

What is the most important action that your country (or the world) can take to combat climate change?

The Brazilian Indigenous activist Txai Suruí highlighted in her speech at the Conference of Parties 26 (COP 26) the effects of climate change in Amazon “Today the climate is warming, the animals are disappearing, the rivers are dying and our plants don’t flower like they did before. The Earth is speaking, she tells us that we have no more time”. In parallel with Brazilian society, these impacts not only generate negative environmental effects but also increase the number of people, especially children, who die from respiratory diseases and the lack of access to health care is a component that increases these statistics.

This problem has its roots back since the use of natural resources was intensified beyond the carrying capacity of planet Earth. The deforestation of the Amazon is also one of the greatest obstacles, as it is considered the "lungs of the planet" and it filters greenhouse gases released from the burning of natural coal, oil and natural gas, as well as petrol-powered vehicles and power plants. According to the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM), areas twice the size of Belgium have been burnt every year since 1985, due to the ease with which deforestation can be carried out in order to transform these areas into agricultural and livestock areas.

Unless humanity prioritizes the reversal and reduction of global warming, its effects will become increasingly evident. As said by Txai Suruí, we have no more time, the time to change is now. Brazil is a country of continental dimensions 66.8% of our territory is still covered by native vegetation. It is extremely important that the role of vegetation is recognized by all. Forests generate countless environmental services such as carbon sequestration, heavy metal sequestration, temperature regulation through the formation of a microclimate with milder temperatures and the highest relative humidity. In addition, vegetation prevents the silting up of rivers and streams, provides homes and food for animals, among countless other benefits that are recognized not just local but globally. One way to recognize and value these services is to pay for them. Today, a hectare of pasture or agricultural land is worth much more than a hectare of standing native forest.

In addition, it is necessary for all industrial sectors to become aware of how to make these changes through the circular economy, making better use of natural resources by optimizing manufacturing processes aiming to eliminate virgin raw materials from processes. Reducing the extraction of virgin raw materials is essential for the future of the planet and humanity.

That way, it is worth emphasizing the transport sector, which today is further reducing the time it takes to reverse the effects caused by greenhouse gas emissions, given that, according to the United Nations (UN), a quarter of the world's greenhouse gases by energy are emitted by this sector. Today, developed countries are increasingly betting on quality public transport that is powered by electricity. This initiative not only provides access to transport for the most vulnerable population, but also reduces the number of vehicles such as cars and motorbikes and the use of oil. It is therefore essential that quality public transport is guaranteed for all.

In conclusion, it is crucial that the fight against climate change is prioritized worldwide, otherwise the consequences will be drastic. The government must monitor deforested areas and ensure compliance with environmental laws to prevent illegal activities. In addition, industries need to become aware of global warming and adopt the circular economy in order to reduce the use of natural raw materials.

Therefore, the most important changes that the world can and must make are to invest its technologies in the fight against global warming in favour of sustainable development and to value environmental services by paying for them. People need money for their survival: a hectare of standing forest should be worth more than a hectare of deforested land!

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