

**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME**

**(UNEP)**

**AGENDA ITEM: FASHION INDUSTRIES' IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**CHAIR BOARD MEMBERS: İREM EMİR, EYLÜL FİDANOĞLU**

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## **Letter from President Chair**

Esteemed participants,

On behalf of TED Bodrum Model United Nations team, it is my utmost honor and pleasure to welcome you all to the fourth annual session of TBMUN. I am İrem Emir, currently an undergraduate at Bilkent University Faculty of Law, and I am delighted to serve as the President Chair of the United Nations Environment Programme committee.

In this annual session of TED Bodrum Model United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme committee will be focusing on fashion industries' impact on the environment . This topic has meticulously been selected in order to provide you a fruitful JMUN debate environment. I believe it is also an excellent opportunity for you to be a part of the UNEP committee considering the current environmental issues that our world is facing right now.

Throughout the conference, the UNEP committee will be following Harvard GA procedure and will be trying to come up with logical and practical solutions aiming to minimize the harm caused by fast fashion companies' practices on both environment and humanity, as well as putting all those ideas into an inclusive resolution paper.

Before I finish my letter, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my honorable deputy chair Eylül Fidanoğlu for the extreme effort she has put into our study guide. I also would like to thank both academic and organization teams for making TBMUN'21 happen.

Should you have any questions regarding the committee, please do not hesitate to contact me via [irem.emir@ug.bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:irem.emir@ug.bilkent.edu.tr) .

I am looking forward to meeting you all and guiding you through the journey.

Yours faithfully

İrem Emir

President Chair Responsible for United Nations Environment Programme

## **Letter from Deputy Chair**

Dear Delegates of the UNEP Committee,

My name is Eylül and I'll be your deputy chair in this year's online TBMUN JMUN committee. Even though this year will be my first experience as a chair board member I am honored to share this experience with my dear chair İrem and you extinguished delegates. I am really excited to be the deputy chair of İrem and be part of this prestigious conference. I wish the circumstances were different and we could have been together face to face but I promise you that this will not get in the way for us to have an amazing time. Before I finish my letter I would like to thank tbmun's secretary general and my dear friend Aybike Canatalay and the organization team for making this conference unique and amazing. I hope this study guide will help you to understand the main idea of the agenda. Feel free to get in contact with me and ask any questions you have in mind.

Kind Regards,

Eylül FİDANOĞLU

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE UNEP



United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. Their mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was founded in June 1972 as a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. The UNEP is the coordinating body for the United Nations' environmental activities. It has played a significant role in identifying and analyzing global environmental problems, developing regional and international environmental programs and conventions, and promoting environmental science and information. Among its most important tasks is assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.

## TOPIC OVERVIEW

From the fine linen dresses worn by women during the Egyptian Empire to hoodies and shirts worn by teens in the twenty-first century, fashion has always been a centrepiece to cultures around the world. While looking at the data of current fashion trends, it is clear that the idea of materialism reigns supreme and has kept hold of consumers across the globe.

Fashion marketing is the process of managing the flow of merchandise from the initial selection of designs to be produced to the presentation of products to retail customers, with the goal of maximizing a company's sales and profitability. Successful fashion marketing depends on understanding consumer desire and responding with appropriate products. As consumers worldwide buy more clothes, the growing market for cheap items and new styles is taking a toll on the environment. On average, people bought 60% more garments in 2014 than they did in 2000.

Fashion production makes up 10% of humanity's carbon emissions, dries up water sources, and pollutes rivers and streams. What's more, 85% of all textiles go to the dump each year. And washing some types of clothes sends thousands of bits of plastic into the ocean. UNEP has concluded that the fashion industry is the second-largest consumer of water, and exceeds the greenhouse gas emissions of both international flights and maritime shipping combined. The fashion industry is complex and multifaceted; as a result, it is often difficult to determine who is responsible for the environmental impacts. However, it is clear that the dangers in the new trend towards **fast fashion** must be carefully addressed. In essence, fast fashion is the process of taking catwalks or celebrity culture and transforming it into an affordable garment at rapid speeds. These trends are often short-lived since consumers wish to purchase new lines of clothing at a rapid pace. Thus, previous clothing sets that are no longer considered to be in style are quickly discarded. With these swift shifts in fashion trends, shortcuts are often taken to speed up the production process. This ends up harming the environment and civilians in the process. For instance, cheaper textiles such as polyester are used to create new garments, harming the environment along the way.

