

AFF Backup – Sustainability

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Case Extensions

Value: Sustainability

Humankind's responsibility to look after the environment is as old as time itself. This responsibility can look like many different things: eliminating waste, preventing harm, utilizing resources to benefit others, and exploring new environments to understand how they work.

With modern technological advancements, humankind now finds itself in a new environment: outer space. This novel avenue of human adventure has created groundbreaking endeavors, such as interplanetary missions, space mining, and even international military innovation. Each of these endeavors utilizes some aspect of outer space. Since humankind has now placed itself in this extraterrestrial physical environment, we have a new application for our timeless responsibility to steward. This foundational idea, which underlies the sample *AFF Case*, can be broken into three main principles:

1. **Responsibility to Steward Applies to Outer Space:** This principle is rooted in environmental ethics, which is a deontological philosophical framework. Environmental ethics views stewardship of the environment as a moral responsibility since the environment has intrinsic value.¹ Since outer space is also a natural environment, the responsibility to steward also applies to our actions outside of Earth.
2. **Responsibility to Steward Requires Sustainability:** This principle asserts that humankind's responsibility to steward the environment requires actions that are inherently sustainable. As defined in the Sample *AFF Case*, sustainability is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."² This principle is rooted in a consequentialist philosophical framework: if our actions in outer space are not sustainable, then reckless, destructive practices will result, and our responsibility to steward outer space will be violated.
3. **Sustainability Requires Cooperation:** This idea understands that the environment is a complex and interconnected system. As such, a single entity, whether it be a government, tribe, company, or community, is unable to sustain the environment. This is especially the case when an entity is pitted against another in a competition. Therefore, sustainability requires the cooperation of numerous communities, often spanning sovereign borders. The Nile River Basin Initiative found in the Sample *AFF Case* is a perfect illustration of this principle.

¹ Akamani, Kofi, "Integrating Deep Ecology and Adaptive Governance for Sustainable Development: Implications for Protected Areas Management," *Sustainability* 12, no. 14: 5757, (2020), accessed July 7, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12145757>.

² United Nations, "Sustainability," *United Nations*, (n.d.), accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>.



Contention 1: Cooperation prioritizes sustainability.

Cooperation is necessary for sustainability.

Explanation: Sustainability requires cooperation. Without cooperation, sustainability cannot occur.

Evidence: Consider this quote from Philosopher Joseph E. Brenner from Xi'an Jiaotong University in 2018:

"The 'logic' in favor of the sustainable use of needed natural resources should be self-explanatory, as an obvious contribution to the common good. At the same time, countervailing forces exist: some humans, as noted, through avoidable ignorance or greed, choose to reject cooperation in favor of wasteful competition and destruction of those resources for private profit."³

Impact: Since sustainability is for the "common good," participation from more than one entity is required. Cooperation is required for sustainability to be achieved. Without cooperation, "wasteful competition" occurs instead.

³ Brenner, Joseph E., "The Philosophy of Ecology and Sustainability: New Logical and Informational Dimensions," *Philosophies* 3, no. 2: 16, (2018), accessed July 7, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies3020016>.



Contention 2: Cooperation is the only hope for future exploration and use.

Cooperation is necessary for the exploration and utilization of outer space.

Explanation: Many approaches can be applied to space successfully, even noncooperation. However, cooperation comes first as it is *necessary* for all stages of the exploration and utilization of outer space.

Evidence: In a highly influential report coined the “Brundtland Report,” the World Commission on Environment and Development for the United Nations in 1983 stated the following:

“The future of the space as a resource will depend not so much on technology as on the slow and difficult struggle to create sound international institutions to manage this resource. It will depend most of all upon humanity's ability to prevent an arms race in space.”⁴

Impact: The future of humankind’s exploration and utilization of outer space relies on multiple international institutions cooperating to prevent harmful and promote beneficial uses of extraterrestrial resources.

⁴ Brundtland, Gro Harlem, et. al., “Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future,” *Oxford University Press*, (1983), pg. 226, accessed July 8, 2025, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.



Additional Arguments

The following can serve either as effective responses in the AR or potentially as additional content for the Affirmative Constructive:

1. Sustainability Supports Innovation

Explanation: Many people see sustainability as a sacrifice to innovation. But the opposite is true: when sustainability is valued, it fuels innovation.

Evidence: Denises Rotondo and Paul Chow from the World Economic Forum in 2025 write the following:

“In an era defined by environmental imperatives and increasing regulatory scrutiny, sustainability has emerged as a key driver of corporate innovation and growth. What was once regarded as a moral obligation has now become a strategic necessity, shaping the way businesses operate and compete. Many corporates are reimagining their supply chains, procurement policies and innovation strategies to align with a sustainability-conscious world. By integrating sustainability into their core operations, these companies are not only addressing global challenges, but also unlocking avenues for value creation and long-term growth.”⁵

Impact: If we choose to value sustainability in the use and exploration of outer space, innovation will still occur. In fact, innovation can be supported and accelerated by sustainable cooperation.

⁵ Rotondo, Denise and Chow, Paul, “Unlocking green growth: Sustainability as a key driver of corporate innovation,” *World Economic Forum*, (2025), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/unlocking-sustainability-green-growth-innovative-strategies/>.



2. International Cooperation is Possible and Realistic

Explanation: Even with the many factors that divide various entities, recent history of outer space cooperation provides that international cooperation is possible and realistic.

