

# ENVIRONMENT DAMAGE BEHIND A QUARTER OF PREMATURE DEATHS, DISEASES: UN REPORT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

FILE - In this Monday, Sept. 4, 2017 file photo, pyres of ivory are set on fire in Nairobi National Park, Kenya. Kenya's president Saturday set fire to 105 tons of elephant ivory and more than 1 ton of rhino horn, believed to be the largest stockpile ever destroyed, in a dramatic statement against the trade in ivory and products from endangered species. According to a scientific report from the United Nations released on Wednesday, March 13, 2019, climate change, a global major extinction of animals and plants, a human population soaring toward 10 billion, degraded land, polluted air, and plastics, pesticides and hormone-changing chemicals in the water are making the planet an increasing unhealthy place for people. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis) | Photo Credit: [Ben Curtis](#)

A quarter of all premature deaths and diseases worldwide are due to manmade pollution and environmental damage, the United Nations said on Wednesday in a landmark report on the planet's parlous state.

Deadly emissions, chemicals polluting drinking water, and the accelerating destruction of ecosystems crucial to the livelihoods of billions of people are driving a worldwide epidemic that hampers the global economy, it warned.

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) — a report six years in the making compiled by 250 scientists from 70 nations — depicts a growing chasm between rich and poor countries as rampant overconsumption, pollution and food waste in the developed world leads to hunger, poverty and disease elsewhere.

As greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise amid a preponderance of droughts, floods and superstorms made worse by climbing sea levels, there is a growing political consensus that climate change poses a future risk to billions.

But the health impacts of pollution, deforestation and the mechanised food-chain are less well understood.

Nor is there any international agreement for the environment close to covering what the 2015 Paris accord does for climate.

The GEO compiles a litany of pollution-related health emergencies.

It said that poor environmental conditions “cause approximately 25% of global disease and mortality” -- around 9 million deaths in 2015 alone.

Lacking access to clean drinking supplies, 1.4 million people die each year from preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and parasites linked to pathogen-riddled water and poor sanitation.

Chemicals pumped into the seas cause “potentially multi-generational” adverse health effects, and land degradation through mega-farming and deforestation occurs in areas of Earth home to 3.2 billion people.

The report says air pollution causes 6-7 million early deaths annually.

The report called for a root-and-branch detoxifying of human behaviour while insisting that the situation is not unassailable.

Food waste for instance, which accounts for 9% of global greenhouse gas emissions, could be slashed. The world currently throws away a third of all food produced. In richer nations, 56% goes to waste.

It also called for a rapid drawdown in greenhouse gas emissions and pesticide use to improve air and water quality.

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Continuing drought will further burden the already depleting groundwater resources of the country, according to associate professor Vimal Mishra

A living member of species of tortoise not seen in more than 110 years and feared to be extinct has been found in a remote part of the Galapagos

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