



Climate pledges ‘hollow’ unless fossil fuels end

Says UN chief

AFP, Glasgow

Promises by governments to cut carbon emissions “ring hollow” as long as they continue to funnel trillions of investment to oil, gas and coal projects, UN chief Antonio Guterres has said.

“The announcements here in Glasgow are encouraging — but they are far from enough,” he told the COP26 climate summit.

“Promises ring hollow when the fossil fuels industry still receives trillions in subsidies.”

Two weeks of negotiations among nearly 200 countries are approaching a climax with a number of key issues still unresolved.

Guterres called on the governments “to pick up the pace and show the necessary ambition” to confront the climate crisis.

“We cannot settle for the lowest common denominator,” he said. “We know what must be done.”

The summit aims to advance global efforts in order to keep the Paris climate agreement’s aim of limiting temperature rises to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius within reach.

But the latest decarbonisation plans of nations as they stand will lead to 2.7C of heating this century, the UN says.

“Every country, every city, every company, every financial institution must radically, credibly and verifiably reduce their emissions and decarbonise their portfolios starting now,” Guterres said.

AFP, United Kingdom

Helping vulnerable nations cope with the multiplier effect of climate change on droughts, flooding, heatwaves and tropical mega-storms will require trillions of dollars, not the billions now on the table at COP26, a draft UN report obtained by AFP reveals.

The failure of rich countries to make good on a promise to deliver \$100 billion a year for vulnerable nations has become a flashpoint at the UN climate talks in Glasgow, entering their final hours on Friday.

But the real cost for allowing the atmosphere to continue to heat will be far higher.

The draft Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) report, scheduled for release early next year, shows that the \$100 billion figure is no more than a down payment on what is needed to prepare for unavoidable impacts.

Flooded cities, food shortages, deadly heat and mass migration will all raise the price tag.

“Adaptation costs are significantly higher than previously estimated, resulting in a growing ‘adaptation finance gap’,” said an executive summary of the 4,000-page report.

“Existing governance arrangements for funding adaptation are inadequate for the anticipated scale of climate impacts.”

Earth’s surface has warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels so far, magnifying weather



extremes across the planet.

And the world is on track to surge beyond the Paris Agreement target of limiting heating to between 1.5C and 2C. Even taking into account a new round of carbon cutting pledges this year, Earth’s surface will still warm a “catastrophic” 2.7C, the UN has calculated.

The higher the temperature rise, the higher the costs of shielding society against climate cataclysm, warns the IPCC, the world’s top climate science authority.

It says that by 2050, finance needed for adaptation could hit one trillion dollars every year, under certain emissions scenarios.

At two degrees of warming, adaptation costs in Africa alone are projected to increase by “tens of billions” every year.

The draft Working Group II report obtained by AFP details climate impacts and -- in unprecedented

DRAFT UN REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

World needs trillions to face threat



Climate activists participate in a protest action in Glasgow yesterday, during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference.

PHOTO: AFP

detail -- the rising need for adaptation.

Many scientists, including some of the report’s key authors, regret that its findings were not published before the crucial climate meet in Glasgow.

In the meantime, experts and diplomats have started to make assessments that are far greater than the figures on the table in the COP26 negotiations.

The decade-old pledge to deliver \$100 billion a year by 2020 -- now postponed to 2023 -- was meant to help climate vulnerable countries green their economies and brace for unavoidable impacts.

But what seemed like a significant sum in 2009 looks paltry today.

“This \$100 billion pledge is seriously outdated,” said Rachel Cleatus, an economist at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

“The science and the realities on the ground have overtaken what the pledge was supposed to do,” she told AFP. “When we talk about post 2025 finance it really needs to be in the trillions.”

The urgent need to fortify against climate impacts -- which will be severe even with 1.5C of warming -- is thrown into sharp relief by the draft IPCC report’s projections of the dollar damage rising temperatures will inflict on virtually every sector of society.

In just one low-lying city, Guangzhou in southern China, estimated losses could top a quarter of a trillion dollars a year without adaptation measures -- such as massive flood defences -- with an additional 20 centimetres of sea level rise.

With 2C of warming, oceans are expected to rise by nearly twice that much.

In a worst-case scenario of unabated warming, Guangzhou’s annual damages could top a trillion dollars. Other low-lying cities such as Mumbai -- with fewer resources -- would face a similar level of devastation.

