



NHSMUN

**UN-HABITAT
UPDATE PAPER**

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Dear Delegates,

I am Juliana (Juju) Johnson, and I am honored to be one of your Session 1 Assistant Directors for UN-Habitat at NHSMUN 51! While this is my first year on NHSMUN staff, I have had the privilege of competing at this conference twice throughout my five year Model UN career. My experience at NHSMUN is something I hold so dear to my heart and I am overjoyed to be able to share it all with you this upcoming March!

I am currently a freshman at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where I study Political Science. I was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles where I attended high school and was heavily immersed in Model United Nation, competing at conferences at USC, UCLA, UCSD, and NHSMUN! While I am not a part of Model UN here at UCSB, I am continuing my studies in international relations and hope to follow a pre-law track to work in human rights law. I contribute my passion for international law and advocacy directly to my time as a Model UN delegate, especially at NHSMUN, where I collaborated with delegates from all over the world on topics I care deeply about. Outside of Model UN, I love spending my time outdoors—hiking and rock climbing as well as playing guitar and writing my own music!! Any creative endeavor you can fathom, I am probably into it!

I cannot express enough the excitement I have to meet all of you and hear your incredibly thoughtful and detailed ideas regarding these topics. Within this update paper, you will be faced with many new ideas, events, and innovations to ponder in your preparation for the committee. If I could give one word of advice to you as delegates it would be to work towards finding a balance between respecting past successes as well as looking towards new and innovative ideas within your solutions. While it is important to look towards our past for context and advice, we also must accept the changing nature of our world and the place new technologies and diplomatic relations have in fostering a brighter and greener future for us all!

I am sending my best wishes to you all, and I cannot wait to see the incredible things you bring in March!

Best,

Juliana Johnson
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Dear Delegates,

I am Claire Koerber, one of your Assistant Directors for UN-Habitat Session I this March. This is my first year on staff at NHSMUN. However, I attended NHSMUN 50 as a delegate last year in COP28. I have participated in Model UN since eighth grade, attending local and travel conferences throughout high school. In my senior year, I helped host the Los Angeles Invitational Model UN Conference at my high school as the Economic and Social Council Under-Secretary General. This year, I chaired UCLA's high school conference BruinMUN. I am super excited about our committee and your discussions on two important and pertinent topics.

I am a freshman at UCLA studying microbiology, immunology, and molecular genetics (MIMG) with a minor in Spanish in the pre-med track. Outside of school, I love playing soccer and lacrosse, surfing, and playing with my dog (when I am home from college). I also make time each day to continue my Duolingo streak (currently 1400+ days) learning Spanish. Participating in Model UN has greatly impacted my life in many ways, and I am glad I get to continue my Model UN experience (and share it with you all).

The following update paper provides an overview of the various developments in sustainable construction over the last five months. It explores new aspects of the issue and illustrates the innovative ways some countries have chosen to implement sustainability in their construction industry. As you research, you should dive deeper into the topics discussed in the background guide and this paper. You should also look for recent developments in sustainable construction that can provide further insight. I look forward to hearing diplomatic discussions and well-thought-out, feasible solutions to improve construction sustainability.

I am very excited to meet you all in a few months!

Sincerely,

Claire Koerber

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Assistant Director, Session I

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Anna Barrett, and I'll be one of your Assistant Directors for UN-Habitat at NHSMUN 2025! I started as a delegate like you at NHSMUN in 2023, when I represented Lebanon in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL). I'm so happy to be returning as an Assistant Director! NHSMUN is such a fantastic opportunity to get to know and interact with delegates from around the world, engage in meaningful and challenging debates, and explore issues and topics that leave you with a deeper understanding of our world and the role you all have to play in it. As an Assistant Director, it is my hope that your experiences as a delegate in UN-Habitat leave you with skills and knowledge that will serve you throughout your Model UN career and beyond.

I'm originally from East Brunswick, New Jersey, but I currently live in Washington, DC, where I'm a first-year student at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, double majoring in International Affairs, with a concentration in International Politics, and Political Science. I'm also proud to be a member of GW's internationally top-ranked Model UN team, which competes on the collegiate MUN circuit, and of GW's International Affairs Society. Some of my personal interests include political history and philosophy, knitting, and experimenting with soup and cookie recipes. MUN, more than anything else, has shaped both my high school and college experiences and taught me many valuable lessons both in and out of committee. Among these lessons: Speak with confidence, always be willing to compromise, and get to know your fellow delegates as people- you never know when your co-sponsor or bloc buddy might turn into a lifelong friend.

No matter what field of study or career you end up pursuing, diplomacy and cooperation will play a part. MUN allows you to develop these skills while also providing an outlet for your creativity. Take NHSMUN as an opportunity to become a better public speaker, writer, and delegate, of course, but remember to have fun, too! Let your personality come through in your solutions, think outside of the box, and be creative as you work to solve the issues put forward in the background guide and update paper. I know that the debate that will take place in UN-Habitat Session II is going to be a reflection of all the hard work, dedication, and passion that you all have as delegates, as well as of the hard work that NHSMUN's staff has put into this committee and the conference as a whole, and I'm so excited to see it!

I can't wait to meet all of you in committee!

Anna Barrett

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Assistant Director, Session II

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Greetings, Delegates!

I am Angel Eunisse Yanga, one of the Assistant Directors for Session II. I warmly welcome you to the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)! I have been with NHSMUN since 2023 as a delegate, and this is my first year as a staff member. In NHSMUN 2023, I represented Brazil in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I was forever hooked by the culture, the competitive spirit of my peers, and the unforgettable experiences I had around New York City. I can't wait to relive my Model UN experiences as your Assistant Director at the conference! I look forward to fostering a welcoming environment for our new delegates while maintaining a challenging and developmental experience for our advanced delegates, ultimately promoting diplomacy, learning, and education.

I've lived in the Philippines for most of my life, completed all four high school years in Los Angeles, California, and now live in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. I am majoring in Biology on a pre-med track at Bucknell University, but my four years of high school Model UN inspired me to continue my involvement in the activity. This past summer, I interned as an engineer at a medical device company, combining my love for biology and engineering by working on developing and maintaining insulin pumps for diabetic patients. Being fully immersed in MUN for a few years now has definitely shaped who I am today. It has taught me persistence and how to fight for what I want to achieve. I've learned how to conduct research and communicate complicated information in a way that others can easily understand. It has built my confidence and inspired me to mentor others in any way I can. The rigorous debates and conversations in and out of committee sessions have made me a creative and inquisitive individual—two irreplaceable skills in real life.

On behalf of all the Assistant Directors in UN-Habitat, we are incredibly pleased to bring you an Update Paper containing the most recent information relevant to our topics in committee. Both topics in our committee resources address some of the most pressing global and national issues. I am eager to witness your creative and niche solutions as you debate these issues at NHSMUN 2025.

I wish you the very best at this year's conference and look forward to meeting you all in person soon!

