



NGO SUSTAINABILITY

GLOBAL WARNING

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

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“Since climate knows no boundaries, bold action is in the best interest of everyone.”

- Patricia Espinosa

Patricia Espinosa

In July 2016, Patricia Espinosa took office as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international initiative designed to prevent anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from altering the earth’s climate, ecosystems, and humanity’s food security, and development. She is also a member of International Gender Champions, a network of leaders dedicated to gender equality.

Prior to her UNFCCC appointment, Executive Secretary Espinosa served as the ambassador of Mexico to multiple countries and as Mexico’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 until 2012. She specializes in climate change, global governance, sustainable development, gender equality, and human rights. She has assisted the Secretary-General, the United Nations System, and Parties to the Framework in securing the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Executive Secretary Espinosa believes we are in a climate emergency, with only 10 years to make dramatic changes that require immediate action. As climate change impacts all areas of society and government, Executive Secretary Espinosa advocates that the plans and policies of each sector of governments around the world take the climate into account.

Additionally, Executive Secretary Espinosa recognizes the crucial role of women in addressing climate change: while women are often important providers of food, water, and energy, they also bear the brunt of climate change. Even though women are key to developing solutions, they are often left behind concerning climate leadership at all levels.

In recent interviews and op-eds, Espinosa has emphasized the necessity for countries to honor their past promises, particularly commitments of industrialized nations to provide \$100 billion of climate finance annually to developing countries. Espinosa warns that time is running out, and securing these funds would help ensure a successful 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Glasgow this November.



Photo: U.N.

Chinua Achebe is known as the “father of African literature,” particularly due to his novel, Things Fall Apart, which illustrated the life of the Igbo people before, during, and after colonization. He primarily lived in Nigeria and was a titled Igbo chief. Later on, he was a professor at Bard University and Brown University until his death in 2013. His work includes novels, short stories, poetry, essay collections, and children’s books. Common themes include the Igbo culture, colonialism, and folk stories. This poem is dedicated to Leon Damas, one of the fathers of la Négritude, a literary and philosophical anti-colonial movement started in the early 1930s in Paris that celebrated Black and African (diasporic) culture.

“Pine Tree in Spring”
for Leon Damas

Pine tree
flag bearer
of green memory
across the breach of a desolate hour

Loyal tree
that stood guard
alone in austere emeraldry
over Nature’s recumbent standard

Pine tree
lost now in the shade
of traitors decked out flamboyantly
marching back unabashed to the colors they betrayed

Fine tree
erect and trustworthy
what school can teach me
your silent, stubborn fidelity?

- Chinua Achebe

“Trees Save Lives. Yet Cities Aren’t Saving Trees.”

New York Times by Catrin Einhorn



Photo: *Rachel Mummey/NYT*

As heatwaves rage across the U.S., cities are eager to invest in planting trees, which offer a plethora of benefits including shade, air purification, carbon sequestration, runoff mitigation, and improving mental and physical health. Planting trees in urban neighborhoods can reduce temperatures by 10°F and energy costs by 25%, which is crucial for low-income areas that are disproportionately hot and frequently lack trees. Iowa and Kentucky provide initiatives that incentivize citizens to plant trees, such as a \$30 rebate to plant shade trees, because many people are unaware of their benefits. To protect communities and combat climate change, we must view trees as infrastructure instead of amenities, and encourage sufficient funds to be allocated for tree planting.

[Full Article](#)

“EU Presents its Plan to Achieve Carbon Neutrality. Here’s What You Need to Know.”

CNBC by Silvia Amaro



Photo: *Thierry Monasse/Getty Images*

The EU vowed to become carbon neutral by 2050, unveiling plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The centerpiece of the plan is to expand the bloc’s Emissions Trading Scheme, which will allow businesses to trade GHG allowances so that the total amount of emissions are capped at a certain level, and innovation to decarbonize is incentivized. The new climate plan would also implement a carbon adjustment tax on EU members when importing goods from outside the bloc. Since these proposals will be costly, the European Commission hopes to provide aid to needy households and member states disproportionately impacted.

[Full Article](#)

“Europe’s Floods are Latest Signs of Climate Crisis”

New York Times by Melissa Eddy, Jack Ewing, Megan Specia, and Steven Erlanger



Photo: *Gordon Welters/NYT*

Days before western Germany’s devastating floods, a European weather agency issued an extreme flood warning after detailed models showed storms would threaten to send rivers surging to levels that a German meteorologist said had not been seen in 500 or even 1,000 years. Those predictions came true as more than 100 people died and 1,300 went missing, raising questions about lapses in Germany’s elaborate flood warning system. These extreme downpours are one of the most visible signs that the climate is changing as a result of warming caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Studies have found that extreme rainstorms and floods are now happening more frequently as the warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture, generating more, and stronger, rainfall. However, even as these events become more common, the flooding in western Europe was an unexpected shock that could not have been adequately addressed by normal means.

