The MUN Times

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Tiny Particles, Massive Problem: Addressing Microplastics

When Inflation hits Life's Essentials

GAMES !

Meet Your Secretariat

Refugees in our World:

Minimizing social inequalities for refugees by enhancing equal life opportunities

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MEET YOUR SECRETARIAT!

Christina Palamidi-Deputy Secretary General

Dear all,

I am Christina Palamidi one of the Deputy Secretary Generals for this year's DSAMUN, which will be the final MUN of my career marking my 23rd conference! My main goal for this year's conference is to make it a safe learning environment and experience for all, and for everyone to feel comfortable making contributions regardless of how big or small they may be! I sincerely hope that all of you take something new away from this conference that will allow you to be an even more active member of our society.

Best,

Christina :)

Evelina Stathi-Secretary General

My name is Evelina Stathi, and I am deeply honored to be serving as the Secretary General of the 28th DSAMUN Conference. My MUN journey began back in 8th grade, and as I now reach my 25th and final conference, I can't help but feel incredibly nostalgic. DSAMUN has always held a special place in my heart, not only because it was my first ever conference, but also because it is my school's conference, a place where my passion for diplomacy, teamwork, and public speaking first began to grow and therefore I truly hope this conference will be the best one yet!!

Charidimos Styliaras-Deputy Secretary General

My name is Charidimos Styliaras and I am a 12 th Grade student in DSA and the Deputy Secretary General in this year's DSAMUN conference. I've been doing MUN for some time and I have fell in love with it. I've met many people from many countries and made several friends and I can't wait to see what my first Secretariat experience will have in store for me! MUN has always been a place where I've learned, grown, and met amazing people, so I can't wait to see all of you bring your energy and ideas to the conference.

Faye Fragkaki-President of the General Assembly

My name is Faye Fragkaki and I have the utmost honor of serving as the President of the General Assembly in this year's 28th DSAMUN Conference. I've been a member of my school's MUN club since the 8th grade and this year's conference marks the end of an era for me. Being part of the Secretariat has been a wonderful experience and I really hope that we made this conference as memorable an experience as it has been for me.

Thedoros Dimitras-Deputy President of the General Assembly

My name is Theodoros Dimitras and I'm a student of the 12th grade in DSA. I've been doing MUN for some years now, with this year's DSAMUN being both my first secretariat position and my last conference, at least for the foreseeable future.
My position is that of the Deputy President of the General Assembly (DPGA), and I am looking forward to the GA, as the variety of topics usually makes for interesting debates.

Tiny Particles, Massive Problem: Addressing Microplastics

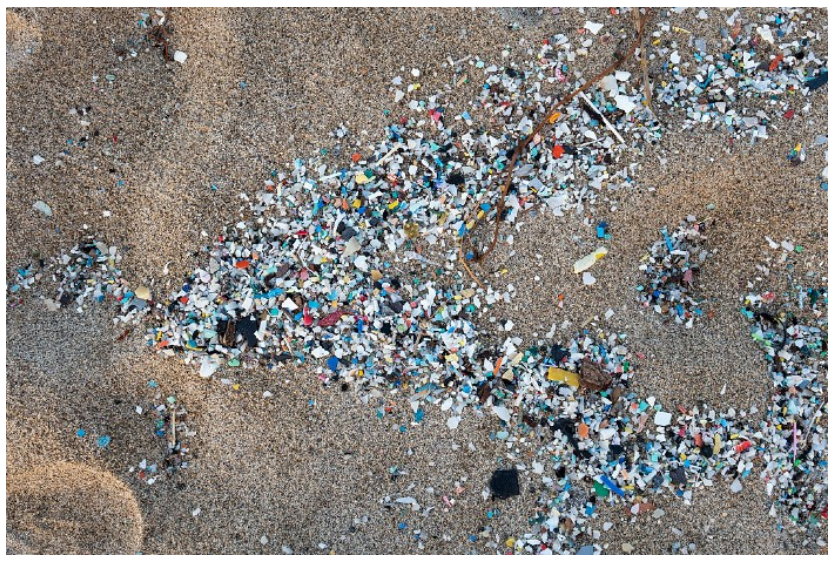
By Ioanna Daniil

From the depths of the ocean to the human bloodstream, microplastics are appearing everywhere. These tiny fragments, less than five millimeters long, permeate oceans, soil, and millions of ecosystems while also posing a potential threat to the human body. This pressing issue raises one central question: how do we confront a pollutant too small to see, yet too vast to ignore?

