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#TheHumanRace: Climate Action in Solidarity



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World Humanitarian Day takes place every year on 19th August to recognise aid workers who risk their lives every day in adverse situations to help people most in need. It commemorates the 2003 bombing of the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, which killed 22 people. It provides an opportunity to recognise the efforts of humanitarian workers all around the globe who work tirelessly every single day, and the commemoration also pays tribute to those who have fallen while helping people in need.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has understandably taken centre stage over the past year and a half, another existential threat - climate change - has been looming in the background, one that is increasingly current, urgent, but possibly underestimated or ignored.

This year's World Humanitarian Day theme - #TheHumanRace - highlights

the immediate consequences of the climate emergency for the world's most vulnerable people. With the campaign, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) is determined to highlight the immediate human cost of the climate crisis by pressuring world leaders to take meaningful climate action for the world's most vulnerable people.

Hosted on the leading exercise app Strava, #TheHumanRace will challenge users around the world to run, ride, swim, walk or do any activity of their choice for a cumulative 100 minutes between 16 and 31 August in solidarity with the world's most vulnerable people. Each sign-up will help carry UN OCHA's message to world leaders at the UN climate summit, COP26, in November: Solidarity begins with developed countries delivering on their decade-old pledge of US\$100 billion annually for climate

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mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

We are currently living in the Anthropocene – the age of humans - where human activity is having a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems. In response to this, scientists have coined the term 'Anthropocene risk' to reflect the complex interrelation of planetary changes and social imbalances that are currently afflicting our planet.

According to UNDP's *Human Development Report 2020*, COVID-19 has demonstrated how shocks emanating from disturbances in life systems and climate change are affecting people and changing societies. Indeed, scientists have long forewarned of the potential proliferation of zoonotic pathogens - those that jump from animals to humans – in society, which arise due to the pressures people put on planet Earth. Arguably, COVID-19 might be a prelude to a new

age of protracted health crises and Anthropocene risks.

This brings the idea of planetary health – the health of human civilization and the state of the natural systems on which it depends - to the fore. In recent times, there have been calls to transform our approach towards public healthcare, which has traditionally focused on the health of human populations and has not taken into consideration the well-being of natural ecosystems and the environment.

Consciously or not, human decisions and actions have given rise to the interconnected planetary and social imbalances we face. To navigate the Anthropocene, society as a whole needs to enhance equity, foster innovation and instill a sense of stewardship of nature. We must critically examine how human values and institutions interact with one another, to solve the collective action problem of climate change. To this end, two

kinds of climate action can be taken. Firstly, individual action can be undertaken to alleviate climate change. This involves behavioural changes by individual consumers – for example, cutting down on single-use plastic cutlery. Secondly, systemic changes, which involve coordinated measures taken as a society, can also help address climate change. These include national commitments to achieve net-zero emissions as soon as possible and developing technology and policy solutions for sustainable development.

The future is not necessarily bleak. If we start early, tap into the power of science and innovation, and ensure that solutions work for the most vulnerable, the risks associated with climate change can still be mitigated and reversed. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres puts it: "The climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win".

Suggested Readings

- Ang, Hwee Min and Matthew Mohan, 2021, 'Singapore unveils Green Plan 2030, outlines green targets for next 10 years', *CNA*, 10 February, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/singapore-green-plan-2030-targets-10-years-1883021>.
- Boon, Rachel, 2021, 'Covid-19 pandemic now, climate crisis tomorrow? It's already happening', *The Straits Times*, 25 July, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/environment/covid-19-pandemic-now-climate-crisis-tomorrow-its-already-happening>.
- Gates, Bill, 2020, 'COVID-19 is awful. Climate change could be worse', *GatesNotes*, <https://www.gatesnotes.com/Energy/Climate-and-COVID-19>.
- UNDP, 2020, *Human Development Report 2020 - The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*, <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>.
- UN OCHA, 2021, World Humanitarian Day 19 August, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/humanitarian-day>.

CLIMATE CHANGE

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

We're in a water crisis. We need to act like it

We need to ask critical questions about how we can do more with less. Where can we farm smarter, using cover crops or more efficient irrigation to protect soil and water?

José Andrés and Caryl Stern

Time

27 July 2021

More countries hike climate pledges, piling pressure on major emitters

A group of mostly smaller countries submitted new, more ambitious climate pledges to the United Nations this week, raising pressure on big emitters including China to do the same ahead of a major UN climate summit in November.

