



NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Greenpeace International

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Introduction

Congratulations on joining Greenpeace International! As a member of this NGO, you are committing yourself to the effort of protecting the environment from imminent threats and promoting peace. Since its creation in 1972, Greenpeace International has pursued its agenda through research, campaigning, lobbying, and nonviolent direct action. At a critical moment in history, our environment is currently facing unprecedented dangers. It is your responsibility to continue the mission for peace and environmental conservation by educating others and convincing them to act.

History

In 1971, a small team of activists unknowingly set out on the inaugural Greenpeace mission on an old fishing boat. They were outraged that the United States government was planning to conduct underground nuclear testing at Amchitka, a tiny island off Alaska's coast that is home to otters, bald eagles, peregrine falcons and other endangered species. These early founders of Greenpeace were ultimately intercepted, and their efforts **thwarted**—the nuclear testing continued as originally planned. Their efforts, however, did not go unnoticed, and they were successful in capturing enough media attention that Amchitka was declared a bird **sanctuary** that year, thus putting a stop to subsequent testing.

Thwarted—*defeated or stopped.*

Sanctuary—*a place of protection and refuge.*

In later years, Greenpeace continued its grand tradition of taking to the seas and challenging larger and more powerful players than itself, sometimes with the same effect as its maiden voyage. Several determined activists adopted a similar strategy to try to stop the French from testing nuclear weapons at sea. Though they were forcibly removed and the test proceeded as scheduled, the incident drew international attention and strengthened the movement against nuclear testing.

One of the more notable Greenpeace victories came in 1995, when a boat of Greenpeace activists stood their ground in the North Sea against Shell Oil Company and the government of the United Kingdom to prevent it from being polluted. This dramatic form of protest spurred others to join the Greenpeace cause to pressure Shell to not dump their oil storage facility in the ocean and to instead recycle it on land. Shell eventually **relented**, and a ban on the ocean disposal of oil rigs followed.

Relented—*softened or reduced resistance.*

The stand-down against Shell is certainly one of Greenpeace's most dramatic victories, but change can also be brought about on a smaller scale on a much more regular basis. These successes can entail anything from convincing a corporation to adopt a more eco-friendly manufacturing process to winning a lawsuit against a corporation that ignores environmental concerns.

Means of Action

Greenpeace International has greatly expanded from its original, modest roots to its current status as a significant global presence. For many people—from everyday citizens to governmental officials—its name is synonymous with environmental activism and preservation. Based in Amsterdam, Greenpeace currently boasts a membership of 2.8 million supporters, and it operates in 42 countries across every continent. Its national and regional offices operate independently toward global campaigns that the NGO has ranked as top priorities: **catalyzing** an energy revolution to confront climate change, defending the oceans and marine wildlife, protecting the world's forests, working towards global nuclear disarmament, guarding against the potential dangers of **genetically engineered** food, and advocating for environmentally responsible trade. Greenpeace relies on clearly defined campaigns for guiding and determining its plans of action, but its broader goals can also include exposing those whom they deem “environmental criminals” or challenging governments and corporations that fail to safeguard the environment. Greenpeace also strives to create debate about society's interaction with and impact on the environment.

One of the most powerful roles Greenpeace can play is that of an **informant**. Through extensive research, Greenpeace seeks to uncover facts and bring them to the forefront of public attention. Because so many of their conclusions rely on research, the reliability of the information they discover is especially important, and it is not a responsibility Greenpeace takes lightly. Greenpeace uses the latest scientific equipment and methods, and it even operates its own research laboratories in the School of Biological Sciences at Exeter University in the United Kingdom. When considering the reliability of this research, it is important to recognize that Greenpeace is an NGO that maintains its financial independence by relying on funding from individual contributions and **grants**. Were its research sponsored by a specific government or corporation, that fact could be used to discredit the motivation behind the findings.

Catalyze—to speed up a process by adding another factor or ingredient.

Genetically engineered—modifying an organism's genetic material in order to change its characteristics.

Informant—a person who supplies information.

Grant—money given for a specific purpose, such as research.

Campaigns

Climate Change

Greenpeace argues that global warming is the greatest threat the world faces today, and it has made halting the effects of global warming and revolutionizing our energy industry its number one priority. Greenpeace activists warn that if humans continue on their current path, they might see such devastating consequences as rising sea levels and flooding, which would **disproportionately** harm lower income nations. We may also see **irreversible** disturbances in natural ecosystems – effects that will be very difficult to predict.

Citing human activities like the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation as major contributors to the crisis, Greenpeace urgently calls for the immediate discontinuation of the burning of coal for energy and also advocates strongly for the use and continued development of alternate energy sources. Clean, renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, bio-energy, and hydroelectricity exist, but Greenpeace argues that they will not be successful in the market unless the government leads the way with subsidies and grants because they are not yet financially viable.

