

HMUN 2020

Haarlem Model United Nations

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Issue:

Tackling the issue of unawareness about climate crises

Forum:

Special Conference 2 (SpC2)



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Introduction

While the consequences of Climate Change are becoming clearer every day, far too many people are still completely unaware of the current climate crisis. This is worrisome since it prevents political decision making and the change in unsustainable lifestyles. Moreover, it is actually dangerous to disregard climate change since it is causing perilous situations. We are already seeing deadly floods in Indonesia, devastating bushfires in Australia and extreme drought causing water shortages. In order to prevent the damage of climate change and in order to build a sustainable and livable future we have to acknowledge the alarming situation.

The committee will have to evaluate the failed attempts and find a solution that actually will create more awareness. Delegates should be critical in their decision-making since there have already been a lot of conventions, treaties and resolutions on climate change that also tried to improve awareness. To look at the issue critically, I advise to research especially how climate change denial still exists and how we can improve education on climate change in developing nations. I think these are the core issues of the still enormous unawareness.

Definition of Key Terms

Climate crisis

Climate crisis is a term describing global warming and climate change, and their consequences. The term is used to describe the threat of global warming to the planet. The term is mostly used by those who believe it evokes a certain level of threat the planet faces from continuing greenhouse gas emissions and can create more political incentive that has long been missing from climate advocacy. The word is introduced by progressive and environmental organizations. They believe that the word: crisis, drove to more emotional engagement and support for action.

Climate Change

Climate change is causing a long-term rise in global temperature. In theory climate change is very natural and has been happening for as long as the existence of earth. However, in the late centuries the global temperature has risen in an unregular pace caused by humans that were responsible of a higher emission of

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greenhouse gasses. These are gasses which are for instance released during the burning of fossil fuels. Climate change may result in natural disasters, rising sea levels, and drought.

Global warming

Global warming is the long- time rise of global temperature. However, more accurately, global warming is the rise in temperature caused by human activity. Humans have emitted more greenhouse gasses in the last few centuries, which is causing a faster pace in the global temperature rise. This has a lot of bad consequences for the planet and its species.

Climate change denial

Climate change denial or global warming denial is the denial, dismissal or doubt that contradicts the scientific consensus on climate change. This includes the extent that it is caused by humans and that it effects human society. People who deny climate change often call themselves climate change sceptics

General Overview

Climate change awareness around the world

As much as 40 percent of the world's adult population is unaware of climate change. This number tends to be higher in developing nations and lower in developed nations. If you look at the graph below you can see that almost everybody knew about the existence of climate change in Japan and Finland. However, in developing nations such as Benin and Liberia, less than a quarter of the people say that they know about it. Especially in nations in Africa is public awareness at its lowest with 16 of the 20 countries with the lowest public awareness being in Africa.

In a recent study on global awareness respondents who reported knowing something or a great deal about global warming were asked about their views on the causes of global warming. Their responses show that knowledge on the situation of global warming is not the same thing as the belief that global warming is a result of human activities.

For instance, Latin Americans are in the middle of the international pack in overall awareness of global warming. However, focusing on people who say they know

about global warming, Latin Americans lead the world in the belief that rising temperatures across the global are a result of human activity. In fact, 13 of the top 20 countries where more people believe global warming is a result of human activities are in Latin America. This shows that we should make a distinction in the debate between awareness of climate change and awareness of the role of humans in climate change.

Most Likely to Report That Global Warming Is a Result of Human Activities

Temperature rise is a part of global warming or climate change. Do you think rising temperatures are . . . a result of human activities?

Country	Percentage who say result of human activities
South Korea	92%
Japan	91%
Costa Rica	87%
Greece	84%
Ecuador	81%
Taiwan	81%
Argentina	81%
Brazil	80%
Paraguay	79%
Portugal	79%
Hong Kong	78%
Colombia	77%
Trinidad and Tobago	76%
El Salvador	75%
Uruguay	75%
Chile	75%
Bolivia	73%
Panama	73%
Mali	72%
Peru	72%

2007 and 2008

Note: The other answer option was "a result of natural causes," but respondents were also allowed to indicate "both." These other options, as well as no opinion answers, are pooled together in this analysis (8% of South Koreans who answered this question responded in one of these four ways).

