

Global Trends

The current global trend of rising temperatures is of greatest importance to me because the resulting disharmony in the climate and global health is an urgent public health matter. The Paris Agreement set an international commitment to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5°C in order to avoid dire and irreversible damage. “In 2021, the global annual mean temperature was about 1.1°C above the pre-industrial level (From 1850 to 1900).”¹ This rise in temperature leads to extreme weather events like prolonged droughts, wildfires, extreme floods, and heatwaves.¹ These events lead to ecological destruction and increased morbidity and mortality. One example of this was the 2003 heatwave in Europe in which 70,000 people died in a matter of weeks.²

Luckily the Conference of the Parties was created so that countries could convene and collaborate on this issue and climate change as a whole. In order to ameliorate the environmental health effects of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced across the globe. Additionally, international efforts for capacity building and resilience strengthening need to continue. Lastly, commitments to climate financing from developed countries need to increase in order to mobilize underfunding and necessary projects in less resourceful regions. The annual conference isn't perfect of course because despite the commitments made, countries are not truly incentivized to meet these commitments. For some countries with other priorities or clear oil and gas interests, they might say one thing at the conference and do another back home. Developing countries and small island developing states (SIDS) are disproportionately impacted by climate change and are less likely to be contributors to climate change. At the latest COP27 in Egypt, a loss and damage fund was established to ensure that these countries have the resources needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This will be extremely helpful in addressing climate equity. I believe that the implementation is there, but it needs to be united and it needs to be faster in order to achieve real results before it's too late.

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References

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