Respectfully,

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UN-HABITAT
NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC A: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF SPORTING EVENTS

Photo Credit: Ibex73

Introduction

The past few months have been packed with preparations for several upcoming sporting events. These include the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. North America will be very busy with the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will take place across the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and the 2028 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles. These events have generated some controversy, including accusations of forceful displacement of unhoused people. There has also been an increased police presence that may disproportionately affect minorities in the case of the Los Angeles Olympics.¹ These concerns have resulted in local and city-wide protest movements advocating for the 2028 Summer Games to be moved elsewhere. Ideally this would be at a location already prepared to host the Games. Protesters have said that Los Angeles is not currently prepared to host such a large, international event.² Complaints include a small public transportation system, Los Angeles' large unhoused population, and air pollution levels. Additionally, the process of updating Los Angeles' infrastructure, expanding transportation options, and reducing air pollution will be costly and disruptive to people living and working in the city.³

Regularly scheduled sporting events, including smaller tournaments and regular season games or matches, are also a concern to those who reside in neighborhoods surrounding event venues. These concerns arise due to the noise and light pollution that sporting events tend to create. This has been exacerbated recently by the growing popularity of motorsports and the construction of new stadiums and fields.⁴ This has gone along with an increase in demand for live sports and entertainment. Often, stadiums are constructed in residential areas outside of city centers, making them more disruptive to residents than a stadium in a primarily commercial area, which may be.⁵ Given the possible adverse health and lifestyle impacts of frequent exposure to excessive light and sound, especially at night when many sports events are held, there is often pushback from residents against the construction of new sporting venues.⁶ Additionally, noise and air pollution can cause environmental harm. This may include disruptions to marine ecosystems and a loss of biodiversity.⁷

2028 Olympics Criticisms and Protests

In the past few months, Los Angeles has begun preparing for the 2028 Summer Olympic Games. The city of Los Angeles and the International Olympic Committee have chosen to highlight sustainability and the environment during the Games. However, concerns persist over the human cost of the Games. Mayor Karen Bass of Los Angeles has faced significant criticism over the treatment of unhoused and low-income people in preparation for the Games, highlighting forced displacement and evictions. Mayor Bass and the city of Los Angeles have stated that they have no intention of moving people out of the city. They rather intend to work towards providing housing for those currently living on the streets.⁸ The Inside Safe program, created by the city to dismantle encampments, provides housing by contracting hotels and motels, with the city paying for the rooms. Although the program has seen some degree of success thus

1 Andrea Gutierrez, "Why are Los Angeles activists organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?," *Prism*, September 5, 2024, <https://prismreports.org/2024/09/05/los-angeles-olympics-protests/>.

2 Gutierrez, "Why are Los Angeles activists organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

3 Esme Deadman, "A 'No-Car' Olympics: How LA 2028 aims to learn from the 1984 Games," *The Sustainability Report*, October 31, 2024, <https://sustainabilityreport.com/2024/10/31/a-no-car-olympics-how-la-2028-aims-to-learn-from-the-1984-games>.

4 Kristy Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events," Audible, September 10, 2023, <https://www.audible.com/preventative-care/how-to-protect-your-hearing-at-loud-events>.

5 Aigerim Altayeva, "Exploring the impact of impulsive urban sounds and noise on open sports training through real-time AI sound analysis," *Retos* 60, (September 2024): 755-763, <http://dx.doi.org/10.47197/retos.v60.109431>.

6 Kristy Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events," Audible, September 10, 2023, <https://www.audible.com/preventative-care/how-to-protect-your-hearing-at-loud-events>.

7 Emily Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures," *Eos*, October 18, 2024, <https://eos.org/articles/sailing-spectators-sounds-could-harm-marine-creatures>.

8 Liam Dillon, David Zahniser, and Doug Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A. for 2028 Olympics. But what will L.A. do?," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/homeless-housing/story/2024-08-16/la-olympics-homelessness>.

far, Los Angeles still has a large unhoused population.⁹ Many of these unhoused people have also built up communities and support systems that they may not want to leave behind. Additionally, the influx of tourists from the Olympic Games might decrease the availability of temporary shelters.¹⁰

Recent estimates in the United States have noted a significant increase of as much as 18 percent in unsheltered homelessness across the country.¹¹ Los Angeles, however, has seen somewhat of a decrease. According to data collected by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the city of Los Angeles experienced a five percent drop in homelessness over 2024.¹² The rise in homelessness across the country may be attributed to inflation, economic instability, and the cost of living.¹³ While these factors exist in Los Angeles, the Inside Safe program has contributed to helping to prevent an increase in homelessness in LA. The agency reported that in the first seven months of 2024, nearly 3,000 unhoused people were moved into temporary housing.¹⁴ Movement into temporary housing does not, however, guarantee permanent housing, which UN-Habitat defines as a human right.¹⁵ The United Nations defines permanent housing as housing without the risk of forced eviction or displacement.¹⁶ Over a quarter of people moved by Inside Safe in that period are estimated to have returned to living on the streets.¹⁷ It is important to note that while homelessness in Los Angeles may have decreased over the past year, Los Angeles's unhoused population has grown significantly since the city was awarded its bid for the 2028 Summer Olympic Games in 2017.¹⁸ While the Inside Safe program does appear to be working, rising national rates of homelessness and an overall upward trend in Los Angeles

mean that it will be challenging to reduce the number of unhoused people in LA significantly.

As the Games approach, the effectiveness of the Inside Safe program may be hindered by the financial incentives for hotel and motel owners to back out of contracts with the city. Currently, the city of Los Angeles pays hotels and motels around USD 105 per room to provide unhoused people with temporary shelter.¹⁹ With the expected influx of tourists from around the world to Los Angeles ahead of the Games, however, the Los Angeles Times reports that hotels and motels may choose to cancel their contracts to charge higher rates for their rooms to Olympic tourists.²⁰ Los Angeles has marketed the Olympics as a financial boost to the city precisely because of the tourism that the Summer Olympics generates, and the hospitality industry has some of the greatest financial incentives to welcome the Games.²¹

Also, many residents disagree with the act of tearing down unhoused encampments. These communities of unhoused people are typically located in a small area and have been torn down by local police.²² Residents have criticized Inside Safe for forcefully displacing communities of unhoused people and the networks that they have created.²³ Since a high number of people moved off the streets by Inside Safe and went on to return to homelessness, it is understandable why opposition to removing stable communities exists.²⁴ The city must find a balance between safely working to decrease homelessness and not simply removing unhoused people from view. In line with UN Habitat's mandate to provide sustainable urbanization, Los Angeles must work to preserve existing communities, and provide people moved off of the streets with adequate

9 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

10 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

11 Kanishka Singh, "US Homelessness Rose by Record 18% in Latest Annual Data," *Reuters*, December 27, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-homelessness-rose-by-record-18-latest-annual-data-2024-12-27/>.

12 "Despite 18% jump in homelessness nationwide, Los Angeles' numbers see notable decrease," *CBS Los Angeles*, December 28, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/despite-18-jump-in-homelessness-nationwide-los-angeles-numbers-see-notable-decrease>.

13 Singh, "US Homelessness Rose by Record 18%."

14 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

15 "Housing," UN-Habitat, accessed January 4, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/topic/housing>.

16 "The Human Right to Adequate Housing," Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, accessed January 4, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>.

17 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

18 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

19 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

20 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

21 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."

22 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles Activists Organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics??"

23 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles Activists Organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics??"

24 Dillon, Zahniser, and Smith, "Bass vows not to bus homeless people out of L.A."



Los Angeles Freeway Traffic, much of the transportation infrastructure in LA is centered around freeways

Credit: 4X4 Blazer 1776

support systems.

