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Sergio Ferrari

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The planet on fire: The hottest year in history is approaching and the Arctic is melting rapidly

The planet burns. Cooling it down would only be a matter of globally agreed political will. Mission as difficult as the same modification of the prevailing productive course. The slogan that prevails seems to be "nothing new under the sun and let's continue playing with fire".



Not by acquaintance ceases to be less dramatic. The planet is burning and the "hellish" deadlines are shortened day by day in the face of the real indifference of those in power. The second week of April, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), based in Geneva, reported that there is a 50% chance that in one of the next five years the average temperature of the planet will exceed by 1.5°C the pre-industrial indices (1850-1900).



Time is up. Photo United Nations

If realized, this increase in temperature would thus mark a point of global warming of no return and a slap in the face to the Paris Agreement of December 12, 2015, which entered into force in November 2016. [WMO](#) is the specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to international cooperation and coordination with regard to the state and behaviour of the atmosphere, its interaction with land and oceans, the weather and climate it generates, and the consequent distribution of water resources.



The Arctic region among the most affected by global warming. Photo-Swisslatin

According to the WMO statement of 9 May, there is a 93% chance that at least one of the years of the period between 2022 and 2026 will become the warmest ever recorded, thus displacing 2016 from the top spot.

In its report on the *State of the World's Climate in 2021*, to be published the third week of May, the WMO deepens the balance of last year. According to the WMO, consecutive episodes of the La Niña phenomenon at the beginning and end of 2021 caused a reduction

in global temperatures. However, this global cooling effect is only provisional and does not reverse the long-term global warming trend. On the other hand, if another El Niño episode were to occur this year, it would cause an immediate rebound in temperatures, as it did in 2016.

More than certain forecasts

The statement by the United Nations climate agency is based *on the* findings of the [*Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update*](#), prepared by the United Kingdom Meteorological Office, WMO's reference centre for such global temperature projections. That Meteorological Office also forecasts by more than 90% the probability that the average temperature of the five-year period 2022-2026 exceeds that of the period 2017-2021.



Drought in southern Africa: the worst is yet to come. photo Feisal Omar, archives REUTERS

In addition, climate prediction groups from Spain, Germany, Canada, China, the United States, Japan, Australia, Sweden, Norway and Denmark participated in the preparation of this report. This crossing of forecasts prepared by specialized entities from different regions of the world allows us to arrive at more accurate calculations. On the other hand, this multinational collaboration is accompanied (and in some ways certified) by the [World Climate Research Programme, which defines](#) itself as "the only longest-running initiative dedicated exclusively to the coordination of international climate research". In fact, it is a

program that brings together internationally renowned climatologists and uses the best state-of-the-art climate center prediction systems in the world.

This Bulletin indicates that for each year between 2022 and 2026, the average annual surface temperature is predicted to be around 1.1°C to 1.7°C higher than pre-industrial levels.

Accelerated worsening

In 2015, the probability that at some point global warming would exceed pre-industrial levels by 1.5°C was almost zero, but since then it has not stopped increasing. While for the period 2017 to 2021 the probability of exceeding the indicated threshold was 10%, for the period from 2022 to 2026 it has increased by almost 50%.



The impact of climate change on children's rights

In the same vein, last April the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said in a statement issued in Geneva that "the coming years are critical." "If we want to limit global warming to 1.5°C," he added, "this is the time; it's now or never... Without an immediate and profound reduction in emissions in all sectors, it will be impossible."

According to the analysis of these specialists, the scenarios that are evaluated to limit warming to approximately 1.5°C, imply "that greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale reach their peak before 2025, at the latest", and are reduced by 43%, in 2030. Even if this happens, they argue, it is almost inevitable that this temperature threshold will be temporarily exceeded, "but we could get back below it by the end of the century."

Those assessments are part of the SUMMARY for Policymakers of IPCC Working Group III: *Climate Change 2022: Climate Change Mitigation*, approved on 4 April 2022 by its 195 Member States, in a two-week virtual meeting. The report is the third installment of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (EI6), which will be completed by the end of 2022.



Drought is a daily reality and increasing Dry zone of Chile. Photo Gabriel Lindoso Greenpeace

However, and although essential information is not lacking, the decisions taken by governments remain timid and incongruous, as was proven once again, for example, at the last SUMMIT of the UNITED Nations COP 26, in Scotland, in November last year. States, especially the most powerful (which are the most polluting) do not take enough steps to unblock the already explosive drama of global warming. A fundamental change of the climate paradigm would force them to confront the very essence of the global hegemonic system of production and the dilemma, no less essential, of growth versus degrowth.