Reuters

The Straits Times

31 July 2021

Tree-planting pledges fall short of climate change goals

Planting a million trees is not the cure-all for global warming that many leaders want it to be, especially when only a fraction of those trees mature, survive or even make it into the ground. And such large-scale initiatives are anything but simple.

Linda Poon

Bloomberg

31 July 2021

Climate crisis: Scientists spot warning signs of Gulf Stream collapse

The currents are already at their slowest point in at least 1,600 years, but the new analysis shows they may be nearing a shut-down. Such an event would have catastrophic consequences around the world.

Damian Carrington

The Guardian

5 August 2021

Blue carbon can't wait

Restoring blue carbon ecosystems could remove about 0.5% of current global emissions, with co-benefits for local ecosystems and livelihoods. These include improved water quality, increased marine and terrestrial biodiversity, among others.

Fanny Douvère

Science

6 August 2021

Climate change: IPCC report is 'code red for humanity'

The landmark study warns of increasingly extreme heatwaves, droughts and flooding, and a key temperature limit being broken in just over a decade. But a catastrophe can be avoided. Deep cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases could stabilise rising temperatures.

Matt McGrath

BBC

9 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

State of the UK climate 2020

Year 2020 was third warmest, fifth wettest and eight sunniest on record for the UK. No other year has fallen in the top-10 for all three variables. The country has warmed at a broadly consistent but slightly higher rate than the observed change in global mean temperature.

Mike Kendon, et al.

International Journal of Climatology, Vol. 42, No. S2

2021

Climate change 2021: The physical science basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened since 2013.

Masson-Delmotte, V., et al. (eds)

Cambridge University Press

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

World Habitat Day

The theme for this year's World Habitat Day is "Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world." The theme recognises that cities are responsible for some 70% of global carbon dioxide emissions with transport, buildings, energy, and waste management accounting for the bulk of urban greenhouse gas emissions.

Worldwide

4 October 2021

6th International Climate Change Adaptation Conference

This is the sixth in the Adaptation Futures international conference series on global adaptation and the first to be held in Asia. It is a unique platform to facilitate dialogues towards action oriented solutions from a diverse range of stakeholders.

New Delhi, India

5-8 October 2021

ENERGY SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

China starts construction of its first small modular reactor

The project will be the world's first onshore commercial small modular reactor (SMR) and will use a home-grown design. SMRs could be used for smaller grids and planning them could be more flexible, although commercialisation has yet to be seen.

Echo Xie

South China Morning Post

16 July 2021

Expanding nuclear energy to the Arctic: The potential of small modular reactors

The Arctic is the most suitable location for SMR pilot tests due to its remoteness and high-energy needs. To ensure the development and successful long-term deployment of SMRs in the region, governments, private companies, and civil society organisations need to continue to fund, pursue, and encourage further investment in nuclear energy production technologies.

Julia Nesheiwat

Atlantic Council

22 July 2021

Indonesia begins work on Southeast Asia's largest floating solar plant

A joint venture between a unit of PLN and Masdar in West Java, the Cirata floating photovoltaic power plant is expected to be the largest floating solar station in Southeast Asia and is scheduled to begin commercial operation in November 2022.

Bernadette Christina

Reuters

3 August 2021

Indonesia suspends coal exports from 34 mining companies: Report

The energy ministry said that sanctions had been issued on some coal mining companies for violating market rules. Indonesia requires coal miners to sell 25% of their production to the domestic market, mainly to state power utility PLN.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

9 August 2021

To save the planet, focus on cutting methane: UN climate report

Methane emissions are responsible for around 30% of global warming since the pre-industrial era, according to the United Nations. Some environmental groups and government officials have urged a global agreement on methane.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

9 August 2021

Cambodia dam destroyed livelihoods of tens of thousands: Human Rights Watch

The Human Rights Watch said that a massive China-financed dam in Cambodia has destroyed the livelihoods of tens of thousands of villagers while falling short of promised energy production.

AFP

Channel News Asia

10 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Homing in on more resilience efforts in ASEAN's decarbonisation

Although fossil fuels continue to provide most of the ASEAN's energy mix, the urgency to generate 23% of the region's Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) from renewable energy sources by 2025 continues to escalate. Hence, the ASEAN countries are optimising renewable power for the growing electricity demand.

