



## We need to take urgent action to save the planet

Climate change is already here and we need to take urgent action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions more substantially. Why? As David Attenborough pointed out at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting in Poland, December 2018 **“it threatens the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world”** sooner than we expected.

At the IPCC Paris Summit in 2016, nearly 200 governments agreed to take action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emission. It aimed to limit the global temperature so it will not rise higher than 2C degree of the pre-industrial level (1850-1900) and the destruction of our living planet may be avoided. Since then the gap between science and politics has widened. Donald Trump has promised to withdraw the USA from the accord.

Meanwhile the climate breakdown is gathering pace. In 2018 the droughts in Argentina and Cape town, floods in Kerala in India and Japan, Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines and China and the wildfires in California cost \$1 – 7bn damage each, as well as killing, injuring and displacing millions of people. All these climate disasters are clearly scientifically attributable to human induced climate change.

The global temperature in 2018 is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest temperature on record. The present global temperature is just 1C above the pre-industrial level; the prediction of the effect of climate change at 2C rise is our non-

survival. That is why IPCC launched a special report in October 2018 to limit global warming to just 1.5C above the pre-industrial level by 2030.

Going above 1.5C will increase the level of damage to our planet by a much higher sea level rise, droughts and floods, drops in food production, mass migration, and faster species extinction. At 1.5C the proportion of the global population exposed to water stress could be 50% lower than at 2C. Food scarcity would be less of a problem. At 2C, extremely hot days in the northern hemisphere like last summer would become more severe and common causing an increase in heat-related deaths and more forest fires. But the greatest difference would be to nature. Insects and plants are likely to lose half more their habitat at 2C compared with 1.5C. Corals would be 99% lost at 2C rise.

**The good news is that it is affordable and feasible to limit temperature rise to 1.5C rather than 2C.** The solutions are out there; the report points to the need for action particularly in energy (getting away from fossil fuel), land use (reforesting), and curbing greenhouse gas emissions from industry and cities, including electrifying transport. But here is the real challenge: the window to achieve remaining below 1.5C is the next 12 years, and this will require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”.

What we need most is to have a global consent to tackle the problem. Unfortunately at the last IPCC meeting in Poland, countries such as the USA, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Australia and Brazil were unwilling to commit to a reduction in their CO<sub>2</sub> emission.

As individuals facing such a global challenge can we do something meaningful for the sake of our grandchildren?

“The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” Psalm 24 v1

Lim and Evelyn