

UN secretary-general affirms the world is paying a terrible price for climate inaction

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United Nations, October 25 (RHC)-- People around the world are “paying a terrible price” for inaction on global warming, with time running out to correct the course and avoid climate disaster, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned.

A new United Nations report released on Thursday says current climate policies will result in global warming of more than 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, more than twice the rise agreed to nearly a decade ago.

The annual Emissions Gap Report, which takes stock of countries’ promises to tackle climate change compared with what is needed, finds the world faces as much as 3.1C (5.6F) of warming above pre-industrial levels by 2100 if governments do not take greater action on slashing planet-warming emissions.

Governments in 2015 signed up to the Paris Agreement and a cap of 1.5 C (2.7 F) warming to prevent a cascade of dangerous impacts. “We’re teetering on a planetary tightrope,” Guterres said in a speech. “Either leaders bridge the emissions gap, or we plunge headlong into climate disaster”.

“Around the world, people are paying a terrible price.”

The call to action follows a streak of destructive and deadly extreme weather in a year expected to be the hottest in recorded history. The world’s poorest have been particularly hard hit, with typhoons, floods and heatwaves in Asia and the Caribbean, floods in Africa, and droughts and wildfires in Latin America.

Global greenhouse gas emissions rose by 1.3 percent between 2022 and 2023, to a new high of 57.1 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, the report said.

Under current pledges to take future action, temperatures would still rise between 2.6C (4.7F) and 2.8C (5F) by 2100, the report found. That is in line with findings from the past three years.

“If we look at the progress towards 2030 targets, especially of the G20 member states ... they have not made a lot of progress towards their current climate targets for 2030,” said Anne Olhoff, chief scientific editor of the report.

The world has currently warmed by about 1.3C (2.3F). Nations will gather next month at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, where they will work to build on an agreement made last year to transition away from fossil fuels.

Negotiations in Baku will help to inform each country’s updated emissions-cutting strategy, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), due in February 2025.

The report suggests that nations must collectively commit to and implement a cut of 42 percent on yearly greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and reach 57 percent by 2035 for any hope of preventing warming beyond 1.5C (2.7F) – a target now seen as likely out of reach.

Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, urged countries to use the Baku talks to increase action in their NDCs. “Every fraction of a degree avoided counts,” she said.

Guterres said wealthy G20 economies in particular would need to show far more ambition in the next round of NDCs. The world’s 20 largest economies were responsible for nearly 80 percent of global emissions in 2023. The bottom 47 countries accounted for three percent.

“These reports are an historical litany of negligence from the world’s leaders to tackle the climate crisis with the urgency it demands, but it’s not too late to take corrective action,” said Tracy Carty from Greenpeace International.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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