# Boston College High School Model UN Conference XXXII





## Antarctic Resources



Chair: Danny Moylan '24 Co-Chair: Lucas Patel '24



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## Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Danny Moylan, and it is my high privilege and distinct honor to welcome you to BC High's 32nd Model UN Conference! On behalf of the entire BC High community, I would like to thank you for expressing interest in the question of Antarctica and your willingness to work toward a resolution.

I began Model UN four years ago as a freshman, and have been fascinated with geopolitics ever since. Model UN has been a way for me to meet like-minded people from around New England, providing me with opportunities that have shaped my high school experience. You form connections when working with others to solve a problem that you care about, and I am proud to be able to foster that environment for all.

The events that we will be deliberating have updates in real-time - the points that are on this background guide may be outdated by the conference! This is why it is so important to prepare for the conference. As this is a novice DISEC, if you feel as if you would like to reach out to me for help preparing I will be more than happy to assist. My email is <u>dp.moylan24@students.bchigh.edu</u> if you have any questions or concerns regarding the topic, preparation, procedure, or anything else. I truly look forward to being your Chair for this exciting discussion, and will see you all in March!

Sincerely,

Danny Moylan '24 Under Secretary General dp.moylan24@students.bchigh.edu



## Letter from the Co-Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Lucas Patel, and I am a senior here at BC High as well as your co-chair. This is my second year being a member of BC High Model UN, participating in local and national conferences. I, like all members of BC High's MUN team, love participating and debating alongside fellow delegates from all over. I am looking forward to meeting all of you and helping assist my chair, Danny Moylan.

A little more about me outside of Model UN includes my participation in the Business Club, Investment Club, Global Citizenship programs, and Spanish Fluency programs. Please feel free to ask me questions regarding any of these topics when we meet together. I also love playing and watching many different sports events, mainly hockey.

I am looking forward to a great time in committee with all of you. Please reach out to me (email below) or your Chair, Danny Moylan (email above) if you have any questions whatsoever. I look forward to meeting you all.

All The Best,

Lucas Patel '24 Co-Chair ls.patel24@students.bchigh.edu



## **Historical Background:**

Antarctica, characterized by vast ice sheets and a uniquely isolated ecosystem, has long captured the imagination of nations worldwide. Recent technological advancements have made resource extraction increasingly feasible in the continent, something the international community has been eager to take advantage of. However, the geopolitical landscape faces a delicate challenge—how to balance the exploration of Antarctic resources while preserving its fragile environment.

#### **Established Treaties**

Historically, Antarctica has been governed by the Antarctic Treaty System, established in 1959. The treaty designates Antarctica as a scientific preserve and bans military activity on the continent. It also prohibits any new claims of sovereignty over the land. However, it did not specifically address resource extraction, and as global priorities shift, the question of how to manage Antarctic resources has come to the forefront.



The more recent Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, adopted in 1991, is a crucial amendment that designates Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science, and imposes strict regulations to prevent environmental degradation. The Protocol establishes a comprehensive ban on mineral resource activities until at least the year 2048, referred to as the mining moratorium. This prohibition is in place to allow for thorough scientific research on the Antarctic environment and its ecosystems, ensuring a better understanding of potential impacts before considering any exploitation of resources. The Protocol includes provisions for periodic reviews, allowing parties to assess the environmental implications of human activities and make decisions about the future of Antarctic resource use. Any amendment



to lift the mining ban would require a consensus among the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, emphasizing the collective responsibility for the region's environmental protection.



#### **International Pressures**

The issue of territorial claims in Antarctica adds a layer of complexity to resource management. While the Antarctic Treaty prohibits new claims, existing claims remain, and overlapping interests may lead to future conflicts. Currently, overlapping claims between Argentina, Chile, and the United Kingdom in the Antarctic Peninsula have historical roots and could become a focal point of committee discussions.

China's gaining interest and involvement in Antarctica extends beyond scientific research, encompassing potential resource extraction. While the Antarctic Treaty System prohibits mineral resource activities, the Protocol on Environmental Protection leaves the door open for future resource extraction. China's establishment of research stations, such as the Changcheng Station, reflects a multifaceted approach, combining scientific exploration with an eye on future economic opportunities. The country has invested significantly in advanced technologies like icebreakers to navigate the Antarctic waters, demonstrating a commitment to overcoming logistical obstacles for potential resource extraction. China's engagement in Antarctica raises questions about the evolving landscape of Antarctic governance and resource utilization.

