Background and Introduction

The United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) 26th Conference of Parties (COP) took place in Glasgow from 31st October to 13th November 2021. The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) was admitted as an accredited observer to COP26. Five of our governing board members attended (Mark Robinson, Jane Samuels, Trevor Peel, Emily Robinson and Subbu Loganathan), supported by David Gomez and Nicholas Watts. The delegates were helped by a lot of hard work from CHEC’s web and social media consultant John McDonnell (more details on the CHEC COP26 hub here (https://www.checinternational.org/cop26-hub/), with support and assistance from other governing board members including Ian Douglas, Ripin Kalra, Rhonda Cox, Eva Ekehorn, and Michael Mutter.

New Zealand CHEC representatives Margaret Evans (HEF trustee), Norm Stannard (CHEC patron), and associate Prof Tom Roa organised a partnership with the University of Waikato to host a parallel Pacific regional COP26 programme. The Hamilton event gathered some 60 local panellists into daily zoom sessions on Glasgow’s themes, with extensive support from Prof Ian Douglas, prefaced daily with reviews from the CHEC team on the ground, and daily videos created by Emily Robinson now archived on YouTube (CHEC YouTube channel here). Planning is now underway for follow up community-based
seminars to spread the message and ignite community activism. (The University of Waikato hosts the Zena Daysh memorial PhD fellowship, and acknowledged CHEC’s founder, Zena Daysh, in her lifetime with an Honorary Doctorate for her human ecology work.)

**Human Ecology and COP26 (Eva Ekehorn)**

The Human Ecology cake, explaining the different aspects of human ecology – more information [here](https://www.checinternational.org/cop26-hub/)

One thing missed was the need for a much better education for all on the environment we live in and use for our daily life. Human Ecology should really be the baseline for this education! We all have a responsibility for what we do but then we must also understand the consequences of what we are doing.

This responsibility has been highlighted by many companies and the efforts that are done to live up to a more sustainable way of producing goods. Also stressed has been the need for much more stringent measurement on how much CO2 a company emits, but maybe less on the impact of mining, manufacturing and food production. Deforestation and meat production has been high on the agenda, but maybe less was said on what changes are needed. Again, this must be partly based on individual action levels. In this, politicians do have their role to play, but worry about political implications if voters are unhappy about the legislation needed. It is the ‘positive circular economy’ that is really needed, where every stage of consumption is being understood and rectified.

Another deep concern is the waste we create. If we really want to cut down on emission, waste treatment and waste reduction should be very high on the agenda. This is an area where lots of actions are desperately needed.

It is of course a concern that the final statement was watered down but some messages are very strong, and the hope is that every country moves in the right direction. So, inspiration for change and how this can be achieved is essential. Much more support has to be handed to those countries that are most at risk, which means governments must ensure that pledges are turned into real funding. **CHEC will work with the Commonwealth Secretariat and inter-governmental organizations ensure these pledges are progressed and brought to fruition.**
At COP-26, the concern of the 32 Commonwealth Small States about the effects of climate change on these countries was made very clear and this was supported by others around the globe. The Maldives and the Seychelles, as well as the Marshall Islands, spoke out very strongly and captured the attention of the media worldwide.

