



## Six Decades Left to Eliminate All CO2 Emissions, UN Says

By Alex Morales November 19, 2014 The world must halt fossil-fuel emissions within the next six decades to stave off irreversible impacts that may stem from a warming planet, the United

Nations said. Sometime between 2055 and 2070, any carbon dioxide produced as the result of burning oil, coal and natural gas should be compensated with measures that suck the gas out of the atmosphere, the UN Environment Program said today in its annual "Emissions Gap" report. Those may include planting trees or using carbon-capture technology.

The findings describe the level of carbon emissions that the UN says can be managed and keep the planet on track to cap warming of 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) since the industrial revolution. The International Energy Agency estimates that based on current trends the world may warm 3.6 degrees by the end of the century, raising the risk of more violent storms, droughts and rising sea levels. "An increase in global temperature is proportional to the build-up of long-lasting greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, especially CO2," UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said. "Taking more action now reduces the need for more extreme action later to stay within safe emission limits."



The report is meant to guide envoys from 190 nations meeting in December in Peru, [Eduardo Agosta Scarel, O. Carm. will represent the Carmelite NGO] where the UN is spearheading negotiations to rein in greenhouse gases blamed for damaging the atmosphere. The UN is seeking a deal by the end of 2015 that would curb emissions in all nations. UNEP's figures include a carbon budget that shows if emissions continue at current levels for another 20 years, damaging temperature increases are more likely than not. Exceeding the budget "would increase the risk of severe, pervasive, and in some cases irreversible climate change impacts," UNEP said. In the last two decades of the century, the globe should aim for "net zero," applying the carbon-neutrality concept to all greenhouse gases, including methane and nitrous oxide, it said. The estimate of the so-called "emissions gap" between projected annual CO2 output in 2020 and what's needed to stay on a 2-degree pathway is unchanged from last year at about 8 to 10 gigatons (8 to 10 billion tons). That means in the past year, countries have made no pledges to substantially cut greenhouse gases in the next five years.

"Unfortunately, the world is not currently headed in the right direction," Andrew Steer, chief executive officer of the World Resources Institute in Washington, said in the UNEP statement. "With the growing momentum for global climate action, we have the opportunity to close the emissions gap and keep within the limits of what the science says is needed to prevent the worst impacts of climate change."

The U.S. and China, the two biggest polluters, made joint pledges to reduce greenhouse gases after 2020. They didn't make changes to their efforts in the nearer term. A level of 44 gigatons is required in 2020, which is lower than the 54 gigatons estimated in 2012, UNEP said. Under a "business-as-usual" trajectory, CO2 output would instead rise to 59 gigatons in 2020, UNEP said. If countries enact their reduction pledges in full, that would fall to 52 to 54 gigatons, which is still above the needed level, it said. UNEP projects the gap will widen further to 14 to 17 gigatons by 2030. That can be closed with measures including energy efficiency improvements to homes and factories, which may shave as many as 3.3 gigatons off annual emissions by 2030, according to UNEP. "It's cheaper and easier to deal with climate change now than to wait for it to get worse," said Adair Turner, a member of the House of Lords, who advises the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit. "Even delaying significant emission cuts to 2030 would put up the cost of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by almost 50%."