

PMUNC 2014

Organization of American States

Chair: *Jonathan Wu*

Directors: *Salwa Ahmad & Sarah Kim*



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Chair's Letter

Welcome to the Princeton Model United Nations Conference's (PMUNC) simulation of the Organization of American States (OAS)! My name is Jon Wu, and I will be the chair of your committee. I look forward to the engaging debate as we work together to address and resolve issues that currently exist in the member nations of our region.

Before I delve into the two topics that we will be discussing this conference, I'd first like to go over our committee format and rules. Founded in 1948, OAS contains all 35 independent nations of the Americas. As a result, the countries of Canada and the US are included along with the countries of Latin America. Something to note is that the real OAS in the United Nations currently does not include Cuba, which has declined to rejoin the committee after being suspended from 1962 to 2009. Regardless, the nation will be included in our PMUNC committee for the sake of invigorating debate.

Our committee will simulate the General Assembly of the OAS, which is an annual meeting comprised of the minister of foreign affairs of the member nations. Each country will have one vote, and the fate of resolutions will be settled by a simple majority.

According to its website, OAS "was established in order to achieve among its member states—as stipulated in Article 1 of the Charter—'an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence'... The Organization uses a four-pronged approach to effectively implement its essential purposes, based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development" ("OAS", 2014, 1).

As a result, resolutions must be able to apply to multiple member nations of the OAS rather than serve as proposals for individual countries. The goal of the committee is to unite

member nations to tackle problems that are relevant to the region as a whole. However, be careful not to become too broad in your resolutions such that they lose their effectiveness. As you research, be sure to study your country along with its relationships with other nations in the region.

Best of luck, and I look forward to meeting you all when conference comes around!

Topic A: Renewable Energy

Introduction

The global population has been rising in an increasing rate, consuming more and more energy to meet its needs at about 2.3% more per year (“International”, 2007, 1). However, this consumption of energy has depended heavily on fossil fuels, constituting over 86% of primary energy consumption in the world (“International”, 2007, 1). As the world’s fossil fuel reserves have been depleting, many nations are now looking to alternative sources of energy. Although considered expensive and unfeasible in the past, renewable energy sources now present an efficient and practical way of utilizing energy. Renewable energy is often defined as energy which can be obtained from natural resources that can be constantly replenished (Arena, 2014, 1). With the recent improvements in

technology, nations can construct and utilize more renewable energy sources, such solar, wind, and geothermal energy. Additionally, renewable energy presents an environmentally friendly alternative to fossil fuels, which is a major factor in the changing global climate. Renewable energy pertains particularly to countries of the OAS, since their locations make them optimal to particular natural energy sources, especially geothermal energy.

Economic and Social Motivations

Currently, many countries in the OAS are still largely dependent on fossil fuels in energy production. With large oil reserves in the region and renewable energy technology still developing, it may seem cheaper and more economically beneficial for the member nations of the OAS to focus solely on oil and gas. However, a 2014 Inter-American Development Bank report titled “Societal

Benefits from Renewable Energy in Latin America and the Caribbean” disputes this belief. By calculating the societal benefits generated from the different renewable energy sources as the sum of avoided costs and economic benefits, the Inter-American Development Bank was able to compare these societal benefits to total costs of generating these energy sources (Vergara, 2014, 4). These costs include the job and economic loss in the fossil fuel industry as a result of a switch to renewable energy. Overall, the report found that “even when only partially and conservatively estimated, the societal benefits of [renewable energy production] are sufficiently large enough to justify the eventual wholesale entry of these technologies” (Vergara, 2014, 4). Essentially, the report shows that the citizens of the member nations of the OAS will actually benefit more economically by switching to renewable energy production.

Renewable energy also offers something that fossil fuels cannot – sustainability. It is well known that renewable energy sources, in varying degrees, are more environmentally friendly than oil and gas consumption. Thus, the agricultural livelihood as well as the animal and plant biosphere will be able to continue to flourish with a switch to renewable energy sources. Yet renewable energy sources are sustainable not just environmentally, but also economically. The infrastructure to harness energy, such as solar panels, has a long useful life, especially when compared to fossil fuels (“Distributed”, 2013, 1). As a result, most of the investment comes from the initial development of the infrastructure, which afterwards allows for low maintenance costs and thus economic sustenance (“Distributed”, 2013, 1).

However, what is true for the average country in the OAS may not be true for each one. The Latin America and

Caribbean region contains some of the largest oil producers in the world, such as Venezuela, that has made oil production and exports a large staple of its economy. Converting to renewable energy sources may be beneficial in the long run, but these countries may find it difficult to substitute that sector of the economy in the short term. Jobs in a once stable industry can be lost in large quantities, which can also result in protests and general unhappiness in the populace. In addition, global oil demand may continue to rise, which may cause countries to view untapped oil reserves as going to waste. Thus, member nations must be careful to account for these countries when developing policies for renewable energy.

