals are considered essential for life on earth.

Logging

The activity of cutting down trees and preparing the timber

Timber

Type of wood that is used in the industry for building and carpentry

Habitat Degradation

The process of when a natural habitat becomes incapable of supporting it’s living organisms due to human activity.

Fossil Fuels

A natural fuel that is formed from the remains of living organisms that are used in the industry.

Ecosystems

A community where living organisms reside.

Fertilize

The process of making soil more fertile and suitable for use by adding different substances to it

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**Why is the Amazon Rainforest so important?**

The Amazon Rainforest was given the name “the lungs of the Earth” which refers to the way it plays a major role in multiple processes that make our earth habitable, such as the water cycle, weather patterns and the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Without it, the entire world’s climate will be severely affected, the atmosphere will become even more polluted, a great percentage of the worlds biodiversity would be lost, and a lot more.

Tropical rainforests in general, exchange a huge amount of energy and water into the surrounding atmosphere, therefore they have a heavy influence on the climate in both local and regional areas. The Amazon rainforest in specific, produces around 75% of it’s own rainfall, which feeds nearby rivers through the process of evapotranspiration, which is when water is transformed from the land into the atmosphere through evaporation from the soil. The water from these rivers then flows directly into the ocean, which maintains ocean currents, therefore controlling regional climate.

Not only that, but the Amazon Rainforest plays a major role in reducing climate change as much as possible. For over the last 150 years, us humans have been participating in activities that include the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas which in the process, pumps countless amounts of Carbon Dioxide Gas (CO2) into the atmosphere. Carbon Dioxide is a greenhouse gas, which when released, acts like a blanket covering the earth, preventing heat from escaping. This heat that is supposed to escape remains on Earth, warming our oceans, land and air. Trees are natural CO2 absorbers, as they take it in and pump out clean, oxygen gas instead. The Amazon contains around 400 billion trees, which all absorb humongous amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere, which reduces the amount of heat trapped on earth.

In addition to the fact that the Amazon Rainforest is the place in the world that is the richest in biodiversity, as it is home to multiple different species of birds, plants, and mammals. It contains around 30% of the world’s species, and 10% of the world’s biodiversity, and still has millions of more species that have yet been discovered. The Amazon River flows at 6,600 km, and is the home to the largest number of freshwater fish in the entire world. The biodiversity of the Amazon Rainforest is also extremely important in maintaining the natural ecosystems.

**Human activities in the Amazon Rainforest:**

Over the past few decades, market forces, population pressure and a lot more, have been forcing the countries of the Amazon, specifically Brazil, to pry open the forest. Today, regional government programs and initiatives are seeking for constant development, which therefore encourages actions such as selective logging, hunting, and deforestation, which is the most prominent human activity in the forest. This in return, allows the countries of the Amazon to become integrated into the global economy, which results in more demand for natural resources, and trading.

For example, Brazil is now the world’s largest exporter of beef, as in 2019, their beef exports have reached an estimated 1.828 million tonnes, and the country now produces around 20% of the total global beef exports, which plays a huge role in the strength of the Brazilian currency. When the price of beef doubled in Brazil, the price in dollars fell, ultimately making Brazil’s exports even more competitive on international markets.

There is huge, global demand on the country of Brazil, which requires infrastructure such as roads and dams in order to respond to these demands. An example for that would be BR-163 and BR-319, which are two highways that conservationists worry will lead to even more deforestation in the rainforest. Not only that, but Brazil seeks help from other countries as well in order to satisfy it’s industrial needs, as China is now involved in mining projects in eastern Amazon, ranging from nickel, copper and aluminum.

**Cattle Ranching in the Amazon Rainforest:**

Deforestation, the permanent removal of trees in order to create room of industrial purposes, is the most prevalent type of human activity in the rainforest. This clearance of land is done due to cattle ranching.

Cattle ranching is when cattle ranchers and land speculators destroy land in order to make more room for pasture, which is defined as land covered in grass that is suitable for grazing animals such as cattle, which after they are fully grown, are slaughtered for industrial purposes. Cattle ranching is the largest driver of deforestation in every Amazon country, estimated that it is responsible for 80% of the current deforestation rates in the rainforest. Brazil has around 200 million head of cattle, and is the largest exporter in the world. Cattle ranching has a low input cost and an easy transportation in rural areas, which makes ranching one of the most popular economic activity in the forest frontier. Currently, more than 450,000 square kilometers of the rainforest’s land was deforested by Brazil and are now in cattle pasture.

