



LASALLECUNMUN 2025

WTO

(World Trade
Organization)



“Trade and
Environmental
Sustainability: growing
need to align trade
policies with
environmental
sustainability goals”

Background Guide





Dear delegates,

"Growth begins at the end of your comfort zone."

– *Tony Robbins*

Illustrious young people, bearers of minds with great intellectual capacity and creativity, you are welcomed to the great model 2025 my name is Kira Bibiana Acosta Castillo and I am very excited to invite you to the annual model to serve you in our committee of World trade organization as your president and together with your moderator Vida Mena Gonzales and your conference officer Fabrizio Soldi Esparza, we are happy to welcome you in this LASALLECUNMUN2025 we know will be full of excitement, laughter and, above all, learning!

Currently I am 15 years old and I go to La Salle Cancún in the administration area, I don't know what career I am going to study yet but I know what I will try my best and work and every day I will achieve my goals. I want to share with you that I have many hobbies, among them I share with Vida the love for drawing and with Fabrizio I share the love for sports, especially Basketball, I'm good at it and I play on several teams. In this committee we love animals, my favorite animals are dogs and I have two of them, Fabrizio has a peculiar taste and attraction for tigers and Vida loves all types of animals. I feel prepared to be president since last year I participated in LASALLECUNMUN2024 as a delegate and I feel that I had an effective performance helping the resolution of my committee. In total, I have participated in one MUN, just like the rest of this chair, but we can promise you that we are perfectly capable of guiding you to a succesfull model this year. Finally, I would like to add that my experience last year was pleasant and that is why I decided to repeat this opportunity but this time as president and what better way than to do it next to the people I love like my chair.

Postscript I want to add that MUN is a beautiful and new experience that should not be closed off, much less great opportunities to generate more knowledge that will be of great help in the future, out of fear, as many people do, that is why reiterating the phrase at the beginning, dare to do new things! I know that you can, dear delegates.

I am sure that you will do an excellent job but if at any point along your extraordinary path you get stuck, do not hesitate to ask your chair for help, we will be here for you.

Wish you the best of luck.

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the largest intergovernmental organization dedicated to facilitating trade between nations. By creating trade agreements and settling disputes between 20 member states, the WTO seeks to ensure that trade flows smoothly, fairly, predictably, and freely. This important mission places the WTO at the center of the global economy, affecting the lives of every nation's citizens.

At LASALLECUNMUN2025 delegates will simulate the WTO Ministerial Conference, where trade ministers from around the world meet to discuss a wide range of issues covered by WTO trade agreements.

Topic: "Trade and Environmental Sustainability: growing need to align trade policies with environmental sustainability goals"

INTRODUCTION

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Dispute Settlement Committee was created to provide a structured and efficient mechanism to resolve trade disputes between member countries. In this case, the topic we will discuss has a strong topic of discussion and controversy that may be due to several factors.

International trade can have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, it is crucial that trade policies align with sustainability objectives to mitigate negative effects such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Some countries may present themselves for or against depending on their culture, development, among other things, but that is why it is important to emphasize that both those responsible for trade and environmental policies recognize the importance of a rules-based multilateral trading system as part of the solution to the triple crisis of climate change, the loss of biodiversity and pollution.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between trade and environmental sustainability has been a significant topic of debate since the mid-20th century. This dynamic reflects the inherent tension between economic development driven by trade and the need to preserve natural resources and ecosystems. However, this conflict gained broader attention in the 1990s with the acceleration of globalization and trade liberalization, as the scale and scope of global trade magnified its environmental impacts.

One of the first notable cases highlighting this tension was the 1991 “Tuna-Dolphin” conflict between Mexico and the United States. This dispute arose due to the use of fishing nets that inadvertently captured and killed dolphins, a practice that provoked widespread concern among environmental advocates. In response, the United States imposed an embargo on tuna imports from Mexico, arguing that the fishing practices violated environmental norms. This action sparked a significant international debate on how to balance trade practices with environmental protection, marking a turning point in the integration of environmental considerations into global trade policies.

Since then, environmental provisions have gradually become a standard feature in trade agreements. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1994, was one of the first major trade deals to explicitly include environmental considerations, setting a precedent for future agreements. Over the years, this trend has expanded to include regional trade agreements and global frameworks. For example, during the 2000s, agreements like NAFTA’s successor, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), incorporated more robust environmental provisions, while multilateral initiatives such as the Paris Agreement emphasized the necessity of harmonizing trade with global climate objectives.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015 further underscored the importance of aligning trade policies with sustainability objectives. Specific targets, such as Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production and Goal 13 on climate action, directly address the need for sustainable trade practices. Additionally, agreements like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) have been instrumental in regulating trade to protect biodiversity and combat illegal trafficking in wildlife.

