Global Population of the 21st Century

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The Global Population of 21st Century

In the beginning of the new millennium, the population increased to 6 billion people. In the 21st century, the world has become interconnected through new technologies, such as social media and the Internet. Increased globalization challenges the need to develop a sustainable world. At the same, the negative effects of the global population continue to challenge the development of global sustainability. This can be defined as “a process through which people can satisfy their needs, and improve their quality of life in the present, but not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The 21st century creates a challenge between global sustainability and the population, its effects on women’s rights, and the role of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women.

The world has come face to face with the largest population explosion in human history. According to NATO, the population will increase to 9 billion people in the next 40 years. Martin Wolf, Journalist for Financial Times, has called the growth of the global population “the most important issue confronting humanity in this century.” Debate has pursued whether the environmental challenges, such as environmental degradation, affects the population. The population can create environmental challenges because of its rate of growth, total size, distribution over the earth and the relative size of important age groups. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “patterns of consumption and resource use in the industrialized countries are certainly responsible for much
Environmental degradation. Environmental degradation is “the erosion of the natural environment through the depletion of resources, the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of plant and animal species.” Caused by direct or indirect human activity, environmental degradation has increased significantly since the Industrial Revolution. Natural events can also result in the degradation of the environment, for instance, earthquakes, volcanoes and intense rainfall events. Recent environmental degradation has occurred within the last two years. For example, Haiti experienced a massive earthquake in 2010 which caused great destruction. Also, in 2011, a tsunami struck Japan, contaminated their water supply, which wiped out cities and almost caused a nuclear plant to melt down. “However, growing populations, whatever their levels of consumption, also place a burden on resources and the environment.” Henceforth, consumers need to address the consequences of their levels of consumption. Therefore, a search for affordable resources that will help protect the environment and its people is necessary.

75% of the largest cities are located along the coast. Within these cities, one third of the world’s population lives in slum conditions that provide little to no access of clean, running water, sanitation or energy infrastructure. Thus, flood infrastructure initiatives, such as assessments of potential rises of water and possible solutions need urgent attention in order to alleviate the challenge of preserving coastal trade. Preserving coastal trade is vital to the rapid growing population in order to meet food demands. According to data collected by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “projections suggest that up to one billion people could be displaced by climate change in the next 40 years, through an intensification of natural disasters, drought, rising sea-levels and conflict over increasingly scarce resources.” Henceforth, newly developed economies, such as Africa, are forming, and are taking initiative to aid with this enduring problem of sustainability.
New energy technology has been generated in order to create a more sustainable environment. “The deployment of energy management technologies, such as intelligent appliances and smart meters, together with reductions in waste through better-insulated buildings and effective use of heat, are examples of engineering initiatives which could alleviate some of the impacts of needing more sustainable energy sources.” Advanced smart meters and appliances “identify energy consumption in more detail than a conventional meter.” Solar energy has also become common, especially in North Africa, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and creating a new economic sector. However, the new technologies and flooding infrastructures handles the challenge only in the environmental aspect of global sustainability. The people and their social goals are challenges that must be achieved in order to maintain global sustainability.

While there have been improvements in the global economy and environment, sustainability cannot be achieved unless social goals are met. These social goals include universal access to education, health care and economic opportunities. Increases in regional populations can have both positive and negative impacts depending upon local, social, economic and political conditions. One of these important social goals that continue to be addressed involves women’s rights and gender equality.

Michelle Bachelet, first Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, spoke at the Rio+20 Corporate Sustainability Forum, Gender Equality for Sustainability Session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil stating “The Tellus Institute says it clearly: ‘Business will play a pivotal role in meeting the sustainability challenges of the 21st century because it overlaps with core business and vital industries, such as energy, agriculture and water, mining and manufacturing.” Women play a vital role in the workplace and are needed to
advance equal rights, sustainability, and improve business worldwide. In developing countries, “43% of the agricultural workforce is predominantly women.” However, women do not have equal access to land ownership, agricultural services and productive assets, which limits their output and potential. These inequalities hold back progress for food security for a growing population. Gender inequality extends beyond agriculture. It extends to the workplace as well.

Within a generation, female participation in the economy has doubled. In 1970, the global labor force consisted of 37 women per 100 men. As of 2007, the same labor force consisted of 67 women per 100 men. According to the World Bank, “employees are people who work for a public or private employer and receive remuneration in wages, salary, commission, tips, piece rates, or pay in kind, while services include wholesale and retail trade and restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; financing, insurance, real estate, and business services; and community, social, and personal services.” However, third world countries within Africa show lack of female employment services opportunities, especially within central Africa. According to data from the World Bank, none of the countries in central Africa have employment service opportunities for females. Overall, the issue of gender equality and female empowerment needed to be addressed on a more global scale.

In 1946, the United Nations created the Commission on the Status of Women in order to monitor and enhance the rights of women worldwide. The mandate for the Commission on the Status of Women was expanded in 1987 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1987/22. This resolution included language promoting objectives of equality, development and peace worldwide. This resolution also called for the implementation of measures for the advancement of women by reviewing its progress on an international and
In 1995, the Commission was assigned by the General Assembly to integrate regular reviewing of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, and to mainstream a gender perspective in United Nations activities. The 56th session of the Commission addressed issues such as “female genital mutilation, assistance to Palestinian women, the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters, elimination of maternal mortality and morbidity through empowerment, indigenous women, and HIV/AIDS.”

The 21st century creates a challenge between global sustainability and the population. It extends its effects on women’s rights and the role of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women. Sustainability and human rights influence billions of people facing hunger, thirst, poor living conditions, as well as regional and global conflict. Measures are being taken to deploy energy management technologies in order to alleviate the impacts of needing more sustainable energy sources. As more women slowly enter the work force, their recognition is gradually increasing, due to lack of gender equality practices in their native countries, especially within developing countries. As the advancement of women continues to be an issue on an international scale, the UN Commission on the Status of Women have taken initiative to create resolutions that examine the issues that face women in this continuously growing population. Even though the population is struggling to sustain itself, Ruth Gordon clearly points out that “courage is like a muscle. We strengthen it with use.”
Questions:

1. How has your state prepared for the challenges the global population is facing in the 21st century?
2. Has your state suffered from any of the challenges that the development of global sustainability and the population are enduring? What is being done to address these challenges?
3. Has your state aided the development of global sustainability locally, regional, or globally? How so? Has it been successful thus far?
4. How can the initiatives to improve global sustainability be improved?
5. What is your state’s position in regards to women’s rights? Why?
6. Have women in your state actively participated in the development of global sustainability? How so?

Notes


5 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.


7 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.


14 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.


18 Bachelet, Michelle. “Keynote remarks.”


Suggested Readings:


http://www.quakerearthcare.org/Publications/QuakerEcoBulletin/QEBArchive/QEB-PDF/QEB4-6-population.pdf

http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/mod13.html?panel=3#top

http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/mod13.html?panel=3#top

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/

http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/directorate/executive-director/

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/56sess.htm#agreedconclusions

http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.SRV.EMPL.FE.ZS/countries/1W?display=map