

Forum: 2nd Committee (Environmental and Cultural)

Issue: Measures to reduce the amount of non-biodegradable waste

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Introduction

The issue of non-biodegradable waste and its impacts on society are growing as we become more technologically advanced. The materials and products created as a result of our progress in technology is a very big threat to our environment. Non-biodegradable waste can be hazardous to our air and our environment because they do not decompose naturally, as biodegradable waste does. There are many side effects of using materials that classify as non-biodegradable waste, such as the buildup of trash and pollution of our water, air, and all living organisms. Non-biodegradable waste and its numerous detrimental effects to our environment, show that humanity must properly manage its resource if we want to have a safe and clean environment.

Background Information

Biodegradable waste includes paper products, kitchen waste, and organic products such as fruit cores. They are decomposed naturally in a short amount of time, by the air, the climate, and even micro-organisms. These waste are sent to landfills and can be beneficial to society through its decomposition and formation of methane gases that can be used as alternatives to natural gases. Non-biodegradable waste, however, does not decompose naturally, and therefore is a hazardous aftermath of human technology. Materials such as electronics, plastic, and rubber, are examples of non-biodegradable waste. Most non-biodegradable waste cannot be decomposed, and will therefore continue to pile up over time, requiring more time and land devoted to its management. One of the most common non-biodegradable waste product, plastic, is exceptionally toxic to water supplies and even our own air. Over time, water and light can cause the emitting of toxic pollutants, which contaminates and pollutes our water supplies. Also, when plastics are constantly in contact with heat or sunlight, they can emit harmful gases into our

atmosphere. Plastic, is used for almost all products and items, and humans do not do enough to reduce the amount of non-biodegradable waste and only 5.7% of plastics are recycled every year, and the rest go to landfills, where the plastics, and all other non-biodegradable waste, takes over thousands of years for them to fully decompose. There are estimates of about 100 million tons of plastic debris in our earth's oceans threatening the safety and health of our marine life.

Major Organizations Involved

- Worldwide Fund for Nature, (WWF, and formerly World Wildlife Fund) an international NGO, working to make sure humanity does not leave “footprints” on earth's environment.
- The European Commission on Environment
- Environmental Protection Agency

Relevant Treaties and UN Resolutions

- 19 September 1997, General Assembly resolution A/RES/S-19/2 is passed on “integration of economic, social, and environmental objectives”.
- UN Document 16/30 on Hazardous Waste
- 2014 Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/27/23 on “ human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes”
- 2009 Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/12/18 on “The adverse effects of the movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights”

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In recent years, companies have been working with consumers to reduce waste on the environment. The European Environmental Commission, and other environmental NGOs have been raising awareness and educating people through their websites and information

centers about the dangers of non-biodegradable waste, and many campaign events. Significant progress has also been made by scientists, to create biodegradable plastics from renewable natural resources, which could be an alternative to non-biodegradable plastics.

Possible Solutions

- **Recycle:** Many non-biodegradable materials such as glass, plastic and metals can and should be recycled to reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills or the ocean. Recycled glass and plastics can be reused for new materials.
- **Alternatives:** Society can start to use less non-biodegradable materials, and turn to safer alternatives. For example, paper and cloth products can be used more than plastic bags and other packaging wastes.
- **Development and use of biodegradable plastics:** Although difficult, more progress in the creation of usable biodegradable plastics can be a possible solution in the reduction of non-biodegradable waste.

Reliable and Useful Sources

- http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/teacher_resources/webfieldtrips/bio_nonbio_materials/
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301283637_NON-BIODEGRADABLE_WASTE_-_ITS_IMPACT_SAFE_DISPOSAL
- <https://www.reference.com/science/non-biodegradable-waste-9154deccb3048454>
- <https://lawrenceroman.wordpress.com/2010/12/01/what-is-non-biodegradable-green-environment-noplastic/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2873018/>