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Testing the Reach of Warnings about Climate Change



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In early August 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*. The report highlights the long-known problems relating to land use, such as deforestation and agriculture, on climate change and vice versa.

For those who have been following and monitoring climate issues closely, this is hardly a new finding. That deforestation and land use change contribute greatly to greenhouse gas emissions is an established fact. The Climate Watch data recorded that between 1990 and 2014, agriculture, land use change and forestry combined were the second largest source of emissions after the energy sector.

The IPCC report also highlights the dilemma between conserving forests for the purposes of climate change mitigation and the potential negative consequences on food production. This, again, is a known reality since the tension between saving the planet and providing for human needs is central to the debates

and reluctance surrounding efforts to address climate change.

In October last year, in the lead up to the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, the IPCC released a *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*. The report advances that the Earth may get warmer by 1.5°C above pre-industrial level anytime between 2030 and 2050. The real emphasis of the report is we may only have 12 years left before hitting the 1.5°C mark. It is imperative for countries, more than ever, to make concerted efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow down the rate of global warming.

This seemingly alarming message, however, did not come as a big surprise to climate change observers. The Climate Tracker Action noted that emissions pathway based on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) pledge submitted as of November 2017 alone has 90 per cent likelihood to exceed 2°C by 2100. At the current going rate from the

time the 2015 Paris Agreement was signed, it is already projected that the world is going to miss the 2°C mark at the end of the century.

The latest reports undoubtedly contain better scientific facts and more rigorous analyses that render predictions and projections more certain compared to earlier climate-related reports. However, at its core, why does the IPCC repeat familiar messages? Considering that the primary audience of the reports is the policy-makers, this presents a puzzling phenomenon since governments have been sensitised to this issue since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

Addressing a lack of knowledge does not seem to be the main reason; rather maintaining the gravity of the problem provides a better explanation. Given its authoritative posi-

tion, the IPCC has the authority to raise alarms over climate concerns. Releasing reports on a regular basis can be translated as an effort to perpetually securitise climate issues by keeping them on top of the agenda. In addition, climate activists and other members of society use them as authoritative sources to pressure governments and the private sector to seriously combat climate problems.

While all these warning efforts are normatively justified, the real question is this: How far is their reach in effecting real behavioural transformations? At the time of writing, the prospect is rather gloomy. The release of the *Special Report on Climate Change and Land* ironically coincided with the incidences of blazing forests in different parts of the world including Brazil's Amazon,

Spain's Canary Islands, Alaska, and Siberia.

In Southeast Asia, the smoke of the forest fires that have been raging savagely in Sumatra since July 2019 have begun traversing national boundaries and reached Malaysia, and started making news headlines in Singapore early this month.

Have alarmist strategies fallen on deaf ears and reached their limits? Do we need to find a better way to communicate messages and encourage learning that will lead to true behavioural changes? Or is it in human and institutional natures to take time for transformations to take place? These are some follow-up questions that are worth further investigations.

Suggested Readings

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CLIMATE SECURITY

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Climate change: Big lifestyle changes 'needed to cut emissions'

Roger Harrabin,
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Commentary: Climate change in Singapore and what the future brings

Koh Tieh Yong,
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Small and medium-sized cities are highly prone to water insecurities

Chandan Kumar Mandal,
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Pope urges politicians to take 'drastic measures' on climate change

Reuters,
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Global climate change looming disasters: PH vs SG, Indonesia plans SG plans for next 100 years

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University of South Florida
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Southeast Asia braces for haze as forest fires keep burning

Yongchang Chin,
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Climate crisis demands more government action as emissions rise

Climate Action Tracker
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Johan Schaar,
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AI Sustainable Development Summit

28 September 2019
New York, USA

Climate Change 2019

7–8 October 2019
London, UK



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ENERGY SECURITY

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Driving exploration and optimizing existing production for long-term energy security

The Jakarta Post
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Running out of gas: Philippine energy security and the South China Sea

Felix K. Chang,
Foreign Policy Research Institute
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New environment minister says Japan should stop using nuclear power

Reuters,
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ASEAN can replicate China's successful solar industry revolution

