

Ecocide as an International Criminal Offense

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The topic of ecocide has been around and debated since the 1970s when the definition was first created. In the past, it has been proposed to admit ecocide as an international crime, but none of these attempts have been successful thus far. In more recent times, the discussion of ecocide has become all that more relevant as our planet has been facing mass environmental destruction. The United States is in favor of making ecocide an international crime that could be punishable similarly to war crimes and genocide. The illegalization of ecocide hopes to resolve the harm that humanity has done to the earth, ozone layer, as well as other parts of humanity. The United States also provides alternative ideas for energy that are less environmentally damaging, encourages support towards the ICC, and overall has an end goal of preventing further destruction and reversing some of our past mistakes before it's too late.

To begin, the United States encourages the alternative energy sources that the United States and other countries have the opportunity to use which can reduce the use of environmentally devastating fuel sources, and it urges the Environmental Protection Agency in its work ending the production of hydrofluorocarbon producing products. The United States intends to join the ICC, advises China and Russia to join as well, and invites other countries outside of the ICC and UN to join in the effort to prevent ecocide. The United States urges countries that can afford good quality solar panels which can last 40 plus years to convert to solar energy, and recommends wind energy as an alternative source of energy that, more often than not, causes no pollution, and is collected through wind turbines which could create jobs for over 100,000 of the working people in the U.S.

The United States also encourages developed countries to assist LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) in order to prevent mass destruction of natural environments for resources.

The United States calls for a member country of the ICC to submit a definition of ecocide to the UN secretary-general as a first step to get ecocide solidified as an international crime, and supports countries such as Vietnam in recovering from instances of widespread ecocide.

As stated by the UN website from the General Assembly, there are only eleven years left to prevent irreversible damage from climate change that has been devastating our planet for centuries, and every year the world loses roughly seven million hectares of forests which affects the oxygen levels of our planet. Noting with regret that the United States caused a mass act of ecocide when using chemicals such as Agent Orange in Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

The United States acknowledges the International Criminal Court (ICC), it was created to uphold the Roman Statute and acts separately and outside of the UN to prosecute individuals who break international law. Ecocide is the destruction of the natural environment by deliberate or negligent human actions, and we should acknowledge that President Biden's EPA orders a slash in climate-warming chemicals used in air-conditioning and refrigeration.

Pointing out that as stated by the ICC, international crime is defined as an act universally recognized as criminal and poses an international concern that may require interference. By acknowledging the United State's role in ecocide and understanding the dangers to the world as a whole, the greenhouse gasses emitted equated to a total of 14.5

trillion pounds of carbon dioxide in the U.S. in 2019. Noting that hydrofluorocarbons are the climate-warming chemicals widely used in air-conditioning and refrigeration units, the world is heading for a 3.2°C temperature rise this century, well above the Paris Agreement maximum target of 2°C, which as of March 31, 2020, 189 parties had ratified. The then-Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, proposed the idea of making ecocide an international crime in 1972, warning that rapid industrial progress could deplete natural resources at unsustainable levels, but it was declined because it was thought to be too radical.

The United States has had a regret filled past when it comes to ecocide. However, the United States firmly believes that the best course of action is to work with other countries in order to prevent future ecocide. Along with bringing prevalence to past instances of ecocide and the effect it has had on the global environment. In the past ecocide has been discussed as an international crime, unfortunately it has not become official. The government should consider pushing for more ethical energy sources such as solar and wind energy. The United States should also not only encourage other countries, but work ourselves to help LEDCs to protect the environment. Ecocide is an issue that may not be seen as much of a problem in everyday life, but it must be viewed as a threat not only to one country but rather the whole world.