

## 2010 and the Upcoming Decade: How Will You Respond to the Changing Climate?

January 1, 2010 marks not only the start of a new year, but the start of a new decade. The New Haven/León Sister City Project is asking you to examine your lifestyles in order to improve the situation in the next ten years. Keep these facts in mind as you think about the upcoming decade and possible lifestyle changes that could help save the environment.

**Effects of climate change are estimated to be killing 300,000 people per year** due to such things as droughts, famines, and flooding. The average surface temperature of the Earth is currently projected to increase by 2 to 11.5°F by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Global sea level could rise rapidly by more than 3 meters (more than 10 feet) if the West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapses according to the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. These predictions have changed dramatically for the worse compared to predictions made in the late 1990's.



In light of this reality, **how will you respond to the challenge in the coming year and decade?** There are many actions that you and your family can take to do your part to decrease the impact you have on the environment. Remember, sustainability means meeting one's needs in a way that will still allow future generations to meet their needs. Invest some time and money into making your lifestyle more environmentally friendly! For example, houses are a large consumer of energy and fossil fuels. Could you turn down your thermostat a degree or two in the winter and up a degree or two in the summer?

Cars and small trucks account for one fifth of the emissions of the United States each year. United States citizens own 30% of the world's cars. They account for 45% of the world's carbon emissions from automobiles. That's a huge contribution from only 5% of the world's population! There are many things you can do to reduce the time spent in the car. Take **public transportation** or **carpool!** Busses and subways are great alternatives. Walking or riding a bike on nice days helps you get exercise while saving the earth.

Did you know that raising livestock consumes natural resources, ruins natural habitats for grazing land and speeds up global warming? Have you ever thought about becoming a **vegetarian**? Even going vegetarian for a day or two every week significantly reduces your environmental impact. Could you spend a little extra money to buy **organically grown food** or to support local farmers? Food imported from across the country wastes large amounts of fossil fuels to be transported.



While individual or personal changes are important, social change is needed to transform our wasteful society. Large corporations need to be subject to limits on the amount of carbon dioxide they can emit. Companies need to take responsibility for their consumption and production of waste. Demand tougher regulations! **In the coming year, do all that you can to get the word out about climate change.** Join local **awareness groups** or take action by writing to your local government officials to urge them to enact **tougher legislation.** Could you donate some of the money you save by living simply to help people in poverty who are unfairly affected by the variable climate?