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## **Environmental education, justice and sustainable degrowth as key actors to protect our planet**

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Several authors, including the International Resource Panel (IRP), have acknowledged economic growth as the major driver of environmental change. This statement is supported by the fact that, despite relative dematerialization due to efficiency improvements in the last decades, absolute dematerialization has not happened and it is unlikely to do so. From 1900 to 2015, humanity extracted a total of 3400 gigatonnes (Gt) of biomass, fossil fuels, ores, and non-metallic minerals, of which 73% was returned to the environment as solid, liquid or gaseous waste. The waste of resources in contemporary societies, especially from industrialized countries, is attributed to two main reasons. On one hand, the metabolism of industrial societies relies on non-renewable resources. On the other hand, it has been estimated that, yearly, humanity directly wastes or mismanages around 78% of the total water withdrawn, 49% of the food produced, 31% of the energy produced, 85% of ores and 26% of non-metallic minerals extracted, respectively. As a consequence, natural resources are getting depleted and ecosystems polluted, leading to irreversible environmental changes, biological loss and social conflicts. To reduce the anthropogenic footprint in the planet, and live in harmony with other species and ourselves, a shift from the current economic model based on infinite growth towards a model built on human equality, environmental respect and following a sustainable degrowth strategy in industrialized countries is urgently needed. This new model can only be attained by a bottom-up transformation, that shall rely on a free, equitable and public education system.