

2020 YMCA MUN GLOBAL SUMMIT TOPIC PAPER

RECLAIM, REINVENT, RESTORE: COMBATING WORLD WASTE

The world is full of garbage- and that has never been more apparent during the COVID-19 shutdown. Air quality is improving across the globe, the canals of Venice are clear and dolphins have returned, the skies are clear above Los Angeles for the first time in 30 years, and carbon emissions are down for the first time in 30 years. All of this was possible only by locking down the world's largest cities for weeks on end, forcing the vast majority of people to stay home, close schools, and cancel events. What will happen when things ever go back to normal?

There is a global waste problem- both in wasting natural resources, material resources, and once done being used, a problem with littering and untapped recycling potential. In the last 30 years, the industrialized world has done almost nothing to "reduce, reuse, or recycle." And sure, where one household installed a rain garden, an entire corporation buried chemical waste in a vacant lot. One step forward and two steps back.

The challenge is to think about waste on two levels. The first level is the easiest: clean up the waste. See litter? Pick it up. Leaking faucet- fix it. Leftover food- eat it. How can waste be contained and cleaned up.

The second level is more difficult because it is larger: how do we prevent waste in the future? How can product packaging be streamlined, how can environmental regulations be enforced, and how can recycling be made more affordable and accessible for all nations of the world to take part? Think about the issue of waste on a global scale and rather than pick up litter on the ground, find a way to make the item being littered not necessary in the first place. Does that mean using glass for consumer soda bottles and milk jugs? Does that mean no longer using Styrofoam? Does that mean closing factories that do not meet environmental standards? Whatever it is- remember- this is a big picture idea.

Think about the things in your daily life that are thrown away- packages from Amazon or Ebay, wrappers from candy bars, the bag of cereal that was inside of a cardboard

cereal box. Do these things need to be made out of what they are currently made out of? Do they need to exist? Are there alternatives to the way that they were made or sold? Challenge the items you buy to be more eco-friendly. There you will find a solution to the waste problem.