The topics before the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are: Paris 2015: Towards a Universal Climate Agreement, Organized Crime in Gold, Wildlife, and Timber, and Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics. Afghanistan is a country affected greatly by the looming threat of climate change, wildlife endangerment, and contamination—these matters must be resolved with the best interest of the entire global community in mind.

I. Paris 2015: Towards a Universal Climate Agreement

The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) and United National Environment Programme (UNEP) held a conference with senior government decision-makers in Afghanistan; the delegation from Afghanistan strongly encourages the continuance of such programming, as we value having our voices heard within the international forum. Furthermore, given the arid climate of Afghanistan and our people’s reliance on foreign aid in times of food scarcity, armed conflict, and epidemic poverty, climate issues are at the forefront of our concerns. As eleven of the past fifteen years have been marked as the hottest years since man has kept record of temperature, these findings suggest serious consequences for low-GDP countries such as Afghanistan, for we have neither the technology nor the infrastructure to implement nation-wide sustainable energy initiatives. Afghanistan has had tremendous environmental stresses over the years, and the effects of war have left them with only about 15% of land suitable for farming. We move that the 21st Conference of Parties allot special time in developing alternative energy plans for less industrialized countries, for it is unconscionable that while the causes of climate change come from industrialized nations in the West, it is the less industrialized, less well-off people of Afghanistan who receive the brunt of the effects.

II. Organized Crime in Gold, Wildlife, and Timber

As a country frequently dependent on the help of foreign aid, Afghanistan and its environment must not be taken advantage of. Unfortunately, many large mammals in our country are classified as globally threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The nature of crimes associated with these animals, such as the Ibex, Gray Wolf, Brown Bear, and Striped Hyenas, are circumstantial in nature and indicative of causes remediable by the global community. Much of the poaching involved with these endangered species is the result of food shortage and sustenance problems, not of international black markets. However, we must address the problem of aid workers promoting (and perhaps inadvertently proliferating) a souvenir/fur black market. Given the nature of these foreigners’ stay in Afghanistan, the United Nations must act with diligence in addressing this egregious issue. Moreover, Afghanistan has, along with 180 countries total, has signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international agreement aimed at preventing specie endangerment
and/or extinction. Afghanistan supports the UNEP in its further pursuits and encourages action to be taken similar to that described in CITES.

III. Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics

While Afghanistan is largely unaffected by global marine debris, plastics comprise nearly 95% of all marine litter in many localities. A vast majority of this debris is land-based plastic. Thus, Afghanistan can participate in the global initiative to solve these problems by implementing more efficient waste disposal and by pioneering a recycling industry which serves to benefit our own national gross product and the international community by providing dire services, provided we receive adequate funding for such an operation. The fact remains that Afghanistan, a land-locked country, lies 300 miles away from the nearest large body of water, the Arabian Sea. Afghanistan must protect the sanctity of our people’s fresh water sources, and thus supports all preventative measures taken by the UNEP in ensuring the quarantine of marine plastic debris and microplastics.