

Bethany Tietjen
COP25 Reflection

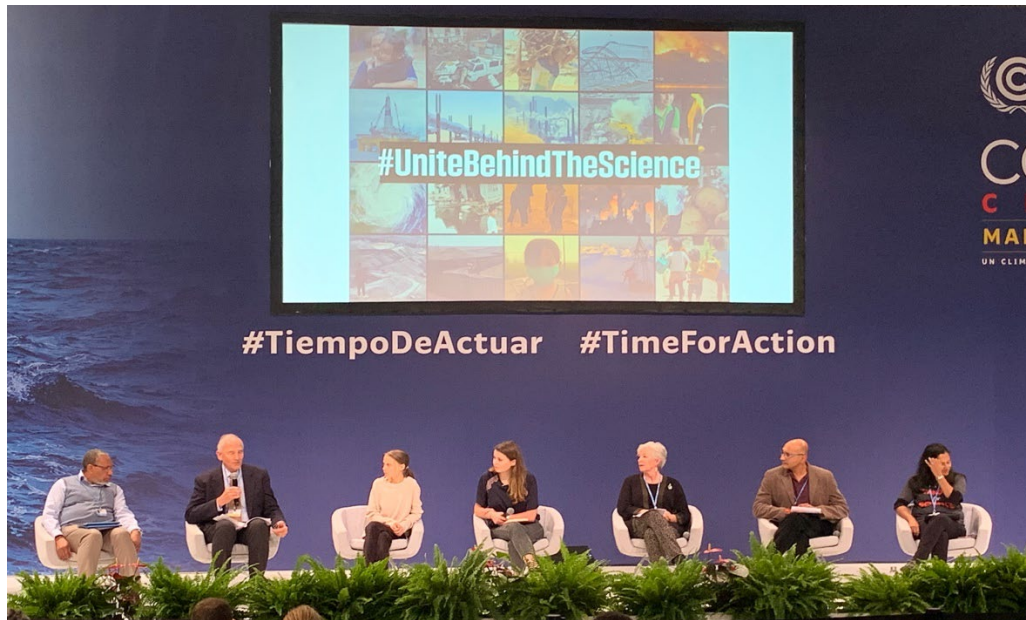
Attending the COP was something that I wanted to do since I started my studies at Fletcher and learned about the potential to be part of the Tufts Observer Delegation. In the midst of a whirlwind semester of finishing my capstone and applying for PhDs, I purchased flights and Airbnbs in Santiago, Chile to attend COP25 there. When that was cancelled, I had to scramble to try and get refunds (just like the thousands of others who had also planned to attend) and I was disappointed thinking that I lost my opportunity to attend the COP. In the hectic weeks following the cancellation announcement and the rapid relocation of COP25 to Madrid, I once again allowed myself to get excited about attending. A few weeks later, with my refunds from Santiago sorted out and my flights to Madrid booked, I began thinking about my expectations for the COP and what I hoped to achieve. I decided to try not to plan too much in advance, and just to be open to as many opportunities as possible when I got to Madrid. This strategy proved beneficial, as it seems to be quite difficult to plan in advance at the COP. New events were being scheduled every day and I was constantly changing my plans.



My first photo from COP25, taken as I walked up to the venue on day one

My week at COP25 was even more interesting than I could have expected. Looking back, I think the primary thing I gained from the experience is a deeper insight into the world of climate policy – not only from the negotiations side, but also from the civil society and NGO side. While I sat in on a handful of high-level events and negotiations, I was mostly impressed by the pavilions and side events that showed the depth and breadth of work going on behind the scenes. In the first few days, I was excited to attend events with high-profile speakers like Al Gore, Greta Thunberg, and Michael Bloomberg, but by the end of the week I realized that, while these people play important roles in highlighting the severity of the climate crisis, I needed to pay closer attention to the scientists, indigenous activists, and other experts who were speaking at COP25. I was continually struck by the fact that I was surrounded by people

who have exactly the careers I one day hope to have. I had so many opportunities to learn about organizations that I might someday work at and also to connect and network with people who are doing fascinating and meaningful work.



Panel of youth activists and climate scientists, including Fletcher Professor Emeritus Bill Moomaw and Greta Thunberg

On two occasions, I met people whose research I used when writing my capstone over the summer. We were able to connect and discuss our mutual research interests and areas for future study. I was able to attend many events related to sustainable food systems and diets, which are my primary research interests. Though the food at the conference venue was not very environmentally friendly, I was pleased to find that this was a big topic of conversation among many of the attendees and I hope that it signals a change in the food provided at future COPs.



Standing in front of the COP sign

It was impossible to attend all of the events that I was interested in – there were often three events I wanted to go to all happening at the same time – but I do feel that I got as much out of the experience as I could have as my first time at the COP. It felt pretty overwhelming at first, and I was constantly worried I was missing something important, but in the end I felt like I was able to learn about new and innovative projects and approaches to environmental issues and I was pleased with the events I chose to attend. Attending COP25 showed me the many different ways people design careers in the environmental sector – something that will be incredibly beneficial to me as I am starting my career after Fletcher. I am very grateful to the Fletcher Educational Enrichment Fund and to CIERP for providing me with funding to make this trip possible. I am also thankful to the Tufts Institute of the Environment for including me in the Tufts delegation.



Tufts Delegation at COP25