

## UN Conference: Connect With the Earth in Meaningful Ways by Taking Care of It

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As the human population grows, there is a need to connect with something we all share: The Earth. The earth is one global village that we all share. We stand on the same earth, and when we connect with the earth in meaningful ways by taking care of it, we find compassion and care for each other. The 68th UN Civil Society Conference gathered a group of non-governmental organizations, activists, academics and government personnel at Salt Lake City, Utah for a three-day assembly to find solutions to challenges including climate change and building sustainable communities. I was fortunate to attend the three-day conference from the 26th to the 28th of August which gathered more than 4000 people from around the globe at the Convention Center in the beautiful mountainous state of Utah.

In particular, a town hall at the UN Civil Society Conference produced the Youth Climate Compact to identify specific actions we can take to reduce the effects of the climate crisis and adapt those actions in our communities.

People know how detrimental plastics are to our environment, and that they should recycle more. However, even if every member of the Earth's population recycles, it will not be enough to offset the fact that as the earth is growing in population, we will tend to use more materials. Moreover, more people are now living in apartment buildings and urban houses consuming energy.

There are definitely steps we should take in reducing plastics. Nevertheless, after the conference, I learned there are more impactful ways for young leaders and corporations to make the change:

Actions that young people should take:

Connect with a farmer. Learn about the food that you consume, like how and where it's grown and explore plant-based cuisine

Increase conscious consumerism and change your purchasing habits. Use six Rs instead of only three Rs - Refuse, Repair, Rethink, Reuse, Recycle, Reduce.

Instead of climate change use the term "Climate Action/Crisis" and declare for climatic emergency on social media

Organize locally to create a "Climate Action Plan" for your community/neighborhood

Create a video about direct personal impacts of the climate crisis. Did your family member have to leave home and migrate somewhere else due to climatic effects?

Host "Climate Hack-a-Thons" in your college to generate solutions for the Climate Crisis or organize climate lobby days

Actions that corporations and business leaders should take:

Start labeling products with their carbon footprint

Calculate one's carbon footprint as a part of physical checkups

Establish a carbon score much like credit scores and tie benefits to ratings

Use drip irrigation to save water

We need the right incentives and regulations to implement these new approaches mentioned above and to create a climate-friendly plan for our modern life. Collaborative thinking and actions are going to have positive outcomes in our fight to tackle this crisis. If not now, then when?

Every one of us can have an impact by making some changes in our daily life. I personally decided to reuse plastic bags when I go grocery shopping and rethink my purchases: do I really need this product or is it an impulse buy? I keep a record of the food I have saved in the fridge to make sure I don't create more food waste, as it takes a lot of energy to create food products and they should be consumed. I also utilize public transportation back and forth from work to decrease my carbon footprint and would encourage people to take ride shares, and I have educated myself on where my garbage is being dumped and how that affects landfill sites.

Participants of the UN Civil Society Conference also wanted to make a positive impact; in a service project connected to the conference, more than 4000 volunteers packed half a million meals for needy children (see image below). This project was carried out in partnership with Feeding Children Everywhere, American Airlines, Just Serve and Latter-day Saint Charities.



*Volunteers assemble meals for children*