

Your Leadership to Make the Net Zero 2050 Vision a Reality

Ever since we were born, we have been eternally connected to the situation of our Earth. Sometimes we do not recognize it, but we cannot live without the resources provided in our environment for even 1 minute. So far in 2022, there have been immeasurable advancements in many sectors of our lives: the popularization of Zoom, electric cars, space tours, and artificial intelligence have pushed society forward. However, there is an ironically unbalanced relationship between the advancements of humanity and the condition of our planet.

Could there be a better way to maximize the success of humanity while conserving the natural environment of our planet?

Last year, I shared my opinions at an ESD open seminar about sustainable food and responsible consumption (related to SDG goals 12 and 13). During my research as a public speaker, I learned more about the 17 sustainable development goals and the effects on the environment that humans were creating. Like an inescapable shadow, I also learned that every action left a carbon footprint with differing amounts. I was surprised that I amassed considerable carbon emissions even when I didn't realize it. After discovering this, I wanted to research more on how I could reduce my carbon footprint, increase my handprint, and help others do the same.

I learned that many people were similar to me: not knowing their impacts on their carbon footprint. I wanted to learn how to go on a carbon emission diet, and one of the first things that came up on Google was eating less beef. It was a challenging task as I have consistently eaten it for my entire life. In the US, fresh meat is easily accessible. Therefore, there is a prominent culture here of eating meat during get-togethers. According to the New York Times article 'The Meat Question, by the Numbers,' "Worldwide, livestock accounts for between 14.5 percent and 18 percent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions." When I read about this, I was astonished that our food sources created so much of our emissions.

So I wondered exactly how much carbon was released while consuming all of that meat?

That night, I shared my findings with my family, and we decided to integrate different meats into our diet instead of beef. We also added more plants to our dishes. This is what my family chose to contribute to the environmental cause. When we bought a house with a backyard, we created fields to harvest containing Chinese Nira, peppers, cucumbers, and many more. While we were gardening, we realized the curiosity of our fellow neighbors about our produce and garden. We received many different questions about them. From early spring to late fall, we rarely needed to buy vegetables at the store through our actions. Our every meal consisted of unique combinations of vegetables and low portions of meat. Furthermore, our entire family could spend valuable time together while picking, washing, and cooking.

Interestingly, our neighbors decided to start their gardens in the same area as ours. They told us that they saw our gardening and how to utilize the best location to create delicious foods. They started planting different things like tomatoes, potatoes, and basil this year. This was an eye-opening experience for me. I saw their gardening strategies and saw many contrasting ways to grow the same foods. Around our house, five houses in a row took inspiration from our

garden. Every family originates from different areas and cultures. They each planted various types of ethnic foods. By learning from each other and the fantastic foods we all grew, we could broaden our friendship and share delicious foods. I am so glad that we all contributed to improving the environment while working together.

In addition, I also do not drink soda. The people around me all drink coffee or soda regularly. Due to childhood habits, I only drink water from our filter at home or reusable water bottles. Sometimes when we go to fast-food restaurants, and I see the piles of plastic cups, I feel a sense of pride that I am improving the state of the environment even a little. On top of that, my family doesn't spend a lot of money on unnecessary things. When we first moved into our large home, we didn't know how to furnish it completely. But as time went on, we received many second-hand goods from our friends or used good websites. Even my desk, couch, or fine china consist of second-hand items. Many of my clothes are from our friends or thrift shops. When I cannot use these things anymore, I try to donate them.

Ever since I started taking an interest in sustainability, I have gained a new outlook on shopping. Wise shopping is one of the most significant steps toward helping our environment. In the past, as long as there was a sale, I would buy it. However, I now focus on the necessities and think about how often I could wear them. Our planet is so meaningful, so I would like to research more and buy my needs from more eco-friendly companies with better values regardless of the excess cost.

A few days ago, there was a beautiful wild peacock across our house. It was an unbelievable experience to see this. Sometimes at night, I see coyotes, foxes, and raccoons in my neighborhood. I regularly see squirrels and rabbits eat the plants we set aside for them to eat. I am so content knowing that I am supporting the ecosystem through my actions. I am fortunate to spend my youth in such an interconnected natural environment.

So right now, I cannot directly feel the effects of the worldwide climate crisis. However, I can see that the problem significantly strikes the world by watching the news. While the planet cannot share its struggles with us, it can show it through droughts, tornadoes, or hurricanes. It is like a signal to humankind. I wonder how we should respond to our Earth's calls for help? I believe the young generation should recognize their impacts on the increased carbon emissions. It is the mission of all humankind to protect the Earth from harm. We must lift the burden off our planet's shoulders and nurture it. Sometimes, when I realize that tomorrow is not guaranteed, I feel alarmed. We live comfortably, but the increasing carbon emissions that cause climate change are an uncomfortable truth we will soon face. It is the time to reflect on the aspects of our lives we took for granted.

Recently, I contemplated a way to spread my newfound information with others. In my opinion, through the media, I could easily reach more people.

People ignore things beyond their specific interests unless they must pay attention. Throughout this year, I could understand the importance of the media in people's decisions. For example, social media and the news have a powerful influence on what people choose to do with their time. With apps like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, people receive a high influx of new information. By spreading awareness about the minor changes that people can make, I can influence people to take action in their personal lives. While it's hard to get people to change

their lives directly, seeing more people talking about it on social media can inspire them to implement those developments.

This past school year, I have been able to join an advanced journalism class in my school that broadcasts news and shares different ideas. Every month, there is a newspaper and YouTube channel distributed to all students and faculty. To share these ideas with important youth, I plan to suggest more ways to raise awareness about sustainable development goals and what students can do in their personal lives.

With my role in this class, I will inspire a special section on our broadcasting channel that creates public service announcements on ways to live a more environmentally conscious life. I am determined to share the critical situation of the environment and inspire others to make changes.

Especially in the United States, there are so many people. If every person could change even one aspect of their life, there could be an enormous change. As a young person living in America, I feel my mission is to help the people around me comprehend their actions and improve.

Reducing the rate of carbon emissions is crucial for our lives in the present and future. Beyond borders, race, or nationality, humanity's mission is to create a sustainable and healthy environment for ourselves and future generations. Everything we do or make is held together by Mother Earth, so we must protect it from harm. Although I know I cannot control the actions of others; I can do my best to shape them to make developments in their lives that decrease carbon emissions. While one person taking action can create change, it takes everyone to reach a goal such as net-zero by 2050. I am ready to do my part and inspire the people around me to live sustainably for the sake of our Earth.