

# *UN says Earth set to warm over 3° C despite pandemic*

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United Nations, December 11 (RHC)-- The Earth remains on course to warm beyond 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A new report published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) found this year's 7-percent fall in carbon pollution would have "negligible impact" on warming without a broad and rapid shift away from fossil fuels.

The Emissions Gap report analyses the gap between action required under the Paris Agreement on climate change and the emissions cuts currently planned by countries. The report found that a "green recovery" from the pandemic, in which emerging net-zero pledges are accelerated, could shave 25 percent off emissions by 2030. This would bring the world closer to levels required to limit warming to 2C (3.6F), as stipulated under Paris.

With just over 1C (1.8F) of warming since pre-industrial times, Earth is already experiencing stronger and more frequent droughts, wildfires and super-storms rendered deadlier by rising seas.

“The year 2020 is on course to be one of the warmest on record, while wildfires, storms and droughts continue to wreak havoc,” said UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen. She said Wednesday’s report showed that a green pandemic recovery “can take a huge slice out of greenhouse gas emissions and help slow climate change”.

UNEP said last year that emissions must fall 7.6 percent annually through 2030 in order to keep the more ambitious Paris temperature goal of 1.5C (2.7F) in play. While 2020 is likely to see emissions fall broadly in line with that figure, it took an unprecedented slowdown in industry, travel and manufacturing to achieve.

Experts that a rebound in carbon emissions is nearly inevitable in 2021. Last week, the UN said countries planned to increase fossil fuel production by two percent each year this decade. To limit warming to 1.5C (2.7F), it said oil, gas and coal production instead must fall six percent each year.

The latest assessment found that emissions in 2019, a year scientists still hope will represent a peak in annual carbon pollution, stood at 59.1 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent. This represents a 2.6-percent increase compared with 2018, largely driven by an increase in forest fires, UNEP said.

It said reduced travel, industrial activity and electrical generation due to the pandemic would see emissions fall 7 percent compared with last year.

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