

A Sustainable Environment: Our Obligation to Protect God's Gift

by
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Recommendations for COP26 Going Forward

Thousands of scientists and political leaders from around the world recently (November 1-12, 2021) gathered in Glasgow, Scotland to develop programs to minimize the rise of the atmospheric temperature. Unfortunately, leaders of two of the greatest carbon emitters, China and Russia, did not attend the conference, and the largest lobbyist representation seemed to be from the fossil fuel industry. On the other hand, the generation with the greatest risk at stake, our young people, were in attendance to make sure their concerns were recognized.

It was not a major surprise that the outcome of the conference did not result in some very positive initiatives to achieve the goal of a maximum increase in temperature of 1.5° C (2.7°F). Of about 190 nations, only 23 agreed to plans to phase out coal, and this did not include some of the big ones like China, Russia, Australia and the U.S. Many of the other countries agreed to *phase down* coal rather than *phase out*. While many countries had agreed to achieve carbon net-zero by 2050, some of the large ones have extended the period. China's new target is to achieve net-zero by 2060 even though it will allow emissions to rise through 2030. India, on the other hand, plans to hit the net-zero target in 2070. According to the Climate Change Performance Index, three Scandinavian countries are at the top with Canada near the bottom in a measurement of how well the countries are doing. China is ranked 33rd but the U.S. is ranked 51st, very disappointing.

Tom Friedman who writes for the New York Times, summarized the outcome of the conference with this motto: "Everyone wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die."

Is the 1.5° C maximum increase target really achievable? According to what countries are currently doing, we are heading to an increase of 2.7° C in the atmosphere, or 4.9° F. Chances are that it will probably be even greater as some countries have been found to under reporting their emissions. On the corporate side, there are many major banks that are pledging net-zero but at the same time are funding fossil fuel projects. If this is what everyone is going to do, what will the environment look like in 30-50 years? Do we have that much time?

The future of our environment cannot depend on pledges. We must take action immediately and show our care for all the people on this earth. We must move forward and do what is right rather than depending only on the politicians. Here are two things that everyone can do almost immediately to help our environment. One is to minimize waste whenever and wherever possible. Before humanity came on this earth, nature existed alone for millions of

years with no waste being generated. Let's try to approach that situation but with humanity. One way to minimize waste is to be more efficient like using less electricity, less gas, and even less water. This will help the environment in more ways than just climate change.

Switching to electric vehicles (EV) is very important but unfortunately it can't happen fast enough. Even if people wanted to switch to EVs rapidly, the electric infrastructure would not be able to handle all the charging stations. People living in apartment buildings without garages may not have any way to charge their battery. Since a major transition to EVs may take some time, we should look at making the internal combustion automobiles more efficient, particularly since the U.S. auto companies wouldn't sign an agreement to eliminate new car emissions by 2040.

The auto companies know much about efficiency as they produced such cars in the 60's and 70's. If you recall, the gas shortage in the early 70's led to introducing the CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards in 1976 which took effect in 1980. Every U.S. auto company had to average 27.5 mpg for all of their autos produced in the U.S. or subject to a multimillion dollar fine. So what did they do? Some low efficient cars with large engines were built in Canada or Mexico and thus not subject to CAFÉ standards. They also built cars on truck a chassis which were not at the time not subject to CAFÉ standards. This was the beginning of SUVs. Fortunately, the CAFÉ standards have been modified to include all light vehicles.

My first vehicle was a 1961 Renault Dauphine getting 40 mpg. While it was a small four passenger car, it still served its purpose. Can we get back to efficient automobiles with smaller engines? They don't need to go 150 mph since it would be illegal. What about producing a sustainable fuel similar to what is being produced for airplanes? Can automobile engines run on a similar type of fuel that reduces carbon emissions by 80%?

Another opportunity to improve our climate is to consider a major source of carbon emissions from cattle. Is it possible to change the cattle feed composition so they produce less methane-type effluent? If the cattle feed can be altered to reduce these emissions, would it have any impact on the quality of the meat?

The shipment of food products can be reduced if the food is produced locally. This can be accomplished for vegetables through urban farming. Growing vegetables in buildings will allow for year-round production, reduction of water consumption by almost 90%, and the sale of the products from the same building.

We can't wait for the politicians to establish policies to reduce emissions. We should do whatever we can as soon as we can. I see two options. If we all agree that climate change must be mitigated and do everything possible to achieve that goal, but we learn in, say, 30 years that we were wrong, what would be the consequences? We spent more money, developed unnecessary technologies, and perhaps inconvenienced ourselves. On the other hand, what if we all took the other side, said that climate change is not a problem, and did nothing? And if we

learn in, say, 30 years that we were wrong, what would be the consequences? They would be catastrophic. So take your choice!