#### **Resource Extraction**

The role of private corporations in Antarctica's resource extraction is a contentious issue. While the Antarctic Treaty System currently prohibits mineral mining until at least 2048, the potential for future amendments to this protocol raises questions about the involvement of private entities. Some argue that responsible private investment could contribute to sustainable



development, technological advancements, and economic opportunities for both Antarctic states and the global community. However, concerns about environmental impact, regulatory oversight, and the preservation of Antarctica's ecosystem highlight the need for a robust international framework to guide and regulate any future corporate activities. Some speculative discussions have involved multinational corporations with expertise in polar operations, such as Russia's Rosneft, which has expressed interest in Antarctic oil exploration. Additionally, China's growing presence in Antarctica, with companies like China National Offshore Oil Corporation engaging in research activities, has led to speculation about potential future corporate involvement in resource extraction.

The continent is estimated to contain substantial reservoirs of oil, natural gas, coal, minerals, and freshwater. As climate change and technological advancements alter the accessibility of these resources, the economic potential becomes more tangible. The lure of mineral wealth, particularly in the form of precious metals and minerals essential for modern technologies, has prompted discussions about the feasibility of future resource extraction. The vast expanses



of untapped resources in Antarctica could offer economic benefits, stimulate technological innovation, and open avenues for infrastructure development. However, exploiting these resources comes with significant logistical challenges and environmental risks. Delegates must explore ways to foster responsible and sustainable economic development while mitigating the negative impacts of resource extraction on the Antarctic environment.

#### **Environmental Protection**

The Antarctic ecosystem is fragile and unique, hosting diverse marine and avian species. Any human activity, particularly resource extraction, poses a potential threat to this delicate



balance. The Antarctic Peninsula has experienced a recent temperature rise, which has led to concerns about the stability of ice shelves and potential impacts on global sea levels. Protecting the continent from expected global warming, as well as ensuring that resource extraction does not cause Antarctica's own demise, will be a delicate balance to strike.

Antarctica's ice sheets, making up more than 70% of the world's freshwater, are of particular concern as water becomes more scarce in the developed world. The utilization of ice extraction, as well as the mitigation of subsequent geopolitical conflicts, will be of particular concern in the coming decades.



Additionally, scientific research has been a hallmark of Antarctic activities, providing valuable insights into climate change, atmospheric science, and biodiversity. Delegates should consider how ongoing scientific efforts can inform sustainable resource management. Collaborative research initiatives, such as those facilitated by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, could play a pivotal role in guiding policy decisions within the committee.

Additionally, ensuring that scientific research on the continent is protected should be of the greatest importance to delegates.

The unique impact of climate change on Antarctica adds urgency to the committee's discussions. Delegates must address how changes in temperature, ice melt, and shifting ecosystems could affect resource extraction and develop adaptive measures to navigate these challenges effectively.

#### Conclusion

The DISEC committee faces the formidable task of navigating the complexities surrounding Antarctic resource extraction. Balancing economic interests with environmental preservation, addressing territorial claims, fostering international cooperation, and regulating



corporations are key aspects that demand thoughtful consideration. Delegates must collaborate to develop comprehensive and sustainable solutions that reflect the shared responsibility of the international community in managing the resources of this unique and vulnerable region.



## **Positions**

- 1. Argentina
- 2. Australia
- 3. Brazil
- 4. Canada
- 5. Chile
- 6. China
- 7. Denmark
- 8. Ecuador
- 9. Finland
- 10. France
- 11. Germany
- 12. India
- 13. Indonesia
- 14. Italy
- 15. Japan
- 16. Malaysia
- 17. Netherlands
- 18. New Zealand
- 19. Nigeria
- 20. Norway
- 21. Peru
- 22. Poland
- 23. Russia
- 24. South Africa
- 25. South Korea
- 26. Spain
- 27. Sweden
- 28. Ukraine
- 29. United Kingdom
- 30. United States



## **Questions to Consider**

- 1. What are the potential impacts of climate change on Antarctica and its resources, and what measures can be proposed to mitigate these effects?
- 2. How can the international community balance the exploration and utilization of Antarctic resources while preserving the continent's ecosystem?
- 3. In what ways can countries collaborate to establish frameworks for the distribution of Antarctic resources, considering the diverse interests and capabilities of participating nations?
- 4. How should the committee address and mitigate potential conflicts arising from overlapping territorial claims in Antarctica?
- 5. How should the committee navigate the involvement of private corporations in Antarctic resource exploration, and what regulatory frameworks could be established to ensure responsible business practices?
- 6. Considering the remote and harsh conditions of Antarctica, what measures can be implemented to enhance international cooperation in search and rescue operations and emergency response, particularly in the context of resource exploration activities?



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