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Amor Mottley, set the ball rolling at the outset with what was described as a rip-roaring speech during the meeting of Heads of Government. She warned that a 2% overheated world would be a death sentence both for threatened countries and their people. Her speech was warmly welcomed by many delegates and climate activists. This speech began a debate on adaptation that ran throughout the two weeks of the conference. She urged the leaders of the largest economies to “try harder” and also help threatened nations with generous financial support. Her urgings were heard but potential large world donors gave a strong impression that these pleas were falling on deaf ears. This led to many expressions of frustration by small states, which in the end ensured that the need reached the communique although the major financial decisions, on top of pledges already made, have been left over for further consideration to COP-27 to be held in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022. Considerable care needs to be taken over follow-up work between now and that meeting and CHEC will focus on this.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was at the forefront of discussions on adaptation and financial accountability and CHEC’s Chair attended the debate on this which took place in the Secretariat’s pavilion chaired by the Permanent Representative of Malawi to the United Nations, H.E. Dr. Perks M. Ligoya, with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, and the Climate Change Minister of Jamaica, H.E. Pearnel Patroe Charles Jr, as platform speakers. All spoke with passion and determination. At a meeting with Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, on her return to London the Secretary-General, following a question from CHEC’s Chair, made it very clear that climate accountability, adaptation and substantive financial support for small countries would be at the top of the Secretariat’s agenda in the build up to COP-27. CHOGM in Kigali, which is likely to be in June next year, will see this high on that agenda. It is a tribute to what happened at COP-26 that the Commonwealth has found its voice and that it will not be quiet on such a very important issue. CHEC can provide both focus and support to continue this progress.
CHEC New Zealand and COP26 (Margaret Evans)

Kowhai trees at University of Waikato

Covid dashed New Zealand plans to send our colleague Tom Roa to Glasgow for COP26 with the CHEC delegation, but the Digital Age enabled us to share and spread the conversation here at home in a ‘zoom’ season of daily updates - Thinking globally and acting locally.

Prof Tom blends an academic role at the University of Waikato with extensive responsibilities as an indigenous leader, and at short notice we pulled together a richly diverse range of almost 60 local participants for 11 panels. The project was supported by University VC Neil Quigley and his skilled events team led by Shaun van Praagh and Rebecca Issacs, Indigenous leader Gannon Ormsby, Waikato Regional Councillor Jen Nickel, and CHEC UK’s Professor Ian Douglas, Subbu, Emily and the Glasgow troops. Also with us were Cabinet Ministers, Waikato-Tainui tribal representatives, local government and civil society leaders. Our panels - in parallel with the Glasgow themes - brought together university and public policy experts with grassroots activists and shared a common viewpoint that we must do more, faster. The focus went beyond climate change to the ‘4 wellbeings’ for sustainability (social, cultural, economic and environmental), along with the indigenous Māori concepts of integrated thinking (kaitiakitanga and kotahitanga).

As in Glasgow, many project stories were shared. Tiny groups were already doing great things in their own neighbourhoods; significant evidence-based research was available; local government policy and strategy was catching up... The call was for systemic reform, and an urgent need to break out of the siloes and develop genuine collaborative partnerships, with readily accessible funding support (particularly for the small projects). Mindful of Greta Thunberg’s ‘blah, blah, blah’ criticism of ‘too much talk and not enough action’, the Hamilton call was for ongoing community-based ‘wananga’ – to develop understanding, commitment and specific projects, and strengthen the political challenge to transfer public funding from ‘negative projects’ into climate change positives.

Priorities included forest restoration (rather than monocultural pine trees) and urban forests for recreation, human, land and ecosystem health. The continuing emphasis on roads was challenged, and how to discourage the current ‘fashion accessory’ of SUVs and Utes. And how to get children back walking and cycling and scootering... In the face of the current housing crisis, the call was to build...
‘neighbourhoods’ not just housing, marae-style and papakainga, intergenerational, cities of villages; safer, more liveable eco-homes with village gardens, good for health, people’s incomes, and climate change; 20-minute cities with basic facilities within a 20 minute walk, reducing the need for energy consuming transport. The challenge now is to do this.

**Key COP26 messages and the Youth (Rhonda Cox)**

Young volunteers from Africa at COP26

COP26 provided CHEC with a unique opportunity to disseminate the message of Human Ecology, via networking, supporting existing projects and creating new ones. This will allow CHEC to position itself within the climate arena on a strengthened platform, where Human Ecology can make a significant mark in society. No pressure but this follow-up work is critical in the build up to COP26!

