Climate Change

A global threat requiring cooperation

International Environment Forum

Youth Discourse - Climate

Sustainable Development Goal 13

13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Where are we with climate change?

UN Secretary-General

Earth Day talk 5 June 2024

Like the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs, we're having an outsize impact. In the case of climate, we are not the dinosaurs. We are the meteor. We are not only in danger. We are the danger.

Last month was officially the hottest May in history, marking 12 straight months of the hottest on record.

(António Guterres, talk for World Environment Day, 5 June 2024, https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22255.doc.htm)

UN Secretary-General

The remaining carbon budget to limit long-term warming to 1.5 degrees is now around 200 billion tons. That is the maximum amount of carbon dioxide that the Earth's atmosphere can take if we are to have a fighting chance of staying within the limit. It is not a goal. It is a physical limit. Every fraction of a degree of global heating counts. The difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees could be the difference between extinction and survival for some small island states and coastal communities.

(António Guterres, talk for World Environment Day, 5 June 2024, https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22255.doc.htm)

UN Secretary-General

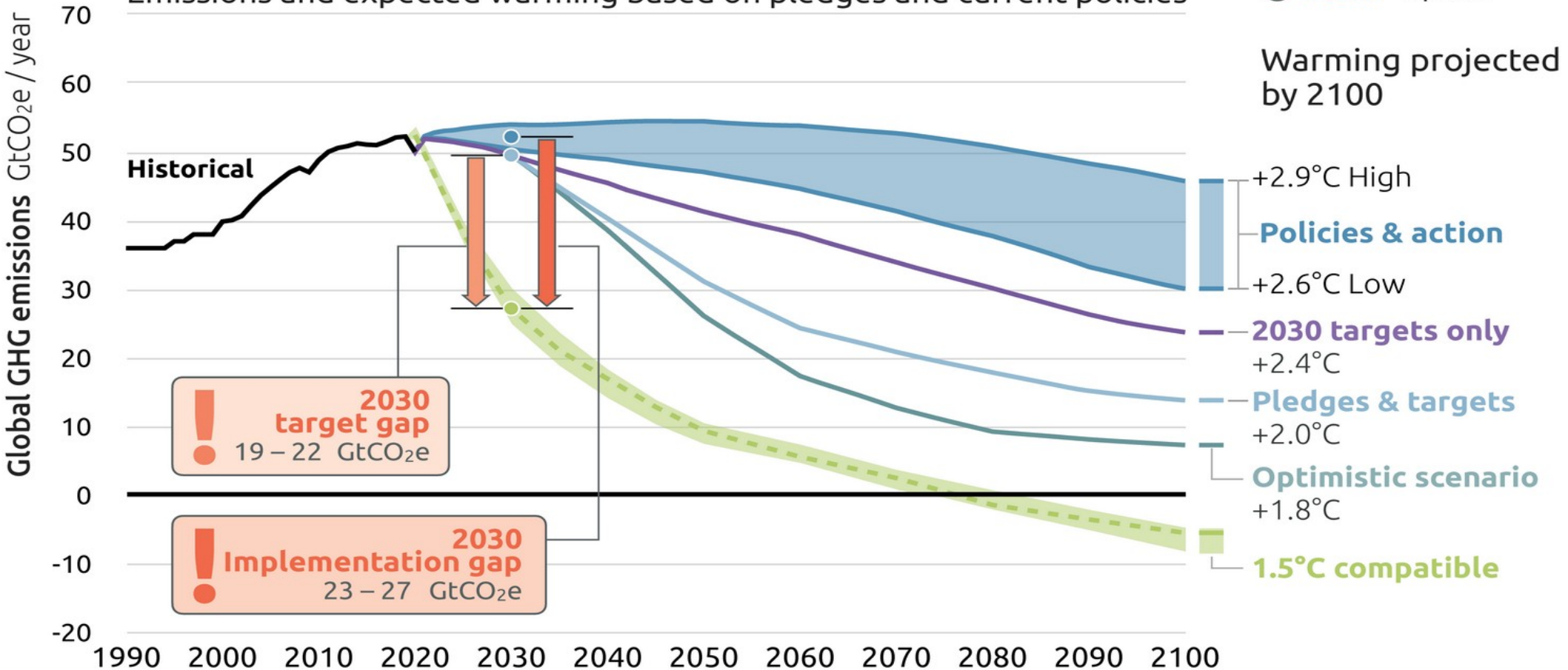
We do have a choice. Creating tipping points for climate progress or careening to tipping points for climate disaster. This is an all-in moment. It's We the Peoples versus the polluters and the profiteers. Together, we can win. But it's time for leaders to decide whose side they're on. Tomorrow is too late. Now is the time to mobilise, now is the time to act, now is the time to deliver. This is our moment of truth.

