

# Global Heating / Climate Change Newsletter

February 2021

## Introduction

Coronavirus is the latest in a series of diseases that have emerged in recent decades: SARS, Swine Flu, MERS, Ebola, Zika, H7N9 Bird Flu.

Many experts say that destruction of the environment is behind the appearance of these diseases. For example, 'developers' cut down a huge swathe of forest. The birds, animals, insects, etc. that lived there are forced to move. Some move closer to humans. Also, humans may move into the area that used to be forest. In both scenarios, humans are now in closer contact with wildlife. It's easier for diseases to jump from wildlife to humans.

A Vatican document states: "It is clear that the origin of the present coronavirus – as with its predecessors like the SARS and the MERS and analogously the outbreak of the Ebola – has to do with human interference in the intricate balance of natural ecosystems through wildlife trading, deforestation linked to mining, logging, animal husbandry, etc. and the consequent destruction of local biodiversity."  
<https://jesuits.ca/stories/seven-reflections-on-the-coronavirus-emergency-from-an-ecological-perspective-by-joshtrom-isaac-kureethadam-sdb/>

Francis Boyle has a different explanation for the origin of coronavirus: it escaped from a laboratory in China, a laboratory that does research into biological weapons. (He says that there are other countries that also have such laboratories, including the US.) This would be another form of human interference in the intricate balance of natural ecosystems.

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/jScV4ZfNriO9/>

Either way, the coronavirus is the result of human activity. It is our fault.

So the coronavirus can be seen as a result of, or a response to, human activity, and, therefore, a lesson from Nature/the Earth/the environment. The Earth is trying to protect itself.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/time-hunger-moon-saints-wolves-and-global-pandemic>

Many people are suffering, of course, but coronavirus is actually doing a lot of good, as shown by recent headlines:

'Coronavirus slashes China carbon emissions'

'Largest drop in greenhouse emissions in human history'

'Air pollution and CO2 fall rapidly as virus spreads'

'Covid-19 will wipe out demand for fossil fuels'

But there is a more serious problem we are all facing: global heating/climate change. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres reminded us last year that the world mustn't forget the "deeper environmental emergency" facing the planet. Likewise, Mizutori Mami, Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, pointed out that responses to climate change are not being carried out with the same level of urgency as responses to COVID-19. She asserted that if we do not respond to and prepare for climate change with a sense of urgency based on lessons learned from COVID-19, all aspects of our lives will no longer be sustainable.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52370221>

A shocking headline from a January 2021 report reinforces the UN's warnings: "the outlook [for the Earth] is worse than even scientists can grasp." And a Waseda University professor says Japan is in a particularly dire situation: "(From an engineering point of view,) it would probably be better to move everybody out of this country and resettle them elsewhere."

<https://theconversation.com/worried-about-earths-future-well-the-outlook-is-worse-than-even-scientists-can-grasp-153091>

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2021/01/16/environment/cost-climate-change/>

## An Opportunity

Coronavirus is giving us a chance to remake the world's economy into a green economy, thereby solving the climate crisis as well as other environmental problems.

"The crisis of the present coronavirus could be an opportunity for a new beginning. It is vitally important that we should not let the public and private response to the coronavirus follow the route that governments and businesses took after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. Economic stimulus packages are important in order to improve strained health care systems, guarantee employment in the wake of the inevitable layoffs produced by the anti-coronavirus measures, and to support families and local communities to get back to normal life. However, we cannot afford to make the mistake of a repeat of 2008 when taxpayers' money was used to bail out banks and financial institutions (that caused the financial crisis in the first place!) and we went back to business as usual. We need to make sure that the post coronavirus economy will be different; it should resolutely follow the path of sustainability, equity, and democratic participation." (The Vatican)

<https://jesuits.ca/stories/seven-reflections-on-the-coronavirus-emergency-from-an-ecological-perspective-by-joshtrom-isaac-kureethadam-sdb/>

This is in line with what Naomi Klein is calling for in her book *On Fire: The Case for the Green New Deal*. Four current and former central bankers (Andrew Bailey, Mark Carney, François Villeroy de Galhau, Frank Elderson) also believe the pandemic offers a unique chance to green the global economy. "The world must seize this opportunity to meet the climate challenge."

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/05/world-climate-breakdown-pandemic>

The Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is talking about this, too.  
<https://www.meti.go.jp/press/2020/12/20201225012/20201225012.html>

Johan Rockström is calling for a commitment similar to that of the US Apollo Program. The US invested 2.5% of its GDP in the Program. 400,000 people worked full-time on the moon landing. If all countries put 2.5% of their GDP into saving the planet, we'd have US\$2,000 billion to invest. "We can fix it if we decide to."

