



Another Warning On Warming

(The editorial is based on the article “Another Warning On Warming” which appeared in The Hindu on 10th October 2018. It provides the analysis on the IPCC Report on global warming.)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released a special report- “Global Warming of 1.5°C” over pre-industrial (late 18th century-early 19th century) temperature. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report has come out after a clear scientific consensus that calls for a reversal of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, to prevent severe harm to humanity in the decades ahead.

- The IPCC’s special report on global warming of 1.5°C, prepared as a follow-up to the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change, provides the scientific basis for governments to act.
- The IPCC report makes it clear that the human and economic costs of a 2°C rise are far greater than for 1.5°C, and the need for action is urgent.
- The report identifies two main strategies.
 - The first stabilises global temperature around the 1.5°C mark with limited overshoot.
 - The second permits temperatures to exceed 1.5°C temporarily before coming back down.

Background

- In 2015, at the Paris climate conference, the global community made a pact to pursue efforts to limit warming to within 1.5°C — half a degree below the previous target of 2°C.
- The Paris Agreement asked all Parties to put forward their best efforts through intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead, including requirements that all Parties report regularly on their emissions and on their implementation efforts.

Concerns

- Human activity has warmed the world by 1°C over the pre-industrial level and with another half-degree rise, many regions will have warmer extreme temperatures, raising the frequency, intensity and amount of rain or severity of drought.
- Global temperature, which have already crossed 1°C, is likely to cross the 1.5°C mark around 2040. The window of opportunity to take action is very small and closing fast.
- Half a degree of warming makes a world of difference to many species whose chance of survival is significantly reduced at the higher temperature.
- Studies conservatively estimate sea levels to rise on average by about 50 cm by 2100 in a 2°C warmer world, 10 cm more than for 1.5°C warming.
- The risks to food security, health, fresh water, human security, livelihoods and economic growth are already on the rise and will be worse in a 2°C world. Risks to food security and water, heat exposure, drought and coastal submergence all increase significantly even for a 1.5°C rise.
- The number of people exposed to the complex and compound risks from warming will also increase and the poorest — mostly in Asia and Africa — will suffer the worst impacts.
- India, Pakistan and China are already suffering moderate effects of warming in areas such as water

availability, food production and land degradation, and these will worsen.

- Closer to a 2°C increase, these impacts are expected to spread to sub-Saharan Africa, and West and East Asia.
- Melting of Greenland ice, collapse of Antarctic glaciers (which would lead to several metres of sea level rise), destruction of Amazon forests, melting of all the permafrost is also a cause of concern.

With sound policies, the world can still pull back, although major progress must be achieved by 2030.

- Governments should achieve net zero CO₂ addition to the atmosphere, balancing man-made emissions through removal of CO₂. And also there should be public support for this and governments must go even beyond what they have committed to.
- To stay below 1.5°C, the transitions required by energy systems and human societies, in land use, transport, and infrastructure, would have to be rapid and on an unprecedented scale with deep emission reductions.
- Contributions from the U.S. and other rich countries to the Green Climate Fund and other funding mechanisms for the purpose of mitigation and adaptation are vital even to reach the goals of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) — commitments that each country made prior to the Paris conference.

Way Forward

- The commitment to generate solar energy by 2022 should lead to a quick scale-up, and cutting down of fossil fuel use.
- Agriculture needs to be strengthened with policies that improve water conservation, and afforestation should help create a large carbon sink. There is a crucial role for all the States, since their decisions will have a lock-in effect.
- Each country will have to decide whether to play politics on a global scale for one's own interests or to collaborate to protect the world and its ecosystems and global commons as a whole.

Global Commons is a term used to describe international and global resources such as the high oceans, the atmosphere and outer space and the Antarctic in particular.

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