The city of Los Angeles has pledged to create a car-free Olympic Games in 2028, highlighting public transportation and walkable options.²⁵ Los Angeles is known for congestion and traffic, so reorganizing the city around car-free options in time for the Olympics would involve significant and costly operations. The Twenty Eight By '28 project aims to achieve this transition by completing 28 new public transit-centered projects by 2028.²⁶ They highlight increased bus efficiency, a light rail system, and a decrease in air pollution.²⁷ Unfortunately, there have been delays, especially with the light rail plans. Therefore, the bulk of Los Angeles's infrastructure development will take the form of improvements to the bus systems. The city has proposed additional carpool lanes and reduced or eliminated tolls for vehicles in these lanes. To be more environmentally friendly, Los Angeles is looking to promote the use of electric cars among citizens of LA and spectators as well. One example of this is the construction of a roadway that charges electric vehicles as they drive.²⁸ The

process of electrification has also included the incorporation of electric buses into new fleets, which LA plans to promote the use among Olympic attendees.²⁹ Additionally, the city is looking to extend metro train lines to transport athletes from the Olympic Village to the city.³⁰ In 1984, the last time Los Angeles hosted the Olympic Games, air pollution and smog caused health and scheduling issues for athletes and events. This included recorded sicknesses in runners and the fact that marathons had to be run in the morning to avoid high smog levels.³¹ Part of Los Angeles's plan for the upcoming Games will involve efforts to reduce air pollution in addition to a reduction in car dependence, which is a contributing factor to the buildup of harmful pollutants. In addition to causing possible safety issues for athletes, air pollution can also pose a threat to tourists, spectators, and local residents. If Los Angeles aims to promote walking and cycling as alternatives to motor vehicle-based options, it must first address the issues that exposure to air pollution poses. Issues linked to air pollution include difficulty breathing, asthma attacks, and

25 Deadman, "A 'No-Car' Olympics."

26 "Attachment A Revised Twenty-Eight by '28 Project List," Los Angeles Metro, March 28, 2023, <https://metro.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6582532&GUID=8477C46B-1301-411C-B426-F4BC46160281>.

27 "28 Projects by 2028 Games - LA Metro," LA Metro, September 27, 2024, <https://www.metro.net/28x28>.

28 Chris Harris, "Electric avenue: LA getting car charging road ahead of 2028 Olympics," *New York Post*, November 30, 2024, <https://nypost.com/2024/11/30/us-news/electric-avenue-la-getting-car-charging-road-ahead-of-2028-olympics/>.

29 Jill Cowan and Soumya Karlamangla, "Los Angeles has Promised a 'Car-Free' Olympics in 2028. Can It Do It?," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/10/us/los-angeles-olympics-traffic-transport.html>.

30 Cowan and Karlamangla, "Los Angeles has Promised a 'Car-Free Olympics in 2028'"

31 Deadman, "A 'No-Car' Olympics"

skin irritation. Additionally, exposure to poor air quality may reduce athletic performance capabilities.³²

Recently, the NOlympics (“No Olympics”) protest movement has formed among residents of Los Angeles to oppose the proposed changes to the city that the Olympics will bring.³³ Activists have noted previously successful anti-Olympics movements, such as the movements to keep the Winter Olympics out of Denver in 1976 and the Summer Olympics out of Boston in 2024, as inspiration.³⁴ Some of the concerns shared by activists include forced evictions and displacements and the adverse effects of increased police presence and militarized security. NOlympics protesters point out that evictions and increased policing will likely have a disproportionate impact on people of color and lower-income communities. Improvements to Los Angeles’ transportation will also be costly to taxpayers. The current estimated cost of ‘Twenty-Eight Before ‘28 is around USD 4.9 billion.³⁵ Supporters of these reforms argue that improvements in bus and light rail systems and highway changes will have long-term positive impacts that Los Angeles needs. They believe these improvements are necessary for the city and that the Olympics will only help complete these improvement projects faster. Overall, the NOlympics, like previous movements, highlight that the city often takes on the environmental and social costs of the Olympics without thinking about how the people already living there will be affected.

According to the NOlympics LA website, activists fear that the increased police presence, security measures, and surveillance in Los Angeles that the Olympic Games will bring may lead to increases in violence against, arrests of, and detentions of minorities.³⁶ Protest organizers cite Black Lives Matter movement leaders in their opposition to the Olympics

on racial justice grounds. NOlympics cites links between the 1992 riots in Los Angeles and increased police presence in the city as a result of the 1984 Olympics in their arguments that the Olympics will exacerbate existing problems of mass incarceration and police brutality in the city.³⁷ Pick a Side LA, an offshoot of NOlympics created to highlight the issue of police presence, provides examples of how the Olympics have been used to increase surveillance and militarize the police. They persist in following the Games. Pick a Side argues that the Olympics have brought increased rates of death at the hands of police forces, most notably during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.³⁸

NOlympics also cites the popularity of short-term rentals such as Airbnb as a reason to oppose the Olympics. Short-term rentals are illegal in Los Angeles, yet Airbnb remains a popular alternative to hotels due to their privacy and spaciousness.³⁹ Those who oppose Airbnb argue that they encourage landowners to raise rents, pricing out tenants so that their homes can be repurposed as short-term rentals. This often results in higher rents for those living around an Airbnb. NOlympics organizers consider this to be a form of gentrification, made worse by the fact that Airbnb is currently a partner of the Olympics.⁴⁰ In response, NOlympics has launched an online tool called #LocksOnMyBlock (“Locks on my Block”) that tracks known Airbnb locations in Los Angeles and surrounding areas.⁴¹ Entries on the website include addresses, photos, dates, and details about the landlords that run the Airbnb. Users are also encouraged to submit information about Airbnb in their area.

Recently, the NOlympics movement has been holding protests outside the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, a stadium that had been used in previous Olympic Games in 1932 and

32 Deadman, “A ‘No-Car’ Olympics”

33 “About,” NOlympics LA, 2025, <https://nolympicsla.com/about/>.

34 Gutierrez, “Why Are Los Angeles Activists Organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?”

35 Deadman, “A ‘No-Car’ Olympics”

36 “Around the World: A Pattern of Policing,” NOlympics LA, 2025, <https://nolympicsla.com/pick-a-side-la/around-the-world-a-pattern-of-policing/>.

37 Dave Zirin, “Want to Understand the 1992 LA Riots? Start with the 1984 LA Olympics,” *The Nation*, April 30, 2012, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/want-understand-1992-la-riots-start-1984-la-olympics>.

38 “Rio 2016: Has Brazil Lost Even Before the Olympics Have Begun?,” *Amnesty International*, July 4, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/07/rio-2016-has-brazil-lost-even-before-the-olympics-have-begun>.

39 Lisa Kwon, “Airbnbs in Los Angeles Are Not Going Away,” *Knock LA*, April 25, 2021, <https://knock-la.com/report-illegal-airbnb-los-angeles/>.

40 “Home Page,” NOlympics LA, <https://nolympicsla.com/>.

41 “Locks on My Block,” NOlympics LA, n.d., <https://locks.netlify.app/>.