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/fixing-the-climate-emergency-is-today%E2%80%99s-apollo-mission--johan-r/12705080>

## Japan

I was pleased to hear PM Suga promise that Japan would achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. At last! PM Abe refused to promise this. But we must not relax. PM Hatoyama promised to reduced emissions by 25% by 2020, compared to the 1990 level, but little came of his promise. And 2050 is too far ahead: we need to bring the target date forward.

## 3 Warnings

Some climate justice organizations warn that the term 'net zero' is being used by polluting governments and corporations to evade responsibility, shift burdens, disguise climate inaction, and, in some cases, even to scale up fossil fuel extraction, burning and emissions.

[https://demandclimatejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NOT\\_ZERO\\_How\\_net\\_zero\\_targets\\_disguise\\_climate\\_inaction\\_FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2t1CXgTKBJFryKogwK0aO\\_rUODAJIJGcv0quXmjL3D2Qf895OrQebItAI](https://demandclimatejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NOT_ZERO_How_net_zero_targets_disguise_climate_inaction_FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2t1CXgTKBJFryKogwK0aO_rUODAJIJGcv0quXmjL3D2Qf895OrQebItAI)

Japan's energy plan still calls for nuclear energy to supply about a quarter of Japan's electricity. Proponents make the outrageous claim that nuclear power is environment friendly and will solve global heating/climate change.

<https://nuclear-news.net/2021/01/07/in-2021-be-aware-of-the-dec-eitful-environmental-nuclear-front-groups/>

## Signs

Temperature hits 38°C in Arctic town

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200622/p2g/00m/0fe/007000c>

The Great Barrier Reef has experienced a third mass coral bleaching event in five years.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/25/great-barrier-reef-suffers-third-mass-coral-bleaching-event-in-five-years>

Last year's summer was so warm that it helped trigger the loss of 600 billion tons of ice from Greenland – enough to raise global sea levels by 2.2mm in just two months.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/mar/19/greenland-ice-melt-sea-level-rise-climate-crisis>

The heat in the world's oceans reached a new record level in 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/13/ocean-temperatures-hit-record-high-as-rate-of-heating-accelerates>

In 2020 cherry blossoms began blooming in the Tokyo area on March 14, the earliest date since record-keeping began in 1953.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13215086>

## Causes

The world's largest investment banks have funneled more than \$2.66 trillion into fossil fuels since the Paris agreement.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/global-banks-climate-crisis-finance-fossil-fuels>

100 multinational corporations are responsible for 71% of carbon emissions.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/campaigns/climate-and-energy>

The wealthiest tenth of people consume about 20 times more energy overall than the bottom tenth, wherever they live.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51906530>

## Food (Johan Rockström)

The way we produce food is the single biggest threat to the stability of our planet.

Nearly a 1/4 of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture.

Food production consumes 70% of all the water we tap from rivers, lakes and groundwater.

What is the main reason we're in the midst of the 6th mass extinction of species? Food.

What is the biggest cause of deforestation and degradation of natural ecosystems? Food.

Food.

We have transformed 50% of the land area on Earth to agriculture.

The overuse of fertilizers and manure has catastrophic effects, causing eutrophication in ground water, lakes and coastal zones.

Agriculture is one of the major causes behind rising risks of antibiotic resistance and growing concentrations of life-threatening chemicals in our environment due to herbicides and insecticides.

If we continue to eat as we do today, we will fail to stay below 2°C Global Warming and we will fail to achieve the UN agenda 2030 goals.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/sustainable-healthy-food-boosts-health-and-planet---johan-rocks/12725078>

## Effects

### Climate change hits women hardest

Disasters resulting from climate change are estimated to kill 14 times more women and girls than men and boys. Natural disasters increase young girls' chances of being trafficked by up to 30% and women are more likely to experience violence during crisis situations such as natural disasters.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/climate-change-hits-women-hardest-report-finds>

### Cashmere crisis

Situated between the Himalayan and Karakorum mountain ranges, the Changthang Plateau is the highest permanently inhabited plateau in the world. Winter temperatures can fall to -40°C. The plateau is home to an extremely hardy and rare breed of goat, the Changra, or Pashmina goat, which has a super-soft undercoat. This luxurious fibre is known the world over as Pashmina, the softest and most expensive type of Cashmere wool in the world.

