



Research Report

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The Issue of Overfishing in the South China Sea

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Personal Introduction

Bart van Donselaar

Dear delegates,
I'm Bart van Donselaar, I'm 17 years old and I will be your chair of the ECOSOC here at CalsMUN 2018, working together with Roan. This conference will mark my 14th MUN session and my 6th time chairing. I currently study at the Vechtdal College Hardenberg, where I follow a curriculum of natural sciences.

When I'm not occupied with my work for school, I'll be reading, watching videos online, listening to music, doing a little gaming and making my friends laugh at my stupidity and clumsiness. I also love to sing, even though I know my singing isn't good in any way.

I started being part of MUN's when I was 14 years old. After my first MUN conference, I have participated as a delegate, chair or secretariat member in other MUNs. Even though I adore the debating and public speaking you do at an MUN, I can't help but love the social aspect of MUNs, getting to know many different people and making friends. I hope you will learn a lot from your experiences in our committee!



Roan Kremer

Dear delegates, My name is Roan Kremer. I'm 17 years old and I will be your deputy chair of the ECOSOC, here at CalsMUN 2018, together with Bart. This will be my 7th MUN and my first time chairing. I study at the Vechtdal College Hardenberg, I follow a curriculum of culture and society. In my spare time I play football at my club, Hardenberg 85. I play in the U-19 2 and First Team as reserve goalkeeper. When I'm not playing football with my team, I'm most likely playing it with my friends or I'm hanging out with them. Besides that I also watch F1 from time to time and watch series like Game of Thrones. Although I love debating at an MUN, what truly makes an MUN unforgettable are the people who you share the experience with. I'm looking forward to meeting you and hope you will all learn a lot in our committee.





The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the key organizations within the UN. Established in 1946, the ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating the economic, social and related work of 14 UN specialized agencies, their functional commissions and five regional commissions. As such, the ECOSOC has broad responsibility for 70% of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system. The council consists of 54 member-states, which are elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms. Seats in the council are also allotted based on geographical representation of different regions of the world.

The ECOSOC holds one four-week session each year in July. Since 1998 additional meetings are held every April with the highest-ranking officials of the International Monetary Fund as well as the World Bank.

The main areas the ECOSOC focuses on, are sustainable development and growth, protection of human rights, accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals, higher living standards and employment as well as solving environmental issues. It furthermore oversees the work of a large number of UN programs and agencies. There are five regional commissions controlling how the UN's programs in a particular region are working together. The ECOSOC can enforce resolutions on its own and can suggest or make recommendations to the General Assembly as well.



Issue: The issue of overfishing in the South China Sea

'The issue of overfishing in the South China Sea' is one of our committee's three issues. After reading this document, you should have enough information to be able to write a proper policy statement/position paper and resolution on this issue. Of course, we still encourage you to research your nation's stance on the issue and any past actions they have taken relating to it.

An introduction to the issue

The South China Sea is a part of the Pacific Ocean. It is located to the south of China (hence the name) and surrounded by multiple countries, such as the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam. All of the countries listed above lay claim to some part of the South China Sea.

The South China Sea produces more fish than almost anywhere else. Therefore, the South China Sea harbours fisheries that are essential to the region's food security. These fisheries are able to thrive because of the great supply of fish in the South China Sea, and for that very reason the supply of fish has been declining over the past few years. This phenomenon is called overfishing, and poses a real threat to the long-term stability of the regions environment.

General information on the issue

The South China Sea has been an important trade- and energy supply route for decades, and now that the center of world trade shifts to the pacific rim, it is more important than ever. Trade and energy transport have been increasing, but the fishing industry has also been expanding in the area.

The South China Sea has a great biodiversity, and its fishing grounds are very rich. Fish has been an integral part of the diets of people in its coastal cities for decades, and it still is. However, because the global population is growing, the fishing industries need expand as well. This has resulted in an enormous decrease of matured fish in the sea, as well as the decay of the sea's coral reefs.

There are multiple territorial disputes in the South China Sea, however not every dispute is violent or even provocative. Still, many of these disputes cause international tension. A big part of the South China Sea is under de facto control by different countries, although it is all considered to be de jure international waters. This has caused multiple incidents with fishermen being put in danger.



