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**Forum:** GC1: General Question and Program Support

**Issue:** The issue of over consumption with special emphasis on UAE

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## Introduction

As humans, we are dependent on consumption. Even in our daily lives, we consume food, water, and air as we breathe to maintain homeostasis. In addition to these needs, we consume other goods and services in order to spend our numbered days efficiently. As we have a short lifespan, we like to consume any presented offerings to live in the best way we can. Nevertheless, as we consume more, seeking an impossible satisfaction, we stray further away from happiness. The never-ending desire to possess more is now leading to an irreversible road for humanity. With the earth's population being nearly 7.8 billion the planet we occupy cannot keep up with our "supposed necessities". The United Nations estimates that the world population will reach 9.8 billion in the year 2050 and 11.2 in 2100. This growth will be highly concentrated in developing nations which also poses issues with inequality in consumption. The nations that will come into consumer dominance must abstain from abusing certain forms of consumption, especially energy consumption of CO<sub>2</sub>. The vicious cycle of shopping is leaving a mark behind and it is on the edge of becoming a dystopian plot. All of us are in this circle, contributing to it whether we like it or not as a small gear. At this point without diving further into the topic, I'd like to quote Jose Mujica or El Pepe, the retired president of Uruguay. "We have invented a mountain of superfluous needs. Shopping for new, discarding the old... That's a waste of our lives! When you buy something, you're not paying money for it. You're paying with the hours of life you had to spend earning that money. The difference is that life is one thing money can't buy. Life only gets shorter and it is pitiful to waste one's life and freedom that way." The bigger aspect we will also focus on is the effect of this on earth. It is such a bigger threat than any human's life as the future of our whole generation depends on this. Using more than we need makes the natural sources get used up faster than the earth can replenish them. We take too much stuff from nature, make it into other things that we use and then dispose of it carelessly into the atmosphere, the oceans, and the land. The overconsumption of energy, water, and raw materials worsens climate change and increases air pollution. It exhausts the planet's life support systems like the ones that provide us with freshwater and leaves us short of materials critical to our health and quality of life. Freshwater reserves, fish stocks, and forests are shrinking, many species are under threat of extinction and fertile land is being destroyed. It is time to take action now.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Overconsumption:** Overconsumption is a problem that is placing future generations at risk. It occurs when resources are excessively used at a rate that is greater than its production. Recent studies have demonstrated that this society has become extremely materialistic. We are accustomed to disposing of certain materials for a short-lived amount of time. Societies from



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wealthy countries with higher development are more prone to this behavior. An average American citizen uses over 10 times the resources a citizen uses in Zambia.

**Overpopulation:** When the number of individuals of a species exceeds a certain threshold. In most cases, the threshold that is exceeded is the carrying capacity, which is the maximum population size of a species that an ecosystem can support indefinitely. When the human population is below the carrying capacity, there are more than enough resources available for all individuals to survive without depleting the availability of the resources. As the population approaches the carrying capacity, resources become more limited because more people are relying on the same amount of resources.

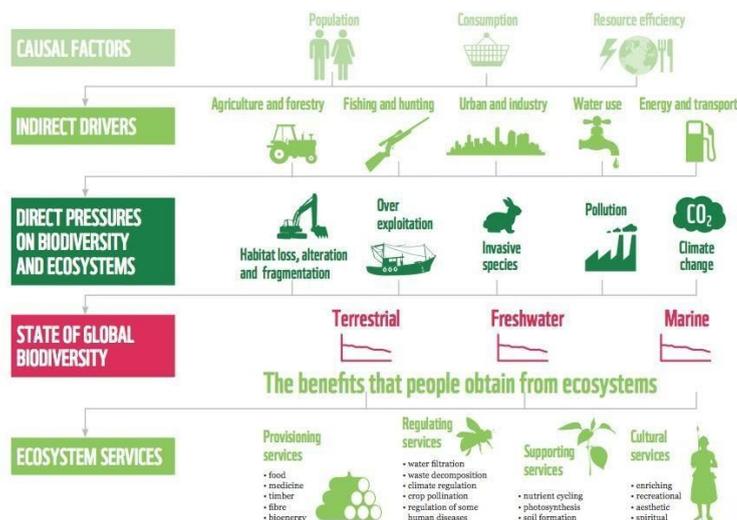
**Ecological Footprint:** “The impact of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated” (according to WWF)

**Overproduction:** Excessive production; production in excess of need or stipulated amount.

**Natural Resources:** Natural resources are resources that exist without the actions of the humankind. This includes all valued characteristics such as magnetic, gravitational, electrical properties and forces, etc. On Earth it includes sunlight, atmosphere, water, land (includes all minerals) along with all vegetation, crops and animal life that naturally subsists upon or within the previously identified characteristics and substances.

