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Welcome to the Paris Climate Talks special edition. In December, 2015, the United Nations meet for one of the most important international conferences since the end of the 2nd world war. We urgently need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. Tackling climate change is the challenge of our time, and one that all nations must face as they gather in Paris to agree a framework for action among all 195 UN member states.

1. The People's March for Climate, Justice and Jobs

Sally Hunt, UCU General Secretary, has made the following call to members:

UCU supports the People's March for Climate, Justice and Jobs taking place on November 28 (Cardiff and Edinburgh) and 29 (London and Northern Ireland). We need to send a clear message to governments that the world needs an ambitious and binding climate treaty. The current UN projections show that the proposals submitted to the Paris talks fall well short of what is needed. Climate change is a trade union issue with workers central to the transformation needed for the transition to a low carbon economy. As an education union we know that our sector will be vital in developing the skills, research and knowledge needed. All branches are urged to help make this the biggest climate march ever... and the biggest trade union bloc.

Posters and leaflets are available for distribution. Please check the CACC link for further information: <http://www.campaigncc.org/29novdemo>

2. Paris CoP21 update

UCU is part of the ITUC delegation that will attend the talks. We will use the opportunity to lobby governments at the conference, but most of our activity will be organising in the social forum space to get our message across. To do this we are working closely with our Global Union Federation – Education International. We have arranged an event at the trade union forum on December 4. It is entitled 'The power of education' and will hear presentations from affiliates in the global south (Niger) and the global north (France). There will also be contributions from Students Organising for Sustainability and Greenpeace International. Fred van Leeuwen, EI General Secretary will open the session and UCU will be acting as a facilitator.

The climate talks are unlikely to produce an agreement that will deliver a 2 degree temperature increase limit. The UN has estimated that current pledges on the table will take us into dangerous levels of climate change. It means that after Paris we will need to push for greater ambition whatever the outcome of the talks.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/30/worlds-climate-pledges-likely-to-lead-to-less-than-3c-of-warming-un>

3. Just transition agreement at the ILO

The need to give unions a voice was given a boost at the International Labour Organisation recently. It will strengthen the call for workers and their organisations to be fully consulted on future industrial transformation. Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "The challenge for governments is to settle a deal in Paris that will avoid catastrophic climate change, destroying lives and livelihoods across the planet. The plans set out by the ILO will help increase ambition on the ground, with employers and unions negotiating and planning for the future. All governments must now accept that social dialogue, disclosure and agreements between employers and unions are indispensable to meeting the urgent and complex transition that has to happen."

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_420286.pdf

The TUC hosted a seminar in October with Greenpeace to launch the new joint report, *Green Collar Nation*, about building a **just transition** to a low carbon economy. The joint paper sets out the need for new industrial opportunities and skilled jobs to support a fairer shift, exploring the common ground between the trade union and environment movements in tackling climate change. There's added urgency, too, as the Conservative government sets about dismantling ten years of progress towards a green economy.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/energy/workplace-issues/green-workplaces/green-collar-nation-just-transition-low>

4. UN Sustainable Development Goals

A new UNESCO campaign is calling on teachers eager to become advocates for education to help lobby for progress toward achieving the new sustainable development agenda. EI is a member of the campaign. By joining the sign-up campaign launched on 2015 World Teachers' Day, 5 October, by UNESCO, the Education For All Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR) and Education International (EI), teachers can advocate for an inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Without this the overall aims to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment and address climate change are unlikely to be achieved. Advocacy toolkit available here:

http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/3783

5. UK Government

The UK Government has confirmed that it has cut funding for the main organisation that promotes better local communication about the risks of rising greenhouse gas levels. A loophole in the 2008 Climate Change Act, does not explicitly assign responsibility for increasing public knowledge, and no Government Department, Agency or other body has taken on the task.

Since she became Environment Secretary in July 2014, Elizabeth Truss has not made a major speech on climate change resilience, like her predecessor, Owen Paterson. Indeed, the Governor of the Bank of England has said more publicly than the Environment Secretary about the risks of climate change.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/bob-ward/climate-change_b_8347246.html

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28299-14-ways-the-uk-has-backtracked-on-climate-pledges-this-year/>

6. Sustainability state of play in the tertiary sector

In October a report on sustainability in the tertiary sector was launched. The report is based on survey responses from 548 staff involved in sustainability in universities and colleges. The survey was circulated to UCU environment reps where a high response rate was recorded.

