



EEG

مجموعة عمل الإمارات للبيئة
EMIRATES ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP



INTER COLLEGE
ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

26th Cycle of the Inter Colleges Environmental Public Speaking Competition The Concept Note

Teachers/Professors are expected to guide the students in conducting research on global, regional, and national level perspectives and to present this research with facts and figures in their original presentation.

While the concept notes touch upon key points to guide the students in the right direction, they must research and bring additional information, examples and unique perspectives that can add value to their presentations.

Nature Positive Economies: Are We Ready for a World Where Ecosystems Come First?

A nature-positive economy is one that halts and reverses environmental degradation by placing ecosystems at the heart of economic and development decisions. Yet, global economic performance continues to be measured largely through indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—a system that values growth and output while often overlooking environmental depletion, ecosystem collapse and long-term social costs. As a result, economic progress is frequently achieved at the expense of biodiversity, clean air, healthy soils and safe water systems.

Today, the consequences of this imbalance are increasingly visible. Air in many major cities has become unbreathable, as reflected by alarming Air Quality Index (AQI) levels, while water pollution and resource depletion threaten ecosystems and human well-being alike. These realities raise a critical question: is GDP still an accurate and ethical measure of economic success, or does the current global situation demand a fundamental shift in how economies are evaluated—one that places nature and ecosystem health at the centre?

This topic invites students to critically examine whether societies are prepared to transition from nature-depleting economic models to systems that actively restore and protect natural capital. Participants are encouraged to explore alternative frameworks that value ecosystem services such as clean air, safe water, carbon sequestration, climate regulation and biodiversity conservation alongside economic prosperity.

By addressing this theme, students will reflect on humanity's responsibility towards nature and question whether existing economic systems are resilient, inclusive and ethical enough to support a future where both people and the planet can thrive.

This topic aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: #6, #8, #9, #11, 12#, #13, #14, #15 and #17.

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Food Systems on the Brink: Is Sustainable Agriculture the Only Way Forward?

Global food systems are under increasing pressure from climate change, soil degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss and a rapidly growing population. While modern agriculture has significantly increased food production, it has also intensified environmental challenges such as deforestation, excessive water consumption, chemical pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. These pressures are not limited to crop production alone—industrial animal agriculture, poultry farming and fisheries have also contributed to land degradation, water pollution, overfishing and rising emissions, pushing global food systems towards a critical tipping point.

This topic invites students to examine whether sustainable agriculture—including responsible livestock management, ethical poultry farming and sustainable fisheries—is the only viable pathway to feed the world without exhausting natural resources. Participants are encouraged to explore practices such as regenerative farming, organic agriculture, agroforestry, vertical farming, climate-smart crops, precision irrigation and improved feed and waste management in animal farming. Students may also highlight the essential role of pollinators, particularly bees, in sustaining food production and biodiversity. The decline of pollinator populations due to habitat loss, pesticide use and climate change threatens crop yields and ecosystem balance, reinforcing the need for pollinator-friendly farming practices.

The topic further allows debate on the challenges of transitioning to sustainable food systems, including economic viability, access to technology, farmer education, policy support and changing consumer dietary patterns. Students may question whether technological innovations, policy reforms, and responsible consumption can complement sustainable agriculture—or whether a systemic transformation of global food systems is unavoidable.

By engaging with this theme, participants will reflect on the interconnectedness of food production, climate, water, biodiversity and human health, and assess whether current food systems can continue as they are—or whether a fundamental shift towards sustainability is necessary to safeguard both people and the planet.

This topic aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: SDG #2, #3, #6, #11, #12, #13, #15 and #17

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The Future of Medicine: Can Healthcare Be Truly Sustainable?

Modern healthcare has transformed human longevity and quality of life, yet it has also become an increasingly resource-intensive and environmentally demanding sector. Hospitals operate round-the-clock, consuming vast amounts of energy and water, while healthcare supply chains generate significant carbon emissions. Alongside this, the sector produces enormous quantities of healthcare waste, broadly classified into hazardous and non-hazardous streams, each presenting distinct environmental and public health challenges.

Healthcare generates large volumes of non-hazardous and hazardous waste, each requiring responsible management. Non-hazardous waste forms the majority and includes packaging materials such as paper, cardboard, cartons, bubble wrap, multilayer packaging, foils, glass and polymer-based wraps used for medicines and medical equipment. When poorly segregated, much of this recyclable waste is sent to landfills or incineration. Hazardous waste—including infectious materials, sharps, chemical residues and pharmaceutical by-products—poses serious environmental and public health risks if mismanaged. The growing dependence on single-use clinical products and packaging has intensified sustainability concerns, while emerging evidence of microplastics from medical materials accumulating in ecosystems and human bodies raises critical questions about healthcare's long-term environmental impact.

This topic invites students to critically explore how healthcare waste management—particularly the segregation and treatment of hazardous and non-hazardous waste, including diverse packaging materials—intersects with sustainability, safety and regulatory oversight. Participants are encouraged to examine whether current healthcare practices sufficiently priorities waste reduction, material innovation and circular economy approaches alongside patient safety.

In parallel, students may assess how energy consumption in hospitals—from lighting and climate control to diagnostic equipment and data systems—contributes to carbon emissions. This leads to further questioning: should healthcare institutions be re-designed as low-carbon, energy-efficient systems, and is the transition to renewable energy in healthcare a necessity rather than an option?

The topic also encourages debate on ethical responsibility, innovation, policy reform and equity—questioning whether sustainability in healthcare is an achievable transformation or a complex challenge constrained by cost, regulation and technological dependence. By engaging with this theme, participants will reflect on the inseparable link between human health and planetary health, and evaluate whether the future of medicine can heal people without harming the environment that sustains life.

This topic aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: SDG #3, #6, #7 #9, #11, #12, #13, #15 and #17

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Crisis Below Our Feet: Can Soil Restoration Address Climate Change?

Soil is one of the planet's most vital yet overlooked natural resources. It supports food production, regulates water cycles, stores carbon and sustains biodiversity. Yet, modern development and land-use practices such as —, unsustainable land use practices, deforestation, overgrazing, excessive chemical inputs, intensive farming and rapid urban expansion have led to widespread soil degradation. Today, large areas of the world's soils are eroded, compacted or depleted of organic matter, weakening ecosystems, threatening food security and accelerating climate change.

These realities raise urgent questions: can climate action succeed if the health of soil beneath our feet continues to be ignored, and should soil restoration be treated as a frontline climate solution rather than a secondary environmental concern? While global climate strategies often focus on energy and emissions, the role of soil as a natural carbon sink remains significantly undervalued.

This topic invites students to explore whether soil restoration can be a powerful yet underutilised solution to the climate crisis. Participants are encouraged to examine how healthy soils act as major carbon sinks, capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide, while improving water retention, crop resilience and stabilise ecosystems. Practices such as regenerative agriculture, cover cropping, agroforestry, composting, reduced tillage and land restoration present nature-based pathways to rebuild soil health while mitigating climate impacts.

Students may also debate the challenges of scaling soil restoration, questioning whether current policies, economic incentives and agricultural systems adequately support farmers and communities in adopting these practices. This leads to further reflection: is soil restoration a long-term investment humanity cannot afford to delay, or a solution overlooked because its benefits are slow, invisible and undervalued?

By engaging with this theme, participants will highlight the hidden connection between soil, climate and human survival, and assess whether restoring the ground beneath us can become a central pillar of climate resilience—or remain an untapped opportunity in global climate action.

This topic aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: SDG #2, #12, #13, #15 and #17

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