

Words for Your World

Year 12 Winner - Ananya Sharma, Putney High School

Dear Ms Espinosa,

I am writing to you, as a young person to share my views on the climate crisis. I feel that COP26 was a momentous event. In the eyes of many, a crucial time to take significant steps toward solving the global climate crisis. As David Attenborough says, “we need to rewrite our story to turn this tragedy into a triumph”. However, I came away from COP 26, disappointed by the result. Although significant progress was made, I believe so much more could, and *should*, have been achieved, and it is for this reason that I have decided to write to you.

Climate change does not substantially impact my life currently, yet I realise that if we carry on the current trajectory of GHG emissions, it will not only influence, but define my life, and those of future generations globally. Already, the climate crisis is devastating many around the world. Forest fires, famine and extreme weather are causing widespread loss of life and livelihood. If the global temperature increases by 2 more degrees, we will see 189 million more people facing detrimental food insecurity¹ and with the IPCC report predicting a 2.7 degree rise by the end of the century², the climate crisis has become more urgent than ever.

I believe the main problem lies with large corporates and governments, the biggest global polluters. As the head of the UN Development Programme stated, “\$423 billion of taxpayers’ money is being spent on subsidising fossil fuel use each year³”. “Phasing down” is simply not good enough if we are to reach net zero by 2050. Tighter regulations by governments, improved disclosure by corporates and more transparent reporting should reduce ‘green washing’, and compel companies to make real changes, running their business more sustainably. For example, rules around offsetting GHG emissions by purchasing carbon credits could be tightened. Currently, many companies offset carbon emissions through afforestation. However regulation should specify the type of afforestation. Many invest in mono-culture plantations (rather than polyculture tree planting) which in fact, reduces biodiversity, negatively impacts ecosystems, and in many cases makes us more vulnerable to climate change.

It is also vital for the UN to better support Indigenous communities. They have extensive knowledge of, and symbiotic existence with, the environment - a lesson to us all, in sustainable living. Additionally, I believe we need to revise our geo-engineering policies and governance, with more funding for research in this area. Although geo-engineering is an undesirable option, it is something we need to consider as traditional strategies of reduction and mitigation are unlikely to help us achieve our climate change goals. As innovative options such as marine cloud brightening, and ocean ion fertilisation develop, I do believe this is something we need to consider more closely.

In the future, I hope we can build a world in which we can live alongside the natural environment without significantly depleting it. In time, I hope we can rebuild the many ecosystems, and species we have collectively pushed to the brink extinction, and ultimately solve the climate crisis.

Kind Regards,
Ananya Sharma

¹ [Unprecedented hunger to follow in wake of the climate crisis, WFP calls for urgent action on World Food Day | World Food Programme](#)

² [Sixth Assessment Report \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

³ [World spends \\$423 billion a year to subsidize fossil fuels: UN \(cnbc.com\)](#)