Scientists warn 1.5°C climate change threshold could arrive by 2029



“Our message is a stark one,” Heck said. “Collective government action on climate change has stalled for the fifth consecutive year.” Efforts to speed up the shift away from fossil fuels have been negated by new oil and gas drilling projects and governments that are “delaying, weakening or rolling back their climate policies.”

Even under the most optimistic scenario, assuming full implementation of existing policies and promises, global temperatures would rise 3.4° Fahrenheit above preindustrial levels by 2100, an increase climate scientists consider extremely dangerous.

While there has been progress on developing renewable energy sources, the “brutal truth is that these positive developments

have not yet added up to bend the curve fast enough," said Niklas Höhne, a researcher with The New Climate Institute. Developing new oil and gas projects is a bit like discovering your food is burning and then turning up the stove instead of turning it off, he added.

Getting into the specifics of the current negotiations at COP31 surrounding global renewable goals, he noted that conference co-hosts Turkey and Australia have so far opposed including the word "clean" in connection with electrification targets.

"It's very hard to understand, and the only explanation I can think of is their interest in fossil fuels," Höhne said.

Australia is one of the world's biggest coal exporters, and Turkey is a major coal consumer, with its power sector still highly dependent on the most climate-damaging fossil fuel. Even as they host this year's climate conference, neither country has offered any specific plans to transition away from fossil fuels.

Bill Hare, the CEO of Climate Analytics, called out wealthy, developed countries for their lack of leadership on climate action, noting that European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen failed to mention anything about transitioning away from fossil fuels during her speech this week at COP31.

"Governments … at this COP have a stark choice," Hare said. If they continue supporting fossil fuels, "it would consign humanity and our ecosystems to insurmountable economic damage and irretrievable loss."

Bob Berwyn is an Austria-based reporter who has covered climate science and international climate policy for more than a decade. Previously, he reported on the environment, endangered species and public lands for several Colorado newspapers, and also worked as editor and assistant editor at community newspapers in the Colorado Rockies.

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