1984. Protests have also been held outside of Los Angeles City Hall.⁴² While NOlympics has been protesting since Los Angeles was announced as the 2028 host city in 2017, recent protests have taken place this summer, including outside the Memorial Coliseum on July 23, 2024.⁴³ Additionally, the NOlympics hold regular meetings and advertise on social media. While these protests have been relatively small, NOlympics has partnered itself with many other anti-Olympics groups around the world, including activists who had protested against the 2024 Summer Games in Paris, the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo, the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, and the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games.⁴⁴

Sports-driven Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is the excessive and loud presence of sounds in the environment. Often, noise levels are measured with levels of decibels (dB). Decibels are the unit measure for sound, making it helpful in measuring noise pollution within a given

area.⁴⁵ To put the dB in perspective, whispering is about 20-30 dB, everyday conversations are 60-70 dB, and city traffic is 70-85 dB.⁴⁶ It is predicted that noise levels at or above 100 dB can cause permanent hearing damage in less than 15 minutes.⁴⁷ During sporting events, noise levels are expected to reach 90-115 or more dB due to loud music, cheering crowds, and the sounds of the event itself.⁴⁸ These elevated noise levels often begin long before the event, as ongoing construction and temporary seating are put in place before the events start. This means those living near construction will hear lots of noise pollution much earlier before the games begin. Construction planning took up a lot of time and resources in the 2024 Paris Olympics. This long period of planning was required and executed by the local Olympic committee to protect the environment, workers, and nearby residents.⁴⁹ Similarly, FIFA strongly urges their staff members to wear earpieces to protect their staff from the high noise levels throughout the events that affect the radio network and safety communications.⁵⁰ This means that residents, tourists, and people stuck in traffic

42 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles activists organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

43 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles activists organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

44 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles activists organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

45 Kristy Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events," Audible, September 10, 2023, <https://www.audible.com/preventative-care/how-to-protect-your-hearing-at-loud-events>.

46 Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events."

47 Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events."

48 Lowery, "Hearing Loss Prevention: Tips for Concerts and Sporting Events."

49 Paris Olympics, "Organising more responsible Games," Olympics, 2024, <https://olympics.com/en/paris-2024/our-commitments/the-environment/organising-more-responsible-games>

50 Inside FIFA, "Stadium Guidelines 5.4 Safety and security," accessed December 31, 2024, <https://inside.fifa.com/technical/stadium->

Formula 1 pit crew equipped with head and ear protection, effectively reducing hearing damage

Credit: Francesco Crippa



around the sports complex of international sporting events are all at risk of hearing damage.

Large-scale sporting events with millions of viewers from around the globe generate lots of noise pollution. Although these noises do not have physical impacts on the environment, they harm the quality of life for nearby communities.⁵¹ Sports can make life very complicated and be damaging to neighboring communities. Many of these communities still have to deal with the aftermath of all the construction work behind tearing down temporary buildings. On a wide scale, one of the most significant sources of this noise is related to motorsport events.⁵² NASCAR is a popular motorsport event run by a private company that supports stock car racing in the United States and beyond.⁵³ Taking a close look at NASCAR races, the organization itself recommends that its workers and fans wear protective gear while watching and working on the floors.⁵⁴ According to NASCAR, their events typically produce 130 dB on the track, which greatly passes the healthy levels for hearing.⁵⁵ As a result, NASCAR creates online materials for fans and workers to read about their races and make an effort to disseminate information on safety practices. Other sports organizations also experience a noise problem. In the racing world, sports organizers, primarily Formula 1, are now considering sustainable hybrid engines for their racing cars in hopes of reducing the noise and carbon they generate.⁵⁶ Creating these rules for competitors at the top level encourages anyone who wants to compete to make sure their cars meet these requirements. Similarly, FIFA has a website called Inside FIFA, where stadium guidelines can be easily found. These guidelines contain many factors and regulations to understand before and upon entry to the

stadium.⁵⁷ Through Inside FIFA, it is easy for fans and the general public to access information about the current and upcoming guidelines from their environmentally innovative programs, resource hubs, and sports documentation.⁵⁸ In small steps like these, incentivizing more sporting organizations to regulate and create safe standards for their stakeholders is encouraged. Since these organizers operate internationally, there is hope these changes will become a core part of various companies and development techniques. The evolution of rules and design requirements for sports vehicles shows that companies can positively impact innovation. However, it's still important to consider the potential risk of greenwashing solutions that could harm the environment and the culture surrounding international sporting events. Even though there is no clear solution for reducing the noise pollution generated by these naturally loud events, the logistical planning and standardization of rules between each venue and host country must be introduced to more sports to maintain a high quality of living for residents and a positive experience for athletes, organizers, and fans.

Noise pollution is often overlooked in athletic performance as well.⁵⁹ In bustling international sports events, venues are typically located at the epicenter of the host country, often in cities and densely populated areas. Beyond the noise from the crowd, there are also impulsive sounds originating from sharp, sudden noises, such as car horns and other urban disturbances.⁶⁰ These impulsive noises are experienced not only by attendees but also from the perspective of the athletes. A recent study found a correlation between athletes' cognitive abilities and mindsets and how their training and preparation environments are affected by these noises.⁶¹ When traveling

guidelines/technical-guidelines/stadiums-guidelines/safety-and-security.

51 International Olympic Committee, "Sustainability," Olympics, 2024, <https://olympics.com/ioc/sustainability>.

52 Ziang Zhang, "Categories of Sport-Environment and Condition of the Sports," *Communications in Humanities Research* 27, (2024): 236-240, <http://dx.doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/27/20231551>.

53 Britannica, "NASCAR," January 4, 20225, <https://www.britannica.com/sports/NASCAR>.

54 NASCAR, "The Decibel Levels at NASCAR Races," Global Discoveries, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://www.gd4488.com/the-decibel-levels-at-nascar-races>.

55 NASCAR, "The Decibel Levels at NASCAR Races."

56 Kit Chapman, "How F1 plans to transition to '100% sustainable fuel,'" *Chemistry World*, September 16, 2024, <https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/how-f1-plans-to-transition-to-100-sustainable-fuel/4020167.article>.

57 Inside FIFA, "Stadium Guidelines 5.4 Safety and security."

58 Inside FIFA, "Stadium Guidelines 5.4 Safety and security."

59 Aigerim Altayeva, "Exploring the impact of impulsive urban sounds and noise on open sports training through real-time AI sound analysis," *Retos* 60, (September 2024): 755-763, <http://dx.doi.org/10.47197/retos.v60.109431>.

60 Altayeva, "Exploring the impact of impulsive urban sounds and noise on open sports training through real-time AI sound analysis," 755-763.

61 Altayeva, "Exploring the impact of impulsive urban sounds and noise on open sports training through real-time AI sound analysis," 755-763.

and competing in different regions, it is recommended that organizers carefully plan and outline strategies to ensure that athletes are well-suited to the environments they encounter.

Interestingly, there is hope for reducing noise during sporting events. Two silent sports were played at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games: silent football and goalball. Silent goalball is played with balls with bells, so visually impaired or blind players must hear where the balls are located, while silent football is similar to American football.⁶² Through the play of silent football, reducing noise proved to be possible. In these events, spectators and staff were disciplined to moderate their noise for the convenience of blind athletes. NBC's coverage of a blind football game highlighted how these events are designed for athletes with visual impairments, making it critical to balance their sensory inputs, including noise levels.⁶³ Fans were required to contain their cheers to allow the players to communicate effectively. In an interview, one of the star blind football players emphasized that he and his teammates still felt the crowd's appreciation and excitement, even without yelling. This energy from the audience motivated and energized them.⁶⁴ The absence of polluting noise, combined with the crowd's energy and expressions of love, strikes a balance between the sports event's spirit and the environment's needs. Regulations ensuring accessibility and fair play must be emphasized to benefit residents and athletes. The goal is to promote comfortable participation and a seamless transition from daily life to the bustling sporting season in hosting venues.

