

# CLIMATE CHANGE: THERE IS NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion & Climate Change

Last week, the UN World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin said that the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere hit a new record last year with emissions showing no sign of slowing down, dashing hopes for a deceleration in emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> — the by-product of burning fossil fuels that scientists say is the main cause of the greenhouse effect which causes global warming.

"Without rapid cuts in CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases, climate change will have increasingly destructive and irreversible impacts on life on Earth. The window of opportunity for action is almost closed," WMO Secretary-General, Petteri Taalas, said in a statement.

This report must be read along with the one released by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October. The world's leading climate scientists warned in that report that there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

While both reports paint a possible doomsday scenario, countries cannot but continue to be aggressive about tackling climate change because, as Patricia Espinosa, head of the UN framework convention on climate change, said, "falling into despair and hopelessness is a danger equal to complacency, none of which we can afford".

If the world wants to slow down the onward march of climate change, it needs to invest in low-carbon technologies like wind, solar, and electric transport, and such products need to be in the mainstream.

And that's not happening at a pace that is required across the world. Take for example, India.

At the Paris climate summit in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a target of generating 175 GW of power from renewable sources by 2022. Out of this, 100 GW is slated to come from solar energy. But in the third quarter of 2018, the country added 1,697 megawatts (MW) of solar power capacity, according to Bridge to India, a renewable energy consultancy firm (published in Quartz).

This is marginally better than the previous quarter, when the numbers fell to their lowest level since early 2017, but is still far below the 4,130 MW added in the first quarter of this year, the report said.

"Our revised best-case estimate for solar capacity by March 2022 is 67 GW, well short of the 100 GW target unless decisive remedial steps are taken immediately," Bridge to India said.

At a time when reports show the problem is going out of hand, policies need to be shored up to ensure that no country misses out on their renewable commitments. It could prove expensive not just for the country, but the world at large.

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