

## **Global Warming**

### The Tipping Point Could Come Earlier

Inter Press Service, 11 August 2005 - A significant rise in temperatures across European cities suggests that a crucial two-degree rise in global temperature could come earlier than feared.

A WWF survey of the temperatures in 16 European Union cities relative to temperatures in the early 1970s shows some of the continent's capitals warming by more than 2 degrees C.

"A two degree rise is the crucial tipping point for people and for wildlife," Alison Wade from WWF told IPS. "Whatever we do there will at least be a 0.7 degree rise. But we must cut emissions to make sure temperatures do not rise above that level."

Several scientific studies say that an average rise in temperatures above two degrees could have catastrophic consequences.

There has been considerable dispute over recent extremities in climate patterns. Many have argued that freak weather conditions over a few seasons are not necessarily indicative of climate change.

"But looking at the temperatures of European cities in the 1970s and in the 2000s, you can see that the cities have already become quite a lot warmer," Wade said. "Climate change has certainly played a part in the temperature increase. We've seen more heat waves, and more freak and extreme weather."

There is a need now to monitor temperature rises in other parts of the world, Wade said. "Look around, you've had massive floods in India, a heat wave in the Mediterranean, drought in Spain. Such events will become more frequent and severe if climate change is not tackled."

The report, 'Europe feels the heat - Extreme weather and the power sector', shows London is the city where average maximum summer temperature increased the most, from 20.5 degrees C in the early 1970s to 22.5 degrees C over the last five years, a rise of two degrees. This was followed by Athens and Lisbon (1.9 degrees), Warsaw (1.3 degrees) and Berlin (1.2 degrees).

The increase in average summer mean temperature was highest in Madrid -- up by 2.2 degrees C, followed by Luxembourg (2 degrees), Stockholm (1.5 degrees), and Brussels, Rome and Vienna (1.2 degrees). In the last five years, average summer temperatures in 13 of the 16 cities looked at were at least 1 degree higher than during the first five years of the 1970s.

The WWF report emphasises the major role of the power sector in fuelling this hike in temperatures. "The power sector is responsible for 37 percent of man-made carbon dioxide emissions globally -- more than any other one sector -- from burning fossil fuels, such as coal.

"Scientists predict that man-made greenhouse gas emissions are doubling the risk of extreme heat waves, such as the European heat wave of 2003, which resulted in the deaths of more than 40,000 Europeans," said Matthew Davis, director of WWF's 'Stop Climate Chaos!' campaign, which is calling on the power sector to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions by 60 per cent by 2020. "This report shows that European cities are heating up and if this disturbing trend continues our cities will become unpleasant places to live with higher temperatures and more chaotic weather," he said.

In Britain the 1990s marked the warmest decade of the last century. By 2080 average annual temperatures across Britain could rise by 2 to 3.5 degrees, and by up to 5 degrees in London and the South East, the WWF report says. The Department of Health predicts a 250 per cent increase in heat-related deaths by 2050.

The report analysed the average maximum or mean summer temperatures in the following capital cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Luxembourg City, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna and Warsaw.

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