



***THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL
MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019***

General Assembly

TOPIC A

The Environmentally Destructive Growth of Multinational Organizations

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WELCOME LETTER

Dear delegates,

It is with our utmost pleasure to welcome you to the General Assembly of The European International Model United Nations. During this conference, the council will elaborate on one of the world's most pressing problems: the aftermath of destructive growth. The General Assembly will negotiate, debate and evaluate which measures are necessary to challenge and battle the environmentally destructive growth of multinational organizations. We expect all of you to come up with unique and applicable solutions in solving this ongoing problem, finding the balance between growth and sustainability.

The presidencies of the General Assembly

Inés Faghihi

Inés is a German graduating Economics and Business bachelor student at the University of Groningen. Although this is her first TEIMUN conference, her Model United Nation path began in 2013 and over the past years she has participated in about more than 20 MUNs or MEPs all around Europe as a delegate, a chair or the secretariat. Having participated in GrunnMUN before and having heard about the special atmosphere of TEIMUN she is extremely happy to be part of this year's TEIMUN edition together with Maharani.

Maharani Ayuanindita

Maharani is from Jakarta, Indonesia, and is a third-year undergraduate student in German Studies at Universitas Indonesia. She began her MUN career in her first year of university and has joined several conferences, trying out different councils, ranging from UNESCO to UNSC. She joined TEIMUN last year as a delegate in the General Assembly and is excited to come back this year to chair the very same council, together with Inés.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us, and see you all in TEIMUN!

Yours sincerely, Inés Faghihi and Maharani Ayuanindita

INTRODUCTION

During the conference, the council will elaborate on the aftermath of destructive growth, with special attention paid to the destructive growth of multinational organizations. The historical background, an explanation of the issue, and the outline of the implications of the problem will draw crucial importance to the debate concerning this destructive growth of multinational organizations.

The historical background highlights how and in what way multinational organizations have become so powerful and what their impact on environmental issues looks like. Moreover, it provides a relatively new perspective on how to look at the environment in relation to human activities.

The issue we are dealing with explains which parties are involved and outlines the status-quo, the fixed paradigm we are living in now.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

a) Multinational corporations and their impact on the environment

Multinational corporations, MNCs for short, are companies that operate in more than one country. Investopedia defines an MNC as "a corporation that has facilities and other assets in at least one country other than its home country; has offices and/or factories in different countries, and usually has a centralized head office where they coordinate global management¹." In this modern era, these MNCs are growing rapidly. The history of this phenomenon is closely related to the history of colonialism. Many of the first MNCs were commissioned at the behest of European monarchs in order to conduct expeditions². The East India Company is one example, which was founded in 1660 by the British and took part in international trade and exploration, locating its trading posts in India³. Ever since, the number of MNCs have continuously been increasing, with most MNCs originating from America, Japan, and Western

¹ Chen, James. "Multinational Corporations - MNC." Investopedia.
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/multinationalcorporation.asp> (accessed January 13, 2019)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

European countries. Rapid growth of these multinational companies has been recorded to happen after the events of the Second World War⁴.

The growth of these companies brings significant impact towards countries, especially to those categorized as developing countries. They help improve the country's balance of payment through the inward investments that result in import substitution and export promotion. MNCs also help provide jobs for the citizens of a country, thus helping reduce unemployment and help the country reach various other macroeconomic goals. Apart from that, MNCs are also good sources of tax revenue for the country, add a variety of products in the domestic markets and may help boost the country's national reputation⁵. Whereas the growth of these companies can be highly beneficial for a country's economy, there is no denying that it brings various drawbacks as well, especially to the environment. These corporations will want to conduct their activities in ways that are as efficient and as cheap as possible, thus they often lobby the governments to try to ensure that they can benefit from regulations being as lax as possible⁶. Considering their economic importance in their respective countries, these lobbying processes are usually quite effective, and this may not be the best environmental practice. MNCs are known to account for numerous environmental problems such as air, land, and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, as well as the occupation of forestry and open lands. They also contribute to the worsening of global warming due to their industrial activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, thus releasing greenhouse gases, which will then contribute further to the destruction of the ozone layer.

