

Kathleen Ramsay

From: Laura Asermily <lasermily@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2018 9:13 AM
To: Kathleen Ramsay
Subject: EDITORIAL 'A Deafening, Piercing Smoke Alarm'

This is a NYT editorial on the report that Ross alluded to last night. Please share with SB. Thanks, Kathleen. Laura

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‘A Deafening, Piercing Smoke Alarm’

The U.N.’s climate panel tells world leaders the time for dithering on climate change is over.

By [The Editorial Board](#) Oct. 9, 2018

When a cautious, science-based and largely apolitical group like the United Nations [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) says the world must utterly transform its energy systems in the next decade or risk ecological and social disaster, attention must be paid.

The panel, created in 1988, synthesizes the findings of leading climate scientists, an undertaking for which it received the [2007 Nobel Peace Prize](#). It is not in the habit of lecturing governments. But [its latest report](#), issued near Seoul on Monday, is very different. One United Nations official described it as “a deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen” — an alarm aimed directly at world leaders. “Frankly, we’ve delivered a message to the governments,” said [Jim Skea](#), a co-chairman of the panel and a professor at Imperial College, London. “It’s now their responsibility ... to decide whether they can act on it.”

Unfortunately, no alarm seems loud enough to penetrate the walls of the White House or the cranium of its principal occupant. President Trump had [nothing substantive](#) to say [about the report](#), preferring, his staff said, to focus on celebrating [the elevation of Brett Kavanaugh](#) to the Supreme Court. Having already announced that he would withdraw the United States from the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change, having also rolled back a suite of Obama-era efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Trump thus reaffirmed his sorry role as an outlier in the global struggle against climate change — a struggle few believe can be won without the enthusiastic participation of the United States.

[The report](#), written by 91 scientists from 40 countries, came about at the request of several small island nations that took part in the Paris talks, where 195 countries pledged their best efforts to limit increases in global warming to 3.6 degrees (2 degrees Celsius) above preindustrial levels. Fearing that their countries might someday be lost to rising seas, they asked the intergovernmental panel for further study of a lower threshold, 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius). The panel’s report concluded that [the stricter threshold](#) should become the new target. The alternative is catastrophe — mass die-offs of coral reefs, widespread drought, famine and wildfires, and potentially conflict over land, food and fresh water.

But how to achieve that lower threshold? Global emissions continue to rise, albeit slowly. The panel said a mammoth effort is needed, beginning now and carrying through the century, to decarbonize global energy systems. The next 10 years are absolutely crucial: Emissions will have to be on a sharp downward path by 2030

for any hope of success. Greenhouse gases must be cut nearly in half from 2010 levels. Renewable energy sources must increase from about 20 percent of the electricity mix today to as much as 67 percent. The use of coal would need to be phased out, vanishing almost entirely by midcentury.

The bottom line: We've got a decade or so to get climate change under control, and there is no such thing as a gentle glide path. We have to take a firm grip on the emissions curve and wrench it downward.

This will take enormous public and private investment and technological progress, even a breakthrough or two. Electric cars would become the order of the day. The public would become more actively engaged, instead of tossing the problem to the next generation and those that follow. Individuals have a great deal more power than they think: They can insulate their homes, install smart thermostats, choose public transportation, buy more fuel-efficient cars and appliances, even change their diet — [livestock are estimated to account for some 14.5 percent of greenhouse gas emissions globally](#).

Perhaps the most important thing the public can do right now is seek out and support candidates who take this threat seriously. Also ballot measures: In Washington State, Gov. Jay Inslee is asking voters to approve [a carbon tax](#). It would be the first of its kind, in any state, and could serve as an inspiration for others.

For every outlier like Mr. Trump, there are scores of political leaders who see the problem and know that the world has yet to fully respond to it. “We have presented governments with pretty hard choices,” [Professor Skeea said](#). “We show it can be done within laws of physics and chemistry. Then the final tick box is political will. We cannot answer that. Only our audience can — and that is the governments that receive it.”

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