

Hold your own United Nations Climate Change Conference

Introduction

The 2018 UN Climate Change Conference, also called the COP24 conference, begins in Katowice, Poland on 3 December 2018. The UN's aim is to hold countries to their binding agreements to reduce emissions that will help the world move to a low-carbon future.

The [Global Learning Programme](#) has produced this resource to support schools wishing to use this as an opportunity to investigate climate change, and at the same time focusing pupils' thinking on ideas such as development, sustainability and interdependence.

The resource includes support to prepare for, run and follow up a school climate change conference, including investigating the religious dimensions of sustainability, and is adaptable if you wish to run similar activities after 2018.

Learning objectives

This resource is targeted at Key Stages 2 and 3. It will particularly support teachers in developing:

- pupils' knowledge and understanding of climate change and its impact in different parts of the world
- pupils' knowledge and understanding of global themes, including development, interdependence and sustainability
- pupils' enquiry, critical thinking and discussion skills
- opportunities for pupils to consider their own and others' values.

Resources

- **Climate change conference links:** a sample of links for pupils and teachers to help prepare for, support or follow up your school conference.
- **PowerPoint™ Introduction to the climate change conference:** a presentation to help pupils understand the role of the UN, and what the UN has done to combat climate change so far.
- **PowerPoint™ Climate change conference aims:** a short presentation designed to help pupils think about what the conference is about, the idea of negotiation and to introduce the 12 focus countries.
- **Climate change conference country information:** background information about the 12 countries and the UN, outlining climate change impacts, likely approaches to the conference and dilemmas. The country information is available in Intro and Full versions.
- **Climate change conference country cards:** fold-over name cards with flags for the countries at your conference.
- **Climate change conference data file:** a spreadsheet with 'intro' and 'full' worksheets, including some useful data about the countries at your conference.
- **Exploring religious perspectives on the environment at Key Stage 2:** teachings from six faiths and some activity suggestions.
- **Exploring religious perspectives on the environment at Key Stage 3:** compares Christian and Islamic teachings, with suggestions for activities.

Activity 1: Your school's climate change conference

A number of schools already run Model UN Conferences; there is already extensive support for the format on the [United Nations Association UK website](#).

A Global Learning Programme Expert Centre on the Isle of Wight ran a Climate Change Conference as part of a Key Stage 2 to 3 transition project: you'll find more details [here](#).

The Met Office has also prepared activities to support a climate change conference, primarily for older pupils. It includes detailed country resources, support for negotiations and greater structure for the conference: <http://www.metlink.org/climate/climate-negotiations-for-schools/>

The introductory video might also be useful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Efb1KL16Bn4&feature=youtu.be>

Preparation phase

To participate fully in their school conference, it is important that pupils take part from a position of knowledge and understanding, including about: climate change; the implications for different countries at the conference; and the role of the UN, together with awareness of how a conference might work.

Investigating climate change, and the implications for countries

Using the [Climate change conference links resource](#):

- You could select resources to support pupils in investigating the causes of climate change, or use selected animations and graphics to brief them more formally.
- If pupils already have good knowledge and understanding of the causes of climate change, you could build on this by using some of the websites to investigate the range of impacts on people and environments in different parts of the world, perhaps homing in on the 12 focus countries for the school conference. It is important pupils know where these countries are, so this might be the time to begin building up a world map of their locations and adding details of the climate change impacts.
- **Extension:** add additional data, perhaps challenging pupils to find the most relevant additional data or exploring changes over time, for example using the Gapminder site.
- **Extension:** if you have more time, you could share the 12 focus countries around different groups to investigate in more detail, focusing on each country's development needs, energy mix and climate change impacts.

You could show pupils information about the 12 countries from the [Climate change conference data file](#) from either the intro or full dataset (depending on age/ability).

- What do the different items of data mean, and what are the implications for climate change; which items do pupils think might be more or less important?

- Do they notice any geographical patterns relating to the countries, for example: which emit most carbon dioxide (CO₂); which use most fossil fuels?
- **Extension:** you could get pupils to use either Excel™ or graph paper to chart and display the datasets. If you have started a group or class world map, you could add charts or graphics to the map, for example as located bars on each country.

Investigating the UN, and how their conference might work

You might use the PowerPoint™ [Introduction to the climate change conference](#) to build up the big picture of the Conference:

- You could work through the presentation to discuss how the UN works, the concept of negotiation and the background to the conference, choosing slides that are relevant to the age of your pupils. They may be able to think of examples, in school or more widely, about how to solve difficult problems by negotiation.
- You could show pictures of different UN formats, such as the General Assembly, Security Council and Climate Change talks from the UNA or UN sites: which set-up do they think would be the best format for their school conference? If you have more time, or wish to split roles up, pupils might be able to organise a climate change display area, press room, etc. around their conference event.

Using the final slide of the PowerPoint™ [Climate change conference aims](#):

- Introduce pupils to the countries represented at their conference. If you haven't already done so, you could use atlases to identify and name the countries on an outline world map or display map.
- If pupils already have good geographical knowledge, you could get them to sort countries into groups, e.g. by continent, developed/emerging/developing, and discuss what they know about the countries' climate change contributions or impact.

Conference phase

The [Climate change conference country information](#) sheets in Intro and Full versions are designed to support pupils working in groups of about three to prepare for and take part in the conference. They have been prepared from a position of knowledge about possible approaches to the conference, although they cannot be taken as representing official policy.