Another major concern is the working conditions in less wealthy parts of the world and in areas where human labor is cheaper. In past years, the international community has taken up marketing campaigns and agreements to break the cycle of environmental mistreatment by the fashion industry.

## **KEY WORDS**

**Fast-Fashion:** Fast fashion is the term used to describe clothing designs that move quickly from the catwalk to stores to take advantage of trends.

**Natural Fiber:** Natural fibers or natural fibres (see spelling differences) are fibers that are produced by plants, animals, and geological processes.

**MicroFiber:** While cotton is a natural fiber, microfiber is made from synthetic materials, typically a polyester-nylon blend.

**Greenhouse Gases:** Greenhouse gases are gases in Earth's atmosphere that trap heat. They let sunlight pass through the atmosphere, but they prevent the heat that the sunlight brings from leaving the atmosphere.

**Soil Degradation:** A change in the soil health status resulting in a diminished capacity of the ecosystem to provide goods and services for its beneficiaries.

**Toxic Clothing:** It represents toxic chemicals in the fabrics which are used to make our clothing.

**Excessive Consumerism:** Consumerism becomes excessive when it extends beyond what is needed.

**Fair Trade:** Defined simply, is when producers in developing countries are paid a fair price for their work, by companies in developed countries.

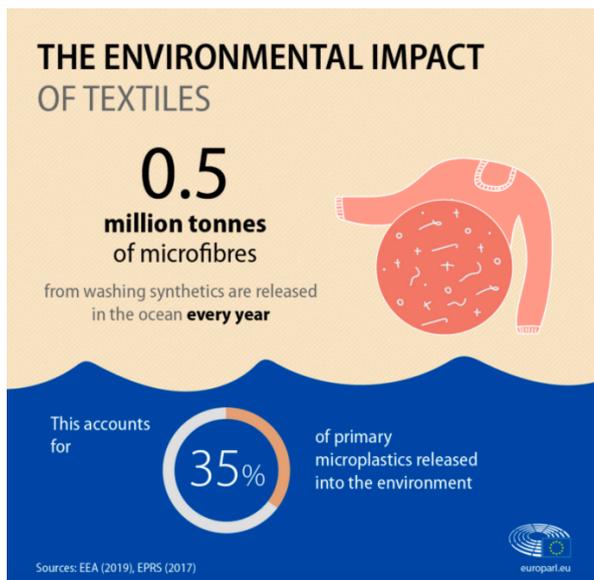
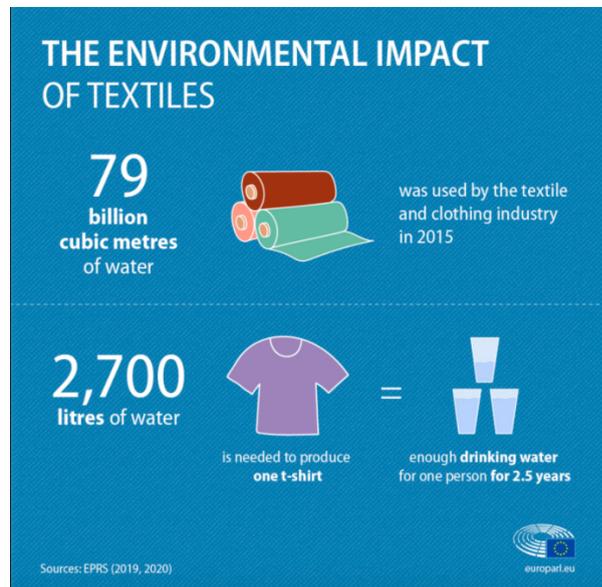
**Sustainable:** Good for the environment because it lasts a long time.

## BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT FASHION INDUSTRIES

### IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

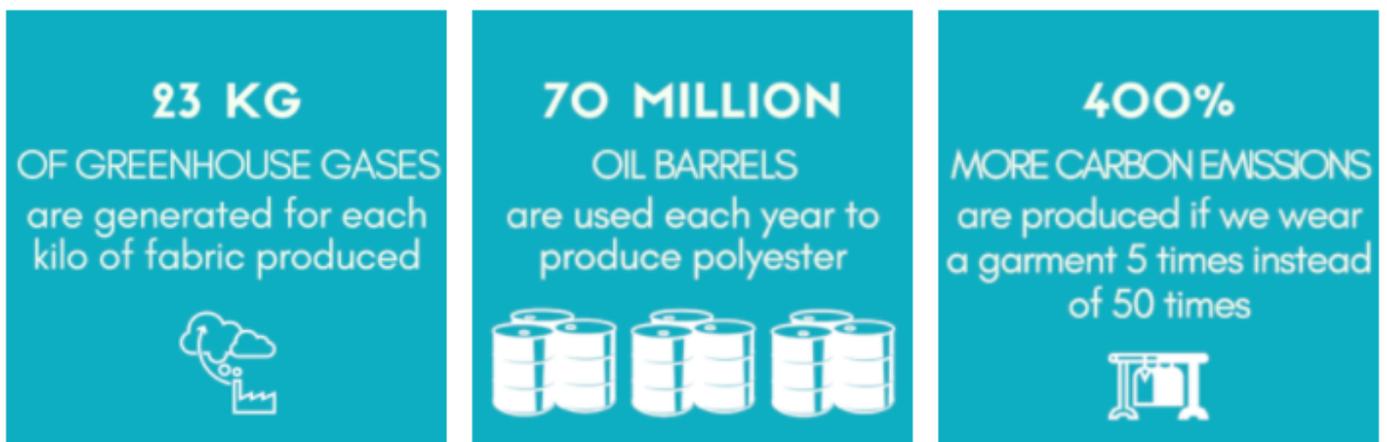
In 21st century almost every industry has an impact on the environment. As soon as these impacts were discovered, non-governmental organizations did start to take action for the situation. The fashion industry is the second largest polluter in the world just after the oil industry. And the environmental damage is increasing as the industry grows.

In most of the countries in which garments are produced, untreated toxic wastewaters from textiles factories are dumped directly into the rivers. Wastewater contains toxic substances such as lead, mercury, and arsenic, among others. These are extremely harmful for aquatic life and the health of the millions of people living by those rivers banks. The contamination also reaches the sea and eventually spreads around the globe. Another major source of water contamination is the use of fertilizers for cotton production, which heavily pollutes runoff waters and evaporation waters.



Chemicals are one of the main components in our clothes. They are used during fiber production, dyeing, bleaching, and wet processing of each of our garments. The heavy use of chemicals in cotton farming is causing diseases and premature death among cotton farmers, along with massive freshwater and ocean water pollution and **soil degradation**.

The soil is a fundamental element of our ecosystem. We need healthy soil for food production but also to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>. The massive, global degradation of soil is one of the main environmental issues our planet is currently facing. It presents a major threat to global food security and also contributes to global warming. The fashion industry plays a major part in degrading soil in different ways: overgrazing of pastures through cashmere goats and sheep raised for their wool; degradation of the soil due to massive use of chemicals to grow cotton; deforestation caused by wood-based fibers like rayon.



On the other hand countries such as China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and many more poor Asian countries are mostly affected by fast fashion and its implications. These countries' lands are often selected by other countries which take a large part in the consumer sector in order to establish their garment factories. This is the reason behind United States based fashion brands having other countries names on their tag stating where they are made.

## NUMERICAL ANALYSIS



The fashion industry is valued at around \$2.4 trillion and employs over 75 million people worldwide. It loses about \$500 billion of value every year due to the lack of recycling and clothes that are thrown into landfills before ever being sold.

The industry accounts for a staggering 8-10 percent of global carbon emissions more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Part of these emissions come from pumping water to irrigate crops like cotton, oil-based pesticides, machinery for harvesting, and emissions from transport. The industry is responsible for 24 percent of insecticides and 11 percent of pesticides.