Annisa Sekar Larasati, et al.

Jakarta: ASEAN Centre for Energy

2021

Renewable energy in EU-China relations: Policy interdependence and its geopolitical implications

This article examines the role of renewable energy in EU-China relations, two leading powers in the field of renewable energy. Both have recently increased their individual ambitions towards decarbonisation of their domestic energy systems. Renewables play an increasingly important role in shaping their bilateral dealings.

Thomas Sattich, et al.

Energy Policy, Vol. 156

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASEAN-IEA Webinar: Stimulating innovation towards high-efficiency cooling solutions

This webinar brought together expert policy makers, compliance experts, academics, and engineers, as well as industry representatives from across Southeast Asia to share their knowledge and experience on innovation to support energy efficient space cooling appliances.

Recorded Webinar

25 June 2021

Policy preparedness for climate resilience of the energy sector

Experts discussed how policy measures can enhance climate resilience of the energy sector and build a resilient future. Discussions can contribute to raising awareness of the important role of climate resilience policies and developing effective policy measures to build resilient energy systems.

Recorded Webinar

29 June 2021

FOOD SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Brazil's produce 'fundamental for guaranteeing China's food security

As China looks outward to support food security as an "absolute priority", Brazil presents a potential sustainable solution, through its "carbon-neutral meat protocol", which is already in use by the private sector. This involves proper pasture management alongside planted trees, among others.

Livia Machado Costa

China Dialogue

20 July 2021

Chinese market regulator strengthens protection for food delivery workers

As most delivery workers are not covered by basic social and medical insurance, China's State Administration for Market Regulation issued guidelines requiring delivery platform companies to guarantee their workers with income above minimum pay, insurance and a relaxation in delivery deadline.

Sophie Yu, Yingzhi Yang and Tony Munroe

Reuters

26 July 2021

Climate change threatens food security of 65 nations

A study of 800 fish species highlights that countries with nutrient-dense fish catches are more vulnerable to climate change, and highlights the need to consolidate fisheries, climate, and food policies to secure the sustainable contribution of fish-derived micronutrients to food and nutrition security.

Scidev.Net

Eco-Business

August 2021

Boosting food security in the Philippines: Inquirer

The Philippines had the greatest number of food-insecure people in Southeast Asia during the pre-COVID 19 era (from 2017 to 2019), bringing the need for a common food security framework to give stakeholders a better understanding of the situation.

Philippine Daily Inquirer/Asia News Network

The Straits Times

10 August 2021

Novel food solutions for a more sustainable future

Climate change has led to volatility in prices among traditionally grown food products in Asia. This provides a business case for alternative proteins, for a more stable and sustainable food system.

Millet Enriquez

Channel New Asia

13 August 2021

UN world food programme warns of growing hunger crisis in Afghanistan

The combination of accelerated conflict and a second drought in four years are hallmarks of a potential humanitarian catastrophe and greater food insecurity in the country.

Hindustan Times

16 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Urban food systems and the pandemic: Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on food systems and adaptive measures practiced in Metro Manila

This article discusses the impact experiences, emerging adaptive practices and evidence base of transformation of Metro Manila's food systems amid the COVID-19 crisis. Recommendations include providing safety nets to smallholder producers and shortening value-chains among others.

United Nations Philippines

2021

Contextualizing the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on food security in two small cities in Bangladesh

This paper examines how residents in smaller cities are coping with the food, social and economic disruptions associated with COVID-19. Unlike Dhaka which has more diverse food options, these smaller cities rely on their local markets and neighbourhood grocery stores for procuring their food.

Hanna A Ruszczyk et al., Environment and Urbanisation, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 239-254.

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Global Food Security & Sustainability Virtual Summit 2021

Given the wake-up call for both developed and developing countries of the looming crisis facing the world, this summit hosted by Singapore will discuss the food security from the local to global level, and from an interdisciplinary and systemic food systems perspective.

Webinar

17 September 2021

World Water Week 2021

Organised by the Stockholm International Water Institute, the theme for World Water Week 2021 is "Building Resilience Faster", with a focus on concrete solutions to the world's greatest water-related challenges, starting with the climate crisis and including water scarcity, food security, health, biodiversity, and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Webinar

23-27 August 2021

HEALTH SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Think it's all over? Why the Covid experts are not so sure about that

The end of restrictions in the UK has not led to a surge in cases. Future lockdowns seem unlikely unless new variants emerge, but coronavirus remains unpredictable.

