On Climate Change:
The Reality of COVID-19 on The Climate

By: Tarek Abdelraouf

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This year, 2020, has been one of the more challenging years that we have faced for multiple reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of people to quarantine, self-isolate, follow strict stay at home orders, and overall face a soaring pandemic all while needing to stay away from their loved ones out of fear for their safety.COVID-19 has turned the world on its head, quarantine along with the measures that have been in place, although are extremely important for our safety, have raised the flag on social, psychological, economic, and political issues (Frank, 2020), and a rise in domestic violence cases (Taub, 2020).

During the early months of the pandemic, humanity, as we endured the stay at home orders, was searching for an indication of hope, or a silver lining to hold onto. Hope was found in the form of positive environmental impact. The pandemic, along with global quarantine regulations had lowered the earth's carbon footprint significantly due to a lack of flights, work from home orders, etc (Mulhern, 2020). Following that news, the internet was flooded with pictures and stories of animals returning to their native habitat, cities with much less air pollution, and generally emptier streets. "The world is healing itself" The echo that was heard across the globe, the belief that COVID-19 may have provided us a pathway to forgiveness from the environment for our detrimental actions. These claims were not unfounded, during lockdown global carbon emissions did see a sudden 17% drop due to the shutdown (Mulhern, 2020). Although this was a boost towards the fight against climate change, the reality of the situation is that the drop was not caused through sustainable methods and thus, a return to "normal" would make it highly unlikely to last.

The carbon drop was observed in May 2020, during the earlier stages of the pandemic, and in the months following, as predicted, the pandemic still rages on and the carbon drop has not lasted. The sustainability of the carbon drop was always in question, but the real questions that humanity should be asking are, what are the main problems for the rise in global carbon emissions, and how do we move forward towards a better "new normal" where lower carbon emissions and a climate plan are part of the solution.

The reasons behind the climate crisis and the rise in global carbon emissions are plenty, of which, the overarching consensus for the current situation can be attributed to corporate greed and lack

of awareness amongst the average consumer. In 2017, the Guardian had reported that only 100 companies and corporations were responsible for over 70% of global carbon emissions since 1988, with the highest carbon emitters being the top oil producers in the world such as Shell, BP, Chevron, etc (Riley, 2017). Corporate greed and the "time is money" business model that corporations have employed have been destroying our planet one carbon tonne at a time. Corporations alone, although they share the majority of it, are not to blame, consumers are also to blame as they have a responsibility to be more environmentally conscious. The current trend for consumers is to indulge their capitalistic tendencies and purchase products at will without considering the producers values or vested interests, the average consumer does not hold corporations accountable nor do they pressure them to invest in their environmental impact, although they have the power to do so.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had everyone awaiting the "new normal" and wondering how life post Covid would be like. Although the virus has undoubtedly become the immediate threat to humanity, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres has stated that the threat of COVID-19 is temporary; Meanwhile the threat of Climate Change will remain for years (Jauregui, 2020). The pandemic may not have provided us with the pathway to environmental forgiveness that we were hoping for, but it did provide us with the opportunity to change course and create a "new normal" that is not only free of COVID-19, but also climate conscious. In order to reach this utopian "new normal" there are some steps that need to be taken, some of which would be:

1) Raising awareness about Climate Change and its effects on our planet. The Climate crisis is not only on governments and corporations, people need to engage in meaningful conversations surrounding the climate and it must be a personal mission for everyone to educate their personal circles about the crisis. Governments must also establish national dialogues surrounding climate change, bringing together government sectors, corporations, nonprofits, etc. to find ways to sustainably coexist with the climate.

2) Governments need to integrate climate change action steps into their COVID-19 recovery plans. The post COVID-19 recovery is a suitable time to begin integrating low carbon and resilience focused development plans and emphasising on existing climate initiatives.

3) Consumers must apply pressure on corporations and brands to take a stand on climate change. Brands listen to their consumer base, if consumers feel strongly about a certain social cause, it is likely that more brands will align themselves with those causes to win over customers.

The threat of COVID-19 is currently felt all across the world, but if immediate action is not taken to curb the impacts of climate change, the effects we could face from the climate crisis would eclipse the difficulties felt in 2020. The steps presented would provide the world with an opportunity to move forward from underneath the COVID-19 crisis without foregoing our duty towards the planet.

Resources

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