

Making

Ourselves Heard

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is bringing young people from the four corners of the Earth to Nairobi for its meetings in November. This gives us a wonderful opportunity to address our thoughts on climate change to our leaders. The Earth's climate has gradually changed over the centuries. Warm and cold periods have alternated. But changes are occurring faster and more destructively over the last few years. Earth is getting hotter and humanity is primarily responsible.

In these last few decades human activity has disturbed the natural balance. Greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels are largely responsible. Forests have also been cut down for wood and to make room for agriculture or cities, leaving fewer trees to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Governments should offer financial or economic incentives to encourage people to take a more environmentally friendly stance. They should:

- subsidize products using 'green' technology in order to make them more accessible to people – making hybrid cars affordable would be one such example;
- introduce sanctions for the most polluting industries;
- impose limits on the energy consumption of factories.

Simple actions by individuals to save energy and use renewable sources can also make a difference, all the way down to village level in developing countries. For example, using a solar lamp rather than one that burns kerosene will prevent about a tonne of CO₂ being released into the atmosphere over a period of 25 years.

Everyone needs to take action, because climate change is altering our future, our work, our local environments, our health, and our way of life ■

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