



Education Unions for Climate Justice:

● Education International's COP 27 Advocacy Toolkit ●

COP27

Background



The 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), or COP 27 is taking place in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022.

Aim and overview of COP 27

Science has established beyond any doubt that the window for action to avoid runaway climate change is closing rapidly. Therefore, COP 27 is one of the last occasions for world leaders to make meaningful policy decisions to sustain the planet and protect lives. This meeting is an opportunity for world leaders to show political will and make impactful commitments on mitigation, adaption, finance, and loss and damage.

By signing the Paris Agreement in 2015, leaders agreed to work together, with differentiated responsibilities, to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and to aim for a rise of under 1.5 degrees (compared to pre-industrial times). The world has already warmed approximately one degree, meaning that to not exceed the 1.5 degree threshold, carbon emissions need to be cut by at least 50% by 2030. COP 27 is the

moment to ensure that this becomes a reality. With extreme weather events and rising sea levels already severely impacting the most vulnerable people across the globe, existing inequalities are being deepened. The countries and communities that have contributed the least to global warming are experiencing the worst effects. COP 27 is the moment for nations that have contributed the most to the climate crisis to demonstrate their commitment to climate justice.

Where are we at now?

Last year's COP 26 in Glasgow made some progress - resulting in the Glasgow Climate Pact - but did not go nearly far enough. Countries committed to "phase down" rather than "phase out" coal power, and failed to mobilise necessary financing. Read more about the [outcomes of COP 26 here](#).

On the education front, the sector's role in addressing the climate emergency received more recognition in Glasgow than in the past – for instance, there was an [Education and Environment Minister's Summit](#) – but education is still being neglected in countries'

nationally determined contributions (climate plans). Read more about the [education outcomes of COP26 here](#).

Why should education unions care about COP 27?

In 2019, EI member organisations globally recognized that educators and education unions have an important role to play in addressing the climate emergency and resolved to step up action for climate justice (see these two resolutions "[Defending Education, Sustaining the World](#)" and "[Education and Research Play a Crucial Role for the Environment and for the Future of Humanity](#)"). This strong mandate from education unions led to the launch of the [Teach for the Planet](#) campaign.

The campaign calls for quality climate change education for all. To make universal climate education a reality, it is important for education and environment sectors to work together and for education to be recognised within climate policies. EI therefore seeks to make education more visible within COP meetings. COP 27 is an important opportunity

to build momentum on climate education after [it was placed firmly on the table at COP 26](#).

The Teach for the Planet campaign also aims to advance climate justice more broadly. Education International believes that as education unions we have a responsibility to do our part in advocating for climate justice and a just transition in collaboration with the broader union movement. COP 27 is a critical moment for global climate policymaking and therefore is worth engaging with.

Human rights and inclusion concerns

COP 27 is taking place in Egypt. COP is usually a key moment for environmental activists from around the world to exercise their right to protest government inaction on the climate crisis and to put forward their demands. At [COP 26 in Glasgow Education International marched alongside UK member organisations](#), joining with other trade unionists, indigenous activists, youth, locals numbering about 100,000 people.

Egypt's government has a history of violating human rights, yet has been given the opportunity to host this crucial global meeting, whitewash its human rights record and paint itself as open and inclusive on the international stage. The government has announced that there will be demonstrations permitted at the conference, but there are concerns that these will be astroturfed and genuine opposition will be blocked. Meanwhile, multiple activists,

researchers, journalists, political figures and trade unionists and others remain imprisoned unfairly and the Egyptian regime continues to crack down on civil liberties.

There is a growing consensus within international human rights organisations and academic institutions that Egypt has become a dangerous place for both trade unionists and academic researchers.

Despite freedom of association being one of the rights ostensibly protected under the Egyptian Constitution, the Egyptian government continues to tighten restrictions on trade unions, many of which are forced to operate without official recognition because of prohibitive obstacles to form trade unions, especially in the public sector.

The Trade Union Organisations Law does not establish mechanisms and procedures for the engagement in collective bargaining, even though the draft Labour Code has entire chapters devoted to collective bargaining, collective agreements and collective dispute. Public service workers are excluded from engaging in social dialogue and collective bargaining as set out therein.

The ongoing attacks on academic freedom in Egypt constitute once more violations of its own Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech, all means of expression and freedom of scientific research.

Education International calls on the Egyptian government to immediately release all those detained for practicing their rights to freedom

of expression and to ensure freedom of speech and assembly for all participants at COP 27 without fear of reprisals.

