

## OPINION

### **Climate change demands a united, global response. Rich countries aren't doing enough**

MARSHA LEDERMAN

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Even at the best of times, navigating the Hunger Games scenario that is the parking lot of the Toronto mall I have been shopping at since childhood can be a soul-destroying experience. But as I sat there in an endless snake of cars over the weekend, I felt a heap of guilt along with the usual annoyance. Fresh in my mind were images I'd seen of fast-fashion castoffs creating literal hills of waste in countries such as Ghana.

Then, on Monday, I felt even worse about our societal addiction to consumption, as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the COP27 summit in Egypt that humanity is on "a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator."

We need to ask ourselves: who is doing the bulk of that driving? And through which countries is that highway careering through, primarily?

We are all connected, and arguably never more so than when it comes to the climate emergency. We can feel a (false) sense of safety and security in our North American bubble, but halfway across the world, vulnerable nations are enduring the consequences of our overconsumption, right now.

"Africa should not pay for crimes they have not committed," Central African Republic President Faustin-Archange Touadéra told COP27. "Like other islands, our contribution in the destruction of the planet is minimal," added Seychelles President Wavel Ramkala-

wan, "yet we suffer the most." Mr. Ramkalan also called for wealthier countries to help repair "the damage you caused to us."

The idea of industrialized economies compensating developing countries for damage related to climate change has long been discussed. But it now seems to be gaining traction at COP27, with promises for climate-adaptation funding through a loss-and-damage insurance program called the Global Shield starting to trickle in.

Meanwhile, those images from Ghana sent me down a rabbit hole, where I read that an estimated 60 per cent of one particular landfill cliff in the capital, Accra, is made up of unwanted clothing – stuff that many of us, with good intentions, have placed in charity bins or brought back to the store to recycle.

I am part of the problem, I know – I'm writing this while clad in H&M sweats and a (very old) Target T-shirt. I am trying to adjust my habits. But individual action can feel so meaningless.

Last summer, I noticed that one of our shower caddies was looking pretty gross – full of soap scum and possibly rust. Feeling virtuous, I decided I would give it a good wash rather than chuck it into the landfill and buy a new one. I spent hours soaking it, scrubbing it, willing it back to cleanliness. And as I wrapped it back around the shower head, gleaming with new life, I felt proud: I had saved this shower caddy from further polluting the Earth.

Two days later, we travelled to the U.S. (yes, we flew – I know, much worse than the aborted bathroom accessory purchase), to a part of the country where food is apparently not composted. As I watched people in pub-

lic places shovel giant plates of partly eaten meals into overflowing trash cans, headed for the landfill, I thought about my shower caddy efforts and felt pretty deflated.

I can adjust my habits all I want - I can buy more sustainable brands (which I'm trying to do), compost, reuse and recycle, and refrain from purchasing new bathroom accessories on a whim - but how much can that really accomplish? Unfortunately, it's a lot less than government policies to protect us from climate change, and aid for developing countries that are being harmed by our habits. Canada has committed billions to this fight - and must continue its support.

In his book tour stop in Toronto last weekend, rock star and political activist Bono thanked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for the foreign aid Canada has provided to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. His message was completely transferable to the climate emergency.

That funding means "freedom from despair for so many people who you're not going to meet and won't be able to thank you," Bono said. "But I can thank you on their behalf. Thank you, Canada." The audience went wild.

Sure, this was a friendly crowd - definitely pro-Bono, if you'll excuse the expression. But this desire to help is one we should all share. There but for the grace of God, go all of us. I know that contributing through my taxes - for international climate aid and climate-friendly policies at home - will do a lot more than anything I can do as an individual.

I also know the world depends on it.