Efforts were made to address this growing concern, but it hasn't always been smooth. In the late 1990s, a light was shone towards a UN project called the Global Compact, which is a voluntary initiative that involved the presence of corporations in the forms of collaboration and/or sponsorship in development projects that focused on

⁴ N/A. "Multinational Corporations (MNCs): Meaning, Origin and Growth." Economics Discussion. <http://www.economicdiscussion.net/multinational-corporations/multinational-corporations-mnacs-meaning-origin-and-growth/20921> (accessed April 4, 2019)

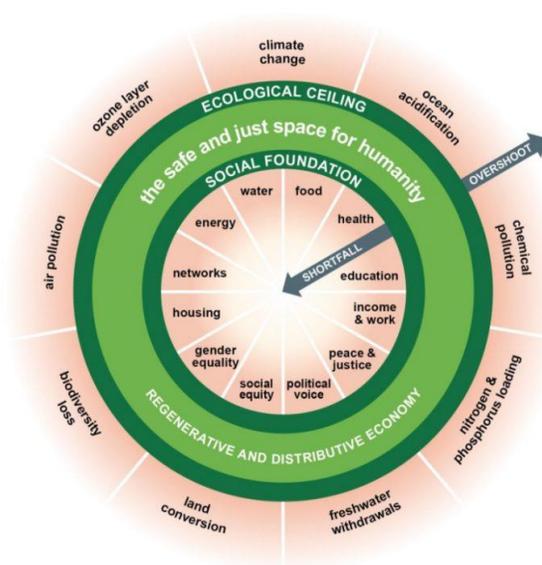
⁵ N/A. "Impact of multinational companies on the host country AO3". Triple A Learning. http://textbook.stpauls.br/Business_Organization/page_144.htm (accessed January 14, 2019)

⁶ Ibid.

supporting human rights and the environment. This was heavily criticized due to the fact that corporations are known to be major contributors towards some severe human rights violations and environmental problems, and this project was seen as a platform for these said corporations to repair their tarnished image without actually tackling the problems they caused⁷. On May 2002, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released an extensive report that shows corporations are making very little effort to repair the environmental damage that are the results of their business and industrial activities. The report shows statistical data on the continuously growing gap between these corporations' efforts and the worsening state of the planet. This is due to the fact that only a small number of MNCs in each industry are actively integrating social and environmental factors into their business decisions⁸. The interests of various MNCs working in the automotive, mining, oil, and chemical industries, who are known as 'big polluters', also later influenced the Kyoto Protocol, an output of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Global Climate Change Conference in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997⁹.

b) The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries

The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries is an approach made by economist Kate Raworth in response to the pressing challenge between human needs and the environment. The Doughnut aims at "being the compass for human progress in this century¹⁰" and has constantly been reviewed and improved for years, with the latest edition being released in 2017. This doughnut-shaped diagram shows the



⁷ Shah, Anup. "Corporations and the Environment." Global Issues. <http://www.globalissues.org/article/55/corporations-and-the-environment> (accessed January 13, 2019)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Raworth, Kate. "What on Earth is the Doughnut?..." Kate Raworth. <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/> (accessed January 14, 2019)

relationship between planet Earth's ecological boundaries, humanity's needs as identified by the world's governments in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, and the safe space where humanity can continuously thrive without further damaging the planet we live in. Raworth's idea of Doughnut Economics has been acclaimed internationally and is widely influential among thinkers, businesses and activists that acknowledge the importance of sustainable development and has received various appraisal from the international community and news media.

ISSUE

a) Status Quo of the issue

The issue we are facing nowadays is the existing fixed paradigm in the world with regard to unending growth. Unending growth and making as much profit as possible define the paradigm we live in. Therefore, powerful multinationals and states have the power to affect opportunities for environmental improvement, promotion of environmental damage and destruction, and to monopolize "*the interest*" of the earth.

In some cases, large companies and states do not take enough steps in order to counteract the consequences caused by this unending growth-mentality. It might not be their direct intent to exhaust the environment, but they indirectly do so due to their weak spot for economic growth and making money.