In a world where 750 million people do not have access to drinking water, it would seem absurd to spend 1.5 trillion litres on the fashion industry every year. Without a doubt, fashion production wastes water in all aspects of production; in fact, 20,000 litres of water are needed to produce a single kilogram of cotton. As well, it could be possible to fulfill 85 percent of daily water demand in the entire population of India with the water it takes to make cotton in that country alone. In addition to using enough water to fill the Aral Sea, the fashion industry actively damages water supplies it does not use.

## THE COMMERCIALIZATION

Fabrics only increased in popularity when major companies such as H&M and Zara decided to adopt them. Both founded in 1947, Zara and H&M have taken the centre stage in the fashion world, with Zara holding the title of one of the largest fashion companies in retail scale. These two companies produced a significant portion of the 150 billion garments made in 2015, enough for everybody on the planet to receive 20 pieces of clothing.

The New York Times coined the term “fast fashion” to describe H&M’s mission, declaring that the process for a garment to go from a designer’s mind to being commercially sold would be only 15 days. With the rush of these global retail giants into America, the

attitude of the American public changed as it became more common to hunt for bargains to stay up with new trends.



Zara, which has been credited as having the first successful fast fashion business model, has a design-to-retail style of about five weeks and introduces more than 20 different collections a year.

Online retailers, which have been dubbed “ultra-fast fashion,” are even speedier: A report by Coresight Research found that the site Missguided releases about 1,000 new products monthly, and Fashion Nova’s CEO has said that it launches about 600 to 900 new styles every week. The rapid rate at which new capsule collections and trendy designs are being released only feeds into consumers desire to buy more.

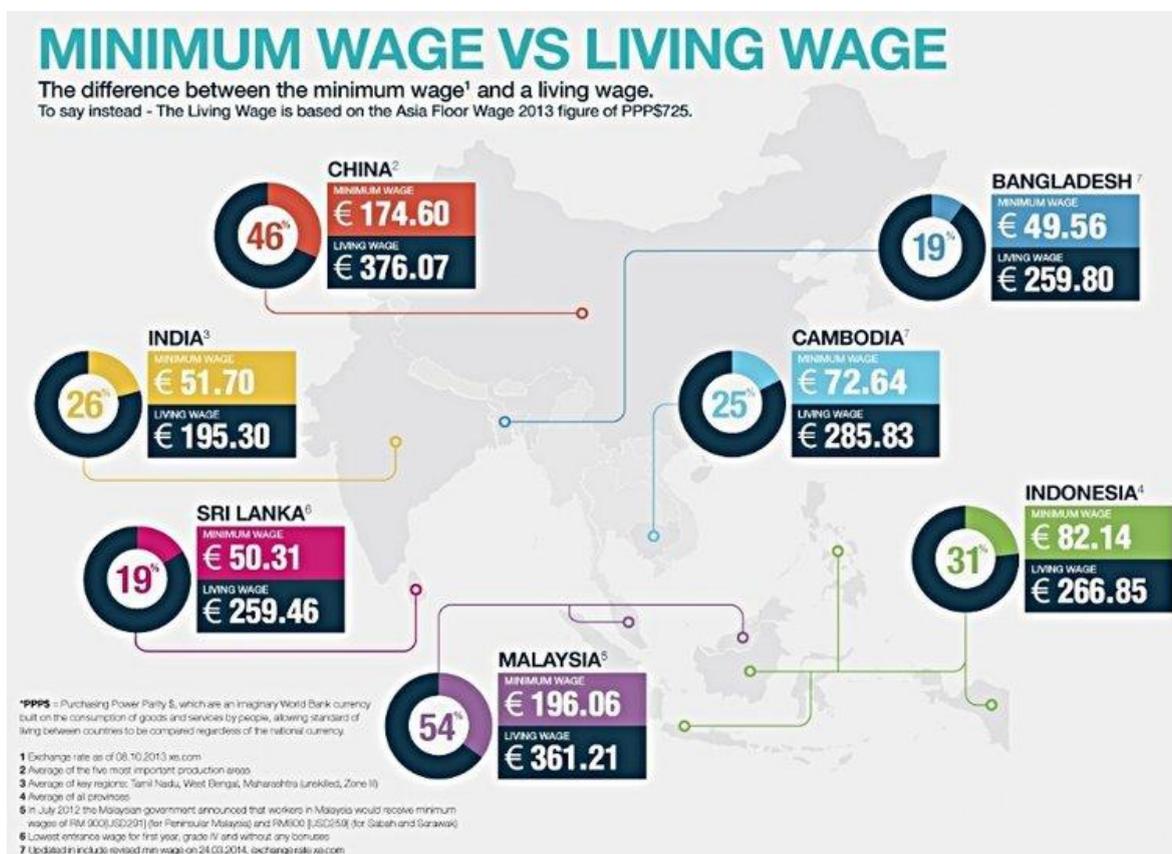
As the time passed and some of the brand’s sales were affected by the criticisms that have occurred because of the unsustainable products that those brands were producing. After those effectments, fashion brands such as Zara developed a new collection which aimed to produce sustainable fashion. It’s name was “Join Life”. This new applied procedure reduced the negative reactions upon the brands. The new clothing line was environment friendly, sustainable and animal friendly. They preferred to use organic cottons, recycled wool and they started to inform people and the other fashion brands about the implications that they were doing to the environment.

