General Assembly Topic 3
Waste Management

Waste management is defined as the collection, transportation, and disposal of garbage, sewage and other waste products. Effective waste management helps lower environmental, safety, and health hazards created by waste. There are eight major groups of waste management methods: source reduction and reuse, animal feeding, recycling, composting, fermentation, landfills, incineration and land application.

Every country generates waste, and global generation rates are rising rapidly. According to the World Bank, "In 2016, the worlds' cities generated 2.01 billion tonnes of solid waste. With rapid population growth and urbanization, annual waste generation is expected to increase by 70% from 2016 levels to 3.40 billion tonnes in 2050." Due largely to lax governmental regulation on an ever-growing chemical industry, everyday products that are used and thrown away contain more toxic chemicals than ever before. When these products end up in landfills or incinerators, the toxins pollute the air we breathe and the runoff from landfills contaminates the water we drink. Landfills are also a huge source of methane emissions, contributing to the climate change crisis.

The United States ranks third in the most annual waste per capita. Until 2018 the U.S. had been sending the bulk of their waste to China, but now that China has restricted imported recyclable waste, it has become much more expensive to recycle in the United States. Now there are two choices: pay extremely higher rates to recycle or throw it all away. In some cities recycling prices have increased by as much as 63% and landfills are overflowing because cities can no longer afford to recycle. Developing countries are impacted more heavily than developed countries by unsustainably managed waste. The World Bank says, "In low-income countries, over 90% of waste is often disposed in unregulated dumps or openly burned." These inefficient and hazardous systems create environmental, safety, and health issues. While this issue is not as openly prevalent in developed nations, it does a serious economic toll. To be effective, waste management often must be 20-50% of a city's municipal budget. With the ineffective systems in place to get rid of waste, countries will eventually run out of space and reach a tipping point. This tipping point will mean exacerbating the climate crisis further, creating massive contamination issues in the water supply in developing and developed communities.

Where does your country stand on waste management? How much waste does your country produce? How efficient are your country's waste management systems? Should your country take steps toward better waste management or reduced waste production? If so, how would your country go about doing that? If your country has one of the highest waste production rates, do they have more responsibility to reduce waste?

Sources:
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