# Thinking through the IPCC report in the new global situation

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One would think that, given the present convergence of crises – a runaway climate; a global pandemic that has already killed at least an estimated 6.18 million people around the world since 2020 and is still killing thousands daily; and a horrific war in Europe – governments would start to see the links between the crises and worsening injustice and inequality across the globe.

Then came the already predicted increasing cost of living crisis, which should be seen as an attack on people's standard of living based on policy choices employed by the government so far. The drastic increase in the price of gas is already predicted to produce a snowball effect on prices of other essential goods, and combined with the problems in supplies due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are now in the situation where people are choosing between food and heating.

However, the war-induced rush to increase oil and gas production to address the energy price increase will significantly weaken efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. How do we address the climate breakdown, which is still one of the biggest challenges threatening us all, at the same time as the immediate effects of the energy supply crisis?

## The IPCC report 2022 part three: mitigation

The world already risks overshooting the 1.5°C target, according to the second part of the UN IPCC report on *Climate Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, released last month, which found that over three billion people are now vulnerable to current levels of planetary heating.

The third part of the landmark 6th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report with the title *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change* came out today, 4 April. It is the most contentious part of the IPCC report. It covers the policies, technologies and finances needed to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and is authored by 278 scientists from 65 countries. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres called the report a "pile of shame" and said that "many governments and corporations are doing moral and economic madness" during the presentation of the report.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was established by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide policy makers at all levels of government with periodic scientific assessments concerning climate change, its implications and risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation strategies. The reports are published every 6 to 7 years; the previous one was completed in 2014.

The decades of delay and dodging of commitments by governments like the UK's, despite the IPCC's unquestionable scientific knowledge that jolts our attention on how deep into the climate crisis we are, have now narrowed our range of options very much if we are to prevent runaway climate change.

## Regulatory and economic policies

The report shows that 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions contribute a disproportionately large share, 34% – 45%, of global household (GHG) emissions. The UNEP has already estimated that global GHG emissions must be reduced by 8% annually, starting immediately. The UK, as a more affluent country, should do more.

Today's IPCC report clearly states that "Reducing GHG emissions across the full energy sector requires major transitions, including a substantial reduction in overall fossil fuel use, the deployment of low-emission energy sources, switching to alternative energy carriers, and energy efficiency and conservation. The continued installation of unabated fossil fuel infrastructure will 'lock-in' GHG emissions." This Working Group III report completes the latest trilogy of the IPCC, which tells us we are not doing enough to reduce fossil fuel use.

We are in very challenging times but without a strengthening of policies beyond those that are implemented by the end of 2020, GHG emissions are projected to rise beyond 2025, leading to a global warming of 3.2°C by 2100.

Taking appropriate actions now is needed to ensure our common survival. What the report makes clear is that we don't need business as usual. There are very clear regulatory and economic instruments, feasible individual actions and system change actions. There is sufficient global capital and liquidity to close investment gaps on renewable energy and technologies. Policy packages and economy-wide approach are better to ensure coordination and effectivity, also particularly important is guaranteeing civil society engagement.

Adoption of low emission technologies is slower in most developing countries due to their limited capacity, therefore more climate finance is needed and developing and low-income countries have called for that for many years. It is important that their demands are addressed at COP27. Public and private finance flows for fossil fuels are still greater than those for climate adaptation and mitigation. If we want to advance in limiting global warming, we need to close the gap on finance and technologies between developed and developing countries as mentioned in Chapter 15 of the report on Investment and Finance.

Policies taken in developed countries have a bearing on developing countries – they can also be barriers to implementing solutions to climate change. Chapter 14 on International Cooperation mentions that free trade agreements (FTAs) may have effects on GHG emissions, that FTAs between developed and developing countries may increase emissions in the long run. On the other hand, FTAs incorporating specific environmental or climate-related provisions can help reduce GHG emissions.

In the succeeding page, it says that international investment agreements may lead to "regulatory chill", which may lead to countries refraining from or delaying the adoption of mitigation policies, such as phasing out fossil fuels. Chapter 14 also says: "A large number of bilateral and multilateral agreements, including the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty, include provisions for using a system of investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) designed to protect the interests of investors in energy projects from national policies that could lead their assets to be stranded."

## The energy crisis and the war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine is already a humanitarian and social crisis, but it is also a disaster for climate actions as it threatens to slow down the global energy transition. Both Russia and Ukraine are key suppliers of the crucial metal resources that are used for the manufacture of green technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicle batteries. The conflict is threatening a global supply crisis of these materials. The world needs a secure, steady and affordable supply of clean energy to meet emissions reduction targets. But the supply relies on access to so-called energy transition metals such as copper, nickel, palladium, aluminium and lithium.

Given the shadow cast by the Ukraine war on the long-term reliance on fossil fuels, which contributes a lot to GHG emissions, many countries especially the US, the EU, the UK and other high GHG-emitting countries need to reconsider their priorities on energy production. Energy is now seen as a national security issue, and the current crisis will certainly not be the last. We need far steeper mandatory phase-out of fossil fuels as soon as possible.

The current disruption of world oil and gas markets actually gives the best opportunity to start driving fossil-fuel use down to zero on a planned and expedited schedule. Some countries, however, are better placed for this than others. That is why the issue of climate finance is a key factor.

At the same time, the best solution to the crisis is to accelerate an increased capacity and equitable access to affordable renewable energy in this country. We don't need to bow to dictators of petro-states like Russia and Saudi Arabia and choose one over another. We need a quick withdrawal from the addiction to fossil fuels. It is of course not easy, but it is the only way. Reviving already rejected projects on fracking and nuclear energy will not be the solution. In fact, the International Energy Agency has already said the planet can no longer afford new fossil fuels development projects.

That transition to renewable energy must not be left to the market either, as the market does not necessarily displace older sources but merely focuses on producing more supply. There is a strong argument for nationalisation as an essential prerequisite for ending fossil fuel use, as these industries would never cooperate to end their own profiteering and power, or reduce themselves to oblivion.

To manage the phases of transition and ensure energy costs remain stable, decision making and control must be in the hands of governments. In fact, an increasing number of climate scientists, researchers and activists are already calling for nationalisation, resource allocation and price controls on energy. Global Justice Now has joined the call of more than 350 organisations on governments and the IPCC to foreground the rapid phaseout of fossil fuels.

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• Global Justice Now. Date: 4 April 2022: https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2022/04/thinking-through-the-ipcc-report-in-the-new-global-situation/