

**Remarks by UNEP's Deputy Executive Director, Ibrahim Thiaw  
45<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,  
28 March 2017, Guadalajara, Mexico**

There are probably a few things on the wish list of most people coming to Mexico.

1. Reveling in Guadalajara's special brand of mariachi music.
2. Soaking up in the incredible history of Chichén Itzá.
3. And drifting through the Great Mayan Reef, the second largest in the world.

Unfortunately, that wish list is about to shrink by a third. Because in just 30 years, we've lost about half of our reefs – the life support system for a quarter of all marine species.

Even if we were to magically stop global warming today, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia is already on course for a third deadly bleaching event and more than 90% of the world's corals could die by 2050.

That's bad news for the planet and for the half a billion other people whose jobs and communities depend on them.

- But when you also consider that while the population is increasing rapidly,
  - A third of the population is already living in countries hit by water stress,
  - And a third of our arable land has already been lost to erosion.
- Then it's clear that we risk fueling conflicts and swelling the stream of refugees.

Yet, incredibly, the worst thing about the situation is not that these problems are destroying the vital foundations of our food chain, our economy or our security.

The worst thing, is that they are just a few symptoms of a much bigger problem.

- One that too many people still think is somewhere off in the future.
- It's not. It's here. Now.

Every year sets new temperature records.

Just a few days ago Petteri Taalas<sup>1</sup>, the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization confirmed that 2016 was the warmest on record: 1.1 °C above the pre-industrial period and 0.06 °C above the previous record set in 2015. It was matched by equally alarming records for sea temperatures, Arctic sea-ice and carbon dioxide.

That could make the task seem too big to succeed or even to know where to start.

But we made this problem and we can fix it. What's more:

- We have a clear starting point: the Paris Agreement.
- We have a clear plan of attack: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- And we have the right tools at our disposal: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UN Framework on Climate Change and a growing green economy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/climate-breaks-multiple-records-2016-global-impacts>

The degree to which both public and private stakeholders have committed to the Paris Agreement is unprecedented and the momentum unstoppable.

Investment in renewable energy has grown by a factor of six in a decade to almost \$300 billion dollars.

Last year alone, renewables accounted for:

- More than 90% of new power generation capacity in Europe.
- And more new jobs in China and the US than the oil and gas industry.

So, we need to build on that with three clear steps.

**1. First, we need to present more scientific findings and to do it in a way that is easily accessible for policy makers, the private sector and the general public.**

Mexico is a real champion in this area, having recovered the climate change process with the Cancun Agreements, including:

- the largest ever collective effort to reduce emissions
- the most comprehensive package ever agreed to help developing nations
- And a clear schedule to review scientific evaluation of progress

After previous setbacks, that put us firmly on track for the Paris Agreement.

**2. So, second, we need more of that kind of leadership to strengthen and accelerate the impact of the science-policy interface.**

Not only is that critical to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but it's a quality they have always demonstrated.

Almost 20 years ago ([1997](#)) the Panel's founding father, Professor Bolin was one of the first to say it wasn't safe to have more than 450 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the air. His ability to translate complex data into clear policies and actions is as relevant today as it was back then.

A robust authentication process remains essential, but is no longer sufficient for the pace of change facing decision makers. To preserve the credibility and the impact of the Panel's work, we also need to make the science-policy interface fast, transparent and accessible.

**3. Which brings me to the third step – the work UN Environment must deliver to ensure that happens.**

With our colleagues at the World Meteorological Organization, we have been co-hosts of the Panel since 1988.

Yes, there are financial difficulties that must be acknowledged and resolved. But the Panel's work shaped and is central to delivering one of the most important negotiations in history: The Paris Agreement.

The Panel's work is the driving force behind much of our own. But it also shapes political opinion, engages the private sector and delivers tangible benefits around the world. That is worth fighting to protect.

So, on behalf of UN Environment, I can assure you that we will do even better.

- We will use our convening power and our communication outreach to get robust science to the right people as quickly and easily as possible using facilities like the IPCC Library.

- We will build capacity in developing countries, using global collaborating centres like the Climate Technology Center and Network or the newly established Global Adaptation Centre in Rotterdam
- And we will strengthen collaboration around the Global Environment Outlook, which covers climate change and the wider issues underpinning sustainable development.

I can't promise that we have the precise solution – or even that there is one. But I can promise that we will give our full support to the Panel and that together, we will move faster in the right direction.

Ladies and gentlemen, 20 years ago Professor Bolin said:

*"What we know now is sufficient for action now. There is no excuse for politicians if they wait until all the scientific debate is over before acting. It is better to be roughly right now, rather than precisely right later."*

Well, the scientific debate is over.

The carbon count is 400 and climbing.

And if you want to know what that means, you don't need a science degree. You just need to talk to:

- The people in Cancun or Cairns watching their futures fade with the coral.
- The people in Louisiana becoming America's first climate refugees.
- The people in Tehran being hit by dust storms nearly one day in three.
- The people starving across the Horn of Africa.
- Or people in Beijing choking, because stagnant winter weather caused by melting in the Arctic is turning the pollution problem, into a catastrophe.

What we know about their suffering is definitely sufficient for action now.

It's up to us to ensure that action is fast enough to make a difference.  
Thank you.