(António Guterres, talk for World Environment Day, 5 June 2024, https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22255.doc.htm)

2100 WARMING PROJECTIONS

Emissions and expected warming based on pledges and current policies

Climate Action Tracker Nov 2022 Update



Climate Action Tracker (2022). 2100 Warming Projections: Emissions and expected warming based on pledges and current policies. November 2022. Available at: https://climateactiontracker.org/global/temperatures/. Copyright ©2022 by Climate Analytics and NewClimate Institute. All rights reserved.

Who is responsible?

Fossil fuels

- The estimated remaining capacity of the atmosphere to absorb carbon without going past the 1.5° limit is 200 gigatons of CO_2
- Proven oil, coal and gas reserves total 2,795 gigatons (not counting unconventional sources like fracking and tar sands)
- To prevent catastrophic climate change, 80% of proven reserves need to be taken off asset accounts and left in the ground

Corporate Polluters

- By 1965, the climate impact of fossil fuels was known by both industry leaders and politicians
- The top 20 petroleum companies have since contributed 35% of all energy-related CO_2 and methane emissions, and plan to increase production to 2030, making enormous profits
- They have delayed national and global action for decades, and spend $200 million each year lobbying to delay, control or block policies to tackle climate change

What do we have to adapt to?

IPCC 6th Assessment Report

Many changes in the climate system become larger in direct relation to increasing global warming. They include increases in the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, and heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions, and proportion of intense tropical cyclones, as well as reductions in Arctic sea ice, snow cover and permafrost.

IPCC 6th Assessment Report

Many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries to millennia, especially changes in the ocean, ice sheets and global sea level.

Sea Level crisis

Rising seas pose “unthinkable” risks to billions, with profound implications for security, international law, human rights

- mass exodus of entire populations
- competition for fresh water
- low-lying communities – and entire countries – could disappear
- danger for 900 million people living in coastal zones

(UN Security Council 14 February 2023)

Climate change and the economy

- climate change impacts will cause average world incomes to drop by a fifth by 2050, even if emissions fall to net zero
- the cost of environmental damage is six times higher than the price of limiting global heating to 2°C
- rising temperatures, heavier rainfall and more frequent and intense extreme weather are projected to cause $38tn of destruction each year

(Maximilian Kotz1, Anders Levermann, Leonie Wenz. 2024. The economic commitment of climate change. *Nature* vol. 628 pp. 551-557 18 April 2024)

Climate change and the economy

Modelling the economic risks of the major climate change scenarios up to 2060:
- extreme heat would disrupt global supply chains and cause the worst financial crisis the world has ever seen
- higher mortality rates in South (1 million annually), preventing people from working outside, destroying crops and disrupting industrial processes

(Sun, Yida, et al. 2024. Global supply chains amplify economic costs of future extreme heat risk. *Nature* 627, pp. 797-804, 28 March 2024)

Where are we going?

Climate scientists on the future

In a 2024 survey of scientists leading IPCC since 2018:

77% believe global temperature increase will reach 2.5°C

42% expect more than 3°C

Only 6% think 1.5°C will be achieved, most say it is dead

Source: Damian Carrington, *The Guardian Weekly*, 17 May 2024, pp. 34-39

Climate scientists on the future

Already profound damage at 1.2°C

Every 0.1° means 140 million more suffering dangerous heat

Over 2.5°C means food price spikes, broken supply chains, migration

At 2.7°C, 2 billion people will be outside the habitable zone

At 3.0°C, cities including Shanghai, Rio de Janeiro, Miami, The Hague will be below sea level

Source: Damian Carrington, *The Guardian Weekly*, 17 May 2024, pp. 34-39

Climate scientists on the future

There is hope from green technologies, more inclusive and equitable ways of living

It is getting cheaper to save the climate

Social tipping points could trigger large-scale climate action

Younger generations are fighting

The worst-case scenario is still avoidable

Source: Damian Carrington, *The Guardian Weekly*, 17 May 2024, pp. 34-39

How to address climate denial and putting fossil fuels first?