Noise pollution during sporting events also can harm the environment. One of the main areas of sports that impact wildlife is outdoor sports played in cities that do not already

have a stadium built for the sport.⁶⁵ According to the IOC's Manual for Sporting Events, the organization recognizes that engine noises from constructing sports facilities contribute to biodiversity loss by disturbing plants and animals.⁶⁶ Winter sports hosted at ski resorts are also prone to disrupting the physical environment and patterns of mountain wildlife.⁶⁷ These patterns include animal sleep, hunting schedules, or even mating routines.⁶⁸ The noise disturbances in patterns negatively affect the normal balance of life for wildlife.⁶⁹ Additionally, live sailing spectators are typically positioned along the shores of the water body on temporary grandstands. This places them close to marine wildlife. Recently, researchers investigated the impact of outdoor sporting events on wildlife by studying one of the older international sailing competitions like the America's Cup.⁷⁰

Outside the competitive season and in the absence of in-person sporting events, wildlife is exposed only to natural sounds, such as snapping marine life, and can maintain their uninterrupted temporal behaviors.⁷¹ However, the native wildlife in the Hauraki Gulf of New Zealand faced disruptions in the 36th America's Cup.⁷² While the competitive boats and sails were powered off after each round, it was the spectators riding their own boats to witness the competition who caused more significant noise pollution, ultimately disturbing the animals. Being one of the largest competitive sailing events in the world, The America's Cup attracts over 1,300 small boats (also known as vessels) where spectators ride to watch the event closer to each match.⁷³ Unfortunately, these vessels were left unregulated, making data limited on the full extent of the noise generated throughout the event.⁷⁴ These small mishaps make it difficult to incite meaningful guidelines to demonstrate to legislators and sports organizers the impact

62 Julianna Russ and Gabriella Etienne, "Paralympics fans learn when to be silent and when to make noise at sports for the visually impaired," NBC New York, September 2, 2024, <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/paris-2024-summer-olympics/paralympics-fans-silent-noise-sports-visually-impaired/5757164/>.

63 Russ and Etienne, "Paralympics fans learn when to be silent and when to make noise at sports for the visually impaired."

64 Russ and Etienne, "Paralympics fans learn when to be silent and when to make noise at sports for the visually impaired."

65 Zhang, "Categories of Sport-Environment and Condition of the Sports," 236-240.

66 International Olympic Committee, "Sustainability."

67 Zhang, "Categories of Sport-Environment and Condition of the Sports," 236-240.

68 Zhang, "Categories of Sport-Environment and Condition of the Sports," 236-240.

69 Zhang, "Categories of Sport-Environment and Condition of the Sports," 236-240.

70 Emily Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures," *Eos*, October 18, 2024, <https://eos.org/articles/sailing-spectators-sounds-could-harm-marine-creatures>.

71 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

72 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

73 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

74 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

of neglecting these practices on residents. Nonetheless, this still opens up the debate for formulating regulations whenever these options for live viewing are considered for similar events.

The noise fog created by these activities hurts animal communication. This disturbance can create serious risks, especially for mothers and their offspring. Researchers using underwater microphones found noise levels passing natural conditions. This was seen to affect animal behavior and fitness negatively. Measurements taken before, during, and after the event showed that the noise was detectable up to eight kilometers away.⁷⁵ As a result, it would take a long period for noise to return to normal levels underwater. This extra noise is particularly harmful to marine animals.

Mothers struggle to maintain communication with their young during feeding, leading to increased stress. This stress can reduce the mother's ability to care for her offspring or even reproduce, ultimately lowering biodiversity in the area. This stress can reduce the mother's ability to care for her offspring or even reproduce, ultimately lowering biodiversity in the area.⁷⁶ The noise also makes it harder for animals to avoid predators, find mates, and catch prey, which are crucial for survival. The widespread noise caused by small vessels, sports commentary, and players highlights the serious threats to marine life.

This research raises questions about reducing marine noise from such events.⁷⁷ Some suggestions include enforcing rules for spectator boats. Some of these rules involve turning off engines at specific times or reducing power usage to lower underwater noise. Current regulations on underwater noise are limited, especially for smaller vessels used by spectators. Noise pollution is rarely considered when designing or selling boats, and spectators often bring or buy vessels specifically for

events without thinking about their negative environmental impact.⁷⁸

Better data is needed to understand biodiversity loss caused by this noise pollution.⁷⁹ Further research could also explore ways to address the aftermath of such events. Some people have suggested launching programs to encourage tourists and sports fans to support the waters they visit. Unfortunately, limited economic incentives and a lack of data currently stop the adoption of sustainable practices.⁸⁰ Despite that, introducing vessel certifications and noise regulations at international sporting events could help raise awareness and reduce long-term harm to marine wildlife.⁸¹

Conclusion

The many challenges that come from international sporting events show the need for strong solutions to decrease their impacts on the environment, wildlife, human displacement, and the economics of their plans.⁸² The challenges of international sporting events—ranging from housing and transportation to the mental well-being of residents and athletes—paint a broader picture of their social and environmental impacts. Anti-Olympics protesters share a common concern with this topic: recognizing the significant threat these events are to the environment. Their message emphasizes the need for organizers and society to use their influence to adopt sustainable practices.⁸³ Addressing these issues requires solutions prioritizing people's and the environment's well-being. These two factors form the foundation for these cultural exchanges and global connections.

Depending on the host country and the sporting events' organization, environmental care regulations vary significantly. Making sure these regulations are strong enough to protect

75 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

76 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

77 Dieckman, "Sailing Spectators' Sounds Could Harm Marine Creatures."

78 Tom Smith, Andrea Grech La Rosa, and Bill Wood, "Underwater radiated noise from small craft in shallow water: Effects of speed and running attitude," *Ocean Engineering* 306, (2024): 118040, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oceaneng.2024.118040>.

79 Smith, La Rosa, and Wood, "Underwater radiated noise from small craft in shallow water: Effects of speed and running attitude," 118040.

80 Smith, La Rosa, and Wood, "Underwater radiated noise from small craft in shallow water: Effects of speed and running attitude," 118040.

81 Smith, La Rosa, and Wood, "Underwater radiated noise from small craft in shallow water: Effects of speed and running attitude," 118040.

82 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles Activists Organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

83 Gutierrez, "Why Are Los Angeles Activists Organizing against the 2028 Summer Olympics?"

the environment and people requires attention and precision. These environmental factors influence hospitality and tourism practices in a more technologically advanced society. This is important for maintaining partnerships with sports organizers while supporting the host city's goals. Currently, Formula 1 is driving its participants to innovate and adopt environmentally sustainable practices.⁸⁴ Sports organizations that are starting these developments in sports logistics show the significance of connecting environmental responsibility with recreational activities and building stronger environmental protections. Currently, raising the bar for higher requirements and adding more factors to consider in preparation for these sporting events may seem radical. However, these developments push stakeholders to pursue alternatives to create a well-balanced lifestyle both in and out of the sporting season. By building quieter venues, improving public transit, and implementing more sustainable regulations, cities can create a positive framework for hosting international sporting events. Delegates in UN-Habitat play a key role in planting the seed for lasting change and leaving a positive legacy once the events conclude.

