

UN report spells out feasible ways to defuse climate 'time bomb'

It shows options, many of them affordable, to cut greenhouse gas emissions

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The United Nations on Monday released a "survival guide for humanity" after nearly 200 nations agreed on the wording of a major report that represents the most complete picture of climate change science in nearly a decade.

The Synthesis Report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) brings together the findings of its six major reports since 2018, and sets out the immense challenges humanity faces from the accelerating impacts of climate change, including more

record-breaking weather disasters and quickening sea level rise.

But, crucially, the report shows there are many feasible and effective options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, and that these options are already available, and many are affordable.

"Today's IPCC report is a how-to guide to defuse the climate time-bomb. It is a survival guide for humanity," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at the release of the report in Switzerland.

The report, approved during a week-long session in Interlaken, brings into "sharp focus" the losses and damage that humanity is already experiencing, hitting the

most vulnerable people and ecosystems especially hard.

"Climate justice is crucial because those who have contributed least to climate change are being disproportionately affected," said Dr Aditi Mukherji, one of the 93 authors of the Synthesis Report.

"Almost half of the world's population live in regions that are highly vulnerable to climate change. In the last decade, deaths from floods, droughts and storms were 15 times higher in highly vulnerable regions," she added.

The IPCC says deep emissions cuts are needed this decade to have any chance of limiting global average warming to 1.5 deg C above pre-industrial levels – a level beyond

which risks far greater climate-linked impacts.

IPCC's chair, Dr Hoesung Lee, said that three to six times the current amount of financing will be needed to put the world on a pathway to a safer, more equitable and sustainable future for all.

"It's not just about the quantity of money. It's also about how and where it is allocated. Vulnerable areas just don't have enough money to fund the urgent need to adapt to climate change."

The report is also crucial in guiding discussions at the UN's COP28 climate talks in Dubai at the end of 2023.

"The report is the last comprehensive science assessment of climate change by the IPCC for the next five to six years. By then, we'd know if the key 2030 goal of halving global greenhouse gas emissions on the path to net-zero emissions around 2050 can be attained," said associate professor of science, technology and society Winston Chow at Singapore Management University.

The world has already warmed 1.1 deg C above pre-industrial levels and could reach 1.5 deg C in a decade, based on present emissions levels.

But the cure is already known and within humanity's grasp, said the IPCC.

Rapidly scaling up green energy investments and spending on adapting to climate impacts, especially in the poorest and most vul-

nerable nations, will have long-lasting benefits that will reduce future losses for people and ecosystems.

The solution, said the IPCC, lies in climate-resilient development – integrating measures to adapt to climate change with actions to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions in ways that provide wider benefits.

For instance, many steps to cut emissions would have significant health benefits by lowering air pollution, promoting active mobility, and encouraging shifts to healthier diets.

The report details a range of emissions-cutting steps – costing US\$100 (S\$135) – or less – per tonne of greenhouse gases to reduce global emissions by half by 2030 on 2019 emissions levels. Wind and solar are by far the cheapest and achieve the largest cuts. But other steps include reducing methane emissions from the fossil fuel industry, more energy-efficient buildings, and cutting food waste.

US\$100 per tonne is about the level of carbon prices in the European Union's mandatory emissions trading scheme, which covers around 40 per cent of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions.

"Let's hope we make the right choices," Dr Lee said. "Because the ones we make now, and in the next few years, will reverberate around the world, for hundreds, possibly thousands of years."

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