The [Egyptian Human Rights Coalition on COP27](#) provides more information about the individuals arbitrarily detained and what you can do to support the call for their release and to open up civic space in Egypt.

[Sign the petition here.](#)

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Education International Key Demands for COP 27



As the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP27) approaches, Education International (EI) has the following priority demands.

1. Raise mitigation ambition

To save humanity from climate catastrophe, we need drastic carbon emission cuts: 50% by 2030. Yet plans to cut ambitions as laid out in nationally determined contributions are not nearly ambitious enough.

For COP 27 to be successful, governments must step up their ambition, and ensure that plans to decarbonise are realised through a just transition in collaboration with workers.

2. Ensure quality climate change education for all.

Education is a powerful tool to support both mitigation and adaptation efforts and should be recognized as such at COP 27.

COP 27 should host a scaled up high-level inter-sectoral meeting on climate change education as a follow up to the Education and Environment Ministers' Summit at COP

26. Ministers should provide updates on implementation efforts and make further concrete commitments to ensure universal quality climate change education in their national contexts.

Governments must finance and implement reforms to include [quality climate change education](#) in curricula across subjects and grades, as well as in initial teacher training courses and professional development opportunities.

Further, governments should prioritise the full implementation of the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Glasgow work programme agreed in 2021, including collaborating on, promoting, facilitating, developing and implementing education on climate change at all levels.

3. Ensure a just transition for all workers including educators.

Whilst there is growing recognition of the need for a just transition to a low carbon economy, it is crucial that decent work, quality jobs and meaningful social dialogue remain at the centre of the just transition concept.

Education sector jobs are green jobs and educators will not lose their livelihoods with the transition to low carbon economy, Yet, climate change is already impacting educators' working conditions, working lives and workloads.

What is a just transition?

The global labour movement's definition of a just transition (see [these ILO guidelines](#) for more detail):

“A just transition secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers and governments. A plan for just transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies.”
([ITUC demands for COP 27](#))

Governments must guarantee educator's labour rights in the context of worsening climate impacts, improving educator's employment conditions, and supporting teacher wellbeing.

Governments should commit to scaling up social protection systems to protect all workers, including teachers, researchers and education support personnel.

Further, governments must recognise the important role of education in realising a just transition. Quality public education should provide students with green skills and training opportunities should be available and accessible for people to transition to or enter green industries.

4. Step up action on adaption, including in the education sector.

Climate change is not a future threat to the ability to deliver quality education, it is our current reality, especially within vulnerable countries and communities.

Extreme weather events are directly compromising the safety of students and educators and disrupting education. For example, 22 000 schools were destroyed during the floods in Pakistan in September 2022, compounding disruption of learning experienced during the pandemic.

Indirect consequences of climate change such as hunger and poverty in areas where families' livelihoods are lost to drought or floods also

impact teaching and learning. Students' and educators' right to quality education and decent working conditions are under threat.

Governments must commit to planning and funding adaption across sectors, including education. Education sector planning must be climate smart. All education infrastructure must be safe, sustainable, and resilient to climate impacts.

Education plays an important role in enhancing communities' adaptive capacities. Education can provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be resilient in the face of certain climate impacts. Ensuring universal access to quality, gender-responsive education should be prioritized to support the adaption needs of communities.

5. Commit more climate finance and fund loss and damage.

Governments, especially high-income countries who have been the leading contributors to climate change, must fulfil and exceed their objective to unlock one billion dollars in climate financing per year.

Climate change is already impacting communities. Funding is therefore needed to support loss and damage for impacted countries, as well as adaption and mitigation efforts.

A [financing facility for loss and damage](#) must be created, recognising the differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing

countries. Climate justice means recognising that climate change exacerbates already existing inequalities and that it is those least responsible for causing the climate crisis that are faced with the worst consequences. As mitigation efforts continue to fall short, financing for loss and damage is even more crucial.

What is loss and damage?

Loss and damage refers to the destructive effects of extreme weather events and sea level rise due to climate change, for example, loss of lives, cultures, traditions and damage of infrastructure or crops.

Broader Trade Union Demands

Education International supports the full list of seven more detailed trade union demands for COP 27 articulated by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

To find out more about trade unions' joint calls, read the [COP 27 Frontlines Briefing](#).