**Fires in the Rainforest:**

The Amazon Rainforest is known to have two seasons; the wet and dry seasons. As indicated by the names, the wet season is when the temperature is pretty low, having heavy rains, and the dry season is when the temperature is pretty high. The dry season, occurs naturally during winter in the Southern Hemisphere and lasts from July to November. The temperature during the dry season averages around 98 degrees Fahrenheit, which people take advantage of in order to clear some land easily. But these fires can also be caused by naturally occurring events such as lightening strikes. Brazil’s National Institute of Space Research reports that there were 42,269 fires in the Amazon region just last year, which is 80% more than the year before during the time of the dry season.

Farmers and loggers are actually behind more than half of these fires, in their attempts of clearing the land for their agricultural and industrial purposes, as they clear this land by burning trees. Illegal land occupiers as well burn these trees so they can make space and thus raise the price of this land and sell it. In 2019, Brazil suffered from raging fires that were caused by a few farmers using the ‘slash and burn’ technique. This technique is a widely used method for growing food in cleared out land where the remaining vegetation is burned, having the resulting layer of ash creatinf a rich layer to help fertilize the crops. The fire was accidentally started, and resulted in a loss that left the entire world fuming. It is estimated that around 9060 km2 of the forest has been lost to these fires, and 2.3 million animals were killed.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

Brazil

The Amazon Rainforest is located in nine different countries, but the majority of it, 60%, is located in Brazil. Decades ago, the Brazilian President actually encouraged the citizens to work in the Amazon, which he was widely criticized for. Through this, he was willingly opening up protected parts of the rainforest to logging, farming, mining, and other forms of development. Obviously, once the fires erupted through the forest, it affected the country greatly as many of it’s residents lost their jobs and homes, since a good amount of them live in the Amazon Basin. Once the fires spread, many countries such as the G7 donated a heavy amount of money, but the Brazilian government angrily rejected it, only to accept 12 million dollars from Britain a few days later. This angered the citizens of Brazil incredibly, as they believed that their government doesn’t care enough about the fact that the Amazon Rainforest is dying, which resulted in many angry protests. In fact, approval of the president’s performance has dropped, as it went from 28.2 % of Brazilians evaluating it as bad or terrible, up to 53.7%.

**The Group of 7 (The G7)**

The G7 is an international intergovernmental economic organization that includes the countries with the largest and most advanced economies in the world; Canada, France, Japan, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. The G7 made sure to show their support during the 2019 Amazon Rainforest fires, and after a three-day G7 summit of major industrialized democracies in Biarritz, they collectively offered to donate 20 million dollars in order to combat these fires. The President of France, Emmanuel Macron announced this donation on behalf of all G7 countries, however this donation was rejected by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. “Macron cannot even avoid a foreseeable fire in a church that is a world heritage site, what does he intend to teach our country?” said Onyx Lorenzoni, the chief of staff to the Brazilian President, which created a lot tension between Brazil and France. Nonetheless, the G7, mainly France, continued to express their concern over the burning forest. “We respect your sovereignty. It’s your country, but the trees in the Amazon are the lungs of the planet.”

China:

China is one of the top, non-Amazonian country that is contributing to the issue of deforestation in the rainforest. Not long ago, the Amazon basin became China’s top supplier of natural resources, and China has become Brazil’s major trading partner, which as a result, leaves China in heavy demand for different natural resources such as iron ore, timber, soy and beef, which is fueling deforestation, and negatively influencing Brazil’s environmental protection laws. In fact, recent research suggests that “the rapid rise in exports of soy and beef products to China are two of the major drivers of the Amazonian deforestation in Brazil.” Not only that, but multiple Chinese companies have been purchasing agricultural and forest land, and have been financing and investing in Amazonian infrastructure projects such as mineral processing facilities and railways.

