

Climate change crisis: global action needed before it's too late



Scientists said that average temperatures from 2010-2019 look set to make it the warmest decade on record.

Provisional figures released by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) suggest this year is on course to be the second or third warmest year ever.

If those numbers hold, 2015-2019 would end up being the warmest five-year period in the record.

This “exceptional” global heat is driven by greenhouse gas emissions, the WMO says.

The organisation’s State of the Global Climate report for 2019 covers the year up to October, when the global mean temperature for the period was 1.1C above the “baseline” level in 1850.

Many parts of the world experienced unusual levels of warmth

this year.

South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania were warmer than the recent average, while many parts of North America were colder than usual.

Two major heat waves hit Europe in June and July this year, with a new national record of 46C set in France on June 28.

New national records were also set in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and the UK.

In Australia, the mean summer temperature was the highest on record by almost a degree.

Wildfire activity in South America this year was the highest since 2010.

The WMO clearly links the record temperatures seen over the past decade to ongoing emissions of greenhouse gases, from human activities such as driving cars, cutting down forests and burning coal for energy.

“On a day-to-day basis, the impacts of climate change play out through extreme and ‘abnormal’ weather.

And, once again in 2019, weather and climate-related risks hit hard,” said the WMO’s secretary-general Petteri Taalas.

“Heatwaves and floods which used to be ‘once in a century’ events are becoming more regular occurrences. Countries ranging from the Bahamas to Japan to Mozambique suffered the effect of devastating tropical cyclones. Wildfires swept through the Arctic and Australia,” Taalas continued.

“It’s shocking how much climate change in 2019 has already led to lives lost, poor health, food insecurity and displaced populations,” said Dr Joanna House, from the University of Bristol.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that climate change is mostly affecting human health, affirming that it causes the death of 7mn people annually in the world’s various regions.

A large number of people suffer annually from pollution, heat stress, injuries and deaths resulting from extreme climate variability and insect-borne diseases such as Malaria, revealed Maria Neira, Director of WHO’s Department of

Environment, Climate Change and Health, in a report about the impact of climate change on human health, during the UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid.

Neira urged governments to take serious measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as air pollution and climate change kill 7mn people annually.

“Health is paying the price of the climate crisis, because our lungs, our brains, our cardiovascular system is very much suffering from the causes of climate change which are overlapping very much with the causes of air pollution,” said Neira, calling the lower than 1% of international financing for climate action that goes to the health sector “not enough and absolutely outrageous”. The Director considered climate change as potentially the greatest health threat of the 21st Century, explaining that governments find difficulties in obtaining international climate finance to protect the health of their people and prevent the effects of this ongoing climate change.

The Climate Change Conference in Madrid, we hope, will strengthen the global action against this climate emergency and fulfil Paris’ climate agreement starting 2020.