The new IPCC report makes the case for strengthening EU climate policy

Embargoed until the publication of the IPCC's summary for policy-makers is published
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Political consensus was achieved at COP21 in Paris, when all countries agreed to "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre- industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre- industrial levels." A new threshold for avoiding the worst impacts and damages from climate change was set. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was tasked to provide a special report on 1.5°C of global warming and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways.

The 1.5°C aspirational goal was adopted, because it was a matter of survival for many low-lying island states and coastal regions. Already at the current 1°C warming we can witness extreme weather events happening more frequently and severely – also in the EU as this summer showed.

The IPCC report released today indicates clearly:

- The risks of climate change at 1.5°C are significantly smaller than at 2°C. This applies to impacts on health, crop yields, fisheries, water stress, biodiversity, sea level rise and the economy as a whole. Marine ice sheet instability in Antarctica and irreversible loss of the Greenland ice sheet could lead to multi-metre sea level rise and the threshold for this could lie between 1.5 and 2°C warming.
- The economic benefits of limiting warming to 1.5°C are huge. Limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C would save 1.5–2.0% of Gross World Product (GWP) by mid-century and 3.5% of GWP by end-of-century (not including long-term sea level rise impacts) and also has been estimated to result in co-benefits of 0.5–0.6% of GWP due to reductions in air pollution. The "costs" are actually investments in avoiding those damages and improving infrastructure, health, geopolitical stability and resilience.
- Humanity has the means to limit climate change and build a more sustainable and resilient future. It is still possible to meet the 1.5°C limit with ambitious policies in all sectors. It will also be much easier to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in a 1.5°C world.
- Sticking to the current 2030 country pledges (NDC's), prepared a year before the Paris Agreement was adopted, would make the 1.5°C goal infeasible.

In light of these findings, the only logical and responsible reaction for the EU and its Member States would be to make their policies consistent with a 1.5°C scenario, delivering on their Paris commitment and aiming to avoid the most severe damage globally and domestically.

The IPCC report shows that for limiting warming to 1.5°C global greenhouse gas emissions have to be net zero around 2070. To allow poor countries more time, the EU would have to reach that point earlier, i.e. net-zero by 2050. Even for a "well below 2°C" scenario, a 95% greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2050 would be an appropriate goal and this means a very significant departure from the current policy track that is based on an 80% reduction by 2050. Under both pathways, it is essential that additional emission reductions occur over the next decade – especially in the transport and energy sector. Hence, increasing the EU's 2030 reduction target to a range of 55-60% compared to 1990 becomes a necessity. Using the 400 billion Euros spent annually on fossil fuel imports could be a good starting point to trigger investments at scale.

Tomorrow, the Environment Council has the opportunity to back a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions goal by 2050 and state clearly that the EU is intending to strengthen its 2030 targets before next year's UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' climate summit in September. International partners and European civil society expect no less in terms of EU leadership on the Paris Agreement.

This statement is signed by 21 EU scientists and experts on climate change:

Aurélien Barrau, University Grenoble-Alpes, Laboratory for Subatomic Physics and Cosmology, French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)

Prof. Kornelis Blok, Professor of Energy Systems Analysis at Delft University of Technology and lead author for the 3rd, 4th and 6th Assessment Report of the IPCC

Philippe Busquin, European Commissioner for Research and Development in 1999-2004

Patrick Criqui, French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Grenoble Applied Economics Laboratory, University Grenoble-Alpes

Prof. Olivier De Schutter, Professor at UCLouvain and Co-Chair, International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food)

Neven Duic, professor at University of Zagreb, president of International Centre for Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems

Gael Giraud, chief economist of the French Development Agency, senior researcher at French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)

Professor Dame Anne Glover FRS PRSE, University of Strathclyde and President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh

Alain Grandjean, economist, member of the Scientific Council of the Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme

Prof. Joyeeta Gupta, Professor of Environment and Development in the Global South Governance and Inclusive Development (GID), University of Amsterdam

Florence Habets, senor scientist at French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and President of the scientific Council of the Seine Normandy Basin Committee

Michael Jacobs, Director, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Commission on Economic Justice

Catherine Jeandel, research Director for oceanography at French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)

Jean Jouzel, former vice chair of IPCC working group I

Sir David King FRS, Affiliate Partner, SYSTEMIQ Limited, London, Munich & Jakarta and Senior Strategy Adviser to the President of Rwanda

Bert Metz, Fellow European Climate Foundation, Former co-chair IPCC Working Group III

Prof. Chris Rapley CBE, Professor of Climate Science, University College London, Department of Earth Sciences

Katherine Richardson, Professor, Ph.D. at Center for Macroecology, Evolution and Climate (CMEC), Natural History Museum of Denmark and Leader of the Sustainablity Science Centre, University of Copenhagen

Prof. Dr. Diana Ürge-Vorsatz, Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy, Central European University

Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, professor of climate and environmental science at the Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, former IPCC Vice-chair

Anders Wijkman, Co-president of the Club of Rome and chair, Climate-KIC