“ COP 27 is an opportunity for world leaders to come together and finally take long overdue action to significantly reduce emissions and to direct climate finance to loss and damage, as promised. It is also an opportunity to recognise the deep interconnections between climate change and quality education. To achieve quality education for all, we need education systems to integrate climate change education into teacher training and curricula at all levels, and for education institutions to be safe, climate resilient, and green. To address climate change, we need to leverage education, which is a powerful tool to reduce carbon emissions and power the green economy.”

David Edwards, General Secretary,
Education International

EDUC

El Research for Evidence-based Advocacy



El's climate advocacy is grounded in evidence and research. We hope that you find the three research studies below useful for your advocacy.

El's Climate Education Ambition Report Card

by Christina Kwauk

Check the [Teach for the Planet campaign page](#) for the latest research update!

This flagship research reveals the extent to which countries include education in their nationally determined contributions.

Of 133 nationally determined contributions (NDCs) analysed (representing roughly 70% of the Parties that have ratified the Paris Agreement), only 40 NDCs (less than a third) even mention climate change education. Only 12 NDCs point to the need for teacher training, and only 1 calls for the provision of professional development opportunities that meet teachers' needs.

You can find additional materials including key findings summary, [a sub-regional analysis for the Arab countries](#) and [blogs from the author here](#). (Please note that this research is

being updated and a final collection with 140 countries analysed will be available just before COP at the [Teach for the Planet campaign page](#)).

Check the research to see if your country is making the grade on climate education ambition. Publicise the results using our social media-sharable score cards!

Teachers Have their Say: Motivation, Skills and Opportunities to Teach Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

by Education International and UNESCO.

This global survey of 58,000 teachers aimed to understand teacher readiness to teach about multiple crucial topics including climate change. It found that fewer than 40% of teachers surveyed were confident in teaching about the severity of climate change even though 95% of teachers believed that it was important or very important to teach. Teachers showed interest and motivation to build their capacity to teach about climate change; governments, education policy-makers, academics, educators and teacher trainers

need to work together to meet this need, and support teachers to address important global challenges in the classroom.

Educators on a Heating Planet: Shaping Education Unions' Vision for a Just Transition

by Alanah Torralba

This study explores the significance of ensuring a just transition to a low carbon economy in the education sector. It shows how, across EI member organisations, many teachers and education support personnel's jobs, working conditions and workloads are already being affected by climate change. Unions are beginning to recognise that to stay relevant, and to protect their members, unions must include climate issues in their social dialogue and take climate into account in their collective bargaining. For decent work in the education sector as the climate emergency heightens, unions must demand quality social protection and manageable workloads, as well as climate-smart education infrastructure to guarantee their occupational health and safety.



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COP 27 Get involved!



The trade union movement and civil society consistently call for COP meetings to be more inclusive and participatory. However, some voices continue to be marginalized and excluded – including those of people who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and those with experiences and knowledge are crucially valuable for sustaining our world such as those of indigenous peoples.

Education International will represent the voice of teachers at COP 27, but only has access to a tiny number of badges to attend. Therefore, if you would like to attend COP 27, we encourage you to reach out to your national trade union centres and request to be part of your national delegation.

However, it is not necessary to attend COP 27 in person to be involved in our climate justice advocacy. You can follow the global discussions virtually and engage in action at the national level.

Here's how:

Include climate issues in your social and policy dialogue:

- o Share EI's COP 27 demands, the [EI Quality Climate Change Education for All Manifesto](#), and your union's national demands on climate justice and climate education with your government.
- o Tell your ministers about your country's results on [EI's Climate Education Ambition Report card](#), and tell them how they can do better!

Make your demands public:

- o Write an article, do an interview, tell the media about your demands and the results of EI's research.

Increase your knowledge about climate change and climate change policy:

- o Watch this [Education International webinar](#) with renowned climate scientists explaining the basics of

climate change, and share it with your members

- o Read EI's 2019 toolkit "[Education: A Powerful Tool for Combatting Climate Change – A Guide for Unions and Educators](#)". The toolkit provides EI member organisations with information and guidance on advocating for education's role in the addressing the climate crisis to be better recognized.
- o Use EI's advocacy toolkit, "[Teach for the Planet: An Education Unionist's guide to Climate Education Advocacy](#)" to support you to get involved in the processes of global climate policy making.

Follow the events and EI's engagement at COP 27:

- o Watch the livestreamed events online.
- o Check out the dedicated COP 27 Hub on the [Teach for the Planet campaign page](#) for coverage from EI.





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Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head office

15, Boulevard Bischoffsheim,
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32-2 224 0611
headoffice@ei-ie.org

www.ei-ie.org
[#unite4ed](https://twitter.com/unite4ed)

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.



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