Statistically, MNCs are the cause of most of the environmental changes happening nowadays. The Carbon Majors Report for example showed how only 100 companies have been responsible of more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 as The Guardian Reports¹¹.

In may 2002, the United Nations Environment Program released a report claiming that the gap between the efforts to reduce the impact of business and industry in the

¹¹ Riley, Tess, "Just 100 companies responsible for 71% of global emissions, study says", <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/jul/10/100-fossil-fuel-companies-investors-responsible-71-global-emissions-cdp-study-climate-change> (accessed April 6, 2019)

environment is growing due to the fact that only a few companies are integrating a social and environmental attitude into their business models¹².

In 2010 the Guardian reported that the United Nations found that if held accountable, one third of the world's biggest companies' profits would go towards the cost of pollution and other damage to the natural environment caused by them¹³.

Together, we need to challenge the status quo. Unfortunately not only MNCs are one deciding factor which is complicating matters, but also some national leaders are not believing in e.g. climate change or that steps against it are needed.

Brazil, for example, has abandoned its plans to host an environmental conference in 2019 and has persistently shown signs of anti-internationalism¹⁴, as reported by The Guardian. This is problematic because Brazil owns the biggest tropical forest on earth, the Amazon. Due to the increase in carbon dioxide, forests have been more and more important with regard to climate change as they absorb said carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, according to climate scientists. Although everyone is in a way responsible for climate change, Brazil is one of our main concerns, especially with regard to the recently elected president, Jair Bolsonaro. According to him, global warming is a "greenhouse fable" and the environmental policy of Brazil is "suffocating the country". Moreover, he suggested stepping out of the Paris Climate Agreement. This will have huge consequences for the Amazon and therefore for the rest of the world.

One nation that has famously just left the Paris Agreements are the United States of America. While the president has denied climate change in the past, there are politicians such as congresswoman Alexandria Ocasia-Cortez that try to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impact of climate change in the US¹⁵.

¹² Shah, Anup. "Corporations and the Environment." Global Issues.

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/55/corporations-and-the-environment> (accessed January 13, 2019)

¹³ Jowit, Juliette. "World's top firms cause \$2.2tn of environmental damage, report estimates" The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/feb/18/worlds-top-firms-environmental-damage> (Accessed, April 6, 2019)

¹⁴ Watts, Jonathan. "Brazil reneges on hosting UN climate talks under Bolsonaro presidency." The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/28/brazil-reneges-on-hosting-un-climate-talks-under-bolsonaro-presidency> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

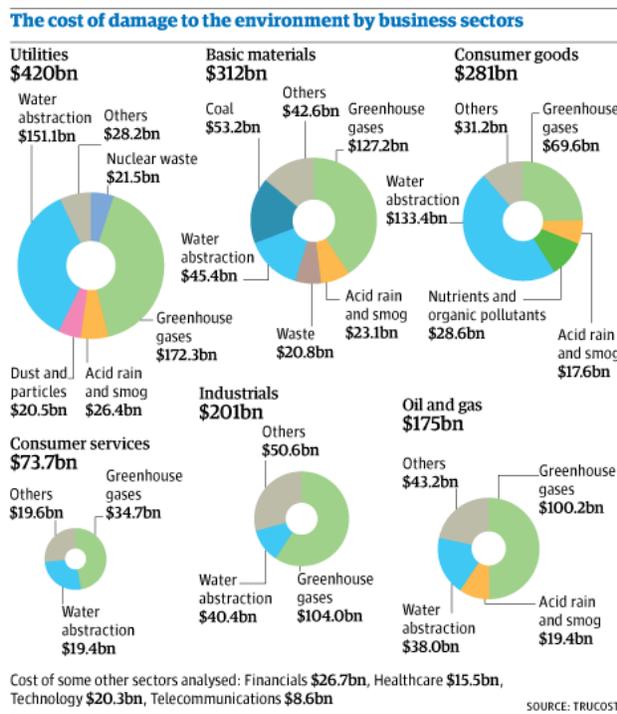
¹⁵ N/A, "Greenpeace hits back at Trump tweet on climate change denial" BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47543905> (Accessed April 6, 2019)