Venkatachalam Anbumozhi,
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Saudi attacks bring into focus security risks for global oil facilities

Tay Peck Gek,
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After Saudi oil drone attack, Canada touts its remoteness and security

Catherine Ngai and Kevin Orland,
Bloomberg
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International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna: IAEA
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Country nuclear power profiles 2019 edition

International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna: IAEA
2019

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ICTP-IAEA Nuclear Energy Management School 2019

7-8 October 2019
Trieste, Italy

RSIS-IAEA Faculty Professional Development Course on Nuclear Security

21-25 October 2019
Singapore

FOOD SECURITY



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The evolving Singapore agrifood ecosystem

Paul Teng, Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros, Robert Hulme and Andrew Powell
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A scalable scheme to implement data-driven agriculture for small-scale farmers

Daniel Jiménez et al., Global Food Security, Vol. 23: 256-266
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UN report does not accurately reflect China's food security conditions

Wang Yi, Global Times
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Leslie Gatpolintan, Philippine News Agency
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Singapore's imports of Thai rice 'easily met' by alternative sources but climate change could affect food security

Ang Hwee Min, Channel News Asia
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46th Session of the Committee on World Food Security

14-18 October 2019
Rome, Italy

Cracking the Nut 2019: Leveraging Systems for Improved Food Security

14-15 October 2019
Dakar, Senegal



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HEALTH SECURITY



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Cancer now tops heart disease as the No.1 cause of death in these countries

Jacqueline Howard,
CNN
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East China opens life sciences park for global healthcare innovation, collaboration

Xinhuanet
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Using a smartphone to detect a highly contagious virus

Ana Sandoiu,
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Can the world eradicate another disease?

Katie Hunt,
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New infectious diseases centre to have real-time location tracking

Cindy Co,
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Monitoring heart disease patients via an app

BV Mahalakshmi,
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Correlation between noncommunicable disease mortality in people aged 30-69 and those aged 70-89 years

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Community engagement to manage acute malnutrition: implementation research in Kupang district, Indonesia

Blandina Rosalina Bait et al.,
Bulletin of the World Health Organisation, Vol. 97: 597-604

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International Conference on Advances in Health and Medical Sciences (ICAHMS)

25–26 November 2019
Singapore

Kyoto 19th International Conference on Agricultural, Environmental, Biological and Medical Sciences (AEBMS-19)

26–28 November 2019
Kyoto, Japan



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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

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Bangladesh's disappearing river lands

AZM Anas,
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Managing Disasters 4.0: Need For New Thinking

Angelo Paolo L. Trias,
RSIS Commentaries
23 August 2019

900,000 evacuated, two dead in Japan flood chaos

The Straits Times
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DFAT awards its first Indigenous-led aid contract

Lisa Cornish,
DevEx
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“Why her understanding could never be mine, and mine could never be hers”

Diego Rodrigo Fernandez Otegui,

ALNAP Blogs on relevance in humanitarian action
06 September 2019

Hurricane Dorian: Bahamas defends response amid criticism

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Courtesy of Flickr account of Jeffrey Pioquinto, SJ and used under a creative commons license.

MIGRATION



Courtesy of Flickr account of ILO Asia Pacific and used under a creative commons license.

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Activists blast amnesty plan for illegal workers

Trinna Leong,
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Hong Kong’s protest movement must stop ignoring migrant workers

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Migrant worker’s death at hands of Taiwan police highlights failings in labour system

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New rules, new debts: Slavery fears rise for migrant workers in Thailand

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Nada Abdelmagid et al.,
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Consultative Workshop on Local Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies

01–02 October 2019
Incheon, Republic of Korea

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Papua New Guinea cancels Australia migrant camp contract

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Hong Kongers troubled by unrest look for new homes abroad

Clare Jim et al.,
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Labour Market Inventory ASEAN 2010–15: Labour market policy in an age of increasing economic integration

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12th Global Forum on Migration and Development Summit Meeting

19-22 November 2019
Quito, Ecuador

9th Annual Conference on Immigration in OECD Countries

12-13 December 2019
Paris, France