

Durban Agreements a step towards a global agreement, but risk of exceeding 3°C-warming remains – scientists.

Durban—11 December 2011-- As the climate talks in Durban concluded tonight with a groundbreaking establishment of the Durban Platform to negotiate a new global agreement by 2015, scientists stated that the world continues on a pathway of over 3°C warming with likely extremely severe impacts, the Climate Action Tracker said today.

The agreement in Durban to establish a new body to negotiate a global agreement (Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action) by 2015 represents a major step forward. The Climate Action Tracker scientists stated, however, that the agreement will not immediately affect the emissions outlook for 2020 and has postponed decisions on further emission reductions. They warned that catching up on this postponed action will be increasingly costly.

The Climate Action Tracker estimates that global mean warming would reach about 3.5°C by 2100 with the current reduction proposals on the table. They are definitely insufficient to limit temperature increase to 2°C.

A warming over 3°C could bring the world close to several potential global-scale tipping points, such as:

- Possible dieback of the Amazon rainforest
- Corals reefs being irreversibly replaced by algae and sea grass
- Irreversible loss of the Greenland ice sheets of many centuries to thousands of years
- Risk of release of methane hydrates in ocean floor sediments further adding to the warming
- Permafrost thawing due to fast rising arctic temperatures

A depiction of the types of impacts likely from 1.5°C of warming, through 2°C and 3-4°C has been posted on the Climate Action Tracker website today.

The costs for adaptation and the residual damages from climate change will increase rapidly with warming. Approximate estimates indicate that the most extreme costs will be felt in West Africa and South Asia, with residual damage of 3.5% of regional GDP for 2°C warming and 5-6% for 3°C warming. With a 2°C warming, adaptation costs would be half those associated with a 3°C temperature rise.

The Climate Action Tracker today released an infographic to show the range of impacts that the world risks on a pathway to well over 3°C and beyond.

“What is positive in Durban is that governments have reopened the door to a legally binding global agreement involving the world’s major emitters, a door which many thought had been shut at the Copenhagen Conference in 2009,” said Bill Hare, Director of Climate Analytics.

“What remains to be done is to take more ambitious actions to reduced emissions, and until this is done we are still headed to over 3°C warming. There are still no new pledges on the table and the process agreed in Durban towards raising the ambition and increasing emission reductions is uncertain its outcome.”

“There are still options available to close the gap between current globally planned mitigation and what is needed to hold warming below 1.5 or 2°C - if action takes place fast,” said Niklas Höhne, Director Energy and Climate Policy at Ecofys. “Emission reduction options are rapidly diminishing.”

A full briefing paper is available on www.climateactiontracker.org.

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The Climate Action Tracker is an independent science-based assessment, which tracks the emission commitments and actions of countries. The website provides an up-to-date assessment of individual national pledges to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions

Climate Analytics

Climate Analytics is a non-profit organization based in Potsdam, Germany. It has been established to synthesize climate science and policy research that is relevant for international climate policy negotiations. It aims to provide scientific, policy and analytical support for Small Island States (SIDS) and the least developed country group (LDCs) negotiators, as well as non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders in the 'post-2012' negotiations. Furthermore, it assists in building in-house capacity within SIDS and LDCs.

www.climateanalytics.org

About Ecofys – Experts in Energy

Established in 1984 with the vision of achieving “sustainable energy for everyone”, Ecofys has become the leading expert in renewable energy, energy & carbon efficiency, energy systems & markets as well as energy & climate policies. The unique synergy between those areas of expertise is the key to its success. Ecofys creates smart, effective, practical and sustainable solutions for and with public and corporate clients all over the world. With offices in the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, China and the US, Ecofys employs over 250 experts dedicated to solving energy and climate challenges.

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Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

The PIK conducts research into global climate change and issues of sustainable development. Set up in 1992, the Institute is regarded as a pioneer in interdisciplinary research and as one of the world's leading establishments in this field. Scientists, economists and social scientists work together, investigating how the earth is changing as a system, studying the ecological, economic and social consequences of climate change, and assessing which strategies are appropriate for sustainable development.

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