

Student perspectives on environmental transition

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For those who may not be aware of it, COP27 implies that over 27 sessions have occurred since 1995 in the context of climate change action, mitigation and prevention. Unfortunately, we have still not seen a meaningful effort by large corporations and governments to develop and commit to sustainable practices. In light of this information, we are calling for this COP to result in an effective and meaningful discussion that leads to action now.

As aspiring marine scientists, we prefer not to be categorized in the same group as the youthful, screaming environmentalists that we see in the press, on television and through social media. We do not side with radical groups that seem to seek confrontation instead of collaboration, with slogans in which one can read between the lines the infamous "either you are with us or against us". In many ways, we feel this may be trivialising climate change, while also instilling resentment towards these issue in the eyes of the public.
Instead, we consider ourselves scientists, who have set out with the goal of realistically solving the problems we collectively face in consideration of sustainable economic growth and social equity. In many respects, many of us understand that change is not something that occurs overnight, but rather requires a gentle transition from the current archaic system we have accepted in the past. In other words, we acknowledge that the transition from black to white may need to go through a wide range of greys.
In our current position, as the next generation, we are not calling on society to completely do away with its necessary means of transportation such as airplanes or large merchant ships that transport our goods worldwide. Similarly, we recognise that we depend on nuclear energy and cannot entirely eliminate our dependency on coal, natural gas and oil. However, it is essential that we accept that this is unsustainable in the long term and has led us to the largest threat known to date by humankind, quite possibly leading to the sixth mass extinction on Earth that could include humans.
In our eyes, decision-makers are among the main levers for generating large-scale ecological action. A successful ecological commitment must include the development of new technologies centred on communication and education. These tools have been and continue to be powerful ways of spreading information and creating awareness. With that said, it is important that through

political action, we further develop technologies that encourage the implementation of new, innovative ways of raising society's awareness of the environmental crisis.
However, we must not forget that the responsibility for climate change is collective as much as it is personal. Accountability for this disaster not only rests on governments and large corporations, but also on each one of us. Let's remember that change can begin even in the slightest action and can come from anyone regardless of origin, faith or gender. In other words, simple changes in our everyday lives may have positive impacts on a worldwide scale. For example, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (2020), committing to public transportation could reduce our individual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by over 50%. As a result of our public transportation commitments, governments could be responsible for supporting more efficient, more comfortable and more economical transportation systems that accommodate larger populations.
Additionally, instead of buying new clothes, we can turn to thrift shops or second-hand stores in an effort to avoid supporting fast fashion while also reducing our ecological footprint. Creativity is vital when it comes to environmental solutions. When it comes to giving life back to our old clothes, we can also exchange them or donate them. Moreover, let's not ignore the huge impact of meat consumption in the climate crisis. The production of a regular 171g steak consumes as much as 2,498 litres of fresh water (GRACE Communications Foundation, 2022). The production of a Mcdonald's Big Mac leads to the emission of 2.35 kg of CO2, the equivalent of driving 12 km on a UK petrol car (Webber, 2021). We understand that completely eliminating meat from our diets is unrealistic, however, one meatless day per week can save the same amount of emissions as driving 560 km per year (Conzachi, 2021).
Furthermore, supporting local actions can result in significant positive consequences in the fight against climate change. Encouraging one another to be conscious about our impact on the planet and our future is vital, not only to promote climate solutions but to close the ideology gap between the current youth and older generations. Although lifestyle changes that require effort and transition may be challenging, they should not take away from the idea that our archaic actions are hurting others and destroying our planet. We aim to secure the future for ourselves and future generations collectively, while also ensuring we do not disrespect the ideas and traditions of those before us.

In conclusion, we are not expecting to wake up tomorrow in a world where climate change has never existed, but we do want our ideas and concerns to be considered for their utmost importance. Our strong desire is to see real commitments and tangible actions toward sustainability set by governments, large corporations and individuals in the near future. We are prepared to dedicate our lives to alleviating the negative impacts through science. We can only expect that during this year's COP, we will finally be able to get excited about the imminent change we will see as a result.

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