
2017 among three hottest on record: UN

BONN: This year will be among the three hottest on record in a new sign of man-made climate change that is aggravating “extraordinary weather” such as hurricanes, droughts and floods, the United Nations said on Monday.

The UN report is meant to guide almost 200 nations meeting from Nov 6-17 here in Germany, to try to bolster the 2015 Paris climate pact despite a planned US pullout.

“2017 is set to be in top three hottest years,” the UN’s World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said, projecting average surface temperatures would be slightly less sweltering than a record 2016 and roughly level with 2015, the previous warmest.

And 2017 would be the hottest on record without a natural El Nino event that releases heat from the Pacific Ocean about once every five years, it said. El Nino boosted global temperatures in both 2015 and 2016.

“We have witnessed extraordinary weather,” WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement of 2017, pointing to severe hurricanes in the Atlantic and Caribbean, temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius in Pakistan, Iran and Oman, monsoon floods in Asia and drought in East Africa.

“Many of these events and detailed scientific studies will determine exactly how many bear the tell-tale sign of climate change caused by increased greenhouse gas concentrations from human activities,” he said.

The Bonn meeting is due to work on a “rule book” for the Paris Agreement, which seeks to end the fossil fuel era in the second half of the century by shifting the world economy to cleaner energies such as wind and solar power.

“These findings underline the rising risks to people, economies and the very fabric of life on Earth if we fail to get on track with the aims and ambitions of the Paris Agreement,” said Patricia Espinosa, head of the UN climate change secretariat which hosts the Bonn talks.

Chinese plot

US President Donald Trump, who once dismissed global warming as a Chinese plot to undermine the US economy, plans to withdraw from the Paris pact and focus instead on bolstering the US fossil fuel industry. China and the United States are the top emitters.

The WMO said average surface temperatures in 2017 were about 1.1C above the pre-industrial era in data from January to September, nearing the most ambitious limit of 1.5C set by the Paris Agreement.

Many scientists say the 1.5C limit is already slipping out of reach because of insufficient action by governments to cut emissions so far.

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