

Climate carnage': UN demands funding surge to save millions of lives

Secretary-general warns effects of global heating are outstripping the ability to adapt to them



Pakistani children use a satellite dish as a raft during flooding in Balochistan province in August. The growing impact of the climate crisis has been clear this year. Photograph: Fida Hussain/AFP/Getty Images

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A dramatic increase in funding for climate adaptation is needed to save millions of lives from “climate carnage”, the UN secretary general, António Guterres, has said.

Climate adaptation includes preparing defences against rising floods, shelters against intensifying cyclones and emergency plans to protect people during worsening heatwaves and droughts. Guterres said only a small fraction of the required finance was given by rich nations to protect vulnerable people.

A **report from the UN Environment Programme** (UNEP) said the worsening impacts of the climate crisis would outstrip the ability to provide protection

without far more funding for adaptation, leading to “knockout blows” to generations to come.

The report found that 80% of countries had started adaptation plans, but that just a third had quantified targets with deadlines.

Climate action takes three key forms: cutting emissions to limit the impacts, adapting to the effects that can not be avoided, and funding rebuilding in communities struck by impacts that can not be adapted to.

A **series of reports** last week found that action to cut global carbon emissions to date was “woefully inadequate”, while Guterres said on Thursday that rebuilding funds – known as “loss and damage” in UN talks – would be a critical issue at the Cop27 climate summit beginning next week.

“The UNEP report makes clear that the world is failing to protect people from the here-and-now impacts of the climate crisis,” Guterres said. “We need a global surge in adaptation investment to save millions of lives from climate carnage.

“Adaptation needs in the developing world are set to skyrocket to as much as \$340bn [£295bn] a year by 2030,” he said. “Yet adaptation support today stands at less than one-tenth of that amount. The most vulnerable people and communities are paying the price and this is unacceptable.”

Rich nations provided \$29bn in finance in 2020, the latest data available, just 4% higher than in 2019. Developed nations promised at Cop26 last year to increase that to \$40bn by 2025.

The growing impact of the climate crisis has been clear in 2022, including catastrophic floods in Pakistan and searing heatwaves from the US to China. The influence of **global heating in supercharging many extreme weather events** is now strong, even with only a 1.1C temperature rise to date, and some major effects would not have occurred without humanity’s interference with the climate.

“Climate change is landing blow after blow upon humanity, as we saw throughout 2022,” said Inger Andersen, the executive director of UNEP. “If we

don't want to spend the coming decades in emergency response mode, dealing with disaster after disaster, we need to get ahead of the game. The temperature ranges we are currently looking at over the decades to come will turn the climate impacts we are seeing now into knockout blows for generations to come.”

Other global crises, such as Russia's war in Ukraine, can not be used as excuses for inaction, she said. “We must get serious about adapting to climate change, and we must do it now.”

As well as more funding, Guterres said countries needed much better data on climate risks and that early warning systems for extreme weather must be in place everywhere in the world within five years. “The world must step up and protect people and communities from the immediate and ever-growing risks of the climate emergency.”

He added: “We must also recognise that, in many places, it is too late for adaptation. **Cop27** must provide a clear and time-bound roadmap on closing the finance gap for addressing loss and damage. This will be a central litmus test for success at Cop27.”

Designing adaptation action must involve indigenous and local communities, said Annamária Lehoczky of the conservation body Fauna & Flora International. “Only then is it possible to be effective, sustainable and just. It is these communities who have the specialist, on-the-ground knowledge of their needs and are best able to develop transformative solutions, which also address the underlying drivers of poverty, inequality, climate change and the degradation of nature.”