**Give us a Future: By Jasmine Gillespie, Belfast**

Hello, my name is Jasmine Gillespie and I’m here to day to talk to you about Climate Change.

Climate Change is a very serious issue that is affecting each and every one of us in some way or another, but most people don’t know the actual impact that it will have on us if we don’t do anything about it. You have probably heard about rising sea levels, but did you know that the Global Average Sea Level has risen nearly seven inches over the past 100 years?

You’re probably thinking that seven inches isn’t that much, but you’re wrong. Every inch of Sea Level Rise covers 50 – 100 inches of beach, that means that in the past 100 years at least 350 inches of beach have been covered by rising sea levels. I’m sure that the main question in your head right now is, “What exactly is causing the sea levels to rise?” and I have the answer for that, it’s the melting ice at the North and South Poles.

Did you know that the area of the Arctic Ocean covered by sea ice in 2018 was only 66% as large as it was in 1979 and that in August 2012 it was the smallest on record? Now let’s go back to the rising sea levels for a minute, I have said that every inch of Sea Level Rise covers 50 – 100 inches of beach and that the melting ice at the North and South Poles is what’s causing that. This means that if the ice keeps melting, global sea levels could rise more than 20 feet, which would put a lot of coastlines underwater.

If you still don’t understand how big this is, let me tell you something else that might wake you up a bit, whole islands, yes, that’s right, whole islands would disappear! The reason that the ice is melting is because the Earth is heating up. Did you know that the Earth’s Global Average Temperature is 1.9 degrees Fahrenheit hotter than it was in 1880? You may think that isn’t a big difference so let me put it in a way that you’ll understand better, water at 32 degrees Fahrenheit is solid ice, but water at 33 degrees Fahrenheit is liquid water, that’s how much difference a small change can make!

Even a small rise in the Earth’s temperature means melting ice at the North and South Poles, it means rising seas and flooding in some places and drought in others.

The past five years have been the warmest five years in centuries and it’s all being caused by the burning of Fossil Fuels and rising levels of Carbon Dioxide! Carbon Dioxide is a Greenhouse Gas that works to trap heat in the Earth’s atmosphere, it helps Earth hold the energy it receives from the Sun so it doesn’t all escape back into space.

If it weren’t for Carbon Dioxide, Earth’s oceans would be frozen solid, so we do need a bit of Carbon Dioxide to make sure Earth is the right temperature, but too much Carbon Dioxide can cause the Earth’s temperature to rise instead of being maintained at a healthy level.

Carbon Dioxide levels have gone alarmingly high in the past 100 years due to the burning of Fossil Fuels, the Earth’s atmosphere now has 411 parts of Carbon Dioxide for every million parts of air, scientists say that we need to get the level of Carbon Dioxide in our atmosphere down to 350 parts of Carbon Dioxide for every million parts of air or less in order to stop the Earth’s temperature rising as much as it is and that we can do this by reducing our use of Fossil Fuels.

Some people are ignoring this issue because they don’t believe that they alone can make a difference whereas others are ignoring it because they believe that if they ignore it, it’ll simply go away. Neither of these reasons have any truth in them.

Ignoring an issue will not make it disappear and you alone can make a difference by changing little things in your life, someone is bound to follow in your footsteps and another person in theirs which could create a domino effect which would lead to big changes being made.

This issue is not going to go away by itself, we need to fix it and we need to fix it fast. We do not have the luxury of time.

This is urgent. Change needs to happen now.

Give us, the children and young people, a chance to have a future, but before I finish I would like to ask you, what are you doing to help this issue? And what are you going to do to prevent it from getting worse?