To address a problem so widespread and invisible, we need to discover its origin. Researchers at Columbia and Rutgers universities recently discovered that a single liter of bottled water can contain an average of 240,000 nanoplastic particles, making every sip a dose of invisible plastic. Even chewing gum has been shown by a study funded by UCLA to shed hundreds to thousands of microplastic fragments into saliva, while the wear and tear of car tires contributes an estimated 3–7 million tons of microplastics annually to the environment.

Once released, these particles travel astonishing distances: atmospheric studies show that fibers can drift for thousands of kilometers and even settle in remote regions such as the Arctic. Meanwhile, particles that originate from the paint of ships or from plastic packaging thrown in the ocean can travel through "marine snow"—a shower of decaying matter, sand, and other dust-like materials—to the abyssal depths. The marine creatures that inhabit these areas can then be tricked into consuming these microplastics. Ryan Bos, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University who studies microplastics in marine environments, claims that "animals, particularly myctophids [commonly known as lanternfishes], which are selective particle feeders [...] are tricked into consuming plastic because of bioluminescence from bacteria adhered to plastics, which could illuminate these 'prey' items in an otherwise light-deprived environment."

Studies have shown that this can have myriad health impacts on marine life, including reduced swimming speed, impaired reproduction rates, increased stress levels, reduced absorption of nutrients, and death. Moreover, the consumption of these fish can pass on the particles to our organism through the food chain. What's disturbing, said University of Toronto evolutionary biologist Zoie Diana, is that "small particles can appear in different organs and may cross membranes that they aren't meant to cross, such as the blood-brain barrier." So, as particle size decreases, its capacity to cause damage increases. This illustration helps establish why there is such a big "fuss" about these small particles.



But what do they do when they cross the membrane of our cells? Can they actually harm the human body? Well, the detrimental effects that their ingestion has on marine life already should indicate that humans are being affected too. Additionally, they have the capacity to interact with biological systems in general. Current data indicates that ecosystems polluted by microplastics exhibit decreased floral and faunal biomass, productivity, nitrogen cycling, oxygen production, and carbon sequestration. These observations highlight that the impact of microplastics on ecological biomes is already evident. Microplastics within the soil can affect the soil microbiota's composition, metabolic processes, and overall functionality. So, if it harms everything, why wouldn't it harm us?

A team of scientists from the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli in Naples, Italy, examined in a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine on March 6, 2024, around three hundred patients who had arterial plaque removed, and they discovered that more than half of the samples contained microplastics. When they followed the patients for almost three years, those with the most microplastics were more likely to suffer heart attacks, strokes, or even die, despite having undergone surgery to clear their arteries. The researchers can't prove the plastics were directly to blame, but under the microscope, they spotted tiny fragments lodged inside immune cells, as if the cells had mistaken them for invaders and gobbled them up. That immune response could spark inflammation, which is a known cause of heart problems. This reveals a potential link between microplastic exposure and heightened cardiovascular risk, indicating that microplastics could be posing a real threat.

Other scientists claim that it is the chemicals that these particles attract into our body, rather than the fragments themselves, that can be found harmful. "The danger of the plastics themselves is still an unanswered question. For me, the additives are the most concerning," mentioned Duke University professor of medicine in an interview, while comparative oncology group director Jason Somarelli noted that "these chemicals, once inserted into our cells, could cause cell stress, DNA damage, and change metabolism or cell function."

A lot of them are also endocrine disruptors, meaning they are interfering with our hormones by binding to the receptors that hormones were supposed to bind to. These substances, such as bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates, have been linked to reproductive disorders, impaired fetal

and child development, and metabolic diseases including obesity and diabetes. Long-term exposure is also associated with an increased risk of hormone-related cancers, such as breast and prostate cancer. Somarelli said his own not yet published work has found more than 100 "known cancer-causing chemicals in these plastics."

Given the origins and dangers of microplastics, it is crucial to identify effective strategies to confront the problem. As of now, the United Nations has not adopted a global treaty to end plastic pollution. Despite a 2022 resolution and ongoing negotiations, talks in Geneva involving 184 countries ended without agreement, largely due to disputes over capping plastic production and regulating harmful chemicals. While over 100 nations and environmental groups supported stricter controls, countries including the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait opposed production limits. However, since plastic does not naturally decompose and cannot simply "disappear," prevention and responsibility are essential. In line with the principle of 'first, do no harm,' industries that generate plastic waste should develop innovative solutions to reduce reliance on plastics and shift toward more sustainable alternatives. Some of these alternatives are already visible in daily life: paper straws and fiber-based food containers are replacing single-use plastics in restaurants, stainless-steel bottles reduce the need for disposable water bottles, and even the fashion industry is joining in, with companies designing shoes from recycled plastics or bio-based materials such as corn, algae, or natural rubber. These examples demonstrate that practical, eco-friendly substitutes exist and can be scaled up if industries commit to long-term change.