- Pupils will represent a country's views and interests, rather than their own opinions, so their preparation time to get into role is important. There are [Climate change conference country cards](#) for each delegation's table to support their country identity.
- You might want to prepare one group of pupils to represent the UN in helping negotiations and deal-making: there is 'country' information and a 'country' card to support them.
- There will be speeches at a conference, so you could invite two or three people to make short presentations at yours. Examples might include your local authority sustainability

officer, a representative of local business, an expert from a local college or university, or a student union officer.

- Pupils will present their country's views to the conference, then debate with others. You might want to create informal opportunities to negotiate, as well as doing so formally.
- The conference should develop a draft resolution for further debate; you might want to allocate this task to (an)other pupil(s), perhaps in role as UN facilitators. The conference can then debate the resolution, table amendments and reach a final resolution, agreed by at least the majority of delegations.

Follow-up

Many of the preparation activities may also be appropriate ways to follow up specific questions raised by pupils during the conference. In addition, you could:

- Debrief the conference: what did pupils learn e.g. about climate change, the UN process, this method of working?
- Investigate the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals: which directly or indirectly relate to climate change? How do they link to the conference outcome?
- Share approaches with a partner school through e-twinning, perhaps by holding parallel conferences and sharing resolutions and conclusions.
- Research additional countries not represented at the conference and prepare similar one-page summaries.

Follow-up ideas in the school and community

Countries at the Climate Change Conference will be making pledges to reduce emissions and take action. You might extend pupils' understanding by investigating how the school, businesses or community are making similar adaptations to the challenges of climate change. For example:

- In your school, the school site team may support investigations into energy use and conservation. Both the Eco-Schools Award and the Ashden Awards (see Links) have a range of school-focused sustainability activities, the latter with a climate change focus.
- Many Local Authorities still have sustainability, energy efficiency or waste officers, some of whom are involved in school outreach work. Your Local Authority website will have information about local approaches to climate change, for example a climate change action plan, and responses to EU 2020 targets for energy and climate change.
- Local businesses may be focused on developing a Low Carbon Economy, for example through home insulation, or sustainable sourcing of food. Some may be working with the Carbon Trust or be linked to a wider network such as Transition Towns, or community organisations that promote low carbon and sustainable futures.

Although it is adults who are responsible for climate change, some schools like to give pupils opportunities to get involved.

- You could challenge groups of pupils to choose one aspect of climate change to research and follow up, for example by lobbying the school leadership team for changes in school or creating a presentation for other pupils, then sharing what they achieved with their class.
- You could get pupils to make their own pledges, write them on postcards and collect them – maybe adding one yourself. Hand them out at the end of term: how well did they manage to keep their pledge and what were the challenges of keeping it? The FutureMe website allows you to do this electronically.

Activity 2: What can we learn from religious ideas about the environment?

You could follow up the conference by exploring some religious perspectives on environmental stewardship using these resources:

- [Exploring religious perspectives on the environment at Key Stage 2](#) has teachings from six faiths and some activity suggestions.
- [Exploring religious perspectives on the environment at Key Stage 3](#) compares Christian and Islamic teachings, with suggestions for activities.

For more information visit the Alliance of Religions and Conservation website (see Links).

Activity 3: Investigate case studies of climate change and development

The case studies in this section have been chosen to build on pupils' thinking following the climate change conference. They have been created from Oxfam programmes, with additional country information sourced from the UNDP and World Bank.

There are case studies of three countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the Philippines, featuring Oxfam's work with people there to adapt to climate change. Each includes a summary of the impact of climate change and people's responses in their own words, together with photographs, background country information and a glossary. A further study on India focuses on the impact of climate change, together with food insecurity.

The case studies are available in a [full text](#) and (simpler) [introductory text](#) version.

You will need:

- atlases or world maps
- copies of the case studies for individuals or groups to work on
- copies of the case studies template or grid.

You could:

- Discuss the set as a whole, perhaps putting them into context by locating them on a world map.
- Share out the case studies: one set per group, or for individuals or pairs to work on before comparing what they have found out. You could ask pupils to work on the text in a number of ways:
 - Use the grid '[Talking about climate change](#)' to encourage pupils to read the text for information, make notes, and compare the countries.
 - Use the [writing frame](#) to support pupils to find detailed information from the case studies, and to write summaries of their findings.
 - Alternatively pupils could use the headings from the writing frame to highlight/colour-code **key facts**, **main impacts**, **solutions** and **improvements** on copies of the texts, before writing their accounts.
 - Use the 5Ws prompts to support working with the texts (**Who**, **What**, **Where**, **When** and **Why**, perhaps adding **How Might** and **What If**).
- You could use these investigations to develop pupils' critical thinking skills, perhaps with the support of a [critical questions bank](#).
- Compare pupils' work on the different case studies within groups or as a whole class, perhaps
 - using the same framework/s or headings to identify the main similarities and differences

- developing a concept map to summarise the case studies as a whole, and colour-coding similarities and differences.
- You could get pupils to research the impact of climate change, and mitigation strategies in further countries using some of the suggested Climate Change links, then use the grid to compare them.
- If you started a world map earlier, pupils could add summaries of their findings to the display.

Resource created by the Geographical Association, Oxfam, RE Today and the Climate Change Coalition for the Global Learning Programme.