Nicola Davis

The Guardian

9 August 2021

EU regulator looking at new possible side effects of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines

Three new conditions reported by a small number of people after vaccination with COVID-19 shots from Pfizer and Moderna are being studied to assess if they may be possible side-effects.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

11 August 2021

South Korea adopts electronic travel authorisation to stave off infectious disease

South Korea is implementing for the first time an electronic travel authorisation (ETA) system for overseas visitors from September, as the COVID-19 pandemic opens the way for a policy previously opposed by the country's tourism industry.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

11 August 2021

What is melioidosis?: Rare tropical disease has killed 2, sickened 2 others in US

Melioidosis, a rare bacterial disease typically found in tropical climates and also known as Whitmore's Disease, has infected four people in four different U.S. states in recent months, killing two of them.

Kelli Dugan

Kiro 7

11 August 2021

WHO supports Guinea after detection of first-ever case of Marburg disease

The World Health Organization (WHO) is supporting Guinea following a confirmed death from Marburg virus disease, the first known case in the country and West Africa.

UN News

11 August 2021

New Zealand to let in Covid-19 vaccinated travellers from low-risk countries next year

New Zealand plans to allow quarantine-free entry to vaccinated travellers from low-risk countries from early next year as part of a phased reopening of its borders that were shut last year due to the pandemic.

Reuters

The Straits Times

12 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Progress towards antibiotic use targets in eight high-income countries

This study assesses antibiotic consumption patterns in eight high-income countries.

Bryony Simmons et al.

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 99, No. 8
2021

Pandemic prevention and unsustainable animal-based consumption

This article argues that our current path in relation to animal-based consumption is unsustainable, in that it may accelerate serious risks to human and environmental health. This perspective is drawn from the collaborative and multidisciplinary One Health approach, which focuses on improving the health of people, animals and environments.

Harman S Sandhu et al.

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 99, No. 8
2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

JICA COVID-19 Webinar #6 "Response to COVID-19 by Public Health Centers in Japan"

This webinar series brought together various leading health professionals from Japan to share Japan's knowledge and experience on COVID-19 response and discuss the implications of their work. The webinar is intended primarily for health professionals in low- and middle-income countries.

Recorded Webinar

13 July 2021

Webinar: "COVID-19 and Youth Employment"

This webinar examined the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, particularly on employment opportunities and students' perceptions of their future career prospects. Panelists reviewed best practices, challenges and potential solutions as well as the role of institutions of higher education in addressing this situation.

Recorded Webinar

15 July 2021

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Disaster relief centre in S'pore helps region fight virus

The Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (RHCC) will play a role in helping countries that have been badly hit by a deteriorating Covid-19 situation.

Osmond Chia

The Straits Times

16 July 2021

The rise of China and India's remote humanitarian aid

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many disruptions to humanitarian action since 2020. Emerging donors such as China and India seized the opportunity to increase their humanitarian footprint. Their move to online aid delivery conforms with a general trend in the humanitarian sector towards the greater use of remote humanitarian programming.

Lina Gong

East Asia Forum

29 July 2021

There's nothing neutral about engaging with Myanmar's military

Myanmar's people have clearly and universally rejected the coup and the military junta. Will international governments, donors, and aid agencies do the same?

Khin Ohmar

The New Humanitarian

28 July 2021

Comply or leave: The dilemma facing humanitarian agencies

Humanitarian agencies are often thrust into the heart of divisive situations. These are contentious crises without easy or quick solutions. In such situations, the core operating principles of humanitarian agencies – neutrality and impartiality – are little match for the egregious bad behaviour of warring groups hell-bent on achieving their objectives by any means.

Mukesh Kapila

The Conversation

10 August 2021

U.S. gives Myanmar \$50 million in aid as humanitarian crisis worsens

The United States said it was giving Myanmar more than \$50 million in aid as surging COVID-19 infections worsened a humanitarian crisis, in a country already reeling after generals overthrew a democratically elected government earlier this year.

Reuters

10 August 2021

Four reshaping disaster-relief logistics: 8 questions for Amazon's Abe Diaz

Amazon announced the opening of a 10,000-square-foot location near Atlanta, its first dedicated to storing and distributing emergency supplies typically needed at the front end of disaster relief efforts. The space holds more than half a million relief supplies that Amazon donated and then pre-positioned. The facility will back relief groups that work in the U.S. Southeast, the Bahamas, the Caribbean and Central America.