Methods of Funding

Renewable energy sources may have very tangible societal benefits to the countries of Latin America and Caribbean, but they also contain a large obstacle that has hindered their implementation—their

large startup costs (“Distributed”, 2013, 1).

There are many different methods that the countries of OAS can use to fund renewable energy policies. One way is through donations or investments from the government of benevolent countries. The United States has shown to pour money into renewable energy initiatives in Latin America (“U.S. Grants”, 2011, 1). But these funds will likely be too small to fund all the costs of a renewable energy policy. A more viable option could be through a funding system among the countries of the OAS, perhaps with revenue sharing. The OAS may also secure funds through the World Bank, which promotes long-term economic development and poverty reduction, or the IMF, which promotes international monetary cooperation and provides policy advice and technical assistance (Driscoll, 1996, 1). However, the most sustainable method of funding may come from private investment, which has

shown to “double that of governments and public bodies” in the global renewable energy sector (Macguire, 2012, 1). Most likely, an effective policy will use a combination of these methods along with financial incentives to secure funding.

Policy Creation

When putting together structured renewable energy policies, countries in the OAS must be prepared to address different aspects. The scale and flexibility of the policy must be decided depending on whether it wants to include a specific sub region or many other countries in Latin America and Caribbean. In addition, effective policies must take into consideration the different geographical strengths of each country. For example, the success of hydropower dams in Chile may not translate well to inland nations that do not have large bodies of water (Pearre, 2011, 1). Geothermal, wind, solar, and other renewable energy

sources may be better suited to certain countries and environments, so it is imperative for the OAS to keep this in mind. However, it must do so while also making sure that policies do not become too generalized that they may not be enforced or maintained as a region.

As mentioned in the “Economic and Social Motivations” section of this background guide, an effective policy must also consider the economies of oil-dependent countries. Setting the time for any renewable energy source policy implementation is key, as well as deciding how to enforce policies. Benchmarks can be used along with economic incentives, such as subsidies or taxes.

Overall, there are many aspects of renewable energy that can be addressed. Doing so can allow for countries of the OAS to realize the full potential of these sources and thrive economically.

Bloc Positions

Andes – Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela.

This bloc contains a large potential of hydroelectric power through the construction of dams, with some already being realized in Venezuela. However, a large amount of this hydroelectric potential is not fully exploited and utilized, such as in Bolivia and Peru (with its Amazonian rivers). In addition, this bloc contains Ecuador and Venezuela, which are two countries that are still heavily dependent on oil exports on its economy.

Caribbean & Central America – Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Trinidad & Tobago

This region is very diverse in its stage of development of renewable energy sources. Some countries such as Honduras are able to supply all of its own electrical needs. However, a large number

of countries, such as Haiti and Nicaragua are impoverished and will need a lot of funds to jumpstart any renewable energy development.

North America – Canada, Mexico, United States

This continent contains three of the largest oil producers in the world that also have strong economies. They are looking to compromise their oil production with the development of their own renewable energy sources. Their strong economies allow them to possibly help fund projects in Latin America & Caribbean.

Southern Cone – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay

Overall, this bloc has been more ahead in the development of renewable energy sources compared to other countries in Latin America & Caribbean. For example, despite being the largest consumer of energy in South America, Brazil is able to produce enough energy to cover 80% of its demand, with only

17.1% of that production coming from fossil fuels. As a result, countries in this bloc can emerge as leaders of the region that can help replicate their successes in other member nations.

Topic B: Healthcare

Introduction

Home to under 600 million people, Latin America and Caribbean has significantly increased access to healthcare over the last few decades. With a significant amount of Latin American and Caribbean healthcare expenditures coming from the private sector, the industry was able to see growth and provide basic care for many civilians (“Health Care”, 2014, 1). However, many problems still persist. Although broad coverage has improved, access to healthcare throughout the region is still largely unequal, particularly for those who are poor and those who live in rural areas. Water sanitation is also a large issue: 77 million people currently lack access to safe water in Latin America and Caribbean, and 100 million people lack access to proper sanitation (“Water”, 2006, 1). With lack of sanitation comes disease and perhaps death, harming a

significant portion of the population in Central and South America. Latin America and Caribbean has been successful with treating epidemics, but now there is a need for it to provide care for chronic diseases and improve prevention as well. With expansions in infrastructure and developments in more efficient policies, Latin America and Caribbean can stand to be a much healthier and safer region.