Flooding will, on average, displace 2.7 million people in Africa every year by mid-century, staple crops yields will diminish along with nutritional value -- raising the spectre of widespread malnutrition -- and heatwaves will lower productivity and burden healthcare systems.

Finance for adaptation is best seen as an investment in avoided costs, the IPCC report says.

Spending \$1.8 trillion, for example, over the next decade on early warning systems, climate-resistant infrastructure, agriculture, mangrove conservation and improving water access “can generate net benefits of \$7.2 trillion” -- a benefit-cost ratio of 4-to-1, it said.

“Investing in climate adaptation is a bit like getting insurance for a known event,” said Brian O’Callaghan, lead researcher on the University of Oxford’s economic recovery project and an author of the recently published UN Environment Programme Adaptation Gap report.

Scientists have called for an IPCC “special report” to quantify global adaptation, much as the policy advisory body has done for measuring the impacts of global warming.

UNEP’s Adaptation Gap report published earlier this month said financing needs would be close to \$300 billion per year in 2030, rising to \$500 billion by 2050.

WHAT’S IN THE NEW COP26 DRAFT DEAL?

NEW CLIMATE PLEDGES

The COP26 summit aims to keep alive cap global warming at 1.5C. Countries’ current pledges to cut emissions this decade would see warming spiral far beyond that limit, to 2.4C. The draft COP26 deal asks countries to upgrade their 2030 emissions-cutting plans by the end of 2022 -- a faster timeframe than the UN’s current five-year review cycle. However, it couched that request in weaker language than a previous draft, and failed to offer the rolling annual review of climate pledges that some vulnerable countries have pushed for. However, government ministers will meet every year to check in on efforts to raise pre-2030 ambitions, the draft says.

MORE MONEY

The draft deal said by 2025 rich countries should double their funding to help poor countries adapt to climate impacts, compared with current levels -- a step forward from the previous draft, which did not set a date or a baseline. Currently, only a quarter of countries’ climate finance goes on adaptation. But the proposal remained foggy on how to fix a long-held pledge for rich countries to give poorer countries \$100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020 -- a deadline they missed and now expect to meet in 2023. The draft COP26 deal did not spell out a plan to make sure the



money arrives. The draft also broached the contentious topic of compensation for the damages (loss and damage) countries have suffered because of climate change.

FOSSIL FUELS

The draft text took aim at the burning of coal, oil and gas, telling countries to phase out coal power and fossil fuel subsidies faster, although without setting a date to do so. That would mark the first time fossil fuels are named and shamed in the conclusions of a UN climate summit. The latest proposal qualified a previous draft by saying countries should phase out “unabated” coal power and “inefficient” subsidies for all fossil fuels, meaning coal, oil and gas. Some campaigners said the new wording was a loophole to keep funding polluting projects, but other analysts said it would be difficult for countries to argue that fossil fuel projects are anything but “inefficient”.

MORE NEWS

Sri Lanka to tax road accidents in drastic budget

Sri Lanka slapped a tax on road accidents in a drastic austerity budget unveiled yesterday as the country faces a major foreign exchange crisis. Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa said vehicle accidents will be taxed under new revenue proposals to keep the budget deficit at 8.8 percent of GDP in 2022, down from 11.1 percent this year. He did not give details of the crash tax. Sri Lanka’s roads are among the most dangerous in the world with over 3,000 traffic fatalities and some 25,000 seriously injured every year.

Court pauses release of Trump White House docs

A US court Thursday granted former president Donald Trump’s request to temporarily halt release of White House documents that could implicate him in the January 6 attack on the Capitol. The documents have been sought by the House Select Committee investigating the riot, and had been ordered released Tuesday by a US district judge. The US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit said Thursday, however, that it had granted what it called an administrative injunction and scheduled arguments for November 30.

Biden, Xi expected to hold virtual summit on Monday

US President Joe Biden is expected to hold a hotly awaited virtual summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Monday, US media, including CNN, reported, as tensions mount over Taiwan, human rights and trade. Relations between the world’s two largest economies have deteriorated in recent weeks, in particular over Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy claimed by China, which last month made a record number of air incursions near the island.