84 Chapman, "How F1 plans to transition to '100% sustainable fuel.'"



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**TOPIC B:
SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES**

Photo Credit: Jeff Kubina

Introduction

Climate change is getting worse every year. Global warming reduction is a shared responsibility of all companies or organizations. They can reduce their footprint by adopting sustainable architecture, design, and construction. There is an opportunity for the construction industry to make buildings more sustainable. Responsible standards at every stage will reduce environmental harm. In the last six months, new construction techniques have received attention. These are modular construction, radiative heating, smart glass, and cool roofs. These technologies help buildings use less energy and cooling. Extreme weather and heat also are improved. Sustainable materials are not shared equally across the world. With the absence of new technology, poor countries face more difficulty in gaining access. The upcoming PAICC meeting will discuss these construction issues. The Climate Change Conference session with the UN will also address these issues. At COP29, many leaders have added new building goals. They have pledged to “#BeBoldOnBuildings” in their climate plans. Regulation of sustainable construction by governments, but implementation by local citizens. International meetings set the framework for these building practices. The rapid development of industrial sectors in developing countries presents a challenge. Many cities are struggling to meet rising housing demands. Faster and greener construction can help solve this issue. Time and money costs restrict the sustainable use of buildings. Poorer countries face a greater risk of environmental harm. Natural disasters force people from their homes and cities. The number of climate refugees is increasing every year. More resilient infrastructure is needed to handle these changes. Countries now see the urgency of sustainable construction. The world needs to find a system that diminishes environmental damage.¹

Round Table Discussions on the Construction Sector at COP29

In mid-November, COP29 met in Baku, Azerbaijan, where several climate change issues were discussed, including new talks about the guidelines for sustainable construction. All UN member states and territories attended the COP29 conference along with climate scientists, trade union leaders, UN officials, policy experts, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).² This year, the conference’s overall focus was increasing climate funding and creating long-term goals for future financing. A long-term climate funding goal was set to increase the strength of urban communities along with an international

carbon credit framework. This framework will support green infrastructure projects. This type of strength refers to a city’s ability to adapt to negative impacts on its communities, businesses, environment, and systems.³ Many of these negative impacts can be social, political, or economic. However, our current environmental pressures can also disrupt many functioning cities. Carbon credit frameworks and substantial urban community projects are meant to assist low-income countries in reaching zero-carbon economies.⁴ Zero-carbon economies are the goal of the Net-Zero Coalition. Achieving net zero requires decreasing carbon dioxide emissions to a level that can be stored in the Earth’s natural carbon pools.⁵

¹ Andrew, “8 Game-Changing Innovations in Green Construction,” Kreo, March 20, 2024, <https://www.kreo.net/news-2d-takeoff/8-game-changing-innovations-in-green-construction>.

² Amnesty International, “COP29: What you need to know about the global climate summit,” news release, November 4, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/cop29-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-global-climate-summit/>.

³ “What is Urban Resilience,” Resilient Cities Network, accessed December 27, 2024, <https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/what-is-urban-resilience/>.

⁴ Amnesty International, “COP29: What you need to know about the global climate summit,” news release, November 4, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/cop29-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-global-climate-summit/>.

⁵ “For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action,” United Nations Climate Action, accessed December 27, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>.

As more cities can transform into zero-carbon economies, the goal of reaching net zero and reducing global warming becomes more achievable.

The UN-Habitat “Climate Action Roadmaps for Buildings and Construction” toolkit was important in the new climate change construction roadmaps launched by Bangladesh, Ghana, and Senegal at COP29. The sustainable construction roadmaps will help these countries achieve global climate targets by greening their construction industries. This is part of the overall project under the UN-Habitat’s “Transforming the Built Environment through Sustainable Materials” initiative. Greening the construction industry refers to using environmentally friendly practices that minimize the negative effects on the environment. This is because certain building practices and materials can have a negative impact on the environment. For example, Ghana has already begun generating five megawatts of renewable energy through its floating solar system. They also have plans to scale up these efforts through their Climate Prosperity Plan (CPP).⁶ Under the CPP, Ghana is also constructing the first net-zero industrial park in Africa, Akosombo. Akosombo is a sustainable, built-and-run industrial hub for clothing companies and other green enterprises powered completely by renewable energy. The need for more projects like this is clear in Bangladesh. Increased disasters threaten Bangladesh as a result of rapid urbanization. Ghana and Senegal’s high population growth rate is causing “housing shortages, pollution, and urban heat.” This shows an urgent need for sustainable construction that can promote resilient city growth.⁷ Their roadmaps follow along to raise Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through low-carbon materials, energy efficiency, and urban resilience. As for Bangladesh, 56 percent of their population

lives in dangerous regions that could be affected by climate change. It is predicted that climate threats could displace 13 million Bangladeshis by 2050.⁸ These countries’ ambitious climate projects “prioritize low-income communities, supporting local construction traditions, green jobs, and improvements in informal housing.”⁹ However, the challenge to ensure fair distribution of sustainable construction resources will be important. Most sustainable development is focused on urban areas, so rural communities will not have the funding necessary to access sustainable construction. To add on, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), released a national circularity assessment toolkit at COP29. This toolkit serves as a reference guide to help countries adopt policies and implement different ways to increase resources for the construction industry. Its goal is to transform the construction and demolition industries. These industries account for over a third of material consumption in the European Union.¹⁰ A collaboration between many organizations funded by the government of Finland made this toolkit an essential reference point for the global building sector. This framework will be used to guide Bangladesh, Ghana, and Senegal in accomplishing their roadmaps.

Kenya is a leader in sustainable development in Africa. Their Kenya Vision 20230 outlines many goals, including reaching one hundred percent renewable energy.¹¹ Musalia Mudavadi, Prime Cabinet Secretary to Kenya, called for world leaders to keep their 2009 promise of one hundred billion dollars a year at COP29.¹² With other African leaders, their goal is to push for consistent climate finance towards green growth. This funding is important to achieve the sustainable construction goals that work together towards making sustainable development happen. During the weeks before COP29, the

6 Republic of Ghana Ministry of Finance, “Ghana Unveils Climate Prosperity Plan at COP29: a Blueprint for Sustainable Growth,” news release, November 14, 2024, <https://mofep.gov.gh/news-and-events/2024-11-14/ghana-unveils-climate-prosperity-plan-at-cop29-a-blueprint-for-sustainable-growth>.

7 UN-Habitat, “Bangladesh, Ghana, and Senegal launch Sustainable Construction Roadmaps at COP29,” news release, November 16, 2024, <https://unhabitat.org/news/16-nov-2024/bangladesh-ghana-and-senegal-launch-sustainable-construction-roadmaps-at-cop29>.

8 UN-Habitat, “Bangladesh, Ghana, and Senegal launch Sustainable Construction Roadmaps at COP29,” news release, November 16, 2024, <https://unhabitat.org/news/16-nov-2024/bangladesh-ghana-and-senegal-launch-sustainable-construction-roadmaps-at-cop29>.

