

Remarks by Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UN Environment at the press conference presenting the Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report.

Half measures will not halve emissions

Abdalah Mokssit, Secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Prof. Hoesung Lee, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, members of the scientific community and the media

This, the third report from the IPCC during the current assessment cycle, completes the full picture of the climate crisis facing humanity. And it is not a pretty picture.

The first two IPCC reports told us that climate change is here, now, and causing huge disruption to the natural world and human wellbeing. This report tells us that we are still not doing enough to cut greenhouse gas emissions, confirming the findings of UNEP's 2021 Emissions Gap Report.

The last two decades saw the highest increase in emissions in human history, even though we know how much trouble we are in. The next decade cannot follow the same pattern if we are to hold global warming this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Half-measures won't halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, which is what we need to do. We need to go all in.

The IPCC tells us that we have the knowledge and technology to get it done. Through a rapid shift from fossil fuels to renewables and alternative fuels. Through moving from deforestation to restoration. Through backing nature in our landscapes, oceans and cities. Through transforming our cities into green and clean spaces. And through behaviour change to address the demand side of the equation.

Now such an opportunity presented itself when countries rolled out stimulus packages to help kick-start economies as we faced the COVID-19 pandemic. But on the "green scorecard", we failed – loud and clear. Once again, we find ourselves with an opportunity as countries seek out alternative sources of energy. Immediate needs must be met, to heat homes and keep lights on. But as we rethink hydrocarbon suppliers and our dependency on fossil fuels, the solution has to be in kick-starting the transition to renewable and cleaner sources of energy.

The next climate COP must bring more-ambitious climate pledges and long-term strategies for 2050 to help drive such shifts. But increased action must begin this year, not next year. This month, not next month. Today, not tomorrow. Otherwise, we will, as the UN Secretary-General put it, continue to sleepwalk into climate catastrophe.