

Unchecked Climate Change A Catastrophe Says IPCC

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report paints a grim picture of the world's future climate, outlining drought and rising sea levels in Australia and New Zealand by 2030, and food shortages for 130 million people by 2050.

The 1572-page document is the second of four, including a summary, that form part of the IPCC's second report and brings together current understanding of the impacts of climate change on natural, managed and human systems, their capacity to adapt and their vulnerability.

"Unchecked climate change will be an environmental and economic catastrophe but above all it will be a human tragedy," says executive director of the United Nations Environment Program Achim Steiner.

"It is absolutely vital that international action is taken now to avoid dangerous climate change. Otherwise the consequences for food and water security in Asia, as for many other parts of the world are too alarming to contemplate." The report suggests that in Australia and New Zealand warming temperatures will be felt mostly through more extreme weather.

"Heat waves and fires are virtually certain to increase in intensity and frequency," says Kevin Hennessy, the coordinating lead author on the chapter for Australia and New Zealand.

"Floods, landslides, droughts and storm surges are very likely to become frequent and intense and frosts are very likely to become less frequent." Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull says the latest IPCC report is a reminder that the world needs to move beyond the Kyoto Protocol to find real, global solutions to climate change.

"Climate change is a global challenge that cannot be addressed unless all of the world's major greenhouse gas emitting countries are part of the solution," says Turnbull.

"What this report highlights is the importance of a global response. Simply imposing unilateral and savage cuts to Australian emissions will just export our emissions and jobs to other countries in a gesture that is as destructive as it is futile."

However Opposition leader Kevin Rudd, together with shadow Climate Change and Environment spokesman Peter Garrett, say that the Federal Government has "lost touch and is not keeping up with the times", arguing that it has not formulated a climate change policy, established an emissions trading scheme or studied the economic impact of climate change in Australia.

“Climate change is hurting Australia right now. Australia’s average temperature has risen by up to 0.7 degrees in the last 50 years, delivering less rain and more intense droughts in southern Australia, reduced snow cover and direct impacts on our biodiversity,” say Rudd and Garrett.

[Source esaa news]