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“Endorsing Accountability: Reapproaching Neglected Urgencies”

Environmental Committee

*Holding major green gas emitters
accountable for climate change*

Defne Keleş



RESEARCH
REPORT



Forum: Environmental Committee (GA4)

Issue: Holding major greenhouse gas emitters accountable for climate change

Student Officer: Defne Keleş - Deputy Chair

Introduction

Climate change is one of the most important issues of our time, and is mainly caused by the greenhouse effect. Thus, holding major greenhouse gas emitters accountable and taking action on the greenhouse effect before it's too late is vital. If nations keep on neglecting these urgencies the world will face catastrophic consequences. Most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from a relatively small number of countries. China, the United States, and the nations that make up the European Union are the three largest emitters. Energy consumption is by far the biggest source of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for 76% worldwide. The energy sector includes transportation, electricity and heat, buildings, manufacturing and construction, fugitive emissions and other fuel combustion.

Definition of Key Terms

Climate change: Climate change is the long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns due to an increase in the concentration of atmospheric greenhouse gasses. Climate change can occur naturally, however right now, it is primarily because of human activities such as burning fossil fuels.

Greenhouse effect: The burning of fossil fuels traps heat in the atmosphere which causes the greenhouse effect, causing global temperature to rise.

Low-carbon growth model: A model aiming to reduce the carbon emissions and switching to alternative fuels. It concerns all sectors of activity and must be endorsed by everyone: citizens, communities and businesses.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A total of 17 goals which are published by the UN to create a sustainable future.

Renewable energy: Energy that is collected from renewable sources, which include sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat. It's a sustainable way to create energy.

Net Zero: Net zero means not adding to the amount of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. Achieving "Net Zero" means reducing emissions as much as possible, as well as balancing out any that remain by removing an equivalent amount.

General Overview

Greenhouse effect is what happens when the burning of fossil fuels creates greenhouse gasses that traps heat in the atmosphere. The heat that is trapped causes global warming. Greenhouse gasses include methane, nitrous oxide, fluorinated gasses and carbon dioxide.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by human activities is the biggest contributor to climate change. According to the overview of the U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, carbon dioxide has an 80% effect on climate change while the other greenhouse gasses have a 20% effect. By 2020, carbon dioxide's concentration in the atmosphere had increased to 48% above its pre-industrial level. It's vital to take immediate action to combat climate change, starting with the largest factor contributing to climate change which is greenhouse gas emissions. One of the main problems is that major greenhouse gas emitters are not held accountable for their pollution. Some of the major corporations that have insufficient climate change strategies are: Unilever, Nestle, Ikea, Google, Amazon, Apple, Maersk. Even if these companies carry out their existing climate change strategies to the fullest, the emissions would be reduced by 40% at most, not 100%. In other words, they cannot reach "net zero". Since the companies stated before are international companies, if the country they normally produce their products in makes its carbon emission laws stricter, they can just move their production to another country that has less strict regulations. Therefore, environmental laws have to be implemented globally in order to be effective in halting carbon emissions of major companies.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to limit the increase in temperature to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, aiming at 1.5 degrees Celsius. However, in order to achieve this the global net CO₂ emissions should decrease by 45% between 2010 and 2030, and reach net zero around 2050. Greenhouse gas emissions harm the atmosphere immensely and carbon emissions are the biggest contributor to the greenhouse gasses. Hence, in the last few decades, countries have been improving their carbon growth models to decrease the amount of carbon emissions. Although some countries such as India and The European Union have made big developments, there are also countries which have not recognized this issue at all. Less economically developed countries (LEDCs) mostly have inadequate laws or poor regulation on controlling carbon emissions in factories. A major reason for this is that these factories develop and positively affect the country's Gross Domestic Product. Thus, delegates should be mindful to not harm the nation's economy while also trying to lessen the global carbon dioxide emissions. In order for the developments mentioned before to be sustainable, all countries should adopt a low-carbon growth model while not extremely affecting their economy.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

China is the top leading country that is emitting greenhouse gasses. China became the leading emitter of carbon dioxide in 2006. China, along with many others, agreed to make changes in order to keep the temperature at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels and below 2C in the Paris Agreement in 2015. They have been relying on coal for their main source of energy for decades. Before 2030, their carbon emissions will

peak. President Xi says that China will decrease their use of coal from 2026. He also announced that they will stop funding new coal fired projects overseas. China first decided to shift to green energy because of air pollution. They are leading the world in renewable energy technologies such as solar panels. They are getting greener fastly as a result of forestry programmes made to reduce air pollution. They are aiming to be carbon neutral by 2060.

