

Theme 2

Connected by the Oceans; Can We Work Together to Protect the Environment?

Introduction

Ocean is one of the biggest and most important treasures of our nature. For many ocean bank cities and countries, ocean is a very if not the most important source of food, base of the economy, as well as in some cases also drinking water when distilled. Ocean is also an important tourist attraction: you can not only swim in it, but also dive and see different beautiful coral reefs and interesting, rear species of fish. All living things and sea creatures in the ocean are also a treasure. The main function of the ocean is to maintain the lifecycle of our planet; therefore, it is essential to sustainability of our ecosystem. Without the ocean nobody on planet Earth would be able to live normally.

Unfortunately, nowadays we don't take enough care of this great piece of nature. Moreover, we destroy it in so many different ways, for example by throwing tons of plastic into the ocean, especially into the Pacific Ocean. In this essay, I will discuss how the human activity has affected the ocean and which impact it has had on the environment. I will explain how the negative impact is part of our modern society's problem, how we can deal with it, and how we can change policy and consumption habits in our society.

Problems of the Ocean

We are living in the most industrialized and developed era our planet has ever seen. On the one hand, this advanced modernization gives us possibilities, such as machinery and advanced technologies. On the other hand, much of production results in pollution. In addition, most of the products are made to last short, some are even single-use, for example plastic, which is one of the reasons for ocean pollution. Due to mass single-use plastic, a lot of unrecycled plastic ends up in the ocean. In the moment, there is a "garbage island" in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, which consists of mainly plastic products. The area of the island is

said to be about 1.6 million square kilometers, which is an area more than four times larger than the area of Finland. The plastic is not only an ocean polluter, but also an animal poisoner. All kinds of sea animals and fish have a chance of eating plastic not only by itself, but also in their natural food, where the plastic could have ended up.

The problem with the plastic is in many ways a result of the culture of overconsumption, which developed in the 20th century, and probably reached its peak now. Plastic toys, plastic bags, plastic packages are now overproduced and overconsumed, although even in the very recent past people could easily go to the shop and buy food in reused glass jars, paper bags or own packages. Single-use dishes overflood market of fast food, and people hardly think of nature when using a single-use plastic glass or a plate.

Another important threat to the ocean is chemical, industrial and agricultural pollutions. They are a result of industrial and agricultural activity on the banks of different bodies of water: rivers, lakes, seas, oceans. This can once again explain us, why any kind of nature harming almost always affects not only the local environment, but also the ocean – all waters go to the ocean: from the lakes and rivers the water gets transported by the rivers flow. Where the river flows into the ocean, together with the river water, all kind of chemical waste goes into the ocean.

Also, oil extraction and shipping harm the ocean and its creatures. Any oil or gasoline, which goes into the ocean water, in whichever way it got there, by shipping or by oil extraction, it harms the ocean in the same way – it causes warming of the ocean water. This, as well as agricultural, industrial and chemical pollution does not only change the ocean water, but also harms the sea plants, especially water. As a result of water warming, the coral reefs start to lose their colors, and lastly lose their colors fully, this process is called bleaching.

How Can We Save the Ocean?

To find a good solution for our problem we need to understand the reason behind overconsumption. Overconsumption is a way for corporations to make more money by making cheap and poor-quality products, instead of making good quality, long-lasting products. For instance, corporations may use cheap material like plastic to produce low quality products,

which break soon so that the consumer would have to go and buy a new product over and over again. In my opinion, to solve this problem, states should tax manufacturing corporations for the use of bad quality materials their products, so that good quality material would become more popular for usage in manufacturing. A good example, how progressive taxation can work for the good of the environment is Norway, where about 49% of all cars work on electric or hybrid engine. This is because tax on normal diesel or gasoline cars makes their prices go higher, so that a low-taxed price of an electric car is lower than a highly taxed gasoline or diesel car. In addition, electric cars in Norway have privileges unlike normal cars, for example electric cars in the Norwegian capital Oslo are allowed to use the bus lane on the road, while for the normal cars the lane is not in use.

The same kind of taxation policy can be used also for non-nature-friendly chemicals, which damage the nature. This way non-nature-friendly substances could become less widely used in industries and agriculture, and the environment damaging processes could get slowed down, and afterwards even stopped fully.

Another problem mentioned above is unnecessary usage of plastic. Nowadays, almost all companies use plastic in packaging, mostly food and drink packaging. By banning unnecessary plastic usage, for exempling in drink bottling and food packaging, plastic would stop being so widely used. In replacement to plastic nature friendly shops could be opened. In these shops instead of buying products ready-packaged in plastic, people could buy food and drink buy putting them into a many-time-use package, for example glass jars for drinks and textile bags for fruits and vegetables. Plastic usage cannot be fully stopped at least in the closest 50 years but can be largely reduced. However, all these measures demand a shift in people's consciousness to care about nature. People should realize that by destroying the environment, they damage their own lives. People should be willing to make a change in their consumption habits to preserve the nature.

Conclusion

Our ocean is our treasure, which we must keep clean and beautiful. The ocean should not be only seen as a resource, but as a home for lots of beautiful, colorful fish, mighty whales

and powerful sharks. Think of the coral reefs that shine in the ocean as a multicolored, deep rainbow, and goes on for kilometers. In those corals, you can see the beauty of the ocean, how endless and diverse it is. This is what our society has to keep, the diversity of the ocean and nature in general in all its multiple life forms. If the humanity continues to be irresponsible about the environment, in a hundred years, or maybe even less, the diversity of plants and animals will disappear – our nature will be blank, as the bleaching coral reefs, lifeless and dead. While it is not late, we have to change our policies and habits globally in order to leave our planet for the future generations. In this way, they will have clean water and air, see blue oceans, different species of fish and animals, and colorful coral reefs.