

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement during the Press conference to present the Working Group I contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director United Nations Environment Programme

9 August 2021

Thank you to the IPCC, the authors and everyone involved in this latest climate alarm. Your work is particularly appreciated given the disruption COVID-19 has caused.

You have been telling us for over three decades of the dangers of allowing the planet to warm. The world listened, but it didn't hear. The world listened, but it didn't act strongly enough. As a result, climate change is a problem that is here, now. Nobody is safe. And it is getting worse faster.

We must treat climate change as an immediate threat, just as we must treat the connected crises of nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste, as immediate threats. As recently noted by the IPCC and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), climate change exacerbates already grave risks to biodiversity and natural and managed habitats. Ecosystem degradation damages nature's ability to reduce the force of climate change. And as the IPCC Working Group I report reminds us, reducing greenhouse gases will not only slow climate change, but improve air quality. It is all connected.

It's time to get serious because every tonne of CO₂ emission adds to global warming. As the UNFCCC noted last week, just 110 of 191 Parties to the Convention have submitted new or updated NDCs ahead the next climate COP. Governments need to make their net-zero plans an integral part of their Paris commitments. They must finance and support developing countries to adapt to climate change, as promised in the Paris Agreement. They must decarbonize faster. Restore natural systems that draw down carbon. Cut out methane and other greenhouse gases faster. Get behind the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol to cut the climate impact of the cooling industry. And every business, every investor, every citizen needs to play their part.

We can't undo the mistakes of the past. But this generation of political and business leaders, this generation of conscious citizens, can make things right. This generation can make the systemic changes that will stop the planet warming, help everyone adapt to the new conditions and create a world of peace, prosperity and equity.

Climate change is here, now. But we are also here, now. And if we don't act, who will?