GALLUP POLL

Unaware governments

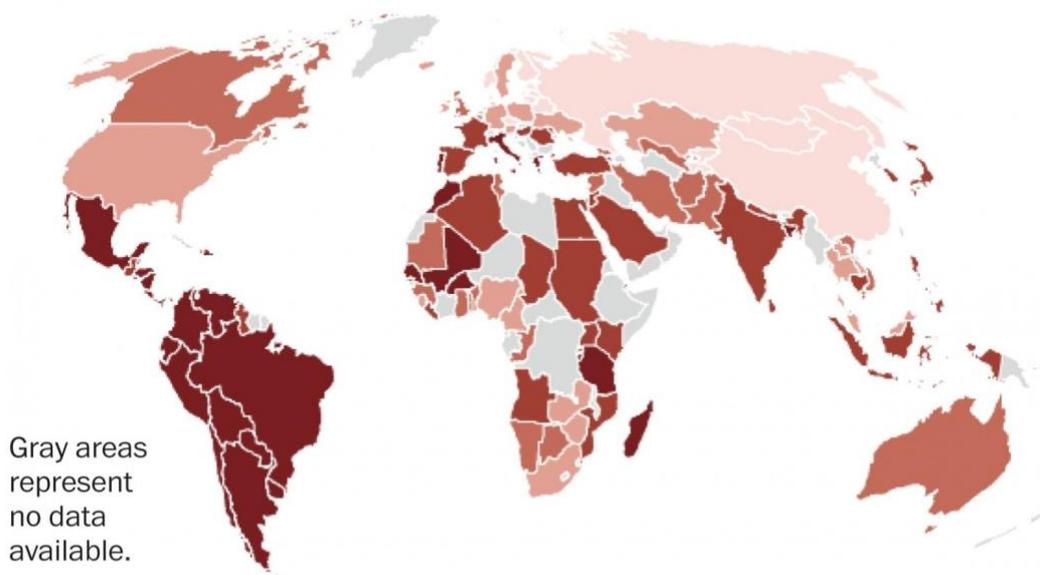
What should worry the world most, is that the greatest emitters of greenhouse gasses still are not up to date on the impact of human activity on the climate. China and the United States of America are the two biggest emitters. Within China the public awareness levels are very low and the public perceives the climate crisis as a very low threat. It does need to be said that the perception of climate change differs across demographic and geographic groups as it does in most other countries. Awareness is higher among urban Chinese than rural Chinese. In the USA, the situation is better than in China. Over 60 percent perceives global warming as a threat to society and recognizes the importance. However, many political groups that gain a lot of support still deny climate change in any way or deny that human activity is responsible for the current climate crisis. It is worrisome that these groups have gained more support since the Trump administration took office.

If one side of the problem are the emitters, the victims are the other side. The consequences of the climate crisis will be the biggest in developing nations mainly in Africa, where, as already stated, the awareness of global warming and the climate crisis is very low. These countries should have a greater awareness of the threat of a climate disaster. This is mainly due to a lack of education on the matter.

Public awareness climate change is a serious threat

Among respondents who said they are aware of climate change.

● More than 90%
 ● 80 - 89%
 ● 70 - 79%
 ● 50 - 69%
 ● Less than 50%



Based on data from the Gallup World Poll conducted in 2007 and 2008, from nationally representative samples in 119 countries.

Source: Nature Climate Change

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Another issue of unawareness is the denial of climate change or the denial of the existence of human influence on the climate. There are two sides to this: Firstly, a climate crisis often interferes with our own values and personal desires. Secondly, there has been a lot of scientific research that counters the consensus on climate change.

The effect of Industry and Business

Acting on a climate crisis often complicates business and industrial production. Companies have the biggest impact on the environment. They emit the most greenhouse gasses, especially in the production and consumption of oil and gas. Research shows that the 20 biggest emitters are responsible for one-third of the global emissions. They have an incentive to prevent climate legislation because it could hurt their profits. Through major lobby platforms in governments and organizations they try to stop climate legislation. They also are often responsible for such great support of climate change denial. They want to influence public opinion in order to gain political support. There have been multiple instances of companies paying politicians for their support, especially in American politics. Sponsored politicians form a danger towards awareness of the climate issue since they can use their role to influence the public.

Progress in 2019

Over the last year, a series of climate protests have been organized in almost every country. After Greta Thunberg her school strike for better climate legislation went viral, school students all around the world followed her in cutting classes and protesting for the climate. At a time of fraying trust in authority figures, children, who by definition have no authority over anything, are increasingly driving the debate. Using the internet, young people are organizing across continents like no other generation before them and through their outsize demands for an end to fossil fuels mirror those of older environmentalists, their movement has captured the public imagination far more effectively.