The conference began with the much anticipated keynote speeches. Speakers undeniably set the stage and temperature for this much anticipated climate event. The speakers who brought the message to the fore included HRH Prince Charles, well known for climate change advocacy; Sir David Attenborough, a powerful and continually prominent spokesman, who uses his deep knowledge beyond measure; Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, who proved to be an amazingly powerful voice at the outset, and a passionate Kenyan climate activist, Elizabeth Wathuti. Rhonda found herself drawn to these speeches as she could relate to the issues that the Prime Minister addressed. These prominent speakers exemplified what Heads of Governments, activists, facilitators and protestors hope for, survival of all. They are pinned on adaptation, sustainability, finance, accountability and collaboration by all key players. The question - Can COP26 reach a consensus/deal, which benefit all and not the few?

The young climate campaigners definitely made their voices heard. This took the form of rallies, marches, speeches and protest. The youth present called for action above everything else as they claim they are fighting for their very existence. They are given credit, especially in the social media, for their undying efforts and grave attempt of holding governments to account. Therefore, after the COP26 dust has settled, some progress has been seen to be made, such as the commitment made by 100 world leaders to tackle deforestation and reduce methane emissions. However, the most vulnerable are holding an empty purse as the fulfilment of funding for adaption remains a burning issue. Now is the time to look forward to COP27, where commitment must be given to strengthen decisions made in the
hope that the most vulnerable states and their peoples can be saved from the most dire predictions. CHEC will work to ensure that urgent action is taken to ensure the livelihoods of succeeding generations.

Cities and Built Environment at COP 26 (Jane Samuels)

Climate-Neutral Housing event at COP26

The Glasgow COP 26 conference was the first to dedicate a full day to Cities, in order to highlight that over half of the world’s population live in cities, and urban buildings account for 40% of global carbon emissions each year. There was a commitment from the COP 26 presidency to bring together national, regional and city level leaders, alongside the private sector, to deliver deep collaboration to accelerate climate action across the built environment over the next decade.

Numerous pavilions were held with sessions dedicated to cities, the built environment, urban planning, architecture and side events on urban adaption, mitigation and resilience throughout the two weeks of COP 26. Examples included reviewing the aims for city level NDCs, accelerating climate innovation and action for cities and communities, and water resilience for the urban sector.

The Cities Alliance event on “Urban informality & inequality – a call for global climate justice” focused on partnerships to strengthen action to achieve climate justice by taking into account the reality of urban informal communities, alongside increasing vulnerability. This was one of the few events where women from informal communities, had a voice alongside local government, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, academics at IIED for human settlements and urban planning, and the UK FCDO, and other organizations. The keynote speech made by Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, Mayor of Freetown in Sierra Leone, addressed the impact of climate change on rural migration to cities and responses by academics who shape and translate the discussions into policies.

This event included several of CHEC’s long term associates which provided a wonderful opportunity to re-establish important networks and discuss potential future projects with those who likewise champion community-led efforts for human ecology with the most marginalised communities across the Commonwealth and the Global South. Key urban and cities events included participants such as a women-led social movement of grass-roots women’s groups from poor urban, Slum Dweller International (SDI) and women from WEIGO, the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing - rural, indigenous communities, and the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative.
COP26 was invaluable for CHEC to connect with organizations and agencies that work in urban capacity building, green infrastructure and sustainable energy transitions. Future efforts could contribute human ecology to the important work of urban spatial planning for healthy cities by Marcus Grant. CHEC will aim to use its expertise and networks in this area to further these objectives. (Please see here for the full report from Jane Samuels)

The Commonwealth and Mangroves at COP26 (Jane Samuels)

Ministers spoke openly and frankly about the need to guarantee future action to ensure funding offered by Rotary International would be appropriate and effective. The meeting was instructive for CHEC’s current UK PACT application, which includes restoration of mangroves in Nigeria.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, reminded everyone that mangroves found in 42 Commonwealth countries were crucial in nature’s battle with rising oceans. She explained that action was needed to reverse a loss of mangroves due to climate change. The Rotary International president, Shekhar Mehta, spoke of how he had seen first-hand in the 2004 tsunami the devastation to land and lives that would not have been so severe if mangroves had been protected. “The sea is washing away the coastline because mangroves have gone,” said Mr Mehta. “We are losing our eco-system. Once mangroves die, our marine system and coastal communities will be lost.”

