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Haarlem Model United Nations

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Issue:

Discussing the transport and processing of waste
originating from MEDC's

Forum:

Association of Southeast Asian Nations
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Position:	President

Introduction

The world is being greatly impacted by humans and our interactions with it. It is because of these interactions that we see the world heating up (due to climate change) and our oceans and land becoming more polluted amongst other issues. The latter of which we will be addressing within this research report, specifically how to mitigate prevent or/and deal with the waste from MEDC's which as aforementioned pollutes our lands and seas. This often evokes imagery of plastics washing up on beaches due to ocean pollution, which despite being a problem isn't what we are addressing. Instead we are addressing the transportation and processing of waste from MEDC's to LEDC's, referred to as the global waste trade. This is done to prevent usage of domestic machinery or (more) money to dispose of the waste as the same services are provided abroad for a substantially cheaper amount with the "associated problems of dealing with waste being mitigated". Many forms of waste are transported to these LEDC with the most predominant type being E-waste. The problems arise when the waste arrives in these "foreign landfills" as locals try to extract the valuables (such as copper) from this e-waste, which is extracted most frequently by burning them. This can result in toxic spillage and exposure which affect the air, land and water. Subsequently people who work or live nearby often become sick, meaning that the "associated problems of dealing with waste are not in reality mitigated, with them instead only being moved, often causing more problems as the LEDC's who deal with this waste usually have weaker infrastructures to help these people or ensure their safety.

Definition of Key Terms

MEDC

The term MEDC stands for "more economically developed country", and it is a term referring to a country in which the average income is above approximately \$15,000 PPP per year, in which most people have access to health care and education. Includes most of Europe, North America, parts of Latin America and East Asia.

LEDC

the term LEDC stands for “less economically developed country” (the inverse of MEDC) and it is a term referring to a country in which average incomes are low (generally below \$15,000 PPP per year), in which most people lack access to health care and education, often characterized by high levels of poverty. Includes many countries in Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia, South America and Southeast Asia and Africa.

Waste

Of a material, substance, or by-product) eliminated or discarded as no longer useful or required after the completion of a process.

E-waste

Pertains to waste of electronic products (including old phones, laptops, computers, calculators etc.) which are being moved for refurbishment, recycling or disposal, the last of which are the most common. The amount of e-waste is increasing due to technological advances, planned obsolescence amongst other factors and causes roughly 41.8 million tons of this waste annually, most of which end up in Asian nations. This waste is detrimental to the environmental and health of people working or living on the site, due to the fact that many of the products within are harmful (copper, cadmium, lead, brominated flame retardant, chromium or other heavy metals, chemicals or toxins) which leak from the items to nearby water and air (if burned or melted). Everyone who works or lives nearby to this site are all exposed to these deadly toxins and can suffer severe health problems.

Global waste trade

The global waste trade is an international trade between countries to treat, dispose or recycle waste. Often e-waste and other basic forms of waste are transported to LEDC's whilst the inverse is true for toxic and/or hazardous wastes.

General Overview

Countries which are more industrialised and economically developed tend to produce more solid waste, with the trend generally being that the higher a country's urbanization rate and economic development, the greater the amount of solid waste produced. Subsequently MEDC's which are both economically developed

and highly urbanised produce the most waste. This is supported by the patterns in the current international trade flows of waste which show that waste most frequently goes from being produced in the MEDCs and are exported and disposed of in LEDC's. This is clearly seen below:



“Rooted in racism and irrigated for social costs”, something which Lawrence Summers (Chief Economist of the World Bank) cemented in a 1991 memo arguing for waste management. Arguing for waste management in itself is a far cry from the accusations above however the quote below explains this;

"I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that... I've always thought that countries in Africa are vastly under polluted; their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles... Just between you and me shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries?"

This idea wasn't only held by him and subsequently explained why many find this trade to be racist without regard for anything but profit.

The idea that numerous scholars and researchers contribute to the prevalence of neoliberal economic policies and ideology for the trade. Neoliberalism aims to achieve an adjusted form of liberalism leaning to favour free-market capitalism, removing economics and markets from the discourse of social obligations and social costs. The transition to this neoliberal policy came in the 1980s and has enabled this sharp increase in the global waste trade due to this

information, lack of care or attention to social costs and obligations. As a policy, it aims to privatize everything in an economy (public services like healthcare, transport and of course waste management) and deregulate both the finances and labour in a country. This policy was and is subsequently blamed for causing a strong correlation between the steep increase in international waste trading and the undesirable impacts of this trade.

Trade liberalization (a core aspect to this ideology) entirely aims to deregulate trade (this means that international trade is subjected to no quotas, tariffs, or restrictions), and is designed to further integrate countries into the world's economy whilst simultaneously helping their own. Despite the fact that this has helped offer opportunity and a platform to reach economic success for countries, the consequences of these policies are widespread for LEDCs. It is so substantial that instead of facilitating growth, these countries end up with crippled economies in servitude to MEDC's leaving many health consequences as well. The International Monetary Fund, a supporter of this ideology has even stated that "progress of integration has been uneven in recent decades".

