

UN chief promises no-nonsense climate summit in 2023

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UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has announced a 2023 summit for 'credible, serious and new climate action' [File: Mary Altaffer/AP]

United Nations, December 20 (RHC)-- The United Nations will host a “no-nonsense” climate summit in 2023 to spur action from governments on the climate crisis, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres says, as the goal of avoiding global warming of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius begins to slip out of reach.

Speaking at a year-end news conference on Monday, Guterres said the world was moving in the “wrong direction” on climate change and that governments had fallen short on their commitments to bring down

emissions. Guterres said the UN would host the summit in September with the aim of holding governments accountable and demanding tangible plans for improvement.

“The invitation is open, but there is a price of entry, and the price of entry is non-negotiable: credible, serious and new climate action,” Guterres said. “It will be a no-nonsense summit, no exceptions, no compromises. And there will be no room for greenwashers, backsliders, blame-shifters.”

While governments and international bodies have acknowledged the urgency of climate change, critics have denounced the international community’s failure to rein in emissions as the climate crisis devastates communities around the world. Drought, heat waves and floods driven partly by climate change are upending the lives of millions of people, especially those in poor countries.

While an agreement was reached at the UN-sponsored COP27 climate talks in November to create a “loss and damage” fund to help poor countries adapt to climate change, issues such as emission reductions and the phaseout of fossil fuels were not comprehensively addressed.

Countries are under pressure to ensure emissions are cut in half by 2030 and down to net zero by 2050, which is the only path to hold global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, a goal agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement, a binding international treaty.

Guterres said on Monday that he would continue his push for a climate solidarity pact, which would require greater effort from the world’s largest emitters and provide more support for nations who require assistance. He also spoke about other issues that have contributed to hardship and instability across the globe, including Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and ongoing protests in Iran.

Guterres said he was “not optimistic” that peace talks between Russia and Ukraine would take place in the near future, but he expressed hope that the UN could play a role in making progress on issues such as grain shipments and the exchange of prisoners of war.

“I do believe that the military confrontation will go on, and I think we will have still to wait a moment in which serious negotiations for peace will be possible,” Guterres said. “I don’t see them [on] the immediate horizon.”

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