Evidence: Qijia Zhou with *Harvard International Review* in 2022 explains the following:

“One of the most successful feats of international space cooperation is the International Space Station (ISS), a result of collaboration between the United States, Russia, the European Space Agency (ESA), Japan, and Canada, only a few decades after the US-Soviet Space Race. This international partnership continues to this day, with a variety of member states contributing vehicles, equipment, and personnel. The example of the ISS proves that past enmity can be put aside for the good of collaborating nations, and even as present relations with Russia are strained, cooperation on the ISS has persisted.”⁶

Impact: The ISS is proof that international cooperation, while not perfect, is a possible and realistic option for exploring and utilizing space.

⁶ Zhou, Qijia, “A Shared Frontier? Collaboration and Competition in the Space Domain,” *Harvard International Review*, (2022), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://hir.harvard.edu/a-shared-frontier-collaboration-and-competition-in-the-space-domain/>.



3. Competition is Unsustainable: The Space Race

Explanation: The Space Race lasted from 1955 to 1975 between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or U.S.S.R. As the name *Space Race* implies, this was a competition between the world's two main superpowers at the time. While competition certainly drove great amounts of innovation, what resulted from this competition was the Outer Space Treaty, and we must ask ourselves, "why?" If the competition for outer space worked well enough and was sustainable, why did both the Soviet Union and the United States agree to overcome some of their stark differences to cooperate instead of continuing to compete?

Evidence: According to a United States State Department archive on the Outer Space Treaty:

"The Outer Space Treaty, as it is known, was the second of the so-called 'nonarmament' treaties; its concepts and some of its provisions were modeled on its predecessor, the Antarctic Treaty. Like that Treaty it sought to prevent 'a new form of colonial competition' and the possible damage that self-seeking exploitation might cause."⁷

Impact: On the other side of the resolution is noncooperation. Since both the affirmative and negative have the same goal of using and exploring outer space, if we do not work with each other towards such a goal, we would then naturally work against, or compete, with each other. Thus, "noncooperation" and "competition" can be used interchangeably. The base word of competition, "compete," is defined as "to try to be more successful than someone or something else."⁸ The priority of competition is the protection of a single entity's interests, even if that is at the cost of another entity's well-being. This refusal to cooperate with others for mutual benefit leads to, in the words of the U.S. State Department, "damage" and "self-seeking exploitation." In other words, competition leads to reckless practices that entirely sacrifice the sustainable use and exploration of outer space.

⁷ United States State Department, "Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies," *The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs*, (n.d.), para. 1, accessed June 20, 2025, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/isn/5181.htm>.

⁸ Cambridge University Press, (*Cambridge University Press and Assessment*, 2025), s.v. "Compete," accessed June 20, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/compete>.



Extra Quotes For AFF Speeches:

1. The Requirements of a Peaceful World

In September 2005, the then-Prime Minister of Sweden, Goran Persson, stated the following at a United Nations Meeting in New York City regarding the concerning trends of international environmental sustainability and poverty:

"A peaceful world requires collective measures for the prevention of war, international cooperation to solve economic and social problems, and respect for human rights."⁹

Impact: A peaceful world requires cooperation.

2. The Necessity of Unity

In a speech before the Virginia Assembly in 1799, Patrick Henry famously spoke the following proverb:

"Let us," said he, trust God and our better judgment to set us right hereafter. **United we stand, divided we fall.** Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs. Let us preserve our strength for the French, the English, the Germans, or whoever else shall dare invade our territory, and not exhaust it in civil commotions and intestine wars."¹⁰

Impact: We stand when we cooperate. We fall when we compete.

3. Greater Progress When We Work Together

As Helen Keller once wrote,

"We live by each other and for each other. Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."¹¹

Impact: Competition creates isolation, which only leads to little progress. Cooperation leads to greater advancement.

⁹ Goran Persson, "Opening Statement by His Excellency Mr. Goran Persson Prime Minister of Sweden Co-Chair of the High Level Plenary Meeting of September 2005," *United Nations Headquarters*, (2005), pg. 3, accessed July 1, 2025, <https://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements/swe050914eng.pdf>.

¹⁰ Henry, William, "Last Speech at Charlotte Court House," *Patrick Henry's Red Hill*, (1799), para. 7, accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.redhill.org/speeches-writings/last-speech/?srsltid=AfmBOop4v0n2zRPK6pCrcsJp1PyNTeJfdOT3k91ULmevcPn5ij2Pd_t3.

¹¹ Keller, Helen, "Script for Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy's Vaudeville performances.," *Helen Keller Archive*, (1920-1985), accessed July 5, 2025, https://www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive?a=d&d=A-HK01-04-B095-F09-030.1.5&srpos=3&e=-----en-20--1--txt--Alone+we+can+do+so+little-----3-7-6-5-3-----0-1&gl=1*14yrz5v*_gcl_au*MTg0Mzk1Nzc3OC4xNzUxNjg1NTI2&_ga=2.39692579.1066316376.1751685526-2008092760.1751685526.



4. Competition Can Only Do So Much

In a speech before a forum in New York in 1912, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated the following:

“To put it another way competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further. Co-operation must begin where competition leaves off and co-operation is as good a word for the new theory as any other. The founders of the republic were groping for the idea when they tried to form a government aimed to secure the greatest good for the greatest number and it is precisely that idea which is being developed to-day along every possible walk of life.”¹²

Impact: Competition has limited benefits. Cooperation is left to pick up the pieces.

¹² Roosevelt, Franklin, “SPEECH BY ROOSEVELT BEFORE THE TROY, NEW YORK, PEOPLE'S FORUM, March 3, 1912,” *U.S. General Services Administration*, (2009), accessed July 4, 2025, para. https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/cany/fdr/part1.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

