

Delegation from Austria

Position Paper for The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

Agenda Item: Enhancing the transition to sustainable energy as a response to the energy crisis and climate change

General Information About Austria: Austria is a country located at the southern part of central Europe, covering 83,878 km² and is bordered by Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Its capital is Vienna, official language is German and currency is euro. It has a population of 9 million people as of April 2022. Austria is a federal parliamentary republic and consists of 9 states. Austria has been a member of the United Nations (UN) since 1955 and Vienna has been one of the UN headquarters since 1980. Austria is one of the 193 member states of UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Vienna headquarter is also a UNEP office.

I. Energy Crisis

Energy is the single most important thing in the world because it is what drives economies and sustains societies. But aside from that it has been pushing our world towards its end by being the biggest contributor to climate change. There are two main kinds of energy which are renewable energy and non-renewable energy. Common renewable energy kinds are wind energy, hydropower, solar energy and geothermal energy. Common non-renewable energy sources are fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) and nuclear energy. Burning fossil fuels causes greenhouse gas (GSG) emissions which causes the temperatures to rise by trapping the Sun's heat in the Earth and therefore climate change. Sadly fossil fuels are by far the most common energy sources in the world. The current problems regarding energy sources are the lack of options besides fossil fuels and the lack of access by some countries especially the ones in sub-Saharan Africa. 13% of the world doesn't have access to modern energy, therefore that is what the UN is focusing its attention on. Many countries, including Austria have been taking precautions in order to reduce their GSG emissions. At 2020 carbon emissions from energy use around the world fell by 6.3% and oil consumption fell by 9.3%, to their lowest level since 2011. This was caused mostly by Covid-19 with the limitation of vehicle use. Since 2020 we haven't been able to keep those percentages high and the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has been continuously rising.

Austria is one of the global leaders in renewable energy. The main energy source of Austria is hydroelectric power and 63% of Lower Austria uses hydropower. Since 2002, the government has invested 2.8 billion euros in eco-electricity and isn't planning to stop until 100% of Austria is using renewable energy. Austria is also a strictly non-nuclear country. According to EU; Austria is currently working to recover from the pandemic and has plans to become more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. The plan consists of 32 investments and 27 reforms. 59% of the plan will support climate objectives.

II. Climate Change

The United Nations (UN) defines climate change as long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Climate changes can be caused by natural or unnatural sources but approximately for the last 200 they has been caused by unnatural sources, which are humans. As it was stated before main reason is the use of fossil fuels due to the GHG emissions. The UN had a goal to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1,5°C, which was decided at the Paris Agreement in 2016. Disappointingly the world is far from reaching that goal. The world is in a climate emergency, and according to the UN Secretary General it's a code red for humanity. The concentration of greenhouse gas emissions is off the charts and it's causing a economical and daily commotion around the world. The effects of climate change, such as rapid melting of glaciers, increasing numbers of hot days, is documented in many countries including Austria.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, records indicate an increase in the average annual temperature in Austria of about 2°C, which is significantly above the global temperature rise of 0,76°C. In order to reduce that number Austria has been contributing to the international efforts to pursue a climate-sensitive energy policy. In addition to its own strict legislation about the environment, Austria has also acknowledged and adopted additional verdicts in the field of landscape conservation that has been

agreed upon by the EU. Austria also puts great importance to ecological criteria therefore has strict regulations regarding the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

In the delegation of Austria's opinion, the world needs to understand how critical and disastrous the situation is and there should be more advertising in order to inform and affect people. Also, developed countries with a steady economy should be more open and eager to help developing countries that are still struggling with the negative effects of the pandemic. The help could be by sharing or trading renewable energy, which would help the developing country save money and it would help the world by reducing CHG. And if the deal is made by trade, the developed country wouldn't be affected bad enough to have a big impact on their economy. Lastly we believe that the "Leave no one behind." decree that was decided for the Glasgow Climate Act should be used in more, if not all, agreements.