In recent years, global institutions have intensified efforts to enshrine environmental sustainability within the trade framework. For instance, in 2022, the UN General Assembly declared that a healthy environment is a human right, a landmark decision that reflects the growing consensus on the urgency of addressing environmental degradation. This declaration calls on Member States to strengthen policies that uphold this right, integrating sustainability as a core principle in both national and international trade policies.

These developments highlight the ongoing and complex challenge of designing trade policies that promote economic growth while safeguarding the environment. The task involves fostering innovation, incentivizing green technologies, and ensuring that trade agreements prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term economic gains.

CURRENT SITUATION

The conflict between trade and environmental sustainability has seen significant developments in recent years, with the United Nations playing a pivotal role in driving global awareness and action. In 2022, the UN declared a healthy environment a fundamental human right, urging Member States to intensify efforts to guarantee this right. This declaration

represents a growing recognition of the intrinsic link between environmental health and human well-being, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices in all sectors, including trade. A notable aspect of this push is the promotion of climate neutrality—a lifestyle and economic model aimed at producing no net greenhouse gas emissions, a cornerstone of global sustainability efforts.

That same year, the WTO's Trade and Environment Week brought renewed focus on making global trade systems more sustainable and resilient. This forum provided a platform for governments, international organizations, and private stakeholders to address critical environmental issues such as plastic pollution, deforestation, and the reform of fossil fuel subsidies. These discussions have sparked varied responses across the international community. For instance, while some nations have embraced stricter environmental policies, others have shown resistance due to concerns over economic and industrial impacts. Countries like China, Japan, and Indonesia, for example, have opposed measures such as the removal of fishing subsidies, arguing that such policies could disproportionately harm their industries and economic stability, particularly in sectors that rely heavily on marine resources.

This divergence in approaches highlights both the challenges and opportunities for increased international cooperation. On the one hand, global efforts to transition to a circular and low-carbon economy offer immense potential for reducing waste, conserving resources, and mitigating climate change. On the other hand, these measures risk disadvantaging developing nations that may lack the infrastructure, technology, or financial resources to comply with stringent environmental standards. Such disparities could exacerbate economic inequalities, underscoring the importance of ensuring that sustainability transitions are inclusive and equitable.

Trade agreements have served as both tools and sources of tension in this context. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) introduced environmental regulations that encouraged investments in sustainable technologies in Mexico, resulting in reduced emissions and the adoption of cleaner practices in some industries. However, the agreement also exposed the risks of insufficiently regulated economic activities, as it led to increased exploitation of natural resources and localized pollution in certain regions. These outcomes illustrate the dual-edged nature of trade agreements: while they can foster progress toward sustainability, they can also create unintended consequences when environmental considerations are not adequately integrated into their frameworks.

Looking forward, the global community faces the critical task of balancing trade policies with long-term sustainability goals. This will require greater alignment between economic and environmental priorities, such as incentivizing green technologies, implementing fair and transparent subsidy reforms, and strengthening international cooperation to address shared challenges. For developing countries, capacity-building initiatives, financial support, and technology transfers will be essential to ensuring their full participation in this transition without compromising their economic growth. Ultimately, achieving a harmonious relationship between trade and environmental sustainability is not only a policy imperative but a moral and practical necessity for securing a sustainable and equitable future for all.

COUNTRY BOX

Argentine Republic
Commonwealth of Australia
Dominion of Canada
Federation of Russia
Federal Republic of Germany
Federal Republic of Nigeria
Federative Republic of Brazil
Finland
French Republic
Kingdom of Norway
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Kingdom of Sweden
Kingdom of the Netherlands
People's Republic of China
Republic of India
Republic of Indonesia
Republic of Korea
Republic of Turkey
State of Japan
United Mexican States

GUIDE QUESTIONS

- I. What is your country's position on the relationship between international trade and environmental sustainability?
- II. How does international trade affect the environment in your country?
- III. What are your country's current trade policies and how do they affect the environment?
- IV. What are the main barriers and challenges that your country faces in implementing sustainable trade policies?

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