

Secretary-General Warns of Climate Emergency, Calling Intergovernmental Panel's Report 'a File of Shame', While Saying Leaders 'Are Lying', Fuelling Flames

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General António Guterres' video message on the launch of the third Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, in New York today:

The jury has reached a verdict. And it is damning. This report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a litany of broken climate promises. It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unliveable world.

We are on a fast track to climate disaster. Major cities under water. Unprecedented heatwaves. Terrifying storms. Widespread water shortages. The extinction of a million species of plants and animals. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies.

We are on a pathway to global warming of more than double the 1.5°C limit agreed in Paris. Some Government and business leaders are saying one thing, but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic. This is a climate emergency.

Climate scientists warn that we are already perilously close to tipping points that could lead to cascading and irreversible climate impacts. But, high-emitting Governments and corporations are not just turning a blind eye, they are adding fuel to the flames.

They are choking our planet, based on their vested interests and historic investments in fossil fuels, when cheaper, renewable solutions provide green jobs, energy security and greater price stability.

We left COP26 [twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change] in Glasgow with a naïve optimism, based on new promises and commitments. But, the main problem — the enormous, growing emissions gap — was all but ignored. The science is clear: to keep the 1.5°C limit agreed in Paris within reach, we need to cut global emissions by 45 per cent this decade.

But, current climate pledges would mean a 14 per cent increase in emissions. And most major emitters are not taking the steps needed to fulfil even these inadequate promises. Climate activists are sometimes depicted as dangerous radicals. But, the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels.

Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness. Such investments will soon be stranded assets — a blot on the landscape and a blight on investment portfolios. But, it doesn't have to be this way.

Today's report is focused on mitigation — cutting emissions. It sets out viable, financially sound options in every sector that can keep the possibility of limiting warming to 1.5°C alive.

First and foremost, we must triple the speed of the shift to renewable energy. That means moving investments and subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables — now. In most cases, renewables are already far cheaper. It means Governments ending the funding of coal, not just abroad, but at home.

It means climate coalitions, made up of developed countries, multilateral development banks, private financial institutions and corporations, supporting major emerging economies in making this shift. It means protecting forests and ecosystems as powerful climate solutions. It means rapid progress in reducing methane emissions. And it means implementing the pledges made in Paris and Glasgow.

Leaders must lead. But, all of us can do our part. We owe a debt to young people, civil society and indigenous communities for sounding the alarm and holding leaders accountable. We need to build on their work to create a grass-roots movement that cannot be ignored.

If you live in a big city, a rural area or a small island State; if you invest in the stock market; if you care about justice and our children's future; I am appealing directly to you: demand that renewable energy is introduced now — at speed and at scale; demand an end to coal-fired power; demand an end to all fossil fuel subsidies.

Today's report comes at a time of global turbulence. Inequalities are at unprecedented levels. The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is scandalously uneven. Inflation is rising, and the war in Ukraine is causing food and energy prices to skyrocket. But, increasing fossil-fuel production will only make matters worse.

Choices made by countries now will make or break the commitment to 1.5°C . A shift to renewables will mend our broken global energy mix and offer hope to millions of people suffering climate impacts today. Climate promises and plans must be turned into reality and action, now. It is time to stop burning our planet and start investing in the abundant renewable energy all around us.

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