Amazon Watch:

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1996 with the main goal that is to protect the Amazon Rainforest, and stress on the rights of the people living in the Amazon Basin. They sometimes partner with different environmental organizations, as well as come up with heavy research and educational reports that they publish for the public about rising rainforest concerns, ways citizens could help, etc. During the Amazon Fires, they encouraged many citizens to donate in order to help, and they were able to collect a good amount of money that they invested into saving the forest.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| 1879 - 1913 | Rubber became one of the most essential materials to the people of the Amazon, and automatically accounted for 24% of Brazil’s main exports, thus becoming the worlds largest supplier of rubber for over 60 years. |
| 1920  1950  1960  Early 1972  Late 1972  1982    2005  2019 | When the world population increased by a billion, which made the Amazon Rainforest a target for the industrial world’s increasing demand for different naturally occurring resources.  Cattle ranching became more popular during this period of time, resulting in much more land cleared for pasture.  The government begins encouraging the citizens to colonize and develop the Amazon Forest, which causes deforestation rates to increase.  The book “The Limits to Growth” was first published by a group of scientists and educators in order to discuss the worlds environmental issues and its future problems. This book sparked the public’s concern for the rainforest for the very first time.  The construction of the 2,485 mile highway called the Trans-Amazonian highway began. It intersects the forest and is a connection with Brazil’s growing farming and cattle breeding industry as not only were many trees killed in the construction, but this path now acts as an incentive for industry expansion as it is easy to enter the rainforest through it.  Sections of the rainforest along the Trans-Amazonian highway were demolished for large industry purposes, and the population among the highway increased which caused the deforestation rates increase from 5% to 12%.  The construction of the Belo Monte Dam begins. It has always been a very controversial idea, as it positioned in the Xingu River, located in the Amazon. Many people argue that the dam shouldn’t have been constructed as it would alter the water’s oxygen and temperature levels which would kill all the fish.  Blazing fires rip through the forest due to farmers trying to clear land, resulting in millions of trees and animals lost. |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

**The Amazon Solutions Platform:**

In 2017, the SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network) announced a new initiative called the ‘Amazon Solutions Platform” which aims to monitor the development of the UN’s 15th sustainable development goal, that includes protecting and restoring terrestrial ecosystems, to sustainably manage forests, and stop land degradation and biodiversity loss, specifically in the Amazon Rainforest. This platform is also supported by the UNEP (United Nations Environment Program)

**Climate Action Summit 2019:**

The UN Climate Action Summit brought together different researchers and scientists to highlight the urgent situation in the Amazon. Chaired by Dr. Carlos Nobre in the UN Headquarters, they’ve addressed the need to act urgently as they have noticed “disruptive change in the past 40 years” to the Amazon. During this meeting, it was suggested that the Amazon should go under heavy monitoring, and more research on the economic implications of destruction in the Amazon should be conducted.

**Investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNEP/EA.3/Res.5)**

This resolution does not directly tackle the issue in the Amazon Rainforest, however it does ask for the strong implementation of methods to further work on UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) that are environmentally related. As stated before, the fifteenth SDG talks about protecting forests in general, as well as reducing land degradation and deforestation. This resolution tackles the environmental aspect of the SDG’s and calls for immediate action that will accelerate the progress of achieving these goals, and reducing issues our planet faces, such as the issue in the Amazon.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

All the previous attempts mentioned were put into action and until this day, are striving to protect the Amazon Rainforest. For example, the UN Climate Action Summit was able to conduct a lot of research and come up with multiple reports on the situation of the Amazon Rainforest, all which they were able to discuss during the UN’s 25th Climate Change Conference (COP25) In Chile. In this climate change conference, members of the Climate Action Summit stressed on the importance of the Amazon when it comes to climate change, as the Amazon Rainforest acts as a buffer against it. Therefore, members resumed their extensive research on the Amazon, with the aim to collectively release a report on the State of the Amazon, and even further details on how they’re protecting it, by June 2020. The Climate Action Summit is fairly new, therefore they are still at the very beginning of their progress in tackling the situation.

As for the Amazon Solutions Platform, members are working tirelessly in order to further develop and work on the 15th sustainable development goal. Reports that they have released over the past few years indicate that they truly are making a difference. For example, in a progress report published to their website, they said that they have established new, protected areas in the rainforest, as a study they completed previously showed that only one quarter of the Amazon is in full protection.