These examples show how important the national opinion of where countries are operating in are. When states do not enact policies, laws or other measures to battle this destructive growth, multinational organizations keep existing in an environment where their actions do not have any consequences. They are able to keep the status-quo in place and to keep following the 'unending growth' principle.

b) Involved Parties

The unending growth of multinational companies has severely impacted the Earth

and all its natural life forms. They are aided with their capability to conduct their business activities using the least expensive methods possible (which often means sacrificing the environment) and their advantage in lobbying States for environmental regulations that favor profit over nature¹⁶. A study conducted by English consultancy Trucost estimated that in 2008, the combined environmental damage caused by 3,000 of the world's biggest companies cost a grand total of US\$2.2 trillion, as reported by The Guardian¹⁷, detailed in the graph as follows.



People such as environmental activists, business critics and the general public have pointed out this environmentally-destructive habit of MNCs and therefore have pushed for said corporations to take responsibility for their actions. Several companies have taken this into account and did their part through their Corporate

¹⁶ Bailey, Victoria. "Negative Impacts of Multinational Corporations." Bizfluent. <https://bizfluent.com/info-8110394-negative-impacts-multinational-corporations.html> (accessed April 4th, 2019)

¹⁷ Jowit, Juliette. "World's top firms cause \$2.2tn of environmental damage, report estimates." The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/feb/18/worlds-top-firms-environmental-damage> (accessed January 21, 2019)

Environmental Responsibility (CER), a term derived from “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)” and focuses more towards the company’s duty to abstain from damaging the environment. These efforts are done through eliminating industrial waste and emissions, maximizing the efficiency and productivity of the company’s resources, and minimize practices that might affect the world’s enjoyment towards nature in the following years to come¹⁸. However, the implementation of these responsibilities are difficult to monitor, considering these activities are self-regulated and held according to the company’s respective procedural standards and strategies¹⁹. Although the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has released a set of standards to help companies implement these responsibilities, namely ISO 26000²⁰, these standards are voluntary and provide guidance rather than requirements due to the qualitative nature of said responsibilities²¹.

Governments also play a significant role in the growth of MNCs. It is up to the government to create policies and regulations to control the growth of these corporations that may function either as preventive or repressive measures. MNCs tend to establish their businesses officially in nations where the tax rate is low, even though their operations are conducted elsewhere²², therefore regulative policies such as taxation are crucial in this matter. It has also been known that numerous EU governments offer ‘sweetheart’ tax deals that reduce the tax burden for specific MNCs to an astonishing extent²³, which causes the loss of millions of Euros in tax income²⁴ and hence easing the growth of these MNCs. The CORPNET research group at the

¹⁸ Mazurkiewics, Piotr. “CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY: Is a common CSR framework possible?” *World Bank Group*: p 2.

<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDEVCOMSUSDEVT/Resources/csrframework.pdf>

¹⁹ Sheehy, Benedict. “Understanding CSR: An Empirical Study of Private Regulation.” *Monash University law Review*, 38 (2012): p. 103. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MonashULawRw/2012/16.pdf>

²⁰ N/A. “ISO 26000 - Social Responsibility.” International Organization for Standardization. <https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

²¹ Chen, James. “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).” Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corp-social-responsibility.asp> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

²² Chen, James. “Multinational Company - MNC.” Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/multinationalcorporation.asp> (accessed January 21, 2019)

²³ N/A. “Who is more powerful -- states or corporations?” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/who-is-more-powerful-states-or-corporations-99616> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

²⁴ N/A. “EU’s secret ‘sweetheart’ tax deals with multinational corporations soar to record numbers. SOMO.” <https://www.somo.nl/eus-secret-sweetheart-tax-deals-with-multinational-corporations-soar-to-record-numbers/> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

University of Amsterdam has identified five countries who play an important additional role in facilitating tax avoidance, namely the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland, and Singapore²⁵. Apart from that, through the provision of subsidies, tariffs, and taxes, governments also hold the power of enforcing policies regarding the fulfillment of the Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) in companies. Apart from that, governments have assumed principal responsibility for assuring environmental management²⁶, therefore stressing the importance of ensuring that the MNCs operating within their countries do not further contribute to the destruction of the environment.

c) The Stance of the International Community

It is worth noting the fact that the international community, as well as national and regional organizations are changing their views on this earlier mentioned 'unending growth' principle. Although many big companies and multinational organizations are being convicted for environmental damage cases, such as BP who caused the Gulf of Mexico oil spill during the Obama presidency²⁷, it is still hard to sue them right away. Thus, the stance of the international community is changing but in a very slow manner.