The ministers agreed the restoration of mangroves led by local communities was the best plan, and, most important the projects had to include a livelihoods component. Ministers and representatives provided examples of how local communities needed encouragement and would appreciate the restoration of mangroves and would do the work if they knew that local livelihoods could be directly benefited. Remarkably many ministers referred to beekeeping, combined with the restoration of mangroves, as a viable restoration/livelihood action plan formula. Protection of pollinators and
mangroves has always been a high priority for CHEC and will continue to be so. *(Please see [here](https://www.checinternational.org/cop26-hub/) for the full report from Jane Samuels)*

**Commonwealth, Civil Society and COP26 (Nicholas Watts)**

The Commonwealth Secretariat Climate summit on the Commonwealth Blue Charter

While COP26 failed to stop extraction to the extent required to keep to 1.5°C, (the necessary if hardly sufficient limit to average global temperature rise), it took place against a new backdrop of acceptance at last of the facts of human-induced climate change. New language entered the Glasgow Climate Pact that points to inclusion of themes previously more in the domain of civil society organisations. These include: the rights of indigenous peoples, (although their vital roles in protecting our natural resources, underscored across COP26, and their implied land rights, were not explicitly recognised); climate justice and the just transition, a theme of trade unions and the ILO, which identifies fairness for workers and communities as a prerequisite for a 1.5°C limit; dietary changes to reduce meat consumption and thus curtail deforestation; the challenge of a shift from fast to slow fashion; other behaviour changes and approaches to transport (e.g. using access and mobility as criteria for policy). Significantly, though, there was no mention of a Green New Deal as such, although it could be argued that its main components do feature as cross-cutting themes. The inclusion of reference to fossil fuels for the first time was welcome, if too weak, as were commitments to address ‘inefficient’ fossil fuel subsidies and to stop investing in overseas coal plants. Reference to loss and damage was also an important innovation, although progress on the question of paying for adaptation measures in developing countries, was limited to a doubling of the share of adaptation in climate funding, previously dominated by funding of mitigation measures. A ‘Glasgow Dialogue’ was initiated to address Loss and Damage claims by developing countries against developed countries.

COP26 was unique in its openness to civil society language, and the scope for civil society and the private sector to do much of the ‘heavy lifting’. Pavilions at the COP devoted to multi-level governance (which included the Commonwealth Call to Action for Sustainable Urbanisation, championed by a cluster of Commonwealth organisations), education and training, and to private sector initiatives, which signalled growing recognition of the critical role of civil society organisations and the private sector, which has around $130 trillion ready to invest, and is well aware of the risk of stranded assets. The problem here, though, is that this money is so hard to spend effectively. Implementation of
mitigation and adaptation measures require a skilled workforce ‘on the ground’ that is not yet widely available.

Global warming has to be addressed through a combination of action by state and civil society organizations. It is here that civil society organisations can redouble their efforts to secure private sector support, and also back the ‘Race to Zero’, while maintaining conditionality such as a fair transition, support for indigenous and poor people’s rights to their patrimony as well as to a clean and safe environment, including both air and water.

Finally, what of the Commonwealth role? Commonwealth organisations have long been advocating a more visible presence in international negotiations and the multilateral space. At COP26, the Secretariat invested what must have been considerable resources in just such a venture in the Commonwealth pavilion. These events had their foundation in the acknowledged achievements of the Commonwealth Blue Charter initiative and extended to climate finance and the emergent Living Lands initiative, modelled on the Blue Charter, i.e., relying on individual or a small number of states to lead on particular themes, such as the nine Action Groups of the Blue Charter.