The key findings, as reported by Environment Association of Universities and Colleges, included:

- Only a quarter of respondents reported that sustainability is a strategic priority.
- University staff indicated doubts regarding the likelihood of achieving carbon reduction targets at their institutions, with two fifths saying they are unlikely or very unlikely to meet targets.
- Action on teaching and learning for sustainability is varied, with a quarter of Higher Education sustainability staff indicating that they do not have any plans in this area.
- A lack of financial and staff resources are seen as the biggest barriers to acting for sustainability.
- There are concerns over reductions in budget for sustainability, with a third of college sustainability staff respondents and a fifth of university sustainability staff respondents expecting a decrease in budget.

Graham Petersen, Environment Coordinator at UCU, said, "The evidence in the report is timely. The UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris climate talks will put a renewed emphasis on the Further and Higher Education sector to embed sustainability. Some institutions are performing well but the overall picture is not encouraging. Education funding cuts must be reversed and a strategic framework put in place to ensure institutions deliver for students, staff and their communities."

http://www.eauc.org.uk/the_state_of_sustainability_in_tertiary_educati?utm_source=EAUC&utm_campaign=5c776bd600-e-news+-+13th+October+2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ee0ce3610d-5c776bd600-285738673

7. USS update

On October 7, UCU hosted a meeting of members to discuss Responsible Investment in the Universities Superannuation Scheme. USS is one of the biggest pension funds in the UK and has been criticised for failing to address a number of ethical investment issues. UCU has been working with ShareAction on this and the meeting was another opportunity to raise our concerns with USS staff that were in attendance.

8. Divestment movement growing

The divestment from fossil fuels campaign in universities shows no signs of slowing down. A further 10 institutions have taken decisions to divest all or some of their fossil fuel investments. University branches are urged to contact student activists to review the state of play in their institution. Divestment will be a major theme of the UCU regional network meetings taking place between now and the 2016 annual congress in May. The next one will be for the SW Region at the University of Bristol on November 27.

University of Surrey divests

<http://blog.peopleandplanet.org/blog/2015/10/20/university-of-surrey-first-to-divest-this-academic-year-press-release/>

Number of universities divesting more than doubles

<http://blog.peopleandplanet.org/blog/2015/11/10/university-fossil-fuel-divestment-doubles-ahead-of-paris-climate-talks-press-release/>

9. UCU training

The next UCU Environment Rep course starts on 19 January 2016. The course is a must for all new reps and interested members. Day 1 will be held at UCU Head Office. The remaining 2 days will be available online during the spring term. It is hoped that this blended learning option will make it easier to complete given the time-off constraints in workplaces. Applications should be made to Karen Brooks, National Education Officer kbrooks@ucu.org.uk
http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/l/p/Activist_guide_2015-16.pdf

10. Spotlight on Anglia Ruskin

Paul Marris, UCU Chair, Anglia Ruskin University branch, provided E News with a summary of what the institution is doing on education for sustainability:

"Anglia Ruskin was the first UK university to sign The Rio+20 Declaration of Higher Education Institutions, and we are pleased that the leadership of our university is committing serious resources to embedding Education for Sustainability across our curricula.

It is now a requirement of our academic planning that all undergraduate qualifications at level 6 aim to ensure that "the learner has the awareness and ability to apply their knowledge and understanding and work with others to take action which promotes the principles of sustainability" and "the learner has developed the attitudes and skills to make informed decisions that reflect care, concern and responsibility for themselves, for others and the environment, now and in the future".

And correspondingly for taught Postgraduate qualifications (level 7) that "the learner has the awareness and ability to apply critically their knowledge and understanding and work with others to take proactive action which promotes the principles of sustainability" and "the learner has developed the attitudes and skills and is able to apply their knowledge to make informed decisions and take actions that reflect care, concern and responsibility for themselves, for others and the environment, now and in the future".

Get in touch

If you are a UCU member looking for advice on sustainable development or have ideas for greening the FHE sector please let us know. Contact: Graham Petersen, UCU Environment Co-ordinator:

gpetersen@ucu.org.uk