

### Sustainable Development Goals - Climate Crisis

There is an ever-changing list of international issues that should demand the attention of not only world leaders, but also of the global population. While there is a comprehensive list of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for our planet adopted by United Nations Member States, the priority of each of these varies depending on the international climate and current issues. In my opinion, the most pressing of these issues right now is our impending climate crisis, water scarcity, and food security. It is imperative that as citizens of this earth, we direct our resources towards solving these issues in order to work towards the achievement of the UN goals within the next fifteen years, give or take.

Of these challenges to the international community, the impending climate crisis demands immediate action, although it may be too late. I chose to focus on this topic because of the recent events of scientists around the world as they beg for an international platform from world leaders. In early April, over 1,000 scientists from 25 different countries participated in staged protests in response to the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. In this startling report, it is stated that rapid and immediate cuts of greenhouse gas emissions are absolutely necessary by 2025 in order to prevent catastrophic climate effects. Speaking on behalf of the Scientist Rebellion, Peter Kalmus, a NASA climate scientist, says, "We've been trying to warn you guys for so many decades. The scientists of the world have been being ignored. And it's gotta stop. We're going to lose everything" (Scientists Stage Worldwide Climate Change Protests After IPCC Report). Kalmus, along with several other scientists, chained themselves to the JP Morgan Chase building hoping to turn heads towards this crisis. Unfortunately, these brilliant minds were met with over one hundred police officers in riot gear and were arrested. Scientists in Washington, DC went as far as chaining themselves to the White House fence. When news of these protests spread, my response was fear. This should be the response of world leaders and corporations that continue to ignore the pleading of science to discontinue, within reason, the use of greenhouse gasses. The imminent climate disasters to come set the stage for every other international issue, as we cannot begin to solve anything if our planet is unlivable.

More devastating realities that face the international community are food security and water scarcity. While there is enough fresh water on the planet to sustain our population, there is not the possibility of access to clean water in many countries. An estimated two billion people currently use a contaminated water source and 2.7 billion experience water scarcity at least one month out of the year. Currently it is expected that by 2025, a whopping two-thirds of the world's population will be facing a water shortage (Water Scarcity, World Wildlife). Lack of access to clean water can stem from many sources, such as a country's infrastructure, displacement, or conflict. National Geographic published an article in 2020 that describes the future of fresh water and how the previously mentioned climate change will contribute to that.

“By 2050 the U.S. could be as much as 5.7°F warmer, and extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and drought, could be more intense and occur more frequently. As temperatures warm, evaporation increases, further decreasing water in lakes, reservoirs, and rivers” (Why is America running out of water?). Seeing how these two issues are directly related further peaked my interest in researching their severity internationally. Along with water scarcity, there are also alarming statistics about the global issue of food security. Food security has served as one of the largest threats to human health for many years, surpassing the threat from disease. In 2020 and 2021, the world saw the most severe increase in food insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is currently estimated that 957 million people in 93 different countries do not have enough food to eat on a regular basis. Similar to water, there is not a lack of food, but a lack of access to food in many vulnerable countries across the globe (Six Critical Global Issues).

While all three of these issues have been considered critical for years, there are rises in these particular circumstances within the last few years. In the past, global hunger has been a serious concern of the United Nations and was included in one of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. By 2015, there had been a steady decline in global hunger. The proportion of undernourished people in the world declined from 15% in 2000 to 8.9% in 2019 (World Hunger: Key Facts and Statistics 2022). So while this has always been a global concern, it peaked at the beginning of the century and has unfortunately begun to peak again in recent years since the pandemic. Access to clean drinking water is also a matter of concern that has been acknowledged for several decades. While there have been efforts towards solving this, there are strides to be made. Climate change on the other hand, has not been taken as seriously as it should for the entirety of our knowledge about it. Particularly with the outbreak of recent rebellion from climate scientists, we are finally viewing climate change as a general issue and not a bipartisan issue. Climate change being primarily affiliated with democratic party goals over the past decade has been detrimental towards real progress in this field. This is an unprecedented global issue in an unprecedented world of rapidly developing technology and the overuse of carbon emissions in our developing world.

In order to combat climate change and its disastrous effects predicted by scientists all over the world, it is essential that carbon emissions are cut. The Scientist Rebellion says that carbon emissions must be reduced by at least half by 2030 and by 2050, we must be emitting less carbon emissions than the planet is able to absorb each year. Because of modern technology, this is attainable, so long as the global community actively works towards this change. Intergovernmental agreements like the Paris Agreement already lay out a strong framework for cooperation and aggressive action. Tragically, the world does not currently have a true alternative to fossil fuels to support our energy needs and the increasing energy needs as we move forward. Work is being done at institutions like MIT to try and develop sustainable alternatives (What Can Be Done About Climate Change). While this is promising, policymakers need to make intentional strides to support this research and development. We may be separated by countries, but as a whole, humankind must adopt a liberalist approach to this issue and work towards cooperation in order to save ourselves and future generations.

## Works Cited

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