The plateau does not usually get much snowfall, and if it does, it usually begins in January or February. However, for the last few years it has been increasingly heavy and starting as early as November.

As a result, food supplements have to be brought in to prevent the animals dying from starvation. Also, the winters have been getting warmer, which has reduced the quality and quantity of the valuable Pashmina wool.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-51708991>

### Threat to World Heritage

Climate change is now the biggest threat to natural World Heritage. A third of natural World Heritage sites are threatened by climate change.

<https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/202012/climate-change-now-top-threat-natural-world-heritage-iucn-report>

### Threat from nuclear waste

The US has more than 150 sites that have to be managed for nuclear waste for centuries, if not millennia. The sites need to be safeguarded against increasingly frequent and severe rainfall, tornadoes, hurricanes and accompanying flooding, and forest fires. But the US Department of Energy appears to lack the capacity for the task.

<https://nuclear-news.net/category/1-nuclear-issues/climate-change/>

In 2020 there was a record number of forest fires in the Chernobyl area, with fires almost reaching the nuclear reactors.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-55404164>

## The Poor

Indigenous leaders: “Change your consciousness.”

A four-day gathering of indigenous elders from Alaska to Australia concluded that our problems will be solved only through a fundamental shift in human consciousness, rather than a constant striving after purely political or technological fixes. “Listen to your heart.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-earth-day-indigenous/listen-to-your-heart-indigenous-elders-channel-tough-love-in-earth-day-film-idUSKBN2221G7>

Climate change affecting Uganda’s Economic Performance

Since 2011 Uganda’s economic growth has slowed from 7% p/a to 5.5 % p/a. Climate change has been one of the reasons. 80% of Ugandans are engaged in agriculture as a primary source of livelihood. The sector is also a major source of export revenues. As such, a shock to agricultural production not only affects the basic livelihoods of the majority of Ugandans but also reduces foreign exchange earnings with which the country pays its import bills and meets external debt service obligations.

The country is currently facing a severe food crisis that has affected most districts. Food prices have been rising steadily over the last six months due to the effects of a debilitating drought. The media is awash with stories of severe malnutrition and even death due to famine and increasing food prices.

Pests such as army worm and diseases tend to follow periods of long drought. On average, 800,000 ha of crops are destroyed annually by climate related effects resulting into losses exceeding USD\$ 47m. This affects not only food security and nutrition but also the general growth and school attendance of young children.

<https://www.udn.or.ug/index.php/udn-media/news/112-climate-change-could-undermine-uganda-s-economic-performance>

**Pablo Solon** (director of the Solon Foundation, former ambassador of Bolivia to the United Nations and representative of Bolivia in climate negotiations)

“We need to change strategy, go on the offensive and go after big agribusiness.”

“We need a new kind of democracy, one that includes nature.”

Global Dialogue for Systemic Change webinar May 2020

Saint-Louis, in Senegal, the ‘Venice of Africa’, is being slowly consumed by the sea. Inhabitants of this coast have been fishing for centuries, but many are now being forced to relocate, their way of life wiped out by rising waters.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2020/jul/03/city-crumbles-as-the-sands-shift-on-senegals-coast-in-pictures>

**Anti-coal activist murdered**

Fikile Ntshangase was brutally murdered in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in October. This followed several beatings and attempted attacks on community anti-mining activists opposed to the Somkhele operations of Tendele Coal Mining.

<https://fossilfreesa.org.za/2020/11/19/time-to-divest-from-murder-fossil-free-sa-condemns-the-brutal-murder-of-anti-coal-activist-fikile-ntshangase-a-call-to-action/>

## Technology

A small group of Australian geoengineers have defied an international moratorium on the deployment of geoengineering technologies. To accomplish this, the project rebranded a risky geoengineering technology – in this case, brightening clouds to reflect solar energy back into space – as a plan to save the Great Barrier Reef.

<https://etcgroup.org/content/geoengineers-test-risky-planetary-engineering-scheme-australia>

The (Northern) geoengineers are not thinking that people and governments in the South may want to do something completely different.