Instead of concentrating exclusively on eliminating microplastics, researchers are also investigating how these particles might be repurposed to lessen their environmental impact while addressing broader waste management challenges. One promising direction involves converting microplastics into functional resources, including construction materials or lightweight components for manufacturing. For example, studies suggest that incorporating microplastics into concrete or asphalt mixtures can enhance structural performance and durability. At the same time, new recycling technologies can give microplastics a second life, reducing the need to produce new plastics and lowering the overall environmental damage they cause.

In addition, there are some studies on magnetic adsorption of microplastics in aquatic environments. For example, hydrophobic nanoparticles could remove the particles due to hydrophobic interactions. This approach not only helps prevent microplastics from entering the food chain and reaching humans but also protects marine ecosystems by reducing pollution in their habitats.

In conclusion, microplastics may be tiny, but their impact is enormous: polluting oceans, entering the food chain, and threatening both wildlife and human health. While the problem can feel overwhelming, every action counts, from reducing plastic use to supporting innovative solutions. If everyone takes small steps towards change, we as a collective can protect our oceans, preserve ecosystems, and work toward a cleaner, healthier future.

When Inflation hits Life's Essentials

by Dorothea Kyriaki Lioganos

The International Monetary Fund defines inflation as "the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time." Inflation is a term that perhaps many people weren't familiar with in the past; yet, since the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, its effects are influencing everyone. The challenges grow when the prices of necessities like food, housing, or even healthcare—goods that no one can live without—are the ones affected.

To understand the true weight of unstable inflation, it is important to look at its impact on households and the measures governments ought to take to respond.

The economy, as pointed out by the European Central Bank, works best when there is price stability. Price stability is important because it helps maintain social cohesion and safety. When inflation affects basic necessities like those mentioned before, low- and middle-income families face the biggest challenges. They are put before the task of having to decide which needs to be bought immediately and which purchases can be postponed. Hence, purchasing power drops as households can afford less with the same income. Over time, this deepens inequality and creates economic instability that affects society.

Governments must respond to unstable inflation; they can do so in different ways. Short-term measures often include subsidies for essential goods, price caps, or direct allowances to vulnerable households. In the long term, governments should focus on stabilising supply chains, strengthening domestic production, and ensuring energy independence. Central banks also ought to use monetary policy to control inflation. The goal is not only to stabilise prices but also to safeguard access to necessities and protect social stability.

Inflation is more than an economic statistic. When it affects everyday essentials, it becomes a matter of survival for some. Tackling unstable inflation requires a balance of urgent relief and long-term strategies, ensuring that households can face the future with security rather than uncertainty.

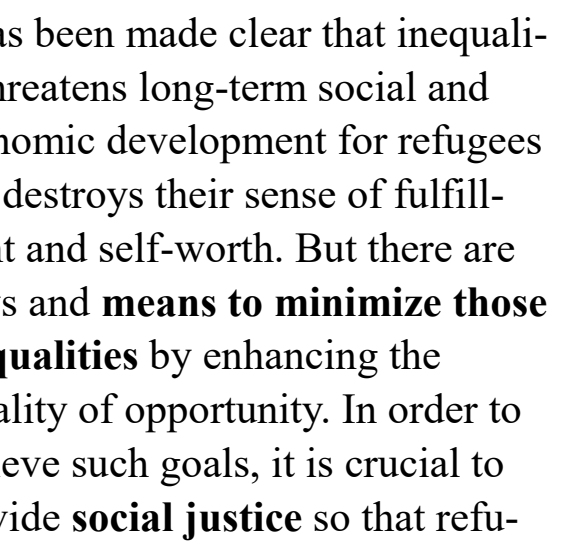
Refugees in our World: Minimizing social inequalities for refugees by enhancing equal life opportunities

by Rea Mylona

In the scenario of your home country facing immense conflict and persecution, you have no other choice but to flee to another country with the hope of starting your life anew. Yet upon arrival a wave of problems, such as discrimination, social exclusion, and limited access to essential services, washes over you. Feeling bewildered and dejected, you cannot help but wonder**: Is this how you were hoping to be greeted in a foreign land?**

Unfortunately, the above scenario is not hypothetical, but a real set of complications that plague refugees in our modern world. This article aims to shed light on the social inequalities that refugees face, highlight their struggles, and explore ways to effectively minimize them through the enhancement of equal life opportunities.

