

# Mongolia at the Crossroads



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Yurt (Source: Wikipedia Commons)

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On October 1, UTSA was proud to honor Ms. Enkhtuya Oidov who came to hold a lecture about the conservation of Mongolia's natural resources, which includes 60 million acres of natural grassland. Ms. Enkhtuya Oidov serves her country as general secretary



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of Mongolia's National Council during the Millennium Challenge Account. She is a founding member of the first Mongolian political

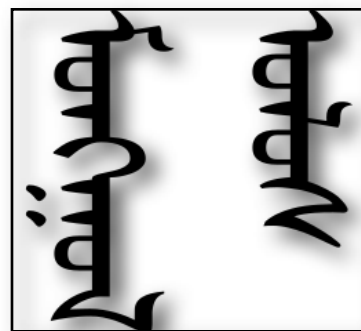
party for national progress, and has also served as a parliament member in the past for the Women's Caucus.

Historically Mongolia has had a low population density, but experienced explosive growth during the 1980s and 90s. As of now 2.7 million people live in Mongolia in 22 provinces. Mongolia has switched from being a nation of herders (mostly goats) to a mining country with one of the world's top gold outputs. Because of the strip mining that is taking place on a massive scale, new government attention has been brought to land conservation, with the goal of 30% of land being under national protection.

The practice of strip mining is known to take a toll on the land and cause problems for both the ecosystem and mankind. Ms. Oidov states that biggest problems

facing the country are climate change, overgrazing, and mining for both oil and gold that has changed the landscape of Mongolia. The price of the mining practice is evident when one considers that rivers in certain areas of Mongolia have dried up the past years. With a large number of people and animals who rely on this water source it can prove devastating. Over herding poses a threat do to a large sudden growth of goats in nomadic herds that have grown from past. Clime change is a huge problem for Mongolia because it is so far above sea level. The thin air puts the delicate ecosystem at the mercy of the sun. In the past years Mongolia has risen in temperature at rate three or four times higher than America.

The government's effort have proven effective, with over nine out of 22 provinces protecting 49% of their land with strict regulations regarding its use. The grasslands of Mongolia also spill into neighboring Russia and China. Peace talks are being held between all



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three parties to try and reach an agreement over the use and protection of the land.