9 UN-Habitat, “Bangladesh, Ghana, and Senegal launch Sustainable Construction Roadmaps at COP29,” news release, November 16, 2024, <https://unhabitat.org/news/16-nov-2024/bangladesh-ghana-and-senegal-launch-sustainable-construction-roadmaps-at-cop29>.

10 “Harnessing Circularity to Drive Climate Action,” UNOPS, November 19, 2024, <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/harnessing-circularity-to-drive-climate-action>.

11 “A new roadmap to sustainable development in Kenya, powered by public/private partnerships at scale,” United Nations Development Coordination Office, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://un-dco.org/coordination-results-roadmap-sustainable-development-kenya>.

12 African Development Bank Group, “COP29: African Leaders Urge Rapid Increase in Climate Finance for Adaptation and Green Growth,” news release, November 15, 2024, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/cop29-african-leaders-urge-rapid-increase-climate-finance-adaptation-and-green-growth-78689>.



World leaders at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan
 Credit: Office of the President of Azerbaijan

Big five Construct Kenya conference took place November 6-8. This event brought together around 8,500 guests for the largest construction event in Kenya.¹³ This conference at the Sarit Expo Centre prioritized sustainable urban development. Many events and presentations focused on infrastructure that is sustainable environmentally, socially, and economically.¹⁴ All the ideas shared at this event helped show what it means to have sustainability regulations in a local context. The parties at the conference recognized the diversity between different groups. They also realized that the differences between countries challenge sustainable urban growth plans. To have solutions to improve sustainability, each community must have personalized guidelines that fit their needs.

Climate finance was the key topic of debate during the COP29 conference this fall. It was clear that discussions must end with a clear conclusion for the future of climate funding. World leaders were looking for alternatives to the promised one hundred billion dollars a year, allowing developed and developing countries to take climate action. Coming to an agreement meant deciding the quantity of funding, the

providers of funding, and the quality of funding.¹⁵ Sustainable construction is affected by the quality of finance. Funding provided as grants or highly concessional loans with low interest rates is important for vulnerable countries. Without this type of funding, governments are more likely to put their limited funding towards renewable energy and other big-name sustainability projects rather than improving the construction sector.

At the “Release of Green Development Practices from China” press conference on November 13th at COP29, the All-China Environment Federation shared examples of their “green transformation and low-carbon development.”¹⁶ These examples would be presented as a model for “promoting global climate governance.”¹⁷ They showed the world the development of China’s zero-carbon or eco-industrial parks. These are a collection of businesses that operate together on a common piece of land to achieve sustainability and economic goals. Ordos City was the first park established in China in Inner Mongolia. The main focus at Ordos is to transform the coal-producing region into a net zero industrial

13 “Building Sustainability Together,” Big 5 Construct Kenya, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://www.big5constructkenya.com/>.
 14 “Insights from Big 5 Construct Kenya: Shaping Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Futures,” Kukopa, November 18, 2024, <https://kukopa.com/blog/insights-from-big-5-construct-kenya-shaping-sustainable-and-inclusive-urban-futures/>.
 15 Melanie Robinson, “Getting a New Climate Finance Deal this Week Hinges on 3 Elements,” World Resources Institute, November 19, 2024, <https://www.wri.org/insights/ncqg-climate-finance-negotiations-cop29>.
 16 “COP29 Press Conference: Release of Green Development Practices from China,” PR Newswire, November 17, 2024, <https://www.prnewswire.com/apac/news-releases/cop29-press-conference-release-of-green-development-practices-from-china-302307736.html>.
 17 “COP29 Press Conference: Release of Green Development Practices from China,” PR Newswire,

system by connecting industries powered by renewable energy.¹⁸ Developing these types of parks relies on sourcing sustainable materials and constructing top-level designs that maximize energy efficiency. The speaker, Mr. Jiang Qingzhe, Dean of the Institute of International Low Carbon Economy at the University of International Business and Economics, encouraged the creation of a fund and standardized assessment system for zero-carbon parks. During the press conference, the audience also heard from Mr. Chen Bingyou, General Manager of New Port Thermal Engineering Company. He announced his company's innovative heating technology and digital control systems. These advancements are meant to help new buildings reach carbon neutrality. The discussion continued into hydrogen power production and examples of successful green hydrogen use in Chinese industries. However, concerns surrounding the accessibility of green hydrogen on a global scale and the possible negative consequences continue. These Chinese developments show the recent movement towards constructing green buildings and greener industries.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MoEI) highlighted its commitment to sustainable construction this November. MoEI officials shared new eco-friendly building practices and technologies, including the 3D digital twin platform. This platform mimics real-world conditions in urban areas within the UAE and provides critical information for resource decision-making. This technology is a promising tool for urban planning and management. The UAE is using this tool to decarbonize the building sector. A 3D digital twin provides very accurate information on city infrastructure performance. Running tests with this model helps governments find the best designs and materials for sustainable construction. Their collaboration on the Arab Roadmap for Zero-Emission Buildings shows the UAE's commitment to the Paris Agreement. The UAE's Green Home Loans program rolled out in 2021, has made sustainable housing more available. The UAE's continued support for sustainable construction was emphasized during COP29. Many people within sustainable infrastructure see this

as a way of turning attention towards the building industry's role in climate change and the transition to a more sustainable future.

Balancing Housing Crises, Rapid Industrialization, and Sustainability

Due to the rise of overpopulation within modern societies, many states are pressured into planning and approving large-scale and fast-moving construction projects. Due to the urgency of completing these projects on time, many opportunities for more sustainable construction are overlooked. As a result, more infrastructure is appearing within cities at an alarming rate. At the end of the day, this does not help in reaching greener development goals. This situation is made worse in developing countries. They face high poverty rates and lack of funding, which prevents them from moving towards greener construction. Additionally, foreign pressures push them to industrialize rapidly. Many developing countries have been actively adopting green infrastructure to strengthen economic and social development. A good example of this is the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). This dam is a hydroelectric project located on the Blue Nile River to generate clean energy and economic development.¹⁹ Once completed, the GERD will be the largest hydropower project on the African continent and position Ethiopia as one of the largest producers of green energy. This will allow the country to export extra unneeded energy to neighboring countries. The GERD is an example of how these countries can implement and benefit greatly from green construction projects.

Mongolia is another good example of how green infrastructure can be prioritized despite pressures for rapid industrialization. Due to inadequate infrastructure, Mongolia suffers from housing shortages and many different environmental issues. The issues include air and soil pollution, water contamination, and flood risks. As a result, the country faces lots of pressure

18 "Eco-industrial Parks," UNIDO, accessed December 27, 2024, <https://www.unido.org/our-focus/safeguarding-environment-resource-efficient-and-low-carbon-industrial-production/eco-industrial-parks>; "The World's First Net Zero Industrial Park," Envision, accessed December 27, 2024, <https://www.envision-group.com/case-study/ordos-industrial-park>.