Even though climate protests have not yet made major differences in climate legislation, it has changed something in climate awareness. More than ever was climate a major issue in world politics than in 2019. The media has never covered that much of the issue and policymakers have never debated that much about the issue. A lot of progress has been made. However, a lot still needs to be done. Urban areas all over the world have seen the climate strikes, but rural areas are still oblivious to the matter. Delegates and policymakers should figure out how we can prevent companies from interfering with the public opinion and find solutions to educate people, not only in urban areas but also in rural areas, about the climate crisis.

Major Parties Involved

USA

Historically, the United States is the only country among the top five emitters not to ratify the Kyoto protocol and one of the only countries that has backed out of the Paris climate agreement. However, since the Obama administration took office, climate change policies have started to shift. Results from Gallup's surveys in 2007 and 2008 show that almost all U.S. citizens aged 15 and older are aware of climate change, but a sizable 35% do not believe climate change is a serious threat. In this way, the United States is similar to Russia and China, where more than one-third of the population is aware of climate change but does not see it as posing a threat.

There are still a lot of popular climate change denial movements in America that also gain a lot of political support. These groups mostly form in conservative and right-wing environments and get a lot support from people living in rural areas. The Trump administration receives a lot of support from these movements.

China

In China, which rivals the United States for the top spot on the greenhouse gas emitters list, the 62% who are aware of climate change falls roughly at about the world's average. However, China stands out among these five countries because its public perceives global warming as a relatively low threat.

Gallup's survey, which is representative of both urban and rural areas, reveals that the general Chinese perception of climate change as a relatively low threat is pervasive across demographic and geographic groups. Awareness is higher among urban Chinese (77%) than rural Chinese (52%). But even within urban and rural areas, education has an independent, additional effect on awareness. As education levels increase, so does basic awareness of climate change.

LEDC's

Less Economically Developed Countries have a lower level of climate change awareness. They have often very little climate policy and education on climate change is often very limited. This is dangerous since the threat of global warming is mostly the highest in LEDC's, since they have very little disaster management and have less resources to protect communities and their land.

Fuel companies

Fuel companies are the majority of the top 20 emitters of greenhouse gasses and they are hurt the most by climate legislation. They have an incentive to prevent climate change awareness since that leads to more political action. They often carry out this incentive by influencing politics through lobbying and sponsoring politicians.

All other nations

All nations are effected by climate change and all nations should have climate legislation that fights global warming and prepares for the consequences of climate

change. This is only possible through politics that rely on political support. Without climate awareness, there is no political support for climate legislation.

Timeline of Key Events

1972	The United Nations Conference on the human environment.
1979	the World Climate Conference takes place in Geneva.
1988	The intergovernmental panel on climate change is founded.
1990	The first IPCC assessment report.
May 1992	Convention on climate change is adopted.
1992	Rio earth summit.
1994	The UNFCCC enters into force.
1995	COP1 in Berlin.
1997	The Kyoto protocol is adopted.
November 2001	the Marrakesh accords.
February 2005	The Kyoto protocol enters into force.
2010	The Cancun agreement are adopted.
December 2015	Paris 2015 climate agreement.
June 2017	US president Donald Trump announces that he intends to withdraw from the Paris 2015 climate agreement.
November 2017	COP23 in BONN.
2019	School strikes all over the world for better climate legislation
December 2019	COP25 Chile/ Madrid fails.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Education has made the biggest impact on climate change awareness. It has made people understand climate change in natural terms and what the role of human activity is in climate change. Programs of UNESCO and other NGO's are supporting more education on climate change.

Furthermore, more media coverage on the subject has created more support for environmental movements. Media coverage shows the alarming situation caused by climate change.

Lastly, environmental movements are known for their incredible campaigns in order to gain support. Over the years, more people have taken these campaigns seriously and have become aware of the threat by a climate crisis.

Possible Solutions

Looking at the previous attempts, we have seen that education plays a key-role in creating more climate change awareness. This has created a bigger understanding about the causes and consequences of climate change. There should be more programs that support climate change education, especially in rural areas and developing nations. Climate change education is still far behind in rural areas and delegates should think of ways how we can improve education in rural areas and in developing nations where there is often a lack of funding and a lack of understanding.

Furthermore, we should look at what drives climate change denial movements. They often have a lot of support from big companies, especially in the fuel industry. How can we limit the influence of companies with the wrong incentive? Think of ways how we can stop the lobbying industry in funding the campaigns of climate change denial politicians.

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