

Introduction to the scenario

(using the PowerPoint presentation)

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We are in Ecuador, a country in north-western South America. Ecuador is an oil-producing nation, but also home to one of the world's most diverse ecosystems. Situated in the east of the country is Yasuní National Park, an area of the Amazon rainforest around four times the size of Luxembourg.

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Yasuní National Park is one of the world's top ten biodiversity hotspots. 655 tree and bush species can be found in a single hectare – more than in all of North America.

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Nowhere in the world has higher levels of biodiversity. Nowhere else on the planet boasts so many species of birds (around 593), amphibians (around 150), reptiles (around 121) and other creatures. The countless rivers which meander through the rainforest are even home to pink dolphins.

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The roughly 1,200 inhabitants of Yasuní National Park, Ecuador's as yet largely intact Amazon region, are already regarded as pioneers of non-violent resistance against multinational oil companies. What is more, Yasuní National Park and the surrounding rainforest is home to the last indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation: the Tagaeiri and the Taromenane, currently numbering around 3,000. They shun all contact with the outside world and preserve their traditional way of life. Their survival depends directly on the preservation of the national park.

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Yasuní National Park is among the world's ten greatest biodiversity hotspots, and was designated a biosphere reserve by UNESCO. However, 7.2 billion US dollars' worth of oil has been discovered in the park's soil, specifically, in the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini oil fields. The area is referred to as ITT, after these initials.

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In the last 30 years, various oil companies have been granted licenses to prospect for and extract oil in the Kichwa area around Sarayaku. In 2002 and 2003, massive human rights violations were committed against the indigenous inhabitants of Yasuní National Park during oil-related activities: oil workers accompanied by soldiers invaded the area, destroying 260 hectares of rainforest and burying 1,450 kg of explosives in the ground for seismic surveys.

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Oil production leads to soil and water pollution; leaking pipelines deposit heavy metals, chrome, cadmium, barium and other highly toxic substances. As the animals in the forests and rivers die, hunting and fishing are no longer possible. Local inhabitants are afflicted by severe health problems, in particular cancer and malformations.

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It is impossible for oil to be produced in Yasuní Park without destroying its forest. Accordingly, the indigenous population has fought back against the plans to extract the oil, with the help of the confederation of indigenous nationalities of Ecuador CONTIGO. Their aim is to raise awareness of the issue by means of protests, peaceful roadblocks, exhibitions, TV presence, interviews and visits to national and international organisations, so as to put the government under pressure to secure their survival in Yasuní National Park.

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As a poor country, Ecuador cannot afford to simply pass up on the money it would make from selling the oil. However, in 2007 president Correa made a proposal to the UN General Assembly according to which he would forgo oil production in the Yasuní ITT area if the international community paid half the value of the lost revenue into a UN trust fund over a 13-year period. The money is to be used not just to protect the Yasuní rainforest, but also to support the creation of an energy supply based on renewables, and promote economic and social development in Ecuador, especially in the region surrounding the national park. The government's aim is to become independent of oil exports.

The Yasuní ITT initiative was met with great enthusiasm by the international community. After countries around the world pledged 100 million dollars by the end of 2011, President Correa announced that Ecuador would definitively forgo oil production in the Yasuní ITT area in order to preserve the rainforest. The initiative was supported by the UN, which opened a trust fund for the purpose. However, not enough money has been paid in so far, and Correa must decide by 31/12/2011 whether the oil should be extracted or left in the ground. In order to make the decision, he has invited key stakeholders to support and advise him. The following parties have been invited to a round table in the capital Quito:

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The German government, represented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Germany plays a decisive role in the process. Numerous countries have already made financial commitments, including Spain, Chile, France and Italy. Others such as the Netherlands, Belgium or Norway have shown a vague interest, but will only get on board if Germany contributes to the fund. However, Germany has so far withheld its support, despite being one of Europe's wealthiest countries. The Ecuadorian government hopes to gain Germany's support for the initiative.

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The Norwegian government has also agreed to attend the talks and appears willing to make a financial contribution.

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Besides the confederation of indigenous nationalities of Ecuador CONTIGO, German representatives of the international organisation Climate Justice have also been invited. This organisation supports the Yasuní ITT initiative, and will attend the negotiations in an advisory capacity given their expertise in global environmental issues.

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Also present will be the oil company Global Oil. Following preliminary negotiations conducted in the last few years, the company is anxious to start extracting the oil.

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The Nobel laureate for literature Adalberto Espejo and Alva Salas, the famous editor-in-chief of the renowned weekly newspaper "Reciente", will moderate the conference at the request of the Ecuadorian government.

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In a moment we will randomly allocate the roles for the simulation, after which you will all receive a role description. You have 15 minutes to read it, ask questions, make notes if you like and discuss how to proceed. The conference will then begin. In the opening round, each group will present itself and state its demands or wishes. You will then be given a little more time to discuss how to achieve your goal within your group.

This is where the conference begins in earnest. You will take your place in the conference hall, and the moderators will guide you through two or three rounds of negotiations. Each round will consist of an official negotiation session at the conference table, and an unofficial one. During the unofficial negotiations you can move around freely, and separate rooms are available for secret discussions. To conclude, the Ecuadorian government will withdraw, deliberate and decide on the future of Yasuní National Park. Its decision will be announced in the final round, after which the conference will end. We will then take a longer break before evaluating the simulation as a group.

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There are a few important rules for the simulation.

1. Immerse yourself in the simulation! The more intensely you play your role, the more exciting the simulation will be. Stay in character, and refrain from analysing the simulation while it is taking place. There will be an evaluation session afterwards.
2. There are no breaks as such during the simulation. For urgent matters you can of course use the group phase, in consultation with the rest of the group. However, it is important to remain in character for the entire time, and not talk about other topics. In particular, the "coffee breaks" are not breaks in the simulation, but unofficial negotiations. They are an opportunity to establish contact with other stakeholders and pursue your interests. Breaks are the most important part of conferences in the real world too, and where the most crucial discussions are held.

3. You are free to develop your roles as you like. Your fundamental stance is shown in the role description. If you need additional arguments or facts for the discussion, you are free to make them up.
4. Virtually any means imaginable can be used to steer the negotiations towards your own interests. Be creative! However, you should act in accordance with your role. Consider how the real stakeholders would act in a conference of this nature. Personal attacks and insults are not allowed.
5. Two delegates from each group take part in the official negotiations at the conference table. This duty should be rotated in each round. While the delegates are at the table, the other group members observe and document the negotiations from their seat. They are not allowed to intervene or speak. Only written notes may be passed to delegates of the same group. Message slips will be provided for this purpose.
6. The conference will be guided and moderated by the moderators. They have the power to determine which topics are discussed, to give the floor to – or take it away from – individual parties or exclude them from the negotiations. They also announce the start and end of each round.
7. All agreements are to be concluded with a handshake, or in writing and signed so that they can be invoked later.
8. There are separate rooms available for private unofficial negotiations. They have been labelled accordingly.

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We will now allocate the roles. Are there any volunteers who would like to take on the demanding role of moderators? (...) Everyone else should draw a role allocation card. Sit with the rest of your group. Once you have received your role descriptions you should familiarise yourselves with your roles. You will then have a little time to discuss strategy within your groups and choose two representatives for the first round of negotiations.