19 "Sustainability Highlights in 2024: 10 Projects to Keep Your Eye On," Plan Academy, last modified December 2023, <https://www.planacademy.com/sustainability-highlights-in-2024-10-projects-to-keep-your-eye-on/>.

to develop mass-housing projects to provide housing for its growing population.²⁰ All of this new construction has pushed the Mongolian government to promote sustainability and energy efficiency in new development projects. For example, the Mongolian Green Building Council (MGBC) has developed a system called the; “BestGER Rating System.” This title stands for “Best Governance in Efficiency and Resilience.” This new system aims to help new housing developments adopt green building practices and focus on resource efficiency. This is done by establishing a system of certifications that projects can obtain. To obtain a GER certification from the Mongolian Green Building Council, projects can adopt the BestGER Simple framework. This framework includes 12 criteria that focus on energy efficiency and construction resilience. Projects can also get the BestGER Comprehensive framework, which contains 39 criteria across six sustainability sections. This project aims to close the gap between infrastructurally weak single-family homes and expensive high-rise apartments in urban areas. Along with promoting sustainability through infrastructure, the Mongolian government utilizes eco-friendly policy to bolster overall sustainability and climate consciousness. For example, they’ve

introduced the potential expansion of the Housing Finance Program (HFP). This has been used to provide interest-rate loans to support green high-rise development. The goal is that the project would eventually be expanded towards new housing solutions within lower-income communities. This has also been used to aid those within low-income communities in affording greener solutions to housing.

More developed states also must remain responsible for supporting the development of accessible green housing infrastructure. This is important as many of these countries expand to support growing populations. For example, the Canadian government has promised to provide 3.87 million new housing units by 2031. This is a clear demonstration of the pressure governments are under to support their ever-expanding populations.²¹ Fast and cheap development projects would prove more cost-effective for Canada. However, their lack of resilience triggers more problems for Canadian citizens. These problems include excessive utility bills, weak and unsafe building infrastructure, and lack of comfort. The Canadian government hasn’t presented a plan for promoting sustainability in their housing goals. To do so, the country can find a middle ground between sustainability and affordability.

20 Harrison, Dao H Nielsen Olivia Ruth, Fremont Emile, Sengupta Pallavi, *Reimagining Mongolia’s Ger Districts : A Blueprint for Green, Resilient and Affordable Housing in Mongolia*, (Mongolia: World Bank December 2024), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120524125074017/pdf/P178812121da130501806512e6ec48ffe7e.pdf>

21 “Two Million Green Homes Canada Needs: Quality Affordable Housing,” Canada Green Building Council, last modified December 2023, <https://www.cagbc.org/news-resources/cagbc-news/two-million-green-homes-canada-needs-quality-affordable-housing/>.

Typical housing in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia—the nation’s capital where over 45% of the entire population resides

Credit: Christopher Michel



This would be done with the government and financial sectors to encourage both groups to commit to sustainable building fully. Both sides must also implement the appropriate economic measures to finance them.

Similar to Canada, China has recently introduced a new approach to combating its housing crisis. This new approach, called “Green and Healthy Housing,” would be a new construction model. This is meant to promote eco-friendly materials and green technology and to recognize the vital role the housing market has.²² China is doing more than just supporting this development at its borders. They also support this globally by exporting pre-made structures, such as hospitals and social housing. These structures would be constructed nearly to completion in China and then shipped globally. These pre-made buildings are not only more time-efficient. They also allow for sustainable assembly, generate less waste, and consume less energy. Exporting these green buildings and recent diplomatic developments between China and other countries will expand the reach of green construction and sustainable development. For example, new negotiations with India might soon open its airspace for international flights to a Chinese-funded airport in Nepal. The goal is to improve sustainable tourism and connectivity, a consensus triggered by collaboration in sustainable development.

Another example of a country facing a growing housing crisis and efforts towards sustainability is Indonesia. With 67 percent of their population expected to live in urban areas by 2035, Indonesia has been resorting to informal settlements. These settlements are often overcrowded and lack the needed infrastructure to protect from dangers such as natural disasters.²³ Indonesia’s two largest cities partnered with the World Bank and the European Investment Bank to address such issues and work towards a greener future. Together, they introduced the City Climate Finance Gap Fund (the Gap Fund). This fund aims to support innovative solutions to combat Indonesia’s ongoing climate crisis. The partnership

focuses on development within five main categories. These categories include sustainable housing tools, green housing guidelines, home designs, city action plan recommendations, and capacity building. The Gap Fund also understands the importance of preserving local architecture and heritage. These cultural aspects of a community are essential to ensuring the longevity of housing developments. Additionally, they provide opportunities for communities to benefit economically and socially. These opportunities include retrofitting homes by adding plants and using energy-efficient resources to lower carbon emissions. There are also opportunities to densify neighborhoods with rental units. This could allow residents to sublease their homes. Subleasing will provide additional income for families while increasing housing availability.

Natural disasters are also a major cause of more rapid construction. This can be seen in the devastating hurricane that hit the southern United States this past year. Hurricane Helene was the third deadliest hurricane in recent history. The disaster resulted in over 200 deaths and billions in property damage.²⁴ Due to this storm’s sudden and devastating nature, governments were pressured to rebuild quickly. Providing victims with stable and safe housing and basic necessities was a significant priority. Natural disasters such as these make promoting sustainability in reconstruction efforts challenging. This is due to the unpredictable and sudden nature of natural disasters. While the government prioritizes quickly providing safe shelter, it is also important to consider standards for new developments. Ideally, new housing can be more climate resilient and withstand such disasters. This would help decrease the need to rebuild after disasters constantly. These new standards can be achieved by holding governments accountable for overseeing development projects. For example, Florida historically had inadequate government oversight. This caused many buildings initially designed to withstand the storm’s force to become destroyed. This was because there was a lack of proper inspections and maintenance.²⁵

22 “China Leads a Powerful Movement Toward Green Housing and Sustainable Urban Development,” Travel and Tour World, last modified December 2023, <https://www.travelandtourtworld.com/news/article/china-leads-a-powerful-movement-toward-green-housing-and-sustainable-urban-development/>.

23 “Green Homes, Resilient Cities: Tackling Indonesia’s Housing Crisis,” World Bank, December 3, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/12/03/green-homes-resilient-cities-tackling-indonesia-housing-crisis>.

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25 Columbia University’s School of Professional Studies, “Paying for, Building, and Reconstructing a Climate-Resilient Built

The need for affordable housing for growing populations has triggered these recent developments. However, they all require different tactics to do so. From increasing international cooperation to utilizing local knowledge and materials, there are many ways to counteract the demand for quick housing. It is still important for developments to consider such projects' eventual environmental and social impacts.

Conclusion

As new developments appear in communities worldwide, we must set standards for sustainable construction. The challenge to provide equal access to sustainable development and climate-friendly construction materials to different regions continues. Differences in socioeconomic status and resource availability continue around the world. Therefore, it is important to recognize how sustainability can be realized in construction projects. Additionally, it is important to recognize the need for multi-faceted solutions. Ideally, these solutions combine governmental policies, financial mechanisms, and collaboration with grassroots organizations to ensure success. All these solutions should also be long-lasting. Despite international differences, countries must continue working together to create solutions and promote a greener future for all. This should also be done regardless of different levels of development and wealth.

Many solutions from governments will be made at large conferences like COP29 or with agencies like UN-Habitat. However, funding collaboration with different countries remains a key challenge in ensuring effectiveness. As delegates, it is important to recognize past trends of collaboration and success. It is also essential to look towards new technologies and international relationships to promote innovation in new ways. For example, looking towards greener power sources, building materials, and modular construction are all breakthroughs in sustainability. It is also essential to help developing countries access new resources. We can promote a more sustainable future through international collaboration and collective sacrifices.

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