India

India is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses. Their goal is to reduce their emissions intensity by 45% by 2030. They have planned on producing 40% of their power through renewable energy. They will have net zero emissions by 2070 which is later than what other countries aim to achieve. India abstained from signing a deal done in COP26 to reduce emissions of methane gas. They have planned on expanding their forests by 2030 to reduce CO2.

U.S.A

The United States of America is one of the countries that rely on greenhouse gasses the most after China. The largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities in the United States is from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat, and transportation. They are the largest producer of oil and natural gas. They are planning on cutting their greenhouse gas emissions by 50% in 2030. They are aiming to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, but have not proceeded effectively towards achieving this goal.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation's economy is reliant on oil and gas. They are the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gasses. They are the second biggest producer of natural gas after the U.S. They are planning to be carbon neutral by 2060.

EU

The European Union is one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gasses. However, they have been decreasing their emissions since 2018. The biggest emitting countries are Germany, Poland and Italy. They are aiming for 40 percent of their energy to be from renewable energy sources. They want to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Japan

Japan is one of the countries that are adopting a goal to be carbon neutral by 2050. Japan wants to decrease their carbon usage by 46 percent by 2030. They are reviewing their energy policy and aiming to reduce their carbon emissions in 2022.

Timeline of Events

June 5, 1972	<i>The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is created.</i>
1979	<i>The first World Climate Conference takes place.</i>
1988	<i>The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is set up.</i>
1992	<i>The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is adopted.</i>
1995	<i>The first Conference of Parties (COP1) takes place in Berlin.</i>
December 11, 1997	<i>The Kyoto Protocol was formally adopted at COP3.</i>
February 16, 2005	<i>The Kyoto Protocol enters into force.</i>
2007	<i>The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report is released. It confirmed that global warming is happening. It was found that it is mostly human caused.</i>
2015	<i>The Paris Agreement is adopted.</i>
January 1, 2016	<i>Sustainable Development Goals are established.</i>
2021	<i>COP26 takes place in Glasgow.</i>

Treaties and Events

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 parties in COP 21. Its goal is to limit global warming to below 2C and preferably to 1.5C. What this agreement is trying to achieve is legally binding the nations to a common cause to take action to combat climate change. A lot of countries have been trying to come up with solutions and setting carbon neutrality targets.

Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is a treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with agreed individual targets. There are 192 parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The emission targets are monitored by the UN.

COP 26

COP 26 is a conference that was held from 31 October to 13 November in Glasgow. COP stands for Conference of the Parties. This conference was the 26th COP. It is attended by countries that have signed the UNFCCC. It's a conference that is held because of global warming. The earth is getting warmer and urgent action is needed.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen in 2009 aimed to act against climate change. It mainly failed because the global temperature was limited to 2C. And even if global warming is halted at 2C, environmental disasters will not be avoided. Consensus couldn't be reached in this conference because countries refused to adopt targets on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

French President Emmanuel Macron announced a green tax on fuel in late 2018 as part of his green policy. After the announcement, people all over France started protesting. The protesters were mainly "yellow vest protesters", who were usually from the working and middle classes and had to drive long distances as a part of their daily life. The middle classes couldn't afford the taxes which is why they protested. The protests later turned into riots. The green tax on fuel didn't work because it wasn't fit for the economic system. The government should have considered the effect that the tax would have on every economic class.

Possible Solutions

The first solution should be using renewable energy instead of fossil fuels. It's vital to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. Although renewable energy technologies are more expensive, they are a good investment for sustainability purposes. Secondly, international cooperations is crucial to tackle their impact on climate change. If all countries work towards the same goal, they have a much higher likelihood of succeeding. Transparency and international collaboration is key in order to achieve these goals. All countries should create a low carbon growth model and should set a goal to be carbon neutral. In order for low carbon growth models to work, countries can share what they are doing to solve the greenhouse effect by reporting to the UN for inspection. Lastly, they need to lower carbon emissions by

managing their land and resources more efficiently by building smart cities, restraining deforestation. In 2030 buildings will account for approximately 12.6 Gt of energy related emissions. However, 70 percent of the urban infrastructure needed to accommodate a swiftly growing world hasn't been built yet. By making the cities fit for a low carbon era we can decrease emissions by 5.9 Gt. Countries should try to reduce their overall reliance on greenhouse gasses and start using renewable energy sources.

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