

United Nations Conference on Climate Change

The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

Senegal

Climate change is an issue that has become increasingly daunting over time, and concern over the future of our earth has reached an all-time high. It has been almost universally accepted that the warming of the earth is attributed to human activity, namely carbon emissions into the atmosphere. The continuous burning of fossil fuels is releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, creating a “greenhouse effect” which is in turn warming the surface of the earth. The rate of climate change is proceeding at an unprecedented degree, with the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere being the highest it’s been in over one thousand years. The rising of global temperatures is then directly causing many other problems regarding our environment and livelihood. For instance, the warming of the earth is causing glaciers to melt and oceans to rise. This leads to increased amounts of floods and the destruction of people’s homes and food sources. These drastic changes in the climate are also creating health issues, such as thermal stress, spread of diseases, and food scarcity. Climate change is also causing increased temperature severity, meaning areas already experiencing storms and hurricane will face even worse conditions. Many deaths are attributed to climate change as well, such as heatstroke, hyperthermia, and worsening diseases. Airborne diseases also spread more rapidly after floods and hurricanes. Floods especially cause not only the spread of diseases but also destroy crops and poison water supplies. When looking at hard evidence, it is clear that climate change is negatively affecting health at an alarming magnitude. The science cannot be ignored behind the sheer severity of the environment due to climate change.

Senegal understands the urgency of the situation, as we have been devastated by climate change ourselves. Senegal heavily relies on agriculture, with over seventy percent of our population being employed in agriculture. Therefore, climate change is directly affecting our country. We are heavily reliant on rainfall to replenish our crops since only seven percent of our land is irrigated. Not only is decreased rainfall affecting us, but rising sea levels are destroying people’s homes. The floods have gotten so bad recently that some streets have been flooded and blocked off for ten months straight throughout the year. To combat these issues, Senegal has worked with the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security organization to create climate-smart villages, which utilize climate smart technology and practices. Senegal is also trying to develop a national science-policy dialogue platform to further the findings and studies on climate change in West Africa. Senegal is also a member of the Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance, which works with CCAFS and the Economic Community of West African States to improve agriculture to adapt to the climate. There have also been African Adaptation Programme interventions in Senegal aiming to accomplish the same thing. The African Adaptation Programme in Senegal also founded the Climate Change Multidisciplinary Working Group to exchange information and expand on the country’s early warning systems. Senegal has seen the effects of climate change first hand and therefore believes it should be our top priority to work towards halting climate change. Hopefully by working to achieve this, we can limit the amount of people we lose annually due to climate change complications.

Senegal believes that due to the critical condition our country is in, it is time that we take drastic measures towards stopping the impact climate change has on people's health. In order to do this, Senegal believes that we need to work towards stopping climate change itself. Climate change has been an issue for the last few decades, and measures have been taken to combat it, but it has not been enough. We have not been successful in eliminating climate change so far, so Senegal urges that we take a more direct approach with geoengineering. One of the techniques Senegal would like to implement is the injection of sulfates into the atmosphere. This would essentially be the same result as that of a volcanic eruption. By artificially creating a volcanic eruption and increasing the amount of sulfur in the air, there would be a direct cooling effect on the earth because of the sun reflecting off of the sulfur particles. This is a feasible approach to reverse some of the warming of the earth as proven by the temporary cooling of the earth after Mount Pinatubo eruption in 1991. Senegal also encourages the utilization of cloud seeding, which allows for even more reflection of the sun back into space. Cloud seeding is the spraying of seawater into the air to create more clouds. NASA worked in 2008 to create the ships that would spray the water. The majority of the technology needed is already available, and these types of ships have been used in the past in areas during droughts. Senegal would also like to plant artificial trees, which would basically be machines that filter the carbon dioxide in the air and stores it. The excess gas could be stored underground in gas fields or aquifers. Another solution Senegal believes is necessary to be used at this point is the creation of algae blooms. By using pipes in the ocean to mix the water, bringing nutrient rich deep water to the surface, we can feed algae blooms. These large algae blooms suck up carbon dioxide and take it to the bottom of the ocean when they die.