Previous attempts to resolve the issue

One of the most important attempts to solve the issue has been the ruling of the arbitral tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which aimed to settle the dispute between China and the Philippines. The case brought forward by the Philippines regarded 15 key disputes between China and the Philippines, and was supported by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam. The tribunal ruled that 7 of the 15 points made by the Philippines were valid, hence greatly restricting China's claims to its nine-dash line. However, as China failed to recognise this ruling, this attempt to solve the issue has failed.

Possible solutions to the issue

A solution to overfishing that has been proven to be successful is passing legislation on the issue in countries that are involved. Even though this seems obvious, it is often overlooked as a solution that is too simple.

Overfishing is an issue that few people know of, and therefore it also is important to educate on the causes and effects of overfishing. This could also be extended to labels on seafood products in stores.

The maritime borders within the region are another sub-topic requiring a solution. One potential solution would be to enforce UNCLOS more strictly; a stance that China strongly rejects. Alternatively, the EEZs of each country in the region could be extended, providing them with the ability to regulate fishing in the area while not adding to or taking from any nation's territory. Alternatively, the whole region could be considered international waters, which would preserve the environment, however also leave many of the nations laying claim to the region unsatisfied.



Major organizations/countries involved

This issue is bound to a specific area of the world, though outside parties also have an influence on this issue. Furthermore, the issue of overfishing is a world-wide problem, so multiple countries are engaged with the general phenomenon of overfishing.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN is a regional organization with 10 members in Southeast Asia. It promotes international cooperation and facilitates multiple forms of integration amongst its members and other Asian nations. It addresses the territorial disputes in the South China Sea regularly, as many of its members exert claims over the South China Sea.

People's Republic of China (China)

As mentioned previously, China claims a large part of the South China Sea, defined by the Nine-Dash Line. There is a degree of animosity between China and other claimants to parts of the South China Sea because of this demarcation line, as it overlaps the exclusive economic zone claims of multiple countries in the area. Furthermore, China is probably the country that has the largest military presence in the area, and thus poses a large threat to regional peace. Besides having a large military presence, China also increases their dominance in the area by constructing artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Chinese fishermen are present in most of the area contained in the South China Sea, and because China is adamant in its claim of the South China Sea, they can -mostly- fish safely.

United States of America (USA)

The United States and China are currently in disagreement over the South China Sea. Disagreement is exacerbated by the fact that the US is not a member of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Nevertheless, the US has stood by its manoeuvres, claiming that "peaceful surveillance activities and other military activities without permission in a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)," is allowed under the convention. Additionally, a South China Sea free to access is in the US's economic and geopolitical interests.

Vietnam

Vietnam's claim is based on the UNCLOS treaty. Tensions with China have recently increased: they emphasized their claim on the Paracel Islands, and furthermore demanded China to stop cruises in the South China Sea. Vietnam has, in cooperation with Japan, started campaigning to stop illegal fishing in the South China Sea.



Timeline of related events

Before the 19th century

Before the 19th century, the region was mainly used for fishing and other maritime business, such as shipping routes. Much of this activity was dominated by empires that now form modern China (PRC) as well as Vietnam, with respective artifacts being found in the South China Sea. China claims that its fishermen have used the Spratly Islands since 200 BC, although these claims have not been backed up by internationally acknowledged evidence.

The 1990's and the 21st century

In 1984, the United Nations created the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in which regulations were set to the rights to maritime regions of each nation. It defines territorial waters as any waters that are no further than 22 kilometers from a nation's border, as well as an exclusive economic zones (EEZ) reaching up to 200 kilometers from the border. EEZs provide nations with the exclusive right to exploit natural resources, including, most importantly, seafood and oil. The Philippines ratified the convention in 1984, with China following in 1996, while the United States never ratified it. Despite this convention, there have been multiple incidents in the years leading up to 2010 in which fishermen were detained for fishing in "illegal" waters by the Philippines and China. There have also been incidents with (sometimes uninhabited) reefs, with China constructing huts on so-called "Mischief Reef" for its fishermen.

Key terms

Nine-Dash-Line

This demarcation line defines the claim both Taiwan and China make on the South China Sea. Their claims have more of a historical motivation, and do not find much ground in the UNCLOS treaty. Both parties use a dashed line instead of a contiguous line, which means that it isn't completely clear how the dashes would join up.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The UNCLOS is a treaty signed and ratified by most UN members. It serves to "define the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establish guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources". Many claims and rejections of claims find their argumentation in UNCLOS.



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