

## Time for Action as politicians debate climate change.

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This weekend, the great, the good and the plain stupid will meet in Copenhagen to find common ground in the battle to combat climate change. The sad reality is that to a large extent, the fight is already lost; from the disappearing islands of the Maldives to the vanishing water sources of Australia and the clock cannot be turned back. Neither can we trade our way out of danger as it is our obsession with economic growth at all costs which has plunged us into the current crisis. Bill Plotkin, in his book 'Soulcraft', outlines the scale of the task ahead; *"The Western worldview says, in essence, that technological progress is the highest value and that we were born to consume, to endlessly use and discard natural resources, other species, technological gadgets, toys, and often, other people, especially if they are poor or from the Third World... competition, taking and hoarding are higher values than a cooperation, sharing and gifting."* The act of recycling our rubbish and buying local food will not avert the crisis yet like so many other small gestures, they make a significant statement - that change is possible, that it begins with the individual and that it cannot simply be left to world governments.

The gloomy environmental horizon does not mean that citizens everywhere cannot make a stand, using imagination and creativity to raise awareness and inspire others. A new generation of schoolchildren are growing up with environmental awareness, learning at an early age that interconnectedness and interdependence make us responsible for the footprint we leave behind in our brief passing on earth.

This Saturday, as world leaders gather for negotiations on a now unlikely climate change agreement, candlelight vigils are being held in every corner of the planet to put human faces on the global demand for action on this vital issue. On the day and at the chosen hour, participants will bring candles and pass out a short agreed message which people can read in turns. The initiative was first mooted by Avaaz, an independent, non-profit campaigning organization "that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people inform global decision-making", Avaaz means "voice" in many languages and the organization is independent, receiving no money from governments or corporations. For further info, check [www.avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org)

Anyone can pick a spot for the vigil, once they register it on a global map. It will be the world's largest ever global day of climate action and one which world leaders and media for once cannot ignore. Eleanor Hough, a graduate of the 'Education for Liberation' night classes at the GOWC, has put Galway on the map for the upcoming vigil, with Spanish Arch the chosen venue and 5pm, Sat, the chosen time. It will be a brief, moment of reflection.

The periodic summits which debate environmental and economic crises mean very little to most people, busy with their own daily battle to keep the domestic ship afloat in a period of economic downturn. The value of a local event is the focus it puts on Ireland's input to the climate talks, a reminder to politicians that we are watching them and that we expect leadership and courage. Thousands of similar vigils are scheduled around the planet, giving the Galway event the feel of being one component of a much larger happening. The organizers ask that participants take photos of their vigil, print them up and deliver them to negotiators and world leaders

in Copenhagen. They will act as evidence that from Galway to Ghana and Buenos Aires to Bombay, the world is ready to respond to climate change.