

Kevin LaMonica - SSUNS 2016

UNFCCC COP22 - Ghana

Topic 1: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

Since the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, countries all over the world have been emitting harmful gases into the atmosphere, cleverly earning the title “greenhouse gases” because their effect on global temperatures. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the average global temperature has risen by 1.53 degrees between 1880 and 2012. Because land areas warm and cool more rapidly than the oceans, rising temperatures pose a greater threat to humans, and more specifically, human health. Climate change has a detrimental effect on the health of humans, because it can cause heat related conditions such as heat stroke, along with conditions relating to the cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, and respiratory systems. The elder population, as well as urban populations are most greatly affected by the effects of climate change. The increasing temperatures also increase the spread of infectious disease due to the fact that vector organisms carrying fatal diseases thrive in hotter climates, a current example being mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus thriving in the hotter climates of South America. Hotter global temperatures also produce more extreme weather events, such as cyclones and droughts. These weather events often lead to contaminated water supplies by infectious diseases and the waste of humans and animals, failed crops, and in industrialized nations, some mental disorders are common. The effects of Climate Change are greatest in developing nations, like those of the African continent; however those nations emit some of the lowest levels of carbon gases into the atmosphere on the planet.

The nation of Ghana is quite familiar with the effects of Climate Change. The country’s geography consists of 23% forest which has played a key role in the economic, social, agricultural, and industrial development of the nation. The development in these areas however, have been curbed by deforestation, destruction of biodiversity, air and water pollution, and soil erosion, all caused by unsustainable practices. In Ghana, increased frequency and intensity of rainfall, floods, and landslides, as well as extended periods of drought and intense heat has led to the livelihoods of many Ghanaian people being disrupted. In addition to these extreme weather events, 70% of the Ghanaian population relies either directly or indirectly on agriculture and livestock, both of which are greatly affected by the changing global climate.

The Government of Ghana recommends this committee ensures that the resources of nations, as well as the health of the people, and food and water security all be protected from further damage due to the increased presence of harmful gases in our atmosphere. We recommend the committee allocates funds, from various Non-governmental organisations and the International Monetary Fund, for the purpose of maintaining infrastructure such as hospitals, as well as progressive farming methods to protect against climate change. We also recommend an international committee convene to study the effects of climate change, meteorologically and medically, on different regions of the world, for the purpose of necessary fund allocation.

When most people think about climate change, they think about the Earth warming up. One thing most do not think about is the impact climate change has on the lives of people living in poorer, developing communities and nations. These people do not have the leisure of walking across the room and turning up the air conditioning during an unusually hot season. The populations of developing nations have to endure these challenges, much of the time without the use of certain technologies enjoyed by those living in industrialized nations. Because of a lack of technologies to help curtail the danger brought to many by climate change, a great number of people are forced to migrate, across political borders or otherwise.

Ghana feels the impacts of climate change to a great extent, and climate refugees are a real problem. A vibrant coastal city by the name of Kporkporgbor was recently swallowed up by the rising sea levels. All but one of the houses in the community are now apart of the ocean floor, and the population of more than 500 people in that community are now climate refugees. Another village in the Feta municipal of Ghana is Fuveme. This village lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the River Volta. This village is facing the same problems that Kporkporgbor were faced with. Back in February, an incident involving tides destroying homes left more than 150 people homeless, and it destroyed 20 homes.

The Ghanaian government first recommends to this committee that due to the detrimental effects that anthropogenic climate change has had on the people of this planet, we first advocate for the legalization of climate, or environmental refugees. The countries most greatly affected by climate change are those without the means to keep their citizens safe, so the legalization of climate refugees would allow the international community to protect the rights of those trying to migrate away from inhabitable conditions.

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Topic 3: Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions

In 2015, 192 nations signed the Paris Agreement in Paris at the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This is the most comprehensive, and most agreed upon, climate deal the world has ever seen. The agreement required 55 countries representing 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions to ratify the document. This threshold was crossed in early October, setting the agreement to take effect November 4th. The next step is the implementation of the agreement.

The Ghanaian government has already taken steps to proceed in the development of the nation in an environmentally friendly way. The government of Ghana, under the Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology, created the National Climate Change Committee to discuss how Ghana can move forward with development using green methods. A paper released by the Committee laid out a National Climate Change Policy Framework, with three main objectives: low-carbon growth; effective adaptation to climate change; and socio-economic development. Many African Nations are working to implement information and communication technologies (ICT) to allow all Ghanaian people to have access to the internet. The Ghanaian government has already taken steps to ensure sustainability and connectivity go hand in hand. Infrastructure such as antennas and masts are being shared, and the sharing of utility poles is being encouraged to provide electricity and connectivity to half the population who don't enjoy these amenities.

The Ghanaian Government recommends to this committee that an international commission be established to monitor the progress of the Paris agreement by ratifying nations. In addition to this commission, an international conference shall be held thrice per year for ratifying nations to report on progress and discuss with other diplomats methods of implementation and budgetary concerns.