Nuclear Disarmament

Nine countries are currently in possession of approximately 30,000 nuclear weapons, a statistic Greenpeace finds extremely troubling. As it was nuclear testing that spurred the creation of Greenpeace in the first place, Greenpeace remains dedicated to opposing the proliferation of nuclear arms, which could threaten the survival of the human race and life on this planet, but also have the potential to cause smaller scale damage because of the processing and storage of nuclear materials. It also firmly opposes the testing of these weapons, as testing can cause permanent harmful effects to the environment near test sites. Greenpeace's strategy is to pressure countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China to disarm, while limiting developing countries' access to this technology and weaponry. Greenpeace believes the way to achieve its goal is to use one of its most valuable resources: the full weight of global support, for public opinion polls show increasingly larger majorities favoring the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

Although some might speculate that developing nuclear energy could contribute to fighting climate change, Greenpeace vehemently rejects this idea, arguing that nuclear development would be too expensive and too dangerous. Developing this industry on a scale large enough to make a significant contribution to humans' energy needs would require trillions of dollars that Greenpeace advocates argue would be put to better use if **allocated** elsewhere. Furthermore, this process would potentially create tens of thousands of tons of lethal waste, could result in

Disproportionately—*unevenly.*

Irreversible—*in this context, not able to be fixed.*

Allocated—*distributed or designated.*

catastrophic accidents, and could contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms.

Sustainable Agriculture

Recent scientific progress made in the field of molecular biology has propelled food producers into uncharted territory with genetic engineering. Greenpeace strongly condemns the creation of plants, animals, and microorganisms by means of genetic manipulation. Such potentially risky experimentation with the world's food supply, which environmentalists believe could upset its delicate balance, could have unforeseeable, uncontrollable, and irreversible consequences on the non-genetically engineered environment. Thus, Greenpeace calls for the separation of genetically engineered organisms from natural ones in the short run, and a complete discontinuation of genetic engineering technology in the long run.

Greenpeace also disagrees strongly with the idea that genetic engineering methods can help alleviate world hunger. Greenpeace argues that the source of much of the world's hunger is not the lack of food but the lack of money to buy food or the lack of land on which to grow food for oneself. Members of Greenpeace argue that scientists have created these new techniques as a means of earning a profit – rather than from an **altruistic** desire to **alleviate** world hunger – without giving sufficient thought to their long-term consequences on the environment.

Altruistic—*unselfish devotion to the welfare of others.*

Alleviate—*to lessen or relieve.*

Conclusion

To be a successful advocate for Greenpeace International, you must be able to persuade others to understand the urgency of your cause. You will encounter opposition on many fronts as you embark on this difficult journey; some won't believe your claims, while others will simply feel indifference to the information you are presenting to them. Come prepared with compelling facts and logical arguments, and anticipate possible counterpoints. Try to structure your arguments so that they contain **irrefutable** evidence that appeals to the pragmatic sides of those you are trying to influence. Ultimately, even the most **cynical** person will care about his or her environment when confronted with the stark truth that we are given only one planet; neglecting, abusing, and destroying it cannot be a viable option.

Irrefutable—*to be impossible to deny.*

Cynical—*the state of being distrustful of human motives.*

Guide to Further Research

Beyond reading this briefing on Greenpeace International, there are two main ways to further prepare yourself for lobbying for your NGO while at the conference. First, the most valuable resource will be

Greenpeace International's website. Here you can find various information on its history, their mission and goals, as well as details on their latest campaigns and causes:

- <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/>
This is the main Greenpeace website. This is a great starting point for learning more about this NGO.
- <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/peace>
“Peace and Disarmament” is an example of one of Greenpeace’s several causes. Several issues at HMCE 2009 are highly related to the cause of peace and disarmament, so familiarize yourself with this campaign.
- <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/climate-change>
Greenpeace has been instrumental in leading the way for a solution to the current environmental crisis that we are experiencing worldwide.
- <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/genetic-engineering>
While scientific progress on **molecular biology** in the form of genetic engineering has a great potential to increase our understanding of nature and provide new medical tools, Greenpeace feels that it should not be used as a justification to turn the environment into a giant genetic experiment for commercial interests. This viewpoint will be highly relevant in a variety of different committees at HMCE.

Molecular biology—
the study of biology at
the molecular level.

The second primary way that you can prepare further is by reviewing the issue briefings of the committees at HMCE, particularly the ones that will be considering issues that are relevant to Greenpeace. Look over the briefings and the questions that the committee will be considering. In doing so, you should be able to gain an understanding of how your organization can interact with the committee in order to further your initiatives and campaigns.

As a member of Greenpeace International, it is your job to familiarize yourself with the several different campaigns of your organization, as well as the issues that are going to be considered at HMCE. There is plenty of opportunity to lobby the committees in order to advance the principles of Greenpeace International.

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