

U7+ Intergenerational Roundtables

Part One: Climate Change, Inequities and Intergenerational Justice Co-hosted by Georgetown University and the University of Cape Town
 Convened by Northwestern University and the U7+ Student Leaders Board
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In May 2021, the University of Georgetown and the University of Cape Town co-hosted the first session of the U7+ Intergenerational Roundtable Series, an online gathering of 80 participants from over 20 universities around the world. The topic of discussion from the U7+ student representatives was "How may climate change affect global inequality and injustice, and intergenerational justice?" The one-hour meeting was divided into three parts: a presentation by the host university outlining the discussion, a 30-minute breakout session, and presentations in each room.

Three major issues were raised in discussing the effects of climate change.

1. What do we owe to future generations? How should we address trade-offs between economic prosperity in the present and near future and the well-being of future societies?
2. How can the major issues discussed in the Paris Agreement be related to intergenerational justice?
3. How to make the broader debate about the impact of climate change on disparities between developed and developing countries and on intergenerational justice more open to younger generations?

In the first part, the University of Georgetown and the University of Cape Town, the host universities, provided input on the framework assumptions. The following are the takeaways from the presentation.

- To solve the serious problem of global warming, many nations around the world are making efforts to realize a decarbonized society, but there is still a large gap between the realized amounts and the intended ones.
- Countries with high carbon dioxide emissions are putting the burden on countries with low carbon dioxide emissions, which is reinforcing inequality on a global scale. Many developing countries are already facing the worst level of climate change in their history, and it is a matter of life or death that will adversely affect their health and lives.
- It is important for the younger generation to be part of the discussion on climate change issues. Since it is unclear whether the voices of young people are considered in the existing system, a new system should be established to ensure that their voices are reflected.
- The issue of climate change is no longer in the distant future, and urgent action is required. We need to act now for the sake of future generations by focusing on the developing countries that are victims of climate change and by supporting them.
- We should realize society in which resources are distributed equitably, regional disparities in the relevant areas are recognized, and procedural justifications are ensured.

In the second part, breakout 30-minute sessions of 5 to 6 participants were held to discuss the content of the first part.

In the third part, one person representing each group gave a one-minute presentation of the points discussed in the second part. The following are the details of the presentations.

- Economic prosperity and environmental policies are not necessarily opposed. We should abandon the assumption that all environmental policies are expensive, and instead look for ways in which both can grow together. It is wrong to assume that eco-friendly measures will always harm the economy.
- Instead of viewing all climate change in the context of the economy, we should also consider them from a social and natural environmental perspective. An ethical and value-based way of approaching the problem would help to form a sustainable society without fixating on economic prosperity.

- There needs to be a channel of communication between the general public and the government. Societies and citizens should exert pressure on the government to take action.
- Each of us must be aware that there are those who benefit from and those who are disadvantaged by climate change. There is a significant disparity between developed and developing countries, and we need to be cooperative and avoid excessive patriotism.
- Governments should develop a long-term perspective in policy making, while ensuring transparency of procedures and outcomes.
- The discussion should be open to all people, not just experts, to gather opinions from actors of a wide range of ages and countries. At the same time, however, it is not easy to reconcile the opinions of people with diverse backgrounds, and persistent efforts are needed to this end.
- We should consider the issue of climate change at the level of our individual lives and act starting from what we are familiar with. It is desirable to maintain connections at the citizen level and provide a chance to discuss local environmental issues. It was also suggested that universities should be a bridge to connect with the community.
- Education plays a very important role in cultivating problem awareness. Education should start at the elementary school level to enable the younger generation to understand the decision-making process properly and to develop the initiative to be actively involved in actual policy making. In addition to the formal education methods of schools, the role of informal education using media cannot be ignored.
- One commenter said, "Since climate change is a real problem now, we shouldn't treat it as a future problem." We should seriously think about how to help the present community, because thinking only about future generations will reduce the sense of involvement of the current generation.