It is also especially interesting to draw attention to regional organizations. Regional initiatives are becoming more important because when people want change or improvement, states, as well as MNCs, need to listen to this.

Examples of this pressure put on MNCs and policy makers are for example the increased awareness of how dangerous plastic is. In response, plastics such as straws have been either forbidden or corporations have voluntarily stopped using those.

In Europe, the "Fridays for Future" movements have gained huge attendance and students in all ages are participating voicing their opinions.

²⁵ N/A. "Who is more powerful -- states or corporations?" The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/who-is-more-powerful-states-or-corporations-99616> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

²⁶ Mazurkiewics, Piotr. "CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY: Is a common CSR framework possible?" World Bank Group: p 2. <https://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDEVCOMSUSDEVT/Resources/csrframework.pdf>

²⁷ Khor, Martin. "The double standards of multinationals." The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cif-green/2010/jun/25/double-standards-multinationals-ecological-disasters> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

This shows that the international community, and with that mostly the people that now have to try to fix the mistakes made in the past, are aware of the problems and willed to make their claims heard.

d) The Implications of the Problem

The planet is dying: more and more people are realizing that and are starting to do what they can to prevent the further worsening of the environment's conditions, including campaigning against corporations and threatening them with actions such as boycotts for causing so much environmental damage. For example, a boycott was launched against BP plc for causing an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which was regarded as "one of the worst environmental disasters to ever befall the United States"²⁸. MNCs certainly do not turn a deaf ear towards such acts, because this may impact the companies' existence and reputation, and therefore have been making efforts in response to this issue. However, other problems have derived from this, which is a phenomenon called 'corporate greenwashing.' The term 'greenwashing' was coined by environmentalist Jay Westerveld in 1986 and can be defined as "the practice of making an unsubstantiated or misleading claim about the environmental benefits of a product, service, technology or company practice"²⁹. This may make companies appear to be more environmentally-friendly than they actually are: promoting 'green' actions such as using eco-friendly materials or helping conserve the wildlife when in reality, they are engaged in environmentally-unsustainable practices within their operations. Companies may also take advantage of the current green and ethical consumerism by misrepresenting facts and exploiting the consumers for money³⁰. As reported by The Guardian, an example of a company known for greenwashing is the American electrical company Westinghouse. In 1960, they were attacked by the anti-nuclear movement, where questions arose about the safety and environmental impact of nuclear energy. They then fought back with a series of advertising proclaiming the cleanliness and safety of their nuclear power

²⁸ N/A. "Boycotts List: BP." Ethical Consumer. <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethicalcampaigns/boycotts> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

²⁹ Rouse, Margaret. "Greenwashing." SearchCRM. <https://searchcrm.techtarget.com/definition/greenwashing> (accessed January 15, 2019)

³⁰ Shah, Anup. "Corporations and the Environment." Global Issues. <http://www.globalissues.org/article/55/corporations-and-the-environment> (accessed January 13, 2019)

plants, stating that they “give more electricity” and are “odorless, neat, clean, and safe.” Whereas some of these claims were proven to be true, the word “safe” was arguable since nuclear meltdowns have occurred in several states in America and the company hasn’t yet addressed the issues of the environmental impact of nuclear waste³¹. Due to this phenomenon, holding these MNCs accountable for the environmental damage that they have caused and demanding them to be more ‘environmentally-friendly’ proves to be a lot harder than it looks.