Concerned meteorologists

Petteri Taalas, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization, commenting on the worrying projections that were released this week, was categorical: "We are, remarkably, closer to temporarily exceeding the lower limit of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change." "This threshold of 1.5°C is not a random figure, but indicates the point

at which the effects of climate will be increasingly harmful not only to people, but to the entire planet."

The Paris Agreement sets long-term goals to help nations substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the globe and thus keep the global temperature rise in this century below 2°C, while continuing maximum efforts to limit that increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

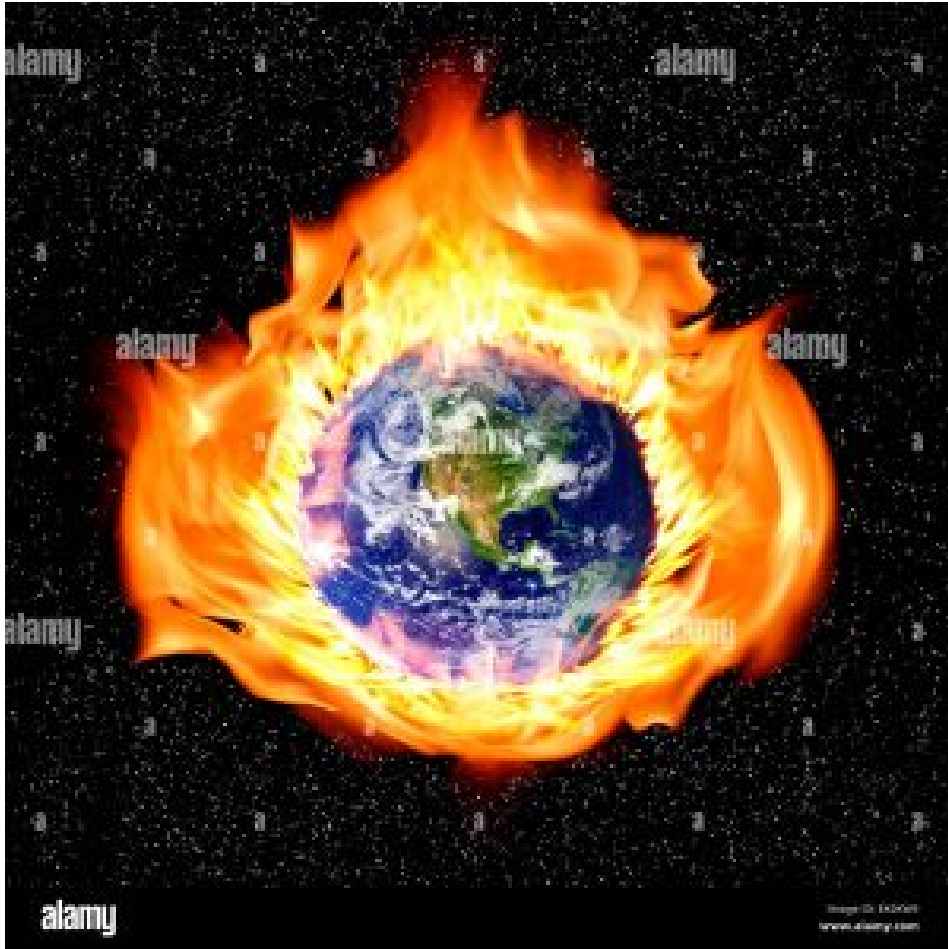


Carbon emissions produced by power plants are a significant factor in global warming
Photo ADB_ONU, Ariel Javellana

If greenhouse gas emissions do not cease, "temperatures will continue to rise," Taalas said. In parallel, the oceans will continue to warm and become more acidic; sea ice and glaciers will continue to melt; sea levels will rise and weather conditions will become increasingly extreme.

For his part, Leon Hermanson, an expert from the United Kingdom Met Office who prepared the Bulletin, said that, although in a given year that value of 1.5°C was exceeded, it would not mean that the symbolic threshold of the Paris Agreement had been exceeded, although "it would show that we are getting closer and closer to a situation in which the limit of 1.5°C could be exceeded for a long period of time".

According to various scientific studies, global warming is particularly inordinate in the Arctic. Taking into account projections for the next five prolonged northern hemisphere winters, the WMO Bulletin forecasts that temperature rise in the Arctic could be more than triple that of the global average between 1991 and 2020.



Moreover, the rainfall regime forecast for 2022 suggests a higher likelihood of drier conditions in southwestern Europe and southwestern North America, and higher rainfall in northern Europe, the Sahel, northeastern Brazil and Australia.

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Sergio Ferrari for La Pluma, May 16, 2022

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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