<https://www.etcgroup.org/content/6-geoengineering-global-south>

## Positive

**BlackRock**, the world's largest asset manager, will make climate change central to its investment decisions.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/banking-and-finance/climate-change-will-reshape-finance-world-s-largest-fund-manager-says-20200115-p53rix.html>

<https://www.bloomberg.co.jp/news/articles/2020-01-14/Q43OWNDWX2PT01>

Britain has gone two full months (June 2020) without burning coal to generate power.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52973089>

**Carbon taxes** penalize fossil fuels for the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted when they're burned, and in doing so offer a two-part advantage compared with other measures. They make non-polluting industries and products more competitive, and yield a flow of revenue that can be used to calm opposition to emissions reduction.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/05/simple-way-green-economy-cash-prizes-carbon-dividend>

Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network (US) says carbon trading is the privatization of air. Before you can trade anything, you've got to determine whose property right it is. Carbon trading, cap and trade, carbon offsets, carbon tax. These are all part of a colonial capitalistic system that privatizes our Father Sky, our air. That's why there's this question about technologies, like capturing carbon. First of all, in our network, we are opposed to it.

Mother Earth is still alive and she shifts. There's fractures and fissures in Mother Earth and well, the government or the fossil fuel companies get a benefit now in offset by capturing it and whatever process of what they do from there with it by capturing it, storing it, in this case in Mother Earth. Who's to say the next month or four years or 12, 20 years later that there's something happening and then that gas is released? What are the assurances? What are the mechanisms for monitoring? What are the mechanisms for assessing all this?

<https://www.etcgroup.org/content/7-geoengineering-and-decolonization>

## Japan

### Signs

11 principal breeds of natural **kombu** may cease to exist by the 2090s. A rise in seawater temperatures could kill off breeds of konbu, including the most popular types such as nagakonbu and makonbu.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/03/31/national/global-warming-japanese-edible-kelp/>

Number of **landslides** surges 50% in a decade

An average of almost 1,500 landslides rocked Japan every year during the past decade, marking an increase of almost 50% on the previous 10 years.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200626/p2g/00m/0na/067000c>

### Positive

Japanese companies overwhelmingly feel Japan should shift away from its dependence on coal for power.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ202001170015.html>

NTT aims to generate the equivalent of 12% of the nation's renewable-energy capacity as of 2019.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Energy/NTT-to-join-Japan-s-renewable-energy-sector-with-9bn-investment>

Tepco plans ¥2 trillion green power push by 2030.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/09/business/corporate-business/tepco-green-power/>

Leaders of Japan's youth climate movement gathered in Tokyo in February for the inaugural Climate Crisis Youth Summit. "What's important is that everyone questions why climate change isn't talked about in Japan."

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/02/24/national/tokyo-climate-crisis-youth-summit/>

### Catholic

The poetry of Mary Oliver

"The world, moist and beautiful, calls to each of us to make a new and serious response. That's the big question, the one the world throws at you every morning. 'Here you are, alive. Would you like to make a comment?'"

<https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/every-morning-the-world-is-created-nature-and-transcendence-in-the-poetry-of-mary-oliver/>



Several Vatican Dicasteries team up to release a 227 page document entitled *Journeying for the care of the common home*, which offers a guide to all Christians on how to maintain a healthy relationship with Creation.

<https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/good-practise/holy-see-vatican-city/>  
<https://laudatosiyear.org/>

*Seven Reflections on the Coronavirus Emergency from an ECOLOGICAL perspective*  
Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development  
<https://jesuits.ca/stories/seven-reflections-on-the-coronavirus-emergency-from-an-ecological-perspective-by-joshtrom-isaac-kureethadam-sdb/>

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Human Development/Climate Change Desk envisages a green church adopting a green lifestyle and fostering a green evangelization to people of various faiths.

The Interamerican Confederation of Catholic Education has helped its members take part in numerous creation care campaigns, including Laudato Si' Week and the ecumenical Season of Creation.

The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Kakamega, Kenya, is hosting numerous programs including about 15,000 whistling pine seedlings at nurseries.

The Climate Justice Coalition is a group of South African trade unions, civil society, grassroots, and community-based organizations that have united to advance a 'transformative climate justice agenda' that tackles the 'inequality, poverty, and unemployment that pervades South Africa,' according to 350 Africa, a member of the coalition.

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/10-catholic-initiatives-caring-for-creation-en-news/>

Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral Church in Indonesia's capital Jakarta has been recognized as the first Catholic church in the country to install solar power.

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/jakarta-cathedral-switches-to-solar-power/90942>

Sixteen US congregations of Dominican sisters have pooled more than \$46 million to establish a new investment funds initiative aimed at financing solutions to address climate change and assist communities worldwide most at risk.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/dominican-sisters-commit-46-million-seed-new-climate-solutions-funds>

A coalition of faith-based organizations in the US called on the World Bank to end all support for fossil fuels and shift investment to renewable energy.

<https://centerforearthethics.org/u-s-faith-based-coalition-calls-on-world-bank-to-take-climate-action-in-the-time-of-covid/>