The UN is constantly updating their website with the development progress on all SDG’s. They report on statistics that prove that through different organizations (such as the Amazon Solutions Platform) and the clauses that were mentioned in previous resolutions, they are gradually becoming closer to achieving all the SDG’s. In 2018, it was officially reported by the SDSN that the rate of forest loss globally, has been cut 25% since 2000-2005. They continue to report on obstacles they face, and data they collect to the public through news articles, reports, etc.

1. Possible Solutions

One possible solution for this issue would be to expand protected areas in the forest, as well as start protecting new acres of land. This can be done through several ways, such as conducting heavy research beforehand in order to become familiar with which areas of the forest need the most protection, as well as ensuring that there are sufficient enforcement agencies and funding for the maintenance of these protected areas. But most importantly, one way to have this solution be successfully implemented would be by encouraging the involvement of local citizens, as the fate of the forest is literally in their hands. The whole issue started by humans and only we can end it.

Another possible solution for this issue would be the implementation of strong laws. The main reason why the Amazon Rainforest is targeted as an easy area where human activities can take place would be because there are no strong laws protecting it, and/or preventing citizens from harming it. In fact, it was actually estimated that around 80% of all the logging in the forest is illegal, which just shows how easy it is to damage without severe consequences. If strong laws are successfully implemented, then the rates of deforestation in the Amazon would slowly start to decrease.

1. Guiding Questions

*(10-15 questions that your delegates could use as guidelines while researching the issue themselves and their countries’ stance on the issue)*

1. Why is the Amazon Rainforest so important?
2. What type of human activity occurs in the Amazon Rainforest?
3. How are these human activities negatively affecting the rainforest?
4. What countries contribute to deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest?
5. What countries have offered to help reduce deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest?
6. What Amazon Rainforest Protection organizations are there?
7. How effective are the strategies implemented in the past in order to protect the forest?
8. What can be done to reduce the damage already created in the forest?
9. What can be done in order to protect the forest from future damage?
10. What will happen if no action is taken to protect the forest?
11. Appendices and useful links
12. [*https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a28910396/amazon-rainforest-importance/*](https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a28910396/amazon-rainforest-importance/)
13. [*https://phys.org/news/2014-05-devastating-human-impact-amazon-rainforest.html*](https://phys.org/news/2014-05-devastating-human-impact-amazon-rainforest.html)
14. [*https://www.newsweek.com/amazon-rainforest-human-activities-vulnerable-fires-nasa-scientists-1470146*](https://www.newsweek.com/amazon-rainforest-human-activities-vulnerable-fires-nasa-scientists-1470146)
15. [*https://www.cfr.org/interactives/amazon-deforestation/#/en*](https://www.cfr.org/interactives/amazon-deforestation/#/en)
16. [*https://www.npr.org/2019/08/26/754255863/g-7-leaders-near-deal-to-help-amazon-nations-fight-rainforest-blazes-macron-says*](https://www.npr.org/2019/08/26/754255863/g-7-leaders-near-deal-to-help-amazon-nations-fight-rainforest-blazes-macron-says)
17. [*https://www.marketwatch.com/story/5-highly-ranked-charities-helping-with-the-amazon-rainforest-fires-2019-08-27*](https://www.marketwatch.com/story/5-highly-ranked-charities-helping-with-the-amazon-rainforest-fires-2019-08-27)
18. [*https://www.americasquarterly.org/fulltextarticle/three-innovations-that-might-save-the-amazon/*](https://www.americasquarterly.org/fulltextarticle/three-innovations-that-might-save-the-amazon/)
19. [*https://insh.world/science/what-if-we-lost-the-amazon-rainforest/*](https://insh.world/science/what-if-we-lost-the-amazon-rainforest/)
20. Contact Info

To any delegates that may have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through:

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Notes:

* Ariel size 11
* Paragraphs begin with indentation
* Section headings must be in **this color** and **bold** in Arial font size 14
* Sub headings size 12 and **this color**
* The research report should be between 3,500 and 5000 words
* 0.5 line spacing
* Save as .docx format
* Every picture included in the report must contain captions, describe the picture or diagram in a (Arial size 9, bold and italicized)
* Same Border as one used on this document
* All text in blue should be in **this color**