**Climatic Change:** A change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

**Overexploitation:** Exploitation of (removal of individuals or biomass from) a natural population at a rate greater than the population is able to match with its own recruitment, thus tending to drive the population towards extinction.





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## **Background Information**

### **Overconsumption in United Arab Emirates:**

Environmental challenges in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are caused by the exploitation of natural resources, rapid population growth, and high energy demand. The continuing temperature rise caused by global warming contributes to UAE's water scarcity, drought, rising sea level, and aridity. The countryside of the UAE, characterized by its great arid land, infrequent precipitation, and high temperatures are already facing long-term aridity. This precondition is very vulnerable to the effects of climate change and contributes to worsening water scarcity, quality, and water contamination.

The United Arab Emirates is located in the Middle East between Oman and Saudi Arabia, adjoining the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. In the last years, the impact of global warming on the UAE has intensified the already existing environmental issues, including water scarcity and limited agricultural land. The United Arab Emirates is a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, listed as having the 29th highest carbon dioxide emissions. Since the rise of the oil industry occurred in the early 21st century, the population and its consumption of energy have sharply increased.

The United Arab Emirates contains the world's seventh-largest natural resource of oil and the seventeenth-largest natural gas reserve. This possession of a high amount of valuable natural resources pushed the United Arab Emirates to the position of the ninth wealthiest country in the world by 2016 GDP per capita. These financial resources support their adaptation capacity to "climate change-induced challenges". Currently, they are investing in increasing air conditioning infrastructure, rainwater drainage systems, constructing flood barriers and new desalination plants. In June 2016 Abu Dhabi announced a project for an enhanced rainwater drainage system due to unnaturally occurring thunderstorms in March 2016 which caused 860 damages on properties and flooding.

Also, the three main characteristics of United Arab Emirates' politics contribute to the recent natural unsustainability: First, the Emirates feature components of a Rentier state. It is governed by an authoritarian political system and finally, both facts cause critical natural resource-related trades. In particular, UAE as a rentier state means that the federalization gains external rent from foreign individuals, companies, and governments. A rentier state's economy is predominated by the dependency on external rents. Oil revenues also count as external rent.



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## Timeline of Major Events

1963	The Clean Air Act sets the standard for modern air quality regulation. It set limits the amount of air pollution in the air and worked to make car manufacturers find a way of lessening emissions.
1967	The Environmental Defense Fund, a US-based nonprofit group with the mission to preserve the natural systems in which all life depends. It works with businesses, the government and communities to forward their cause.
1979	The first World Climate Conference takes place.
1987	World human population reached 5 billion mark.
1988	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is set up.
1989	The Montreal Protocol comes into effect, phasing out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other substances responsible for ozone depletion.
1992	At the Earth Summit in Rio, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is opened for signature along with its sister Rio Conventions, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
1994	The UNFCCC enters into force.
1997	The Kyoto Protocol is formally adopted in December at COP3. The Protocol legally binds developed countries to emission reduction targets.
2014	First session of UN Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme.



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## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

**Qatar:** Qatar, which has the highest per capita wealth in the world, is also the obesity capital of the world, with over half the population overweight, according to a report in the UK. Half of all adults in the state are classed as obese and 17 percent are suffering from diabetes, making it the most overweight country in the world, the report said. By way of comparison, a third of Americans are classed as obese and eight percent suffer from diabetes. With these facts emphasizing the overconsumption, Qatar is also the country with the highest carbon emissions per capita rate in the world. According to the Living Planet Report, produced by the World Wildlife Fund and the Global Footprint Network, among others, if every human being lived like the average Qatari, the Earth would need nearly five times more resources than it has. Why is Qatar highest on the list of consumers? The oil pumped from the desert country's rich sands isn't counted against the country's consumption (unless it's burned in-state), but energy usage is too high in this Middle Eastern country. Citizens are provided with free electricity and free water, which the Guardian's Fred Pearce described in a 2010 column as "liquid electricity," since water in the Middle East is often produced by desalinating seawater, an energy-intensive activity.

**Kuwait:** Besides Qatar and UAE, Kuwait is also one of the top world's wasters. Having the second-largest ecological footprint, in Kuwait, the consumption of oil, the country's main source of energy, is increasing year by year. In addition to the harsh climate and the rapid economic and construction growth in the country, there are further aspects of energy inefficiency. While 10% of the produced energy was being consumed locally in 1980, this percentage increased to 20% in 2005 and is expected to reach 40% by 2015. If this situation continues, the country will be forced to increase production or reduce exportation. Both options will cause serious problems to the country in meeting future energy demands due to its dependence on oil as a source of income, shortages of other energy resources, and the environmental care of the country. In this work, we assess the energy situation in Kuwait and its historical, current, and future conditions with a focus on the power plant sector, as it is the major consumer of energy in the country.