Although we will never know what might have transpired at Glasgow to ‘keep 1.5C alive’ had the Kigali CHOGM taken place before COP26, we can at least take some comfort in the commitment to return to addressing enhanced ambition for NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) annually, first in Egypt (Sharm El-Sheikh) in 2022. The Commonwealth must make a major effort that its 54 nations speak with a common voice to advocate for positions consistent with a 1.5C limit. CHEC will continue to actively campaign for this target to be met. (Please see here for the full report from Nicholas Watts)

Gender and Inclusion at COP26 (Emily Robinson)

An underlying theme of many of the COP26 sessions was the need for more gender equality in solving the climate crisis. There were some specific sessions such as “Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Action” which demonstrated more inclusion of women in decision making roles regarding the climate crisis. Some solutions could be found in meetings on sustainable agriculture, and key outcomes of
COP26 in the climate education space. The message was clear, the experiences of women and girls around the world are often overlooked when it comes to the climate crisis, but their inclusion in the decisions being made to solve it is essential.

In “Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Action” we heard from a number of speakers (both women and men) on the need for women and girls to have not only a bigger role, but an equal role in the decisions being made to combat the climate crisis. The fact that 80% of the poorer and rural people impacted by the climate crisis are women and children, needs to be more broadly addressed when speaking about solving climate change as women are usually the primary caregivers in most of the world. Several key takeaways from this session that need to be applied to solving the climate crisis are:

- Empowerment for women in rural and poorer areas where they are more disproportionately affected by the climate crisis than anyone else
- The need for women to be included in decisions being made about climate crisis solutions
- Better education and more funding for education for women and girls, including climate education

The same conclusions were made by ministers from Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama in another session. In order to make the agricultural sector more climate resilient, more information and education needs to be made available to the poorer and more rural farmers and ranchers, particularly women and indigenous peoples.

Another session on Climate Education singled out women and girls as the key to solving the climate crisis noting that the impact of climate change on women and girls around the world is a human rights issue.

“Little Amal”, the 3.5-meter puppet highlighting the impacts of the climate crisis on refugees, was also present at several of the gender equality events. Organisers were hoping to shed light on the impacts of climate change on women and especially little girls, and the importance of their role as agents of change in combating the climate crisis.

One of the last sessions was “The Road Beyond COP26: A Conversation with African Gender Networks Leading Climate Action” given by 5 accomplished women from the Network of African Women Environmentalists. All had different backgrounds and professions, however their message was clear, not only was gender equality essential, but the role of African women on this, and as environmentalists, needs to be on a par with decision makers around the world, as they are one of the most marginalized groups disproportionately impacted by climate change.
A key outcome from the UK Government on gender at COP26 was the pledge of £165 million to take on climate change while also “addressing the inequalities that make women and girls more vulnerable to climate change and empowering them” to take action. This is significant in furthering women’s empowerment and equality in Asia and the Pacific, and particularly in Bangladesh, for which £120 million was set aside. It should be noted, however, that the remaining £45 million is already included in part of the UK’s Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA) programme (£274 million in aid announced previously) and should be counted as so, not separately as the announcement suggests.

The UK has urged other countries to put gender equality at the heart of their climate action plans and several have stepped up to do so. The US has made gender equality a priority for its “National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality” and has pledged funds to support women farmers in East Africa adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. Sweden has pledged to embed gender equality in their “Climate Policy Action Plan” going forward. These are good first steps in ensuring gender equality in climate action, but the world has a long way to go in order to make this a reality. CHEC will continue to emphasise these objectives in its future work.

Nature Based Solutions and COP26 (Ripin Kalra)

Within the climate change context, nature-based solutions (NBS) were often discussed within a regional setting. Negotiations at COP26 in Glasgow highlighted the importance of conserving and restoring nature to achieve the goal of 1.5 degrees, despite the rephrasing and omission of the term ‘nature-based solutions’ from the final decisions.1 Discussions during COP26 outlined the key benefits of NBS in cities, providing opportunities to address the environmental and societal issues contributing to, and caused by, climate change.

