

# Climate Change: UN Conference in Copenhagen

## Secondary School

This learning resource is intended to assist teachers in exploring an international political event of huge significance, with students who will live to see the consequences. Decisions made at the UN conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 will have a significant impact on students' lives: if the substantial carbon emission targets recommended by scientists are agreed, their lifestyles will have to shift dramatically by 2050; if the targets aren't met, we run the risk of a global catastrophe within their lifetimes.

It is also important to recognise that the talks aren't just about reducing emissions, they are also about how we support poorer nations who are already, or imminently, facing humanitarian disasters due to accelerating changes in their climate over the past 5-10 years.

There are major practical and moral issues in agreeing a deal that is safe and fair for everyone, including poor and newly industrialised countries. This resource will assist classes in exploring some of these issues together, and support teachers in helping students see that they have a voice in political decisions.

## Overall learning objectives

- Understand the need for countries to agree a plan to tackle climate change together
- Know that there will be a United Nations conference in December 2009 to agree a global deal, and show that young people have a voice in political decision-making too
- Understand that the poorest countries are most vulnerable to changes in climate, and begin to explore why
- Understand the concepts of risk and vulnerability

## Key Questions

- Why is there an international conference about climate change this year?
- Why are organizations like Oxfam calling for a fair and safe global deal to tackle climate change?
- What is meant by fair and safe? What would a fair and safe deal look like?
- What are the barriers?
- What can young people do about the issues?

## **Key Concepts**

- Understanding climate change and its impact around the world
- Differing points of view
- How decisions at government levels affect lives

## **Key skills:**

- Debating
- Role-playing
- Speaking
- Listening

## **UN Climate Summit Role-play**

**Ages: 11-16**

### **Aims:**

To develop pupils' understanding of the process leading up to the COP15 conference in Copenhagen and the complexities of reaching an international agreement on how to tackle climate change.

### **What you need:**

- Access to the following page: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-LpM3A5w2c&feature=related>
- Country information sheets

## Introduction

Explain that in December there will be a Conference in Copenhagen where UN member countries will discuss how to tackle climate change together. This is a difficult task because different countries want different things. World leaders will have to work together to agree on targets that all countries will try and meet from 2012 onwards. At this point it is a good idea to discuss what is meant by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Show pupils the following clip: Seal the deal...Ban Ki Moon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-LpM3A5w2c&feature=related>

Next explain that the children will be simulating the conference to see what might be agreed and what the challenges are in getting countries to agree to targets when they all have different points of view.

## Main Lesson

Group the children in mixed ability table groups, with one group of four higher ability children to act as the UN. They should use the information sheets to help them prepare the information that they will need to use. N.b. The UN will also need a copy of all of the country profile sheets.

Each group is one of the following countries:

- UN Organiser (4 children)
- UK
- USA
- China
- India
- Tanzania
- Bangladesh

Extra Countries:

- France
- Spain
- Canada
- Peru
- Japan
- Brazil
- Indonesia
- Mauritania

Explain that one of the jobs within each country group will be to take minutes on their discussions and point of view. These could be displayed around the room on large sheets of paper. (Keep for follow up lesson in January 2010.)

They will look at the information sheet about their country to explain that country's point of view on Climate Change. As a group they need to discuss the questions at the bottom of each information sheet and think up responses. They will use these answers to make a short speech to present to the class to describe how Climate Change is affecting them and what they are willing to do to combat it.

Give the children time to prepare for the conference.

The UN group should use this time to prepare questions for each country - some of which are on the country information sheets but they also need to think of some of their own.

When each group is ready ask them to give their speeches and ask the UN group to chair the meeting by giving the groups turns to speak and responding to their arguments.

## **Plenary**

When you have completed the summit the UN group needs to lead a vote on the following questions:

**A. Do you agree that something needs to be done about climate change in the very near future?**

**B. Do you agree to an 80% cut in emissions by 2050?**

**C. Do you agree to providing money for poorer countries so they can pay for the damage caused by climate change?**

Then discuss some of the issues: Why are some countries reluctant to make changes? Why does this make it difficult to make changes globally? What could be done to make more progress at these types of summit? Is a summit the best way of effecting change?

## **Follow up in January 2010**

Present the resolutions from Copenhagen and compare with the resolutions from the summit your class held before the summit took place.

## **Suggested follow up activity**

Pupils could then be asked to imagine that they were a journalist at the conference. They write a letter to a newspaper in their country, explaining what their thoughts of the summit were and arguing persuasively about what they think should happen next.