Economic and Social Motivations

Quite simply, a healthier population means a happier and more productive population. It is crucial for the stability of a country. As Nicole Klingen, Acting Director for Health, Nutrition and Population at the World Bank explains, “Whatever path countries choose, universal health coverage is key to prevent people from falling into poverty due to illness, and to give everyone the opportunity to live healthier, more productive lives – regardless of ability to

pay” (“Universal”, 2013, 1). A higher life expectancy and a lower infant mortality rate will allow countries to thrive. Reduced costs for good healthcare are also good for the financial well being of citizens. A strong healthcare policy can also make countries in the OAS more attractive to immigrants, which can further allow our member nations to flourish. In general, a structured and well thought-out healthcare policy can translate to a drastic improvement in the well being of the people of the countries in OAS.

Over the last few decades, healthcare coverage in Latin America and Caribbean has drastically improved (“Universal”, 2013, 1). An increased number of countries in the OAS now boast higher life expectancies and general healthcare coverage, but many poor and excluded populations still lack quality coverage (“Universal”, 2013, 1). The Latin American Center for Rural Development’s “Poverty and Inequality 2011: Latin

America Report” states how “urban areas in the region are primarily facing challenges of inequality, security and economic dynamism...while rural areas show lags in access to services and basic rights such as health and education. Gender equality is also a major issue in rural territories” (“Born”, 2012, 1). Infant mortality rates in Mexico further highlight this issue. “In Mexico’s Mixtla de Altamirano Municipality, 700 of every 1000 live-born babies will die in their first year of life, according to the report. In 530 other municipalities across the country, the rate is less than 1 in 1000, and the national average is 17.6 children in every 1000” (“Born”, 2012, 1). Thus, member nations of the OAS must work together to address these current concerns in healthcare coverage and inequality that plague the region.

Disease Prevention

Just as important as basic healthcare coverage is disease prevention. To help

the people of Latin America and Caribbean be healthier as a whole, their basic living needs must be met with quality. One example of the provision of a basic living need that currently can be improved is water sanitation and coverage. Although Central and South America have one third of the global water supplies, their distribution to residents is highly inequitable (Hillstrom, 2004, 1). There are multiple causes for this issue. In some regions, countries have arid areas with haphazard rain, resulting in water shortages. In other regions, available water supply is contaminated by human sewage and pollution. Increased industrial activity in Central and South America has increased the latter. With lack of sanitation comes disease and perhaps death, harming a significant portion of the population in Central and South America.

Disease prevention is also achieved through education. Educational campaigns that are geared toward

informing the populace of certain diseases and some preventive measures can significantly improve the health of the civilians of the member nations of OAS. These campaigns can be achieved through a myriad of methods, such as the distribution of brochures and other items, television programs, and local seminars. However, it is important that educational campaigns for disease prevention do not overlook the poorer and sparser populations in the region, such as rural areas. Equality in both education and access to healthcare is currently a large priority of OAS.

Policy Creation and Implementation

Several factors are taken into consideration when crafting effective healthcare policies. One factor is efficiency: How can healthcare and education be spread to regions with sparse populations without sacrificing quality? Currently, there is a bit of a

tradeoff exists among coverage, costs, and quality (Pauly, 2011, 1). Is there a way to compromise these three to maximize the healthcare of the region?

Additionally, it must be noted that each country may have different priorities. For example, HIV was such a major cause of concern for Brazil that it initiated a television campaign for youth in 2003. According to a study by avert.com, 36% of Brazilian teens lose their virginity before turning 15, but only 62% of teens actually know how HIV is contracted (Ballve, 2003, 1). Conversely, chronic diseases such as diabetes are more prevalent in other countries like Mexico. Steps should be taken to dictate the scale and flexibility of healthcare policies.

Most importantly, the success of any healthcare policy will be tied to its sustainability. Being able to consistently access quality healthcare is key to a lifetime of good health. For the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to be

able to thrive, a structured and sustainable healthcare policy is crucial.

Bloc Positions

Andes – Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela.

This region contains some countries, such as Bolivia, with very poor overall health. Malaria is a large problem in this region, and the healthcare systems may need to be reformed in order to achieve a greater livelihood among this region's inhabitants.

Caribbean & Central America – Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Trinidad & Tobago

This bloc overall is fairly average in terms of health, and there is still room for improvement. Haiti stands out as an example of a country that has a poor health system as a result of being impoverished. Natural disasters can

topple healthcare systems along with buildings.

North America – Canada, Mexico, United States

Strong economies translate to strong healthcare systems, which is the case for this region. However, while Canada and Mexico have universal healthcare systems, the United States lacks one.

Southern Cone – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay

This bloc boasts two countries with very advanced healthcare systems in Chile and Uruguay. However, it also contains Argentina and Brazil, both of which are suffering economically. This can lead to a deterioration of their healthcare systems, so a policy change can be very beneficial.

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