

World marks new global heat record in March



Brussels, April 9 (RHC)-- The world just experienced its warmest March on record, the 10th straight month of historic heat, as sea surface temperatures also hit a new high, according to Europe's climate monitoring agency.

The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said on Tuesday that March averaged 14.14 degrees Celsius (57.9 degrees Fahrenheit), exceeding the previous record from 2016 by a 10th of a degree. The month was also 1.68C (35F) hotter than an average March between the years 1850-1900, the reference period for the pre-industrial era.

Vast tracts of the planet from parts of Africa to Greenland and South America to Antarctica endured above-average temperatures during the month. It was not only the 10th consecutive month to break its own heat record but also marked the hottest 12-month period ever recorded – 1.58C (34.8F) above pre-industrial averages.

The primary cause of the heat was greenhouse gas emissions fuelled by human activity, C3S said. “It’s the long-term trend with exceptional records that has us very concerned,” C3S Deputy Director Samantha Burgess said. “Seeing records like this – month in, month out – really shows us that our climate is changing, is changing rapidly,” she added.

While the temperatures do not mean the 1.5C (2.7 Fahrenheit) limit agreed on by world leaders in Paris in 2015 has been breached, “the reality is that we’re extraordinarily close, and already on borrowed time”, Burgess said.

Already, 2023 was the planet’s hottest year in global records going back to 1850. The United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that the world will probably breach 1.5C in the early 2030s. The target is measured in decades rather than individual years.

Ocean surface temperatures also set a new global record in March, even as an El Nino, a climatic condition that warms the central Pacific and changes global weather patterns, began to wane. The global sea surface temperature averaged 21.07C (69.93F) during the month, the highest monthly value on record and slightly higher than what was recorded in February, C3S said.

Oceans cover 70 percent of the planet and help keep the climate liveable by absorbing 90 percent of the excess heat resulting from carbon dioxide and methane emissions produced by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

“The trajectory will not change until concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop rising,” Woodwell Climate Research Center scientist Jennifer Francis told the Associated Press news agency, “which means we must stop burning fossil fuels, stop deforestation, and grow our food more sustainably as quickly as possible”.

Hotter seas produce more moisture in the atmosphere, leading to increasingly erratic weather, including strong winds and heavy rain.

Russia is currently reeling from some of its worst flooding in decades while parts of Australia, Brazil and France also experienced an exceptionally wet March.

Hotter seas also increase the danger of mass coral bleaching events, with marine scientists warning last month that a mass bleaching was already unfolding in the Southern Hemisphere and could be the worst in the planet’s history.

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