Applying NBS such as green infrastructure can mitigate 30 per cent of climate change and reduce the urban heat-island effect by 1-2 degrees. This would lower the energy load required to cool buildings and spaces, saving up to 20 per cent of energy use in cities2. Additionally, the incorporation of nature into urban spaces would not only improve biodiversity and restore nature, but the quality of life for

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1 COP26 in Glasgow – Closing Briefing
2 Nature for Climate & Biodiversity in Cities
residents would be enhanced through improved public open spaces. When more space in cities is given to nature and people, activities such as biking and walking are encouraged to help reduce the use of cars, thus reducing carbon emissions. Protection and restoration of forest areas and mangroves for climate mitigation and adaptation are key in protecting urban areas from climate enhanced hazards such as landslides or storm surge.

Despite these obvious benefits of NBS in cities, only 3% of climate financing is directed toward NBS\(^3\). Implementation is challenged by lack of interest for investment due to insufficient quantification of benefits, and by land acquisition. Compared to the tradition of excessive concrete use, construction lead-times for NBS are considerably longer and require more planning, which results in slower investment paybacks. Mainstreaming of NBS within land-use plans and policies would accelerate implementation, however national policies and building codes are slow to incorporate NBS. Actions by cities and local governments are limited and restricted by central governments who are struggling to keep up with supporting NBS policies.

A draft version of the *Glasgow Climate Pact* included the term ‘nature-based solutions’ but was replaced in the final version with the phrase ‘emphasizing the need to protect and restore nature and ecosystems.’\(^4\). It recognizes the critical role of nature in keeping to 1.5 degrees and encourages governments to incorporate nature into the National Climate Plans. CHEC with its commitment to Human Ecology is uniquely positioned to champion this work.

### COP26 and Finance – Adaptation Finance and Sustainability Disclosures (Subbu Loganathan)

Panel on Adaptation Finance at European Union Euroclima+ Latin America Pavilion

The financing of initiatives to adapt to climate change, to mitigate/reverse climate change, and the pledge of financial regulators and private actors (banks, asset managers, pension funds and others) was a common undercurrent at COP26. A commitment to stop deforestation by 2030, and a pledge by financial institutions with trillions of

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\(^3\) Nature for Climate & Biodiversity in Cities


\(^5\) FT.com - Lily Cole: COP26 marks a time to take action
dollars of assets commit to eliminate investment in deforestation-linked activities, was part of an early agreement in Glasgow.

Some key events during Finance Day (Day 3 of COP26) at the COP26 green zone underscored the importance of ‘bottom-up’ change using one key asset owned by most people in the world – their savings and pensions.

“How your wallet could save the world” combined two unlikely protagonists against climate change, the sustainable investing activists ‘Make My Money Matter’, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) UK. The WWF’s new film “Our Planet: Too Big to Fail” brought home the urgency of reviewing every single penny/cent/yuan/yen/rupee of investment from our pensions/savings accounts/investing accounts/funds. If we collectively moved our pensions in the UK to divest from fossil fuels, cement/steel and other ‘carbon-emitting’ industries, this would be 20 times more effective than going vegetarian/vegan or stopping flights.

Financial institutions with more than $8.7 trillion of assets committed to eliminate investment in deforestation-linked activities, which was a cautious step forward for protecting biodiversity and human ecology.

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), an alliance of banks and asset managers committed to meeting the outcomes from the Paris climate agreement and backed by former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, announced that over 450 firms representing $130 trillion, have signed up to reach and generally promote net zero by 2050. Whether this is more “blah blah blah” or a serious commitment to divestment, remains to be seen. A large part of achieving net zero is envisioned not by ‘divestment and reduction’ which means the elimination of investment in fossil fuels and reduction in carbon emissions, but by ‘offsets’ which involve carbon markets and carbon trading which are a new and questionable science and raise other biodiversity issues.

The “financialisation of nature” was viewed with some concern by indigenous leaders - as Tom BK Goldtooth, of the Navajo community said, “Sometimes it has led to a violation of the sacred: to put a price to the air, carbon trading, or even a price to the biodiversity, in exchange for an extractive industry to offset its devastation.”. Multiple indigenous leaders spoke of land-grabs as part of corporate efforts to offset their pollution: “Before you trade carbon in the trading market system, you’ve got to determine whose property right it is,” Tom said. “It becomes a property right issue. Who owns the trees?”

