

**To All Media Agencies**

**18<sup>th</sup> August, 2021**

## **An A Rocha Ghana Press Statement on the Latest IPCC Report**

### **'Code Red for Humanity' says UN Secretary General on IPCC latest report**

Global temperatures will continue to rise and weather extremes become more intense if there is no radical and immediate action to cut our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). These are some of the stark warnings laid out in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's new report on the Physical Basis of Climate Change. The reading is bleak and the threat to humans and the Earth is severe: it's A Code Red for Humanity, as the UN Secretary General has stated. But we still have time to reverse global warming and minimise the intensity of climate change impacts if we all pull together and act fast. Policymakers must promote a radical shift towards green development, and private sector must innovate immediately to support a green trajectory. Having caused most of this global crisis, rich countries must provide urgent support to poorer countries to adapt to the impacts.

#### **What the report says**

##### **The Global Outlook**

The overriding message is that it will get worse before it gets better. It is now irrefutable that the unprecedented warming of the world since industrialisation has been caused by GHGs from human activities. They are also the main drivers of changes such as increased global precipitation, shrinking glaciers and ice sheets, sea level rise, and ocean warming and acidification. The increased frequency and intensity of rainfall, floods, droughts, storms, and heatwaves are also all down to our own activities.

The increasing pace of sea level rise – reaching an average 3.7 mm yr<sup>-1</sup> for 2006-2018 – will continue for 100s to 1000s of years as the warmer temperatures continue melting glaciers and ice sheets. Other changes are also locked in for decades due to emissions that have already happened. This means that, even if we radically reduce our GHG emissions immediately, some changes will still occur.

Using five levels of GHG emission scenarios to model how the climate system will react, the report explains how the impacts get bigger as the emissions increase. While 2°C global warming is extremely unlikely by the end of the century under the low emissions scenarios, it is very likely within just 20-40 years under the very high GHG emissions scenario. Sea level rise under very low emissions will be half the rise projected for very high levels. We need a radical and immediate step-up in action on GHG emissions to ensure the worst case scenarios never happen.

Reaching net zero for human-caused CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – where their production is balanced by their removal – is urgent if we are to stabilize human-induced global temperature rise. Human-made techniques for removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere have been developed, but they have wide impacts on water availability and quality, food production and biodiversity. We must avoid them at all cost and reach net zero through real and fast GHG emissions reductions and increased natural carbon sinks.

#### **What About Africa?**

Impacts identified specifically for Africa include increased monsoon rains for West Africa over the mid- to long-term, and delays in both their onset and retreat. Frequencies and intensities of rainfall and flooding will increase over most of Africa and Asia even at a 1.5°C rise in temperature. With a 2°C rise, droughts will be more severe and frequent across many regions of Africa, South America and Europe. These

temperature rises are almost certain to happen soon – at 1.5°C by 2021-2040 and 2°C by 2041-2060 – under the high GHG emissions scenarios.

Urban and rural areas will need to adapt. As the protectors of our food security and biodiversity, farmers and rural communities need urgent specific support for adaptation and resilience building to cope with the changes. There needs to be deliberate policy and investment drive to increase direct public and private funding for community-based adaptation mechanisms. The Green Recovery Action Plans and the African Green Stimulus Programme are timely continental initiatives that cannot be undermined and that should rally African Countries for a well-coordinated green recovery and low emissions development pathway.

### **Taking Action in Ghana**

Action by Ghana is also critical to the overall global action. We need to prioritize mitigation and adaptation mechanisms more than ever. We need to ensure all investments, public and private, prioritize and enhance our adaptive capacity and help build resilience at levels of our governance and socio-economic development sectors.

Government must do far more to protect and strengthen Ghana's safety nets such as food sovereignty, forests and protected areas, natural water resources and biodiversity. Current national and decentralized processes to integrate climate action within our Nationally Determined Contributions and Medium-Term Development Plans are great and should prioritize investments and implementation beyond planning and excellent documentation. The national processes should endeavour to align biodiversity conservation as a crucial imperative.

Farmers need support from government and others to adapt and build resilience to climate change through training in sustainable agriculture, and access to seeds, equipment, services and other inputs. Urban, rural and coastal areas need protection from threats of flooding, storms and sea level rise. A critical action must be to stop all developments on floodplains and areas that protect coastal communities from storm surges, and more crucially, prioritize security for all mangrove ecosystems in Ghana. Ghana's forests must also be protected. They help communities adapt to climate change, reduce the damaging impacts of storms, stop soil erosion and landslides, provide clean water even when other sources are polluted by floods, keep people cool in extreme heat, strengthen food security, and so much more.

Delaying action will place an immeasurable burden on our children and could make Africa uninhabitable due to the extreme heat, as temperatures are rising far faster here than the global average. There is still time to reduce the impacts. But we need radical action now, and not more delays.

### **Further Enquiries**

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