

RETHINK THE CLIMATE STRATEGY

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

There is the USA, and then there is the rest of the world. Especially when it comes to climate policy and environmental protection. Last week, US president Donald Trump tweeted about the severe cold wave that has gripped much of North America. “What the hell is going on with Global Warming? Please come back fast, we need you!” he tweeted, after commenting on the plummeting temperatures in the US Midwest. When the president of the sole superpower in the world jokes about one of the biggest crises in human history and implies that climate change and global warming are not real, he not only ridicules those coping with the very real tragedies caused by rising sea levels and worsening extreme weather events, but also weakens global political will in curbing emissions and creating consensus for future action.

Climate change and the attending warming that has followed does not necessarily mean that there will be no winter. While scientists are always wary of linking climate change directly to extreme weather events, there is enough evidence to suggest that severe cold weather events — such as the polar vortex that has currently engulfed North America — can be caused by anthropogenic (human-made) climate change. According to a research paper published in the journal, *Nature Communications*, in March 2018, “As the Arctic transitions from a relatively cold state to a warmer one, the frequency of severe winter weather in mid-latitudes increases through the transition.” The paper goes on to explain that during mid to late winter, when the Arctic warming trend is greatest, severe winter weather becomes more frequent in the United States. There is enough consensus among scientists that climate change is real; and that rising sea levels, melting polar ice caps, and increasing extreme weather events will lead to massive humanitarian crises the world over.

Whatever the political ideology of those in power may be, it is irresponsible for them to be facetious about looming disasters. The need of the hour is to rethink the way that the climate problem has been dealt with so far. The American president’s frivolity on such a serious issue is detrimental to climate mitigation and adaptation projects around the world. It sends a signal to large corporations and big polluters that the concerted political will that is required to alter the “business as usual” approach is currently absent. Farmers in developing countries are struggling to deal with changing weather patterns, island nations are in the process of negotiating resettlement plans for citizens, and extreme weather events continue to create calamities. But once again, as Rome burns, Nero fiddles.

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