



A sea level rise will spell danger to coastal communities

CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENING PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

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The People and the Planet are threatened by the impact of Climate Change, according to United Nations (UN) scientists. Ecosystem collapse, species extinction, deadly heat waves and floods are among the “unavoidable multiple climate hazards” the world will face over the next two decades due to Global Warming, they warn.

In the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, released on February 28, 2022, the UN scientists say that human-induced Climate Change is causing dangerous and widespread disruption in Nature and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world, despite various efforts to reduce the risks. People and ecosystems least able to cope are being hardest hit, they say. “This report is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction,” said Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC. “It shows that Climate Change is a grave and mounting threat to our well-being and a healthy planet. Our actions today will shape how people adapt and Nature responds to increasing climate risks.”

The world faces unavoidable multiple climate hazards over the next two decades with Global Warming of 1.5°C (2.7°F). Even temporarily exceeding this warming level will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible. Risks for society will increase, including to infrastructure and low-lying coastal settlements. The Summary for Policymakers of the IPCC Working Group II report, ‘Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’ was approved on February 27, by the 195 Member Governments of the IPCC, through a virtual approval session that was held over two weeks starting on February 14.

URGENT ACTION NECESSARY

Increased heat waves, droughts and floods are already exceeding plants’ and animals’ tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals. These weather extremes are occurring simultaneously, causing cascading impacts that are increasingly difficult to manage. They have exposed millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, especially in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, on Small Islands and in the Arctic Region.

Scientists stress that to avoid mounting loss of life, biodiversity and infrastructure, ambitious, accelerated action is required to adapt to Climate Change, at the same time as making rapid, deep cuts in greenhouse Gas emissions. So far, progress on adaptation is uneven and there are increasing gaps between action taken and what is needed to deal with the increasing risks, the new report finds. These gaps are largest among lower-income populations.

The Working Group II report is the second installment of the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which will be completed this year. “This report recognizes the interdependence of climate, biodiversity and people and integrates natural, social and economic sciences more strongly than earlier IPCC assessments,” said Hoesung Lee. “It emphasizes the urgency of immediate and more ambi-



The recent floods in Brisbane, Australia



A kangaroo walks past a wildfire in Australia

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tious action to address climate risks. Half measures are no longer an option.”

This report provides new insights into Nature’s potential not only to reduce climate risks but also to improve people’s lives. “Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to Climate Change and provide life-critical services such as food and clean water”, said IPCC Working Group II Co-Chair Hans-Otto Portner. “By restoring degraded ecosystems and effectively and equitably conserving 30 to 50 per cent of Earth’s land,

freshwater and ocean habitats, society can benefit from Nature’s capacity to absorb and store Carbon, and we can accelerate progress towards sustainable development, but adequate finance and political support are essential.”

Scientists point out that Climate Change interacts with global trends such as the unsustainable use of natural resources, growing urbanization, social inequalities, losses and damage from extreme events and the COVID pandemic, jeopardizing future development. “Our assessment clearly shows that

tackling all these different challenges involves everyone – Governments, the private sector, civil society – working together to prioritize risk reduction, as well as equity and justice, in decision-making and investment,” said IPCC Working Group II Co-Chair Debra Roberts.

“In this way, different interests, values and world views can be reconciled. By bringing together scientific and technological know-how as well as Indigenous and local knowledge, solutions will be more effective. Failure to achieve climate resilient and sustainable development will result in a sub-optimal future for people and nature.”

CITIES: HOTSPOTS OF IMPACTS

This report provides a detailed assessment of Climate Change impacts, risks and adaptation in the cities, where more than half the world’s population lives. People’s health, lives and livelihoods, as well as property and critical infrastructure, including energy and transport systems, are being increasingly adversely affected by hazards from heat waves, storms, drought and flooding as well as slow-onset changes, including the sea level rise.

“Together, growing urbanization and Climate Change create complex risks, especially for those cities that already experience poorly planned urban growth, high levels of poverty and unemployment, and a lack of basic services,” Debra Roberts said.

“But cities also provide opportunities for climate action – Green Buildings, reliable supplies of clean water and renewable energy, and sustainable transport systems that connect urban and rural areas can all lead to a more inclusive, fairer society.”

There is increasing evidence of adaptation that has caused unintended consequences, for example destroying Nature, putting peoples’ lives at risk or increasing Greenhouse Gas emissions. This can be avoided by involving everyone in planning, attention to equity and justice, and drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge.

NARROWING WINDOW FOR ACTION

Climate Change is a global challenge that requires local solutions and that is why the Working Group II contribution to the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) provides extensive regional information to enable Climate Resilient Development (CRD).

The report clearly states that CRD is already challenging at current warming levels. It will become more limited if Global Warming exceeds 1.5°C (2.7°F). In some regions it will be impossible if Global Warming exceeds 2°C (3.6°F). This key finding underlines the urgency for climate action, focusing on equity and justice.

Adequate funding, technology transfer, political commitment and partnerships lead to more effective Climate Change adaptation and emissions reductions. “The scientific evidence is unequivocal: Climate Change is a threat to human well-being and the health of Planet Earth itself. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future,” said Hans-Otto Portner.