Addressing Climate Change Denial

On the matter of climate change and other vital issues with profound implications for the common good, ...humanity would be best and most effectively served by setting aside partisan disputation, pursuing united action that is informed by the best available scientific evidence and grounded in spiritual principles, and thoughtfully revising action in the light of experience.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017 https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171129_001)

Addressing Climate Change Denial

...there does exist at present a striking degree of agreement among experts in relevant fields about the cause and impact of climate change.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017 https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171129_001

Addressing Climate Change Denial

Sound scientific results... produce knowledge that can be acted upon:... the extent of human contribution, projections of the possible future consequences, and alternatives for response.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017 https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171129_001

Addressing Climate Change Denial

...the governments of nearly every country on earth have reached political consensus on a joint framework, in the Paris accord, to respond to climate change.... The agreement represents a starting point for constructive thought and action....

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017 https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171129_001

Addressing Climate Change Denial

[You] can help to contribute to a constructive process by elevating the discourse above partisan concerns and self-interest to strive to achieve unity of thought and action.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017 https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171129_001

Actions needed

Global cooperation

Much has been said about the need for cooperation to solve a climate challenge that no nation or community can solve alone. The principle of the oneness of humankind... seeks to... anchor the aspirations of individuals, communities and nations to those of the progress of humanity.... As children, women, men, religious and scientific communities as well as governments and international institutions converge on this reality, we will do more than achieve a collective response to the climate change crisis. We will usher in a new paradigm by means of which we can understand our purpose and responsibilities in an interconnected world....

(Bahá'í International Community, Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the challenge of climate change, 2008)

Systemic approaches

A fundamental component of resolving the climate change challenge will be the cultivation of values, attitudes and skills that give rise to just and sustainable patterns of human interaction with the environment. The problem of climate change has powerfully demonstrated the need for integrated and systemic approaches.

Bahá'í International Community, *Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the challenge of climate change*, 2008

Justice and Equity

In the face of the destructive impacts of climate change – exacerbated by the extremes of wealth and poverty – we need new approaches centered on the principles of justice and equity

This is a moral challenge which calls for the transformation of thoughts and behaviors so as to allow our economic and social structures to extend the benefits of development to all people

(Bahá'í International Community. 2008)

A coherent ethic

We must forge a coherent ethic for the resolution of the climate change crisis, beyond a world community driven by largely economic and utilitarian calculations, to one of shared responsibility for the prosperity of all nations.

We must recognize the broader human agenda – which integrates climate change, poverty eradication, gender equality, development, and the like – and seek to use both human and natural resources in a way that facilitates the progress and well-being of all people

(based on Bahá'í International Community. 2008)

Action at the local level

Vulnerability at Local Level

Some climate impacts are expressed partly at local levels, not global

- land-use change
- biodiversity loss
- pollution

(David Obura. 2024. “Equity in action: global to local”. pp. 11-14 in *Global Catastrophic Risks 2024*)

Vulnerability at Local Level

- inadequate quality and quantity of essential resources
- water shortages
- poor shelter
- unclean air
- temperatures not within a safe or adaptable range
- threats to security from natural hazards and extreme events

Adaptation at Local Level

A critical challenge is to make these global issues relevant to the lives of the most vulnerable people. These injustices disadvantage poorer communities and poorer countries. Equity must drive decision-making, identifying the fair direction of resource flows, and turning nature- negative activities to nature- and people- positive ones. Where there are places and contexts with a justice deficit, resources should be redirected to redress these, with a focus on natural assets as the foundation for resilience and welfare.

(David Obura. 2024. “Equity in action: global to local”. pp. 11-14 in *Global Catastrophic Risks 2024*)

Did 'Abdu'l-Bahá know about global warming?

“Should the fire of the love of God be kindled in Greenland, all of the ice of that country will be melted, and its cold weather become temperate...”

'Abdu'l-Bahá (1916), *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 5, p. 28

(He is also reported to have said that palm trees would grow in Chicago and Montreal.)

Climate Justice

- climate victims contributed the least

- there is no going back

- the past is no guide to the future

- your challenge as youth is to invent a more just future

Vision of the future

A flourishing global civilization in harmony with the natural environment is a vision toward which growing numbers are laboring. The world that beckons is one of integration and balance, beauty, and maturity. It is a world with a redefined sense of progress, filled with communities and individuals working together with the support of institutions toward the realization of their highest aspirations.

(Bahá'í International Community. *One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World*, 1 June 2022, para. 42)