Social inequalities can take many forms for refugees, persisting in their environment and creating many inconveniences in their lives. In the countries where they have found refuge, they frequently experience forms of discrimination. A common form is undoubtedly xenophobia, a phobia based on narratives centred around the fear of outsiders. This fear is mostly based on ethnicity, race and religion, traits that add unique aspects to one's character, appearance and identity. As a result, refugees are often perceived as a threat in the eyes of the people who deeply value the origin of their local culture, the economy and security of their country. Such feelings of hostility and antipathy towards refugees are often expressed through hate speech and even in forms of physical violence.



Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that refugees who flee from countries engaged in war embark on lengthy and strenuous journeys in order to seek international protection. Consequently, **most populations of refugees have limited access to any kind of health services their vulnerability to the acquisition of illnesses and various mental and psychological health issues is increased**. Regrettably and do not possess sufficient funds to get the appropriate treatment. Furthermore, **the inclusion of refugees, specifically children and teenagers**, in the education system is also weak currently. In accordance with the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 3.**7 million refugee children are still not attending school.** Not only does **the lack of access to education** put refugees at risk of economic dependence but it further enhances the acts of discrimination against them, specifically social exclusion.

It has been made clear that inequality threatens long-term social and economic development for refugees and destroys their sense of fulfillment and self-worth. But there are ways and **means to minimize those inequalities** by enhancing the equality of opportunity. In order to achieve such goals, it is crucial to provide **social justice** so that refugees are ensured fairness and equity in access to resources such as education, healthcare and housing. Correspondingly, **governments** can include refugees in their public healthcare systems, as seen by the example of Jordan, which allows refugees to access national health services and had included them in its response to COVID-19. In regard to governments, **they can also increase the capacity of their national educational systems to accommodate additional refugee students.**

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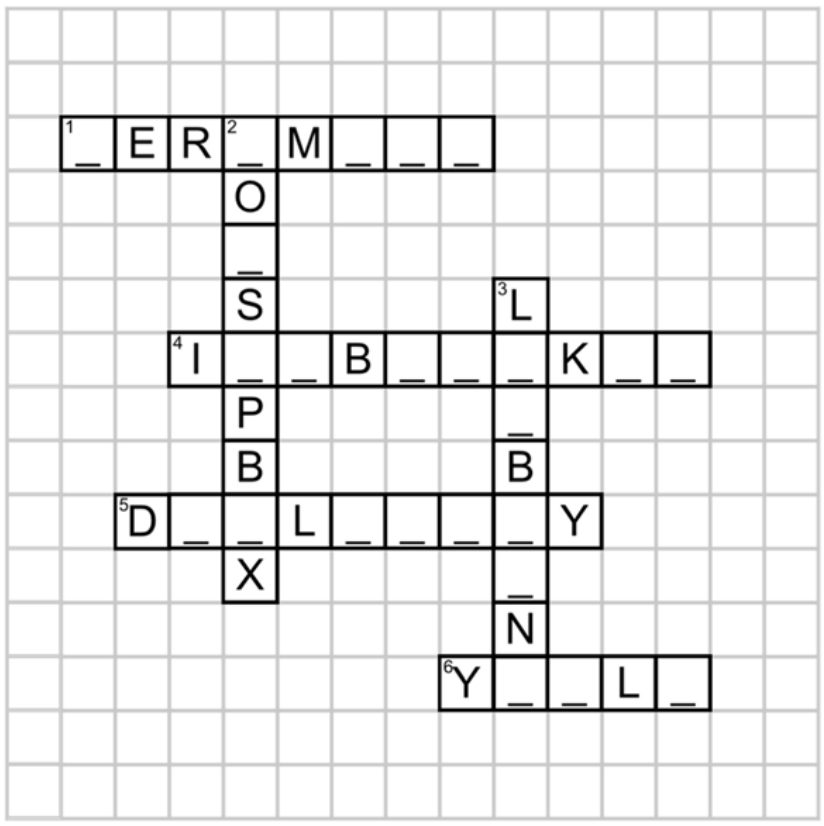

Across:

1. The opening/closing of a ceremony
4. Activity at the start to get delegates talking
5. The art of negotiating peacefully between countries
6. To give the remaining time to another speaker

Down:

2. Anonymous game where delegates share messages or notes for fun
3. Efforts of delegates to create a resolution/persuade others to support it

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