



Environmental

Impact of Masks on Textile Waste

Chairs:

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Introduction:

Dear delegates of 2021, we, Malak Benchekroune and Zakya El Abbadi, are more than happy to welcome every single one of you to Tangier's MUN 2022 conference to the Environmental committee. In this committee, we will work together to determine and discuss the impact of masks on textile waste.

Summary:

With the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic, the manufacturing as well as usage of masks has seen a drastic increase. Since COVID-19 was designated a pandemic, face masks have become an essential component of daily life all around the world. International and national agencies advise using surgical or medical masks to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. These are supported by government rules in some nations. Wearing masks has been shown to have additional benefits, including a reduction in other viral infections like influenza.

Masks have caused an enormous increase in fabric consumption and pollution in the environment. Moving forward, because not all masks are reusable, they have caused a faster consumption worldwide of material not necessarily fabric. Textile waste has always been an environmental issue which in turn, is being worsened by the production of masks. Although the obvious solution for textile waste is recycling, it is clear that it is not implemented during the outbreak. According to recent statistics, we use 129 billion face masks per month on the planet, or 3 million per minute. The majority of them are disposable face masks composed of microfiber plastic. This causes a threat to marine life and the majority of living

things. Overall, masks are going against their initial purpose, helping the population, by being an ongoing threat to the environment.

Questions to consider:

- Do you consider that there are specific face masks that should not be worn?
- Are certain mask fabrics better for the environment than others?
- Can masks benefit the textile waste issue rather than worsen it?
- How would you know what fabric is better for the environment?
- What are the different strategies seen to combat textile waste?
- Do the benefits of mask usages outweigh the environmental harms?
- Why do you think face masks are essential? Discuss both when covid started and how it is going now.
- Did masks increase the global rate of textile waste production after the Covid-19 pandemic began?

Key Words:

- **Textile Waste:** Wastage or waste can be defined as materials that aren't used after a process or a product's basic use. It's a type of worthless, ineffective, or defective substance, including products such as clothing, footwear, fashion accessories, towels, bedding, and curtains that have previously been acquired.
- **Surgical Masks:** a rectangular-shaped face mask (usually made of fabric or polypropylene fiber) with two straps connected in the back of the head. A surgical mask, often called a medical face mask, is a piece of personal protection equipment worn by medical personnel during procedures. It blocks the movement of pathogens (mainly bacteria and viruses) shed in

respiratory droplets and aerosols from the wearer's mouth and nose, preventing airborne transmission of illnesses between patients and/or treatment professionals when worn correctly.

- **N95 Respirators:** a respiratory protective device that achieves a very close facial fit and filters at least 95% of airborne particles and meets the N95 classification of air filtration established by the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), meaning it filters at least 95% of airborne particles.
- **Fabric masks:** inner layer of absorbent material, such as cotton. Middle layer of non-woven non-absorbent material, such as polypropylene. Outer layer of non-absorbent material, such as polyester or polyester blend.

UN Involvement:

Encourages people to be careful of the way they dispose of their masks and how the careless disposal of masks negatively affects the environment. (see source 7)

Requirements:

- A. Position Paper
- B. Research on the Topic
- C. Potential solutions to solving the problem
- D. SMILE ;) and Positivity

Bibliography and useful websites

1. <https://www.nbcnews.com/select/shopping/eco-friendly-face-mask-ncna1264810>

2. <https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-communication.pdf>
3. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/apa.15784>
4. <https://news.mit.edu/2021/covid-masks-environment-0720>
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7543915/>
6. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.estlett.1c00422>
7. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1069151>