

The planet Earth is our home and we aren't keeping our house very clean. By our actions, we are leaving a filthy "foot print" that we may never be able to erase. If we want to survive, we must change the way that we live. We must find ways to clean the waters, repair our forests and reduce air pollution in order to reverse the damage we have already caused.

In the world today, more than 1 billion people don't have access to clean water. Life threatening diseases like typhoid fever live in polluted water and spread rapidly in these areas causing mortality rates to climb dramatically.

Many areas that don't have clean water also have hunger problems. Farmers must use polluted water to irrigate their crops. The water, containing harmful bacteria, is absorbed by the plants and into the food. As a result, what little food they grow isn't safe to eat.

Another problem facing us is the increasing deforestation of our lands. Many people throughout the world use wood as a primary source of heat because it is cheap and available. They use it to provide shelter. Big companies thoughtlessly clear acre after acre to support convert the land for development. They ignore the fact that the forests are the natural filters that clean our air. They don't care that more than 230 million square miles of the world's forests have been cut down in the last 10 years. On estimate, all of our rainforests will be cut down in 40 years unless we do something to stop de-forestation.

Finally, when people think about air pollution, they think about smoke and smog but it is much more than that. Global warming and ozone depletion are so serious that the whole planet is affected as temperatures continue to climb. Scientists previously have thought that the North Pole won't melt away until 2050. In more recent studies, however, there are predictions that the

ice cap will be gone by 2014. Weather patterns will change more draughts, more serious storms and a greater risk of famine as more crops fail.

Some people can argue that trees are a renewable resource. Even though this is true, once the land had been developed, it isn't available to replant. More land must be protected so that there will always be forests to help us keep our air clean.

Many of the same people say that global warming is a myth. They believe that the changes are just part of the natural cycle of changes on the planet. However, we know that we are adding things to the air that shouldn't be there and most scientists have shown the connection between this pollution and global climate changes.

People understand the need to focus on world hunger and understand the importance of clean water. However, they still don't understand relation between clean water and hunger. They don't want to spend money on things that won't directly benefit them. They need to understand that it is less expensive to help people feed themselves and stay healthy than it is to provide them with food and medicine.

Cleaning up our environment isn't something we can keep putting off because the longer we wait, the worse the problems get, and the harder it will be to reverse the damage. Thus, the main focus of the United Nations should be environmental sustainability. The U.N. must coordinate the kind of global changes that will repair the damage we have caused and protect our environment for future generations.