## COUNTRY BLOCS ACCORDING TO THE TOPIC

### BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA, TURKEY, HONG KONG, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES:

Most of the global apparel market begins in producer countries, where it is much cheaper and more work is done. The fashion production economies of Bangladesh, Turkey, Hong Kong, and the Philippines have been growing rapidly in the past couple years.

We often hear company owners saying that "for these workers, it is better than nothing", "at least we give them a job", and to a certain extent, they are right. But it is also right to say that they are exploiting the misery and taking advantage of poor populations who have no choice but to work for any salary, in any working conditions. Even the European Parliament is using the term "slave labour" to describe the current working conditions of garment workers in Asia. Consumer countries mostly clear out their fabric wastes to the countries which they use to produce products for their fashion brands. This action has several outcomes such as; destroying the environment, soiling degradation and water, air pollution etc.



## **USA, JAPAN, RUSSIA:**

Consumer countries pertain to countries on the higher end of the economic ladder, such as the United States and Japan (with a few exceptions that are outlined below). Within these countries, the main issue lies within the consumer's attitude towards fast fashion. The average consumer is not exposed to enough information about the detriments of their purchases and are therefore unable to take action. These countries mostly use protectorate countries to make them produce their products with low paid workers. Consumer countries usually follow the fast fashion model to continue on with their high standard fashion industries.

800 people  
*have been injured*  
in fire accidents in garment  
factories  
*in Bangladesh in 2013*



## **TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS**

- 1910 - The first fashion show was organized by Jeanne Paquin.
- 1940 - The fashion scene shifted from Paris to London and New York.
- 1947 - Clothing-retail companies H&M and Zara are founded, eventually becoming dominant competitors in the fast fashion market.
- 1980 - Sports brands like Nike, Reebok, Adidas came up with athletic clothes and became popular.
- 1990s-2000s - Demand for fast fashion exponentially increases as major companies from Europe bring new fashion trends to America.
- 2000 - Environmental concerns and the ethical impact of fashion began to touch the consciousness of the customers by the early years of this decade.
- 2011 - Greenpeace International, a global environmental activist organization, launches the Detox My Fashion campaign to increase public awareness around encouraging major companies to lead a toxic-free production line.
- 2019 – The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion has been established.

## **QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:**

- What are the major impacts of fast fashion on the environment?
- In what ways do fast fashion and major clothing companies harm the environment?
- Is the profit made through fast fashion practices worth the inhumane working conditions?
- Where does your country stand in the supply chain of the fashion industry and how can changing that help contribute to the whole industry?
- How can countries be held accountable for their sustainable fashion objectives?
- What incentives or deterrents can be put into place?
- Why has fast fashion risen in popularity both in the world and in your country?
- How do major fashion brands that are prevalent in your country affect the environment?
- Are there any efficient ways to minimize the fashion industry's damage on the environment?

## **USEFUL RESOURCES**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeVU2Ff4ffc>
- <https://youtu.be/IRAf6VY6zk>
- [https://youtu.be/Fw40Ge\\_PMwA](https://youtu.be/Fw40Ge_PMwA)

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