

# Climate Emergency

*António Guterres*

*On 27 July 2023, the Secretary-General of the United Nations put the world on notice about the climate emergency confronting us all.*

Humanity is in the hot seat. Today, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Change Service are releasing official data that confirms that July [2023] is set to be the hottest month ever recorded in human history. We don't have to wait for the end of the month to know this. Short of a mini-Ice Age over the next days, July will shatter records across the board.

According to the data released today, July has already seen the hottest three-week period ever recorded; the three hottest days on record; and the highest-ever ocean temperatures for this time of year. The consequences are clear and they are tragic: children swept away by monsoon rains; families running from the flames; workers collapsing in scorching heat.

For vast parts of North America, Asia, Africa and Europe, it is a cruel summer. For the entire planet, it is a disaster. And for scientists, it is unequivocal — humans are to blame. All this is entirely consistent with predictions and repeated warnings. The only surprise is the speed of the change. Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning.

The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived. The air is unbearably hot. The heat is unbearable. And the level of fossil-fuel profits and climate inaction is unacceptable. Leaders must lead. No more hesitancy. No more excuses. No more waiting for others to move first. There is simply no more time for that.

It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C and avoid the very worst of climate change. But, only with

dramatic, immediate climate action. We have seen some progress. A robust roll-out of renewables. Some positive steps from sectors, such as shipping. But, none of this is going far enough or fast enough. Accelerating temperatures demand accelerated action.

We have several critical opportunities ahead. The Africa Climate Summit. The G20 [Group of 20] Summit. The UN Climate Ambition Summit. COP28 [twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change]. But leaders — and particularly G20 countries responsible for 80 per cent of global emissions — must step up for climate action and climate justice. What does that mean in practice?

First, emissions. We need ambitious new national emissions reduction targets from G20 members. And we need all countries to take action in line with my Climate Solidarity Pact and Acceleration Agenda: hitting fast-forward so that developed countries commit to reach net-zero emissions as close as possible to 2040, and emerging economies as close as possible to 2050, with support from developed countries to do so.

And all actors must come together to accelerate a just and equitable transition from fossil fuels to renewables — as we stop oil and gas expansion, and funding and licensing for new coal, oil and gas. Credible plans must also be presented to exit coal by 2030 for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and 2040 for the rest of the world. Ambitious renewable energy goals must be in line with the 1.5°C limit. And we must reach net-zero electricity by 2035 in developed countries and 2040 elsewhere, as we work to bring affordable electricity to everyone on earth.

We also need action from leaders beyond governments. I urge companies, as well as cities, regions and financial institutions, to come to the Climate Ambition Summit with credible transition plans that are fully aligned with the United Nations' net zero standard, presented by our High-Level Expert Group.

Financial institutions must end their fossil fuel lending, underwriting and investments and shift to renewables instead. And fossil fuel companies must chart their move towards clean energy, with detailed transition plans across the entire value chain: No more greenwashing. No more deception. And no more abusive distortion of anti-trust laws to sabotage net zero alliances.

Second, adaptation. Extreme weather is becoming the new normal. All countries must respond and protect their people from the searing heat, fatal floods, storms, droughts and raging fires that result. Those countries on the

front lines — who have done the least to cause the crisis and have the least resources to deal with it — must have the support they need to do so.

It is time for a global surge in adaptation investment to save millions of lives from climate [carnage.] That requires unprecedented coordination around the priorities and plans of vulnerable developing countries. Developed countries must present a clear and credible roadmap to double adaptation finance by 2025 as a first step towards devoting at least half of all climate finance to adaptation. Every person on earth must be covered by an early warning system by 2027 — by implementing the Action Plan we launched last year. And countries should consider a set of global goals to mobilize international action and support on adaptation.

That leads to the third area for accelerated action — finance. Promises made on international climate finance must be promises kept. Developed countries must honour their commitments to provide \$100 billion a year to developing countries for climate support and fully replenish the Green Climate Fund. I am concerned that only two G7 [Group of Seven] countries — Canada and Germany — have made until now replenishment pledges. Countries must also operationalize the loss and damage fund at COP28 this year. No more delays; no more excuses.

More broadly, many banks, investors and other financial actors continue to reward polluters and incentivize wrecking the planet. We need a course correction in the global financial system so that it supports accelerated climate action. That includes putting a price on carbon and pushing the multilateral development banks to overhaul their business models and approaches to risk.

We need the multilateral development banks leveraging their funds to mobilize much more private finance at reasonable cost to developing countries — and scaling up their funding to renewables, adaptation and loss and damage. In all these areas, we need Governments, civil society, business and others working in partnership to deliver. I look forward to welcoming first-movers and doers on the Acceleration Agenda to New York for the Climate Ambition Summit in September. And to hearing how leaders will respond to the facts before us. This is the price of entry.

The evidence is everywhere: humanity has unleashed destruction. This must not inspire despair, but action. We can still stop the worst. But to do so we must turn a year of burning heat into a year of burning ambition. And accelerate climate action — now.