

UN reports that the earth will “overshoot” the 1.5 degree warming limit

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This year is trending toward being one of if not the hottest in recorded history. The effects have been dramatic across much of the globe, with intense heat and drought in some areas and torrential rain and flooding in others. The impacts on humans, plants and animals have been severe in many cases. The question arises, “is this just a random fluctuation in weather, or the result of human-caused global warming?”

A recently released report prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme, titled *Limiting Overshoot*, presents the conclusion that the earth is on track to exceed the global average temperature threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above the preindustrial average that was agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate accord. A total of 195 countries signed the accord, including the United States. The US withdrew from the accord during Trump’s first term. Furthermore, the surpassing of 1.5 degrees will occur in the immediate future if it has not already happened. Reaching this disastrous milestone is the result of the uncontrolled emission of greenhouse gases due to the burning of coal, oil and gas.

The European climate service Copernicus reports that August was the hottest ever recorded—16.96 degrees Celsius (62.53 degrees Fahrenheit), breaching the preindustrial average by more than 1.5 degrees. It remains to be seen whether this holds true for the year. In any case, the Paris accord limit has effectively been breached.

The consequences of this insane trajectory have already begun to be felt during this northern hemisphere summer in the form of extended and repeated heatwaves, droughts and floods, among other extreme weather phenomena. Even if greenhouse gas emissions were immediately curtailed and strict methods of carbon extraction from the atmosphere implemented, the catastrophic disruption of the earth’s climate due to global warming would take many years to reverse, at best.

The prospect is for increased death rates due to excessive heat, severe impacts to agriculture leading to food shortages and even famine, the spread of infectious disease, huge wildfires (which pump more carbon and noxious emissions

into the atmosphere) and inundation of extensive coastal areas due to the rising sea level, all of which are already occurring. These and other effects of global warming would likely cause massive population displacements, resulting in the extreme amplification of already tragic conflicts.

The negative effects of global warming on human health are also being felt. This summer’s repeated heat waves in Europe caused a significant increase in heat-related deaths.

In the worst-case scenario, changes will have occurred which initiate self-reinforcing processes that are nearly impossible to reverse. This could include the loss of the albedo effect through the melting away of large masses of white ice in glaciers and the massive ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. This refers to the role of these permanent ice formations in reflecting a large amount of solar radiation back into space. These vast expanses of ice and snow were accumulated over millions of years and would be difficult or impossible to recreate over any realistic time frame. Instead, the newly exposed darker soil and rock would absorb increasing amounts of solar radiation which would then be released back into the earth’s atmosphere as heat, thus creating a self-reinforcing (vicious cycle) loop of global warming, accelerating this process even more. The recent catastrophic flash flood in Nepal is just one example of the devastation that will be unleashed.

The correlation between the increased emission of greenhouse gases due to industrialization and global warming is clearly illustrated by the intensification of the severe weather pattern known as El Niño over the past few decades.

Recently published research (“Recent strengthening of eastern Pacific ENSO in the last millennium paleorecord,” *Science*, August 27, 2026) regarding a recurring weather pattern that has been observed for hundreds of years, known as El Niño (aka El Niño–Southern Oscillation or ENSO), strongly supports the conclusion that its intensification is correlated with the advent of industrialization. El Niño is caused by periodic warming in the eastern Pacific Ocean. This results in marked

intensification of severe weather patterns that travel eastward around the world. We are currently experiencing the development of a new El Niño, which is amplifying already severe weather. It is predicted to continue into next year.

The published study utilizes data from the geochemistry of Galápagos coral skeletons across the past millennium. The data reveal that the amplitude of temperature fluctuations in the eastern Pacific since 1850 increased by 36.5 percent between 1990 and 2010, compared to the 1,000 years before 1850. The increase has been 16 percent, compared to just the 1851-1982 period, indicating an acceleration. This correlates well with the increased in strong El Niño events over the past century. The data indicate a strong link between rising sea temperatures resulting from industrialization and intensifying El Niños and furthermore that this process is accelerating.

The World Meteorological Organization predicts that the current El Niño “will intensify into a very strong event in the coming months, with big impacts on rainfall and temperature patterns and associated risks of floods, drought and extreme heat ...” and that the effects will continue into 2027. This extreme or perhaps unprecedented El Niño is being referred to by scientists as a Super or even “Godzilla” El Niño.

The authors of the UN report seek to soft-pedal its impact by proposing that the really bad consequences of global warming will be felt when the earth reaches an annual average of 2 degrees Celsius (3.8 degrees Fahrenheit) above the preindustrial temperature, but not at 1.5 degrees above it. This is a “feel good” measure to somewhat blunt the impact of their findings. The report predicts that, “the most optimistic scenario has warming peaking at 1.8 C (3.2 F) around mid-century if countries pursue ambitious climate goals, but that governments’ current policies should push temperatures to 2.6 C (4.7 F) above pre-industrial levels by 2100.” Separate research has shown that the rate of global warming is accelerating. If one or more of the self-reinforcing processes begin, the consequences could come even sooner.

In reality, the accelerating rate of warming hardly makes a difference. The effects already being felt will only intensify in the immediate future, unless drastic measures are implemented as soon as possible.

To reduce the likelihood of the worst-case scenario coming to pass, a massive, coordinated world-wide effort must be initiated immediately. Scientists have, for decades, warned about the dangers of global warming due to the increasing emissions of greenhouse gases during the industrial era. However, the feeble and totally inadequate measures taken so far have clearly done nothing to slow, much less reverse the dangerous effects of global warming. Indeed, the rapidly

deepening capitalist crises is, among other things, prompting the ruling oligarchs to drastically reduce or eliminate altogether efforts to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

This is, perhaps, especially blatant on the part of the Trump administration. It is drastically reducing the resources which have previously allocated to environmental and human welfare efforts to build up the military and domestic repressive forces and to further increase the wealth of the already filthy-rich oligarchy. At the same time, Trump is promoting the increased production of oil and coal. And by unleashing war on Iran, now spreading throughout the Middle East, Washington is unleashing one of the most potent sources of emissions, military violence.

The UN’s report’s optimistic scenario advocates a strategy of an “overshoot, peak and decline pathway,” conceding that things will get worse before they supposedly get better. This would involve having policymakers “‘prepare for and navigate a future’ in which the globe crosses that limit [1.5 degrees C.] and then corrects course and cools temperatures.” In the meantime, the UN report advocates “adaptation,” which would involve undertaking of measures to mitigate the adverse effects of global warming. Under present political and economic conditions, this scenario is a dangerous fantasy.

The root cause of the total failure to effectively halt and reverse global warming is capitalism. The technological and social changes needed to avoid an otherwise inevitable catastrophe are already well known and feasible: elimination of greenhouse gas emissions by implementing a massive shift to renewable energy sources being the most important. The resources to accomplish this are available but are currently being squandered on preparation for world war and the enrichment of the already filthy rich ruling capitalist oligarchy. This tiny minority will employ all means at its disposal to defend its privileges. Only the combined power of the united world working class, armed with a socialist program and led by a revolutionary party, can avert this impending tragedy.



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