The assessment of the environmental impacts caused by economic activities also prove to be a persistent issue. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) can be defined as “the process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse³²”. It is defined by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project prior to decision-making³³ and is used by governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike. This process is hence very important for MNCs in averting or mitigating the current environmental trends, considering their economic growth has proven serious consequences for the environment³⁴. It is also aimed to promote transparency and public involvement that is essential for the decision-making process before a project is executed³⁵. EIA has been implemented through a diverse range of legal mechanisms around the world through acts and policies³⁶, and has been done by countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, and Japan³⁷.

³¹ Watson, Bruce. “The troubling evolution of corporate greenwashing.” The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/aug/20/greenwashing-environmentalism-lies-companies> (accessed January 15, 2019).

³² N/A. “What is Impact Assessment?” UN Environment. <https://www.cbd.int/impact/whatis.shtml> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hermann, Lion, Donovan, Jerome J. & Bedggood, Rowan E. “Environmental Impact Assessment from a Business Perspective: Extending Knowledge and Guiding Business Practice.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 117 (2014): p. 789-805. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1721-3>

³⁵ N/A. “Guidebook for Evaluating Mining Project EIAs.” *Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW)*: p. 19. <https://www.elaw.org/files/mining-eia-guidebook/Chapter2.pdf>

³⁶ N/A. “1.6 Overview of legislation for EIA.” SOAS University of London. https://www.soas.ac.uk/cedep-demos/000_P507_EA_K3736-Demo/unit1/page_13.htm (accessed April 6th, 2019).

³⁷ Ibid.

However, the provision of these legislations do not immediately guarantee its effective implementation, and this is especially tricky considering the power the MNCs hold in the modern society as well as in the world's economy. Whereas the influence of these MNCs are undoubted, the fact that they are slowly and steadily rising to the top of the power ladder is also worth noting. Economy-wise, plenty of corporations are on par with some of the largest economies in the world: for example, the American company Walmart, with a revenue of US\$ 482 billion, has exceeded the economies of Spain and Australia, with the revenues of US\$ 461 billion and US\$ 421 respectively, according to the data of the CIA World Factbook in 2017³⁸. The phenomenon of globalization has also transformed state power, making it compete with corporations for influence and political power³⁹. MNCs like Apple and Starbucks wield phenomenal power: they oversee huge supply chains, sell products all over the world, and help mould international politics to their interests⁴⁰. Due to this, it can become harder than ever to hold these companies accountable for the damages that they have caused.

³⁸ N/A. "Who is more powerful -- states or corporations?" The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/who-is-more-powerful-states-or-corporations-99616> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ N/A. "Who is more powerful -- states or corporations?" The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/who-is-more-powerful-states-or-corporations-99616> (accessed April 6th, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The unending growth of MNCs and the environmental implications that come with it remains a difficult challenge in the 21st century. These corporations are allowed to freely grow, both in size and in number, taking advantage of the ease in taxation, policies, and regulations imposed upon them by countries in hopes for all the promising benefits that come with the establishment of an MNC. This persistent case leads to the modern problem of environmental damage, which is a growing concern since the planet's state is worsening day by day. Aside from that, whilst corporations are well known for being some of the biggest contributors towards the environmental damage we face today, not enough action by these said perpetrators are done as a form of responsibility for what they have caused. However, holding these companies accountable has proved to not be entirely successful due to various reasons, such as the rise of corporate greenwashing, lobbying, and the prominence of these companies in their host country or even the world. Therefore, to tackle this problem, we must address it from the very root cause and guarantee the cooperation between governments and the international community. This matter requires immediate action because what we do towards the planet and the natural resources inside it will eventually come back to us: if we continue to damage the planet, then we shall suffer the consequences of our own destruction, because as stated by American poet and cultural critic Wendell Berry, "The Earth is what we all have in common."

QARMA'S

1. How does the international community ensure that the growth of MNCs stay within the "safe and just space for humanity" as shown in Raworth's Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries?
2. How can governments help regulate the growth of MNCs?
3. How can the MNCs be held accountable for the environmental damage that they have caused?
4. How can unending economic growth combined with sustainability?
5. To what extent should regional organisations and NGOs have a say on policies concerning MNCs environmental behavior?

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