What is COP 21?
The “Conference of the Parties” is the annual meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC. The 21st meeting will be held in Paris from November 30th- December 11th, 2015. For more info see http://newsroom.unfccc.int/

Why is this so important?
Leaders from around the world have been meeting about Climate Change for our whole lives (since 1992), yet there has never been a global agreement on emissions reductions. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol was never ratified by the U.S. and has not been taken seriously by many developed nations. COP21 is seen as something of a “last hope.” Nations will meet in Paris to decide on a global target and legally binding instruments that will go into effect by 2020 to keep global warming under 2°C.

Connections to Swat
- As an elite institution it is our responsibility to show solidarity with communities facing the brunt of extraction and earth warming effects. Climate Change will affect all of us, but those nations who are disproportionately affected, however, have less representation at the negotiations. This is an environmental injustice.
- 2 professors and 5 students have been granted badges and will be attending COP21 as NGO observers. They will send live updates back to campus in the form of blogs (google “Swarthmore COP 21) and Skype calls. Stay tuned for skype updates and times. We’ll keep you informed about ways students can participate in these meetings.
- Christiana Figures ’79 (pictured) has been the Executive Secretary of UNFCCC since 2010. “I’m very comfortable with the word ‘revolution,’ ” she says. “In my experience, revolutions have been very positive.”
- Obama will come back from Paris with a national plan to reduce our carbon emissions. We must keep our country and states responsible for this plan. There will be meetings in Harrisburg in March to discuss Pennsylvania’s role in the transition to clean energy.

As the world gathers in Paris to enact a climate revolution, we may want to recall the collective (although not yet realized) vision of the French Revolution: Liberté, égalité, fraternité!

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