

Opening Remarks at the 54th Session of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Secretariat

UNEP Deputy Executive Director - Joyce Msuya

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(5 minutes)

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- *Hoesung Lee, IPCC Chair*
 - *Petteri Taalas, Secretary General, WMO*
 - *Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC*

Distinguished delegates, Bureau members of IPCC and experts.

I am honoured to address you today at the 54th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the 14th session of the Working Group I.

For more than 30 years, the IPCC has watched the horizons – warning us of the critical need to prioritize climate action and protect people and planet.

While the climate crisis, together with biodiversity loss and pollution – has indeed been underway for decades - the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this triple planetary crisis into sharp focus.

The pandemic is a warning from the planet that much worse lies in store unless we change our ways.

After years of promises but not enough action, it is a warning that we must get on top of these crises that threaten our collective future.

As I speak, it is clear that extreme weather is the new normal. From Germany, to China, to Canada or the United States – wildfires, floods, extreme heat waves – it is an ever-growing, tragic list.

And as countries invest unprecedented amounts of resources into kick-starting the global economy, as we all call for this recovery to be green - we need the IPCC more than ever.

IPCC reports have historically underpinned global climate action and influenced the decisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As we look towards the Sixth Assessment Report, particularly your Synthesis Report, to help guide us.

I am pleased that despite the challenges faced by COVID-19, the IPCC is on track to consider the Synthesis Report for approval in 2022, as originally planned.

I am also happy that the other two Working Group Reports are on track.

IPCC is breaking new ground by organizing this virtual session for the approval of its first contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report.

This is the first such session and reflects IPCC's commitment to ensuring that the science and knowledge we need to underpin climate action is not interrupted.

This report will give us a better understanding of extreme weather events and the impacts of COVID-19 on climate change and air pollution.

It will provide the momentum we need to galvanize global actions as we head towards the UN Climate Change Conference - COP26 in October.

And it will provide the science we need to inform the [First Global Stocktake](#) of the world's collective progress towards achieving the Paris Agreement goals in 2023.

Countries look to the IPCC reports for guidance in developing their national ambitions and the IPCC has told us what ambition must look like – that each and every country in the world commits to a net-zero future and details plans to realize this ambition.

And it is an encouraging sign that a growing number of countries are committing to net-zero targets.

But to remain within the 2°C limit and to even have a chance at the 1.5°C goal, commitments need to be translated into policies and actions.

To catch up, we must focus on three areas:

First, we must put financing in place for adaptation.

Second, we must place a stronger focus on nature-based solutions in updated Nationally Determined Contributions.

Third, we must unite the nature and climate agendas.

Another important point I wish to make is that 2021 will be a pivotal year for climate action. It is when much of the work to set our post-pandemic course is taking place.

It is the year of the delayed climate COP. It is the year to agree on a global post-2020 biodiversity framework. And it is the start of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. 2021 must mark the beginning of the era of action. And it must be the year where science reigns supreme.

To conclude, I congratulate all the contributors to the first Working Group Report and the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs for their leadership.

Thanks to the IPCC Chair for his support to the Co-Chairs, WGI Bureau, and the authors.

And to the IPCC secretariat and Technical Support Unit of the Working Group I for their excellent collaboration in arranging this virtual session.

And my sincere thanks to the WMO for their ongoing support of the IPCC process.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations, and I look forward to the release of the Working Group I report as well as the rest of the IPCC reports in the coming months.

Together, they will help galvanize the action we need to protect the world – especially the most vulnerable people and countries – from the impact of climate change.

Thank you.