**United Arab Emirates:** UAE is currently consuming 12.3 times its resource capabilities, which includes water, arable land, and fish stocks every year. What is even more shocking is that the UAE consumption doubles the world's second-biggest resource spender, Japan, which goes through seven times its natural supply capacity. Despite the UAE's geographical conditions, which affect factors such as water or arable land, it's important to note that no other GCC states fall into the world's top 15 over-consumers. In North Africa, nonetheless, Egypt and Morocco are both using 2.7 and 1.8 times their resource capabilities, respectively. Globally, we are getting through the resources of more than one and a half Earth each year. Christophe Roturier, scientific director at the WWF, says: "From this day we're using more than the planet can replenish." The issue of overconsumption has, indeed, been recognized by UAE authorities, following reports that stated that the UAE consumes more coffee, energy, and food than any other GCC country. Commenting on the overuse of energy resources, the



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UAE's minister of energy, Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei, said earlier this year: "What is sad is that consumption is double or triple the average of the world."

**Denmark:** Denmark is among the world's top four polluters according to one of the largest scientific studies looking at the impact of humans on earth. The report suggests that if everyone in the world lived like a Dane, the global population would need the resources from about 4.5 Earth-like planets. Despite Denmark's high placement on the list, the Living Planet Report also praised the country for being "a world leader in harnessing and providing wind power".

"We have a lot to be proud of here in Denmark. We are still a leader in wind power and our efforts in that area mean that we make an increasingly larger difference in the world's climate and environment while at the same time creating growth and jobs here at home," WWF Denmark's John Nordbo said in a statement.

**United States of America:** America is well-known as the leader of over-consumption of food and fuel. CO2 emissions per capita and obesity rates in America are in each case twice as high as averages on the European continent. Corporate power contributes to both outcomes when it blocks tax and regulatory measures that might correct the excess. But private companies have more room to do this in America because of the nation's unique culture, political institutions, and material resources. Besides, the United States of America is one of the top 5 countries when it comes to ecological footprint. Stating that California has the same size ecological footprint as France will be enough to emphasize the situation the USA is currently in.

## **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

**Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979**

**Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Basel, 1989**

**Sustainable Development Goals, September 2015:** The 17 goals selected by the General Assembly has an overall focus on making the world a more livable place. Specifically, goals 6,7, 12 and 13 target our topic. They read as Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Responsible consumption and Production and Climate Action.

UAE has already started taking action regarding the 12th goal. Achieving energy efficiency and rationalization to reduce the effects of climate change is a key focus of the UAE Government; in addition to shifting towards a green economy capable of creating new job opportunities and more sustainable products and services. The UAE succeeded in reducing its ecological footprint to 7.75 hectares per person in 2014, from 11.68 hectares in 2006. In addition, several initiatives and safe management procedures of chemicals and wastes were launched to establish the infrastructure for reducing and recycling all the waste and to minimize their adverse impacts on human health. These procedures include Sea dumping,



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waste-to-energy projects, etc. More detail is can be found in the link included in the further research part.

**Paris Climate Agreement, December 2015:** The climate pact represented a huge historic step in re-imagining a fossil-free future for our planet. It is nothing short of amazing that nearly 200 countries around the world—including oil-exporting nations—agreed to keep global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius and, to the surprise of many, went even further by agreeing to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

**United Nations Assembly for the Environment: Takes place every 2 years**

## **Possible Solutions**

In order to resolve this issue, our delegates must recognize the correlation between the subjects of Economy, Politics, Humanitarian Status, and Natural Environment. Thus, the house must come up with solutions that will cover or at least consider all these topics. Yet the chair board will address four propositions:

1. Utilize UN sub-bodies and NGOs as little as possible plus it would be most beneficial and professional if the council refers to the IMF and/or the past UN Resolutions/Treaties.
2. Knowing that the topic is general, try to keep in mind all the subtitles under overconsumption (food, energy, plastic, etc. and the wastes created by this issue) while debating upon the topic.
3. Try developing stronger limitations because a group we are targeting is civilians. Changing their lifestyles won't be possible without manipulating some frames.
4. Besides, the civilians don't forget that the countries themselves are the highest overconsumers. As they work with higher numbers and don't have enough force to withhold them this is where we focus on. Try making clauses about detaining countries' markets and expenses.

## **Useful Links for Further Research**

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/ae.html>

<https://uaesdgs.ae/en/goals/responsible-consumption-and-production>

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