

Cop26: What's all the fuss about?

The news is alight with mentions of COP26. What is it exactly?

On the 1st to 12th of November, world leaders will unite in Glasgow in the 26th meeting of the Conferences of the Parties. Their task: to refine previous global responses to the increasing climate crisis.

Why should Rotarians care?

Climate change is deemed one of the most pressing issues of our time, having ramifications in both environmental and social justice dimensions for all of humanity. As a humanitarian organisation, we empathise with the 21.5 million people displaced by climate change-related disasters, including severe weather events, as well as food and water shortages... and that's just in the data recorded from 2010 to now.

As a marine biologist, it was my job to observe and describe effects of rising sea temperatures on fish distributions. In the media we see that the world has already heated up, on average, by 1.2C – it seems such a small amount! But the oceans alone absorb a whopping 90% of the total global heat. We call this a heat sink. That heat sink is the heat equivalent to five Hiroshima bombs dropping into the water EVERY SECOND. Evolutionary processes do not work fast enough to allow our marine ecosystems to adapt that quickly. The humanitarian effect is that seafood accounts for 17% of the global protein consumption and 39 million people are employed as fishers.

At COP26, the IPCC Report will be discussed. It outlines worst case scenarios that we don't want to face. It also shows what would happen if we were to make a transformational shift towards a cleaner, greener, more sustainable future. In fact, the latest science shows that we could stop that global temperature rise if we invest and deploy in innovation that helps bring us to net zero emissions. Temperature thresholds will be the focus of the COP26 Summit.

Did you know?

Many people argue that renewable energy is so heavily subsidised yet fail to hold the fossil fuel industry to the same level of standards they criticize. Every single minute, oil, coal, and gas is subsidized to the tune of \$11m. In a humanitarian lens, research connects the air pollution attributed to burning these fuels to the premature deaths of almost nine million people globally each year. If we held that up to Rotary's 4-way test, it would fail.

In my job as D9685 Environment Chair, I want to ensure that our work is aligned to the truth (evidence-based), fair (committed to diversity, equity, inclusivity and justice), beneficial, and indeed builds goodwill and friendships. In that light, it is my duty to provide you some further reading. I hope it helps you understand more about the foundations for the discussions at COP26. I hope it provokes some healthy discussion within your Clubs.

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2021/oct/14/climate-change-happening-now-stats-graphs-maps-cop26?utm_term=ea9ffecf2b6bfc6001b8b7ceb70a1db4&utm_campaign=GreenLight&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=greenlight_email

There is a well-known quote by Robert Swan: ***"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it"***. As Rotarians, we are experts in collective action. We have the framework already in place to play a huge role in creating the change needed to ensure a healthy planet for our kids' kids. Let's get started by learning together.

MELANIE LEWIS

D9685 Environment Chair 2021-22

Melanie.Lewis@rotarysocialimpact.org