[Full Article](#)

“Politicians From Across World Call for ‘Global Green Deal’ to Tackle Climate Crisis”

The Guardian by Fiona Harvey



Photo: *Anadolu Agency/Getty Images*

A new alliance of politicians, the Global Alliance for a Green New Deal, from the EU, UK, and developing countries have invited politicians from around the world to discuss global climate policy before COP 26 in November this year. The alliance hopes that it will successfully pressure governments to implement policies to stimulate the green economy, restructure the global debt system, and provide equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Successful environmental policies implemented at national levels will also be discussed and replicated internationally when possible. A Global Green Deal would not only tackle climate change, but alter the way of life for all of humanity.

[Full Article](#)

“Planes Sampling Air Above the Amazon Find the Rainforest is Releasing More Carbon Than it Stores”

Inside Climate News by Georgina Gustin



Photo: *Carl de Souza/AFP via Getty Images*

For the past few years, researchers have been suspecting a transformation of the Amazon Rainforest from a crucial carbon sink to a source. Now, a study published in the journal *Nature* confirmed that suspicion. Scientists from the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research measured the carbon emissions in air columns above the Amazon Rainforest in Brazil, finding that the forest is releasing more carbon than it stores as deforestation, fires, and warmer temperatures degrade the forest’s productivity and resiliency.

[Full Article](#)

“Handful of Cities Driving Urban Greenhouse Gas Emissions”

New York Post by Reuters



Photo: *Reuters*

25 major cities are responsible for half of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions released into the atmosphere every year. Out of the cities cited, twenty three were in China and the other two were Moscow and Tokyo. Across the globe, cities in developed countries release more GHGs than cities in developing countries, suggesting that wealth is an important determinant of GHG emissions. Researchers urge the governments of these large cities and their home countries to drastically decrease the amount of fossil fuels they consume before there is an irreversible effect on the planet.

[Full Article](#)

“More Power Lines or Rooftop Solar Panels: The Fight Over Energy’s Future”

The New York Times by Ivan Penn & Clifford Krauss



Photo: *Tamir Kalifa/NYT*

As the U.S. begins to make decisions regarding the future of energy in the country, a conflict between those who want to improve and expand the grid system and powerlines, and those who want greater investments in renewable, decentralized energy systems such as solar and wind is growing. President Biden supports large energy companies replacing coal and natural gas power plants with large-scale wind and solar farms, requiring the building of new power lines. However, many believe that there should be an emphasis on localized energy generation rather than large-scale energy farms. “The choices we make today will set us on a path that, if history is a barometer, could last for 50 to 100 years.”

[Full Article](#)

“The Environmental Toll of Disposable Masks”

MIT News by Anne Trafton



Photo: *MIT News*

Since the Covid-19 pandemic began last year, face masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) have become essential for everyone. However PPE carries both financial and environmental costs. The pandemic is estimated to have generated up to 7,200 tons of medical waste daily, most of which is disposable masks. That amount could be dramatically cut by adopting reusable masks, according to a new study from MIT that has calculated the financial and environmental cost of several different mask usage scenarios. Decontaminating regular N95 masks so that health care workers can wear them for more than one day drops costs and environmental waste by at least 75%, compared to using a new mask for every encounter with a patient.

[Full Article](#)

“Universities can be 'Living Labs' for Sustainability.”

World Economic Forum by Wei Shyy



Photo: *Florian Wehde/Unsplash*

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology embraces sustainability as an important part of its strategic development. The university takes an approach rooted in the integration of sustainability into many societal sectors. Students must be prepared with a “sustainability roadmap,” which consists of skills like life-cycle analyses, systems thinking, and scenario-planning. There should be cross-disciplinary research in universities, as they can serve to be “living labs” that can help to produce more effective sustainability solutions. Hong Kong University is also launching the largest-scale solar project in Hong Kong with hopes to be carbon neutral by 2050. The university aims to be a multistakeholder hub with local, national and global impact.

[Full Article](#)

“Gender Pay Gap Means Fewer Female Candidates on the Ballot.”

EurekAlert by Tomaso Eridani



Photo: *Getty Images*

A study released by two professors at Bocconi University in Milan found that female political candidates received fewer votes and were less present on ballots in areas where gender pay gaps are larger. The data was gathered from seven French parliamentary elections between 1988 and 2017. The study revealed a strong correlation between gender earnings gaps and electoral gaps: an increase of 150 euros in the monthly earnings gap led to an increase in the vote share gap by 0.6 percentage points.

[Full Article](#)

Intern Rob Israel had the privilege to tour the newly renovated library in Madison, CT. Read on to learn of their new sustainability measures.

Scranton Library



Photo: Madison Historical Society

Located in the heart of Madison, Connecticut, the Scranton Memorial Library has been around for 121 years, still found in the same building after all this time. A few years ago, Scranton Library began a \$15 million renovation and expansion, doubling its size from 20,000 square feet to 39,000 sq. ft², taking fifteen years to plan and under two years to complete the renovation included the remodeling of the existing building and the addition of a second story, new wing, entryway, and parking lot. New features include a café, study room, conference rooms, a design studio, and an updated children's room with child-sized furniture.