Mark Solomon

DRR Voices Blog

11 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Disaster Governance in the Asia-Pacific: Future Pathways for South and Southeast Asia

This report examines the developments in disaster governance in South Asia as an area of cooperation for Southeast Asia. By exploring the role of regional initiatives, it aims to identify potential avenues for interregional cooperation on disaster governance.

Alistair D.B Cook and Christopher Chen

RSIS Policy Report

2021

Regional Situation Analysis: The State of Production, Dissemination, and Use of Disaster-Related Statistics in Selected Countries in Asia and the Pacific

This analysis reports on the findings of the Technical Working Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific on the region's use of disaster-related data, the gaps and possible areas of improvement.

UNESCAP

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASEAN-IPR Discussion Series 2021: Post-Conflict Peace Building and Relief Efforts

This webinar explored peacebuilding and relief efforts in the ASEAN region. It examined the structures and mechanisms that exist, the gaps in the system, and potential future pathways.

Recorded Webinar

14 July 2021

RSIS Webinar on "Climate Change and Communities – a Human Security Perspective"

This webinar brought together a panel of experts to discuss how the issue of climate change can be viewed through a human security lens. They examined how this approach might ensure the security and stability of communities in a new climate future.

Recorded Webinar

28 July 2021

MIGRATION

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

How to build long-term resilience in vulnerable communities

In response to the second deadly wave of the pandemic that hit India earlier this year, the grassroots-led Migrants Resilience Collaborative has brought together stakeholders to deliver social security entitlements to India's affected migrant workers.

Flora Rosenow
World Economic Forum
 23 July 2021

How women migrants in Thailand are stopping trafficking and gender-based violence in their communities

While migration can financially empower female migrant workers, they are also especially vulnerable to human trafficking and gender-based violence.

UN Women
 29 July 2021

World Day against Trafficking: Challenging misconceptions about it in migration pathways

There are no accurate estimates on the number of victims of human trafficking, or even the number of migrants who are victims. However, COVID-19 has revealed the heightened vulnerability of migrant workers to being trafficked.

Celine Bauloz and Marika McAdam
World Economic Forum
 30 July 2021

'No more refugees' is not the answer to Afghanistan's displacement crisis

The crisis in Afghanistan is an opportunity for other nations to create a more inclusive and innovative model for accepting refugees. Such model would improve the lives of refugees, while allowing the host community to benefit as well.

Muhammad Hamid Zaman
The New Humanitarian
 11 August 2021

The great climate migration is happening and you might be the next to move

Over 40 countries all around the world have experienced extreme weather events in one week. With the rising frequency and intensity of climate change-induced disasters, the trend of climate migration – whether internally or internationally – is also likely to increase.

Aspen Pflughoeft
Deseret News
 13 August 2021

'Ticket to work': Indian state brings vaccines to migrant workers' doorstep

Amid fears of migrant workers being left behind during India's vaccination drive, Kerala has been specifically targeting its large migrant population as part of the state's vaccination drive.

Roli Srivastava
Reuters
 13 August 2021

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Quarterly mixed migration update Asia, Quarter 2, 2021

This report looks at new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and policy developments that occurred in the 2nd Quarter of 2021 in South and Southeast Asia. Updates include the effect of COVID-19 restrictions of labour migrants, access to vaccines, and climate migration.

Mixed Migration Centre
 2021

IOM cash-based interventions annual report and case studies 2020

This report examines the impacts of IOM's institutionalisation of cash-based interventions as part of their efforts to implement its Grand Bargain commitments. It looks at case studies from countries that had implemented cash-based interventions in 2020.

International Organization for Migration
 2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Implications for Policy of a (Post-?) COVID-19 World

This webinar discussed the effects of crises, such as COVID-19, storms and droughts, on the processes of human mobility including migration, displacement as well as immobility.

Recorded Webinar
 17 March 2021

Safeguarding Humanitarian Action in Counter-terrorism Contexts: Addressing the Challenges of the Next Decade

This event brought together experts in the field to discuss the role of UN member states and of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact in promoting respect for principled humanitarian activities against a backdrop of counter-terrorism.

Recorded Webinar
 24 June 2021