A key development at COP26 was the launch of a new International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) to establish a comprehensive sustainability reporting and disclosure standard. Continuing with
the ‘what can be measured, can be managed’ theme, for governments, asset managers and pension funds, this promises better quality, transparent, and comparable reporting by companies on climate and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) matters. A common language (and common data) for sustainability reporting will go a long way in exposing greenwashing and holding governments and organizations accountable to their net zero pledges. CHEC will work with the Commonwealth and other accredited organizations to further climate funding for mitigation and adaptation.

Climate Change and Health at COP26 (Trevor Peel)

WHO discussion on monitoring air pollution and health benefits within climate change systems at COP26

The World Health Organisation published, ahead of the conference, a COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health with 10 recommendations, proposing a set of priority actions from the global health community to governments and policy makers, calling on them to act with urgency on the current climate and health crises.

The recommendations were developed in consultation with over 150 organisations and 400 experts and health professionals, intended to inform governments and other stakeholders ahead of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to highlight various opportunities for governments to prioritise health and equity in the international climate movement and sustainable development agenda.

Each recommendation comes with a selection of resources and case studies to help inspire and guide policymakers and practitioners in implementing the suggested solutions. The next few years present a crucial window for governments to integrate health and climate policies in their COVID-19 recovery packages (recommendation 1) and international climate commitments (recommendation 2). Immediate pandemic responses will largely set the pace and direction of health and climate goals. Ambitious national climate commitments will be crucial to sustain a healthy recovery in the mid-to long-term.

To achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, health and equity need to be placed at the centre of the United Nations climate negotiations going forward. The health benefits from climate actions (recommendation 3) are well documented and offer strong arguments for transformative change, and
this is true across many priority areas for action: adaptation and resilience (recommendation 4), energy transition (recommendation 5), clean transport and active mobility (recommendation 6), nature (recommendation 7), food systems (recommendation 8) and finance (recommendation 9). The health sector and health community are a trusted and influential - but often overlooked - climate actor that can enable transformational change to protect people and planet (recommendation 10). The WHO Pavilion at COP 26 was the venue for a wide range of events on Climate Change and Health. CHEC will work on these issues with the World Health Organization and other NGOs active in this area.

Concluding Remarks (Chair of CHEC, Mark Robinson)

The Commonwealth Secretariat Blue Charter event at COP26

The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) was accredited to COP-26 by UNFCCC and accorded seven places at this important meeting. Founded over 50 years ago by the late Zena Daysh, who hailed from New Zealand, CHEC’s mission has been to promote, disseminate and apply the principles of human ecology in the Commonwealth and beyond. It has been a catalyst in promoting sustainability, particularly in terms of human settlements, fisheries, afforestation and strengthening community action, especially for the advancement of women and youth. Today, CHEC is highly active in the climate change debate in relation to the serious life-changing problems that so many of the smaller members of the Commonwealth are faced with, both in the oceans and on land. The importance of the relationship between humans and all aspects of the living planet, that are instrumental to future survival, must never be underestimated, which is why CHEC has been so active in the COP-26 search for effective solutions, which will be so important for future generations.

What CHEC can do in the aftermath of this conference has been set out in the paragraphs of this report by the delegates who have written them and who will help in their execution. Such work can be formulated in journals and other methods of communication, as well as through small projects funded by the Human Ecology Foundation in concert with other partners. In this, CHEC hopes to work in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia/Pacific regions. In particular, thanks must go to Waikato University in New Zealand for their help in spreading CHEC’s daily conference reports across the Pacific, an area where viable communication has often proved difficult.
In early February 2022, CHEC hopes to hold a webinar involving Commonwealth partners to find a way to take all these matters forward through the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, Rwanda and on to Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Finally, I would like to thank all colleagues both in Glasgow and around the Commonwealth for their tireless work in making CHEC's participation in COP-26 so worthwhile.