New children's room

However, one of the biggest renovations to the library are its brand new renewable energy sources. 315 solar panels line the roof of the new second story, while a geothermal array of 25 heat pumps occupy the renovated basement with wells expanding under the new parking lot. The solar panels produce 140,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) annually, which will power many different parts of the library and hot water sources. The geothermal heat pumps are designed to continuously circulate heat between the building and the ground, with heat rising from the ground during the winter and

into the ground during the summer, as the ground temperature remains around 55 degrees.



Solar panels on the roof of the library

The combination of solar and geothermal energy was specifically designed to create days in which the library would run completely on energy generated on-site and to allow for one energy source to run continually, as solar energy may not be as efficient during rain or snow.

The installation of the geothermal system, which took about 2.5 months to drill, allowed the library to operate in the absence of air handling systems on the roof. This created room for more solar panels. The combination of these two systems eliminates 382,690 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions every year, which is the equivalent of planting 2,945 trees.

Overall, the library is expected to save \$45,066 dollars per year on energy costs. However, the systems are already far exceeding expectations, which means that the library will save more money while decreasing its reliance on energy from off-site. Within eight to ten years, these two systems are expected to pay for themselves with the hopes that they allow the library to run efficiently for over the next 100 years and beyond.



Geothermal pumps under the building

Our interns at NGO Sustainability frequently report on groundbreaking environmental organizations. Here is intern Simone Kenny's report.

C40 Cities



Photo: *C40.org*

C40 Cities is an organization that connects the world's cities and their leaders whilst encouraging them to collaborate effectively, share knowledge and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change. C40 connects 97 cities around the world, encompassing over 700 million citizens and a quarter of the global economy. Through collaboration and communication, mayors from around the world can inspire each other to take charge within their own cities to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, including limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C.

C40 has five main initiatives: Energy & Buildings; Transportation & Urban Planning; Food, Waste, and Water; Air Quality; and Adaptation Implementation. These initiatives result from C40's four-pronged approach to connect city officials with their peers, inspire innovation by showcasing solutions in leading cities, advise based on similar experiences, and to influence local and national policy agendas.

C40 was founded in October 2005 when then mayor of London, Ken

Livingstone, convened representatives from 18 megacities to forge an agreement to cooperatively reduce climate pollution and created the 'C20'. In 2006, Mayor Livingstone and the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI), bringing today the total of member cities to 97.

The leadership of C40 consists of the Chair and the Board. The current Chair of C40, which is a rotating position, is Eric Garcetti, the current mayor of Los Angeles, California. The current President of the Board is Micheal R. Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York City.

C40 is funded by donations from other organizations, the largest three being Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and Realdania, which are all philanthropic organizations. Other major financiers of the organization include the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Oak Foundation. In 2020, C40 received \$30.7 million. Funding is used to run the organization as well as support specific projects and initiatives in member cities.

Their most recent project included the newly-launched C40 Mayors Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery. This agenda aims to outline bold steps to equitably and sustainably recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by C40 mayors around the globe, the specific measures outlined in the agenda focus on creating green jobs, investing in crucial public services, protecting mass transit, supporting essential workers, and giving public spaces back to people and nature.

Each week, our interns at NGO Sustainability choose special topics of interest to report on. We believe our interns should explore issues they are passionate about within the sustainability field and we look forward to sharing some of the most interesting aspects of this work with you. Here is intern Anne Malin Marie Schuemann's report.

Anokhi: Sustainable Fashion from the Pink City



Photo: *Anokhi on Instagram*

India has a rich history of sustainable practices. Using handmade fabrics and vegetable dyes are long-standing traditions in Indian clothes-making, as are handcrafted garments. The state of Rajasthan in particular is known for its textiles and block printing tradition. Jaipur, also known as the pink city, is located in Rajasthan and is a cultural hotspot for the handcraft tradition. The fashion brand Anokhi (meaning “remarkable” or “unique” in Hindi) has been hailed as the pioneer of the sustainable fashion movement in Jaipur.

Anokhi focuses on reviving old Rajasthani techniques for the modern market. Founded in 1970, Anokhi has been making sustainable fashion for the Indian market for over fifty years, focusing on traditional techniques such as block printing

and consistently using traditional sustainable materials. This includes using vegetable dyes to dye fabrics and complete the prints, and using sustainable materials such as cotton rather than synthetics.

Anokhi emphasizes not only ecological sustainability, but prioritizes the impact it has on the community. It works exclusively with Rajasthani craftspeople as suppliers, mainly artisans in the villages surrounding Jaipur. Designs are made in-house and then delivered with fabrics, dyes, and woodblocks to the artisans who complete the prints in their homes. As block printing is a traditionally male trade, the brand also employs rural women by commissioning work from them in embroidery, beadwork and patchwork.

Anokhi also has the Anokhi Museum (also known as Anokhi Haveli) in Jaipur, located about 10 minutes from the Amber Fort. The museum does not showcase the pieces made by the brand, but it does educate visitors on traditional techniques and materials including the block printing technique that Jaipur is known for. Also the museum offers block printing classes for visitors. The goal is to preserve a sustainable tradition that is unique to the region, making it accessible to visitors and artisans alike.



Photo: *Flickr*

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