

Only Seven Years Left for Global Climate Target: UN Panel Chief

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PARIS (AFP) - The head of the UN's Nobel-winning panel of climate scientists on Friday said only seven years remained for stabilising emissions of global-warming gases at a level widely considered safe.

Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), delivered the bleak warning at a gathering of European Union ministers where he pleaded with the EU to take the lead in global talks on tackling climate change.

The UN negotiations "must progress rapidly, otherwise I am afraid that not only future generations but even this generation will treat us as having been irresponsible," said Pachauri.

...He issued a stark warning that time was running out for dealing with the threat.

In the 20th century, the temperature had already risen on average by 0.74 degrees Celsius (1.32 degrees Fahrenheit), he said. The EU wants to limit the overall warming since pre-industrial times to 2 C (3.6 F), a goal that is shared by many scientists.

To do this, said Pachauri, "we would have to stabilise the greenhouse-gas concentration at more or less the level at which we are today." (...)But in order to do that, we have a window of opportunity of only seven years because emissions will have to peak by 2015 and reduce after that. We cannot permit a longer delay."

Pachauri also sounded a note of caution about the 2 C (3.6 F) figure, as evidence was mounting that climate change was accelerating faster than thought. Heatwaves and floods were increasing, and higher temperatures were having a far-reaching effect on glaciers and snowfall.

"The very wise target that the EU had set of 2.0 (C, 3.6 F) may need to be looked at once more, because the impacts are turning out to be more serious than we had estimated earlier," he said.

Talks are taking place under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for a new global pact after 2012, when the current provisions of the Kyoto Protocol run out. A major round of negotiations will take place in Poznan, Poland in December, with the climax scheduled in Copenhagen in December 2009.

[For "Yahoo News" article, see http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080704/sc_afp/euclimatewarmingun_080704140734;_ylt=Ah2Bb7S4RnobOKBHPWX3jxrAlMA) Information about news article discovered at the Energy Bulletin website (see <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/45768>).

Posted at "The IPCC Community Journal" on July 12, 2008.