Assange gets permission to marry in UK prison

British prison authorities have given WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange permission to marry while in custody, his fiancée has said, as he awaits a key court decision over possible US extradition. Assange, wanted by Washington to face various charges related to the mass leak of classified documents, plans to marry Stella Moris, a former member of his legal team with whom he has two children. He is being held at Belmarsh high-security jail in London while the High Court prepares to rule on a US appeal against a lower court’s decision to block his extradition.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A man wades through a waterlogged street at a residential area after a heavy monsoon rainfall in Chennai on November 12, 2021. Heavy rains caused flash floods and landslides across southern India and Sri Lanka have killed nearly 50 people.

PHOTO: AFP

Ten EU nations causing ‘high concern’ over Covid

AFP, Stockholm

Ten countries in the 27-member European Union face a Covid situation of “high concern”, the bloc’s diseases agency said yesterday, and the pandemic was worsening across the continent.

“The overall epidemiological situation... was characterised by a high and rapidly increasing overall case notification rate and a low but slowly increasing death rate,” the European Centre for Disease Control said.

“Case notification rates, death rates, and hospital and ICU admissions are all forecast to increase over the next two weeks.”

In its latest weekly risk assessment, the agency listed 10 EU countries in its highest category of concern -- Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia.

“Countries with lower vaccination uptake continue to be the most severely affected,” said the agency.

Germany was among 10 other EU nations classed as “high concern” and France among three of “moderate concern”.

Italy, Malta, Spain and Sweden were of low concern.

The agency said four countries had been raised into a higher category since the last assessment, and five countries had been lowered.

The number of cases and deaths is expected to increase by about 50 percent over the next two weeks, the agency added, reaching a weekly rate of 300 new cases and 2.7 deaths per 100,000 population.

The assessment looks at the 27 EU nations as well as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The coronavirus has killed at least 5,078,208 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte was to announce new restrictions yesterday, reportedly including Western Europe’s first “partial lockdown” of the autumn, as cases hit record levels.

Norway too is reintroducing virus curbs short of a lockdown and authorising towns to use health passes as it tries to stop a spike in cases.

World has become deaf to plight of the poor: pope

REUTERS, Assisi, Italy

Pope Francis yesterday said that the world had become deaf to the plight of the poor and condemned those who become disproportionately rich while blaming the needy for their own fate.

Francis travelled to Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis, to meet with about 500 poor people before the Catholic Church’s World Day of the Poor which will be marked on Sunday.

“Often the presence of the poor is seen as being annoying and something to be tolerated. Sometimes we hear it said that those responsible for poverty are the poor themselves,” he said in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels after poor people, including Afghan refugees, recounted their personal stories.

“The blame is dumped on the shoulders of the poor, adding insult to injury, so as not to make a serious examination of conscience about one’s own actions, about the injustice of some laws and economic measures, about the hypocrisy of those who want to enrich themselves disproportionately,” he said.

Francis, who in 2013 became the first Latin American pope, has made defence of the poor a cornerstone of his pontificate. The former Cardinal Mario Bergoglio is the first pope to take the name Francis, the saint who dedicated most of his life to the poor.

“It is time to give a voice back to the poor because their requests have fallen on deaf ears for too long. It is time for eyes to open to see the state of inequality in which so many families live,” Francis said.

“It is time to again be scandalised by the reality of children who are starving, reduced to slavery, tossed around by the waters as they risk drowning, innocent victims of all kinds of violence,” he said.

Quotes of the day



“Lebanon is not a failed state yet, but it is a failing state, with a government failing its population. I saw scenes in Lebanon that I never imagined I would see in a middle-income country.

UN ENVOY ON EXTREME POVERTY OLIVIER DE SCHUTTER



“The overall situation is that we are seeing progress on all fronts. ... I feel this is the moment where Europe is, in a way, counting our friends and we are very happy to see that we have many.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION’S VICE PRESIDENT MARGARITIS SCHINAS ON MIGRANT CRISIS AS TURKEY BANS CITIZENS OF SYRIA, IRAQ AND YEMEN FROM FLYING FROM TURKISH AIRPORTS TO BELARUS



“Your constant engagement with the world, thoughtfulness... is a reflection of a true leader but also just a very good person.

NZ PM JACINDA ARDERN ON OUTGOING GERMAN CHANCELLOR MERKEL