

Building the Paris COP21 Climate Protest



The pace of climate change is relentless. The projected date for the arrival of a 2°C rise in the global average surface temperature over pre-industrial levels is coming down all the time. It's now estimated to happen by 2038. The earth will warm by at least 4°C by the end of the century, possibly 6°C.

The results of this are catastrophic: intensifying extreme weather events – heatwaves, droughts, floods, water shortages, hurricanes and tornadoes. The sea level is rising as a result of the melting icecaps.

It was clear by August that 2015 will be the hottest year on record in terms of the average global temperature. Only freak conditions late in the year could prevent this happening, and this is highly unlikely since the current El Nino weather pattern – a warming of the central Pacific Ocean that changes weather worldwide – continues to strengthen.

In fact this year's temperature could go off the charts. June was the fourth month in a row to break all previous records. Monthly heat records have been broken 25 times since the year 2000 whilst the monthly cold record has not been broken since 1916.

This summer has seen exceptional temperatures in Spain, Austria, in parts of Asia, Australia and South America. In

May, a heatwave in India claimed more than 2,000 lives and ranked as the fifth deadliest on record. In May Southern Pakistan had a heatwave that killed more than 1,200 – the eighth deadliest in the world since 1900.

All this makes the Paris COP crucially important. A binding global agreement is an essential component in tackling climate change.

Preparing for Paris

Over 600 activists attended the final meeting of the International Coalition on Climate Change, formed to organise the events around COP21 in Paris jointly with the French COP21 Coalition, on October 2-4.

The aim is to make the actions from November 28 until December 12, around the talks, the biggest series of protests against climate change the world has ever seen. We are on course to achieve this goal.

The meeting was titled The Road To Paris and Beyond; making it clear that the first and foremost objective of the exercise was to build the movement itself, to come out of Paris stronger and to continue the momentum into 2016. Reports were given of the very successful events and demonstrations organised across France, in particular over the weekend 26 -27 September; which were termed a staging post to Paris. Across France over 200,000 people took part in various events including the culmination of a two month round the country cycle ride involving over 1500 riders.

The main events to come include:

The eve of the Summit, November 28-29 will see a series of mass demonstrations, across Europe and the world, protesting about climate change and calling for the COP to take action. Over 1,000 events have already been registered.

In Paris on December 5-6 there will be a Citizens Climate Summit centered on Montreuil. As well as multiple conferences and debates on a range of issues concerning climate change and ecology and workshops to prepare actions for the week ahead, in parallel there will be a Global Village of Alternatives; a place to explore practical technologies.

From December 7-11 there will be Citizens Action Zones during which many forms of direct action and protests will take place. These will include flash mobs and occupations, with targets such as EDF and Total as well as the summit itself, being explored. Each afternoon there will be a general assembly to discuss what is happening at the COP itself.

On December 12, at the end of the COP, there will be a massive international mobilisation in Paris – and other parts of France but predominately Paris – to make a declaration that whatever has or has not happened at the COP the struggle continues as a higher level than before.

The assembly is planned for 12 noon on the 12th of the 12th – a massive demonstration, which have at least two starting points and converge in the Eiffel Tower area, but not only a demonstration. It will be linked to various forms of mass action and civil disobedience that will take place in the course of the day. The aim will be to bring parts of Paris to a standstill.

There is a plan for a call out when the final plenary starts at the COP for people to head for the key transport hubs near Le Bourget airport where the summit is being held in order to completely surround the area. The idea is also that similar actions will take place in other parts of the planet at the same time.

This is how it is motivated on 350.org:

“We want to have the last word as the climate talks conclude. And we’ll get it by speaking in the language of movements: by

putting tens of thousands of people into the streets of Paris, and making sure business as usual cannot proceed as long as world governments fail to do what's needed.

"This will be a day of mass mobilization and actions in the streets. We will take to the streets of Paris with our determination, our diversity and our creativity; to resist and to build. Our movement is here to last, and it will be shaped by every one of us. Everything we do, we will do together.

"The Paris moment will be defined not by what happens in the negotiating halls, but in the streets of Paris and around the world. Politicians aren't the only ones with power. If enough people agree that it's time for the world to move in a new direction, and push together, the world will begin to move.

"December 12th plans are still developing. We'll be in touch as details come together, so sign up now to stay up to date."

The task now is to build all these events to the maximum. Nothing is going to come out of Paris that will be adequate to the problems we face. We know that in advance. Another total failure such as Copenhagen five years ago would be a total disaster.

This is probably the last chance to get an agreement that can actually influence the 2°C tipping point. The struggle for a binding global agreement needs to go alongside the fight to build a movement on a scale that can take the climate struggle forward.

This article was originally published on October 21, 2015 at www.leftunity.org