



Dear Friends,

We are about to start the second and final week of COP26. Here is what happened during the first week:

Background

We know for certain that this COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, is neither our last, best chance to tackle climate change as some suggest, nor is it just another instance of talking shop. It has brought high level political attention, as well as a media focus to the climate crisis, and has made clear the gap between what we need to do, and what we have achieved so far. The need to take transformative action to combat the climate crisis has never been clearer. We have seen unprecedented weather extremes across the world this past year, from flooding in Germany and China, to forest fires in the US Pacific Northwest. For those of us living in the developed world, climate change is no longer a far-away problem in space or time. It is here and now.



But this is just a taste of what vulnerable communities in developing countries have been experiencing for years. As we know, at the heart of the climate crisis is a deep injustice—those least responsible for causing climate change through greenhouse gas emissions are on the frontlines of the impact of the climate crisis. The latest scientific report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in August, presented the dangers we face in the starkest terms yet. Urgent and transformative change is required, and yet global emissions

of greenhouse gases have continued to rise. According to UN General Secretary General, António Guterres:

“The Working Group's report was nothing less than a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable.”

What we have seen in the past week is that COP26 has shone a light on the inadequacy of our actions to date, and the need to ramp up both ambition, but even more crucially: implementation. We know now that not many countries consider climate change to be core to their self-interest. In too many countries around the world, climate change has yet to assume the centrality and urgency it warrants in national policymaking. Too often, the debate emphasizes the cost of climate action, underplaying or ignoring completely the costs of inaction, as well as the benefits of transitioning away from fossil fuels.



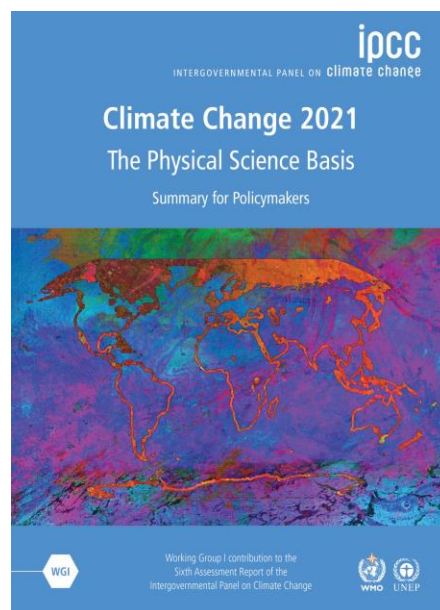
The lack of transparency has been one of the big complaints about this conference. Delegates representing civil society want to be able to watch, listen, and dissect what governments are promising, and the commitments that they are making. They have found it difficult to attend some sessions due to social distancing rules, and have been forced to rely instead on web access provided by the conference organizers. People feel that it's not the same, and feel cut off from the process—unable to influence and scrutinize in the way that they would like. On Friday there was a similar sense of disconnect on the streets of Glasgow at the youth rally for climate.



At the rally, representatives of Indigenous people explained how multinational companies had polluted their water and taken over their land in the pursuit of profit. For them, it's not just a climate crisis, it's a question of much wider social justice. Andrea Lxchiu from Central America, who spoke at the youth rally, was asked why she travelled to Glasgow. She answered: “To say that the answers to climate changes are not going to be negotiated inside the COP but constructed around people who want these systems to change. I think the message we send when we take to the streets is that hope is still alive while we are organizing to change the world.”

This is the challenge for world leaders when they return to Glasgow this week to see if they can agree on a communique, at what we are told is the “last, best chance” to stop runaway climate change. How will they convince distrustful activists and people already suffering due to global warming, that they will deliver on the promises that have been made and will show the ambition needed. The reality is that we need these political leaders to have any chance of driving down emissions. The richest 20 nations in the world—the G20—are responsible for the vast bulk of greenhouse gas emissions. If they can be locked into an agreement it will be an important contribution to the wider effort.

In the most recent [IPCC Report](#), it states “that climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying. Every region is facing increasing changes. The role of human influence on the climate system is uninterrupted.” This Report provides vital information for world leaders during COP26 in Glasgow.



Decisions to be made

The Paris agreement (2015) set out a mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Each country must set out how it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a plan known as the [Nationally Determined Contributions](#) or NDC. NDCs must be revised and strengthened every five years, with the first revisions being viewed at the Glasgow COP. Unless the commitments in the current NDCs are strengthened and put into effect urgently, there is no hope of limiting global warming to 2°C.

Practical Actions to be Continued

- Take action to reduce your carbon emissions
- Plant trees – Trees for Life where possible
- Join others in your community to pray for Climate Justice
- Talk to your local and national leaders
- Listen to the voices of women and children to share their experiences and solutions

Conclusion

Mary Robinson, as the “Leader of the Elders,” spoke eloquently this past week and declared that “climate summits like COP26 are a test of leaders’ mettle.” As a former head of state and a UN climate envoy, she knows the pressure they will be under in Glasgow, but also the power they have to make lasting positive change at a time of crisis. She lamented to a journalist that, “We’re not going to have enough of the real voices, because they can’t get to the COP. It’s a bit too white and elite, frankly, because of Covid and [because] they didn’t manage the security and the prices.” She’s still optimistic: “I have to be a prisoner of hope.”

As we start the final week of COP26, we must continue to pray that the host, the United Kingdom, takes on the responsibility to lead by example and galvanize all delegations into radical ambition, and that it demands consistency and credibility. We gather in prayer to pray for the Leaders and all in Glasgow, and that they will not shrink in this moment. They should heed the words of Nelson Mandela, the founder of The Elders, who stated: “it always seems impossible until it is done.” And so, we must remain hopeful.

Jean Quinn DW

Director UNANIMA International