

Climate Change and Sustainability

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Too much change is a bad thing; just ask the climate. With the imminent threat of rising global temperatures and their lasting effects on the world, there can be no hesitation to take action now. None of us is immune to the challenges that come with a warming climate. From a reduction in crop yield and influxes of displaced people to the increasing prevalence of pollution-related deaths, global climate change is a subject that cannot go unanswered, as has been the case in the past. Despite the challenges presented, this issue presents important moments for global opportunity and coordination.

At this point in time, the UN has officially recognized climate change as a threat to human security. Many actions, such as the Paris Climate Accords, have made tremendous progress to enhance collective efforts, but there is still much work to be done. Various other issues, specifically land disputes and the resulting displaced people, have been identified to have the potential to harm global stability and international cooperation, but when these complex issues are resolved people are going to require a healthy, clean region to call home.

According to a 2017 report from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the 17 countries that make up the region of Eastern Europe only represented 0.2% of sustainable development investment in 2015, despite the fact that over 300 million call this region home, representing 4.9% of the world's GDP. There are a myriad of untapped natural resources in the region, but after one year of the Paris Climate Accords, only three countries (Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine) had made considerable advancements in clean energy technology. However, these countries can still make reforms to combat the growing concerns for climate change. A study by the World Bank found that "Russia could cut its energy consumption by 45%, an amount equal to France's total annual energy consumption" (Wheeland). By incentivizing reforms to energy policy in developing nations, while also increasing oversight on waste in developed ones, we can effectively combat fossil fuel emissions on a large scale.

A polluted environment does not just mean a warmer climate. The expansion of the fossil fuel industry has created many negative health impacts, as pointed out by the World Health Organization (WHO). It is estimated that at least 1.4 million die annually in this region due to pollution. This accounts for at least 15% of Europe's yearly mortality rate. Shockingly, "European citizens lose annually 50 million years of healthy life because of environmental risks" (Press Releases *United Nations*). Air pollution is the chief contributor to these early deaths, corresponding to 620,000 deaths per year by itself. These diseases occur around three times more often in low- and middle-income nations in comparison to wealthier ones. This is on top of the fact that low-income nations are more likely to be agriculturally-based economies, which are most affected by an inconsistent climate. Ensuring that all countries have equal opportunities to invest in clean technology is essential to successful regional coordination efforts.

Without a healthy planet on which to live, no other goal for global unity is feasible. We must take action while we still can, in the hopes that we can halt the dangerous effects of global climate change. This issue has proven to affect all facets of daily life and will continue to worsen without concerted and unified actions on a global scale. By adopting the following proposals, we believe that we will be able to confidently leave a planet that is better off for our children and the generations to come.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has outlined and suggested the following key policy recommendations:

- a. A stronger rule of law, continued sustainable energy policy reform, and the effective implementation of key energy legislation;
 - b. Enhanced energy security through increased conventional and unconventional fuels production, utilizing renewable energy potential and maximizing energy efficiency gains, and diversifying energy supplies via new interconnections with neighbouring markets; and
 - c. Continued energy market liberalization and integrations with regional markets.
1. Based on the International Energy Agency's suggested policy recommendations, we propose that participating nations should encourage energy market liberalization policies and integrations with regional markets.
2. Create a supranational commission comprised of representatives from each country, tasked with the goal of increasing regional efforts to unify energy policies that will decrease fossil fuel reliance and mitigate the effects of climate change. This supranational commission would be formed under a new multinational political union. This union and commission would promote the following:
 - a. Incentivize the abolition of legislation that hinders the development of green energy technology.
 - b. Encourage developing countries to adopt national standards for phasing out the use of dated energy infrastructure, which would diversify resources while increasing the potential for competitive energy trade across the region. These standards would be heavily encouraged in the manufacturing and production industries.
 - c. Seek to enforce current statutes that are already attempting to combat climate change in developed nations.
 - d. Appoint Jim Jordan as the chief auditor of prospective and ongoing clean energy projects in the region. Audits would occur every five years to ensure that goals are being met.
3. Due to the dire health risks that climate change and fossil fuel use causes for many member states' populations, countries should strive to:
 - a. Invest 5% of state oil/coal/natural gas revenue to sustainable resource development and infrastructure. Loans or bonds are encouraged to be taken from sources like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to help fund these projects.
 - b. Emphasize the dangers of air pollution and how to combat it in public school curricula that are not already doing so. The Environmental and Sustainability Commission could recommend a school curriculum identifying these dangers as well as the possible regional solutions to nations that require assistance. This may include the viewing of "DamNation" (2014). Waste management should be covered and encouraged for other nations.
 - c. Replace non-renewable energy sources with sustainable technology. This may include, but would not be limited to, wind, solar, hydroelectric, and biofuels. The use of natural gas is acceptable as a transition into this goal. Hydroelectric power

would be heavily audited and restricted with the inclusion of required environmental impact statements presented to the commission.

- d. Eliminate the use of microplastics (e.g. glitter).
- e. Enact strict regulations for the use of nuclear energy (to be determined by individual nations) by increasing national oversight for this sector and its accompanying waste.

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