Currently the main arguments in favour of global waste trade argue that it offers vital economic transactions with countries which otherwise have little to offer the economy. Whilst this is *true to a certain extent the import of waste is fundamentally* ntries which are less developed should take on hazardous wastes as a way to increase profits and stimulate their economies, is one which is clearly fundamentally flawed. It is so extreme that the term Toxic colonialism has been dubbed for this practice where developed states utilise LEDC's as nothing more than inexpensive alternatives for the export or disposal of hazardous waste pollution causing economic dependency, exploitation of labour, and cultural inequality.

Despite 'good intentions' to help LEDC's with trade, the lack of regulations around this trade have made it incredibly easy for nations to become toxic dump yards for hazardous waste, a trend which isn't slowing down as a lack of opposing policies allowing this import of hazardous waste to increase. Despite the fact that the majority of toxic and hazardous waste producers are developed countries, less developed countries disproportionately suffer from associated negative health effects of the waste. These include poisoning, lung disease, infertility and more. Every year 400,000-1 million people in LEDC's die due to the international waste trade. a number which will undoubtedly increase as the word bank states that Without immediate action, global waste will increase by 70% by 2050. Hence it is imperative that countries ensure better protection for their people, and stricter regulations on this disposal to prevent these deaths.

Major Parties Involved

The USA and Europe (MEDC's)

With most waste coming from MEDC's, specifically the USA and the European Union, it is their responsibility to help mitigate this problem. To some extent this has been

done with the EU enforcing slightly stricter waste trade regulations than before but much must still be done. This is not to say that they can no longer participate in the international waste trade but instead that they must ensure that the waste they send is able to be dealt with safely. If this is not possible as is the case with many chemicals or other hazardous materials they must not send it.

LEDC's

Receiving the burden of international waste trade, LEDC's are subjected to most of the negative consequences of the waste. This means that they need to ensure ways to protect themselves and prevent waste, harmful to them, or waste, with which they are unable to deal, from being expected (amongst other problems).

Timeline of Key Events

The 1980's	Neoliberal policies allow for the first international waste trade.
March 22 1989	Basel convention is signed.
December 1989	Lomé IV Convention is signed.
January 30 1991	The Bamako Convention is signed.
December 10 1999	In the fifth meeting of the Basle convention "the Protocol on Liability and Compensation" is adopted
June 2000	Cotonou Agreement signed to replace the 1975 Lomé Convention.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

As is the case with many of the issues of the world there have many attempts to quell the issues associated with the international waste trade over the past 30 years. However, due to the sheer quantity of traded and difficult laws there to enforce, it has proven tough. Regardless of this fact, the following are the most notable attempts to do this over time:

Basel Convention

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the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (commonly referred to as the Basel Convention) is a 1989 treaty which lays the groundwork to establish regulations regarding the movement of hazardous wastes across borders.

ENFORCE

The Environmental Network for Optimizing Regulatory Compliance on Illegal Traffic is an internal body of the Basel Convention, to promote compliance with this convention. As it is multinational and multilateral, it allows to subjectively look at this transnational business.

Protocol on Liability and Compensation

In 1999 the Protocol on Liability and Compensation was passed and built off the Basel Convention. Unfortunately, it remains unsigned by most countries.

Lomé IV Convention

Signed by ACP this agreement supplements the Basel Convention and bans the "export of hazardous wastes from the European Community to ACP States".

The Bamako Convention

Due to dissatisfaction with the Basel Convention, multiple developing African nations established the Bamako Convention in 1991. This differs from the Basel Convention by banning all waste trade to these nations from countries outside the Organization of African Unity. This was not implemented effectively.

Possible Solutions

Regarding possible solutions to this problem, there is a plethora, ranging from recycling, diversion of waste and different methods of treatment, which will be expanded upon below.

First and foremost, on the smallest and most local levels, you can implement education about the importance of waste management, pushing the importance of recycling as well as the reduction of their product consumption and thus waste production. In addition to this, it remains imperative that this is addressed on many levels with the responsibility not only being placed on the civilians of a nation. Through effective waste management, we can ensure that we can deal with waste more effectively, continue to recycle what can be recycled, insure a higher environmental standard by not outputting harmful gases or simply transferring waste from one place to another and not dealing with it. Governments must ensure incentives for people and companies to deal with their waste properly and produce less via such policies as 'pay as you go', or 'carbon taxes' where polluters pay according to their impact on the environment. Moreover, it should subsidize those companies which help curb waste production or efficiently deal with it. Finally, it is

the responsibility of the government to adequately reprimand, punish and/or address, companies and individuals which cause substantial waste, dispose of their waste in an unsafe and unlawful manner or any other associated situation.

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