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UN's Bombshell Climate Change Report Forecasts Fire and Floods for Russia

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The Angara River in Irkutsk is shrouded in smoke that is spreading from the wildfire-stricken republic of Sakha in northeastern Siberia. **Alexei Kushnirenko / TASS**

Russia can expect to see intensifying wildfires, floods and other extreme weather events in the coming decades as the global climate crisis deepens a decade sooner than projected just three years ago, UN climate experts said in a bombshell report published Monday.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report shows unequivocally that global warming is unfolding more quickly than feared and that humanity is almost entirely to blame. Years in the making, the sobering report approved by 195 nations shines a harsh spotlight on governments dithering in the face of mounting evidence that climate change is an existential threat.

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Here's what the IPCC report says about Russia:

Heatwaves are likely to intensify throughout eastern Europe, including Russia. However, Russia's European regions are likely to experience both heatwaves and cold spells more frequently if global carbon emissions aren't drastically reduced, the scientists wrote.

Moscow is warming abnormally fast. While the planet has warmed by 1.2 degrees Celsius over the past 150 years, Moscow's average temperatures have risen by 1 C in just 50 years, the IPCC scientists said. Only Kolkata, India and Tirana, Albania have warmed faster in that time period.

Previous studies have said Russia is warming roughly 2.5 times faster than the planet as a whole.

Wildfires will blaze longer and farther. The length of Russia's wildfire seasons will continue to increase even if the global community manages to halt warming at 2 degrees Celsius as UN scientists hope, the report states.

Devastating forest fires have ripped across Siberia with increasing regularity over the past few years, which Russia's weather officials and environmentalists have linked to climate change and an underfunded forest service.

Related article: Siberia Feels the Brunt of Climate Change as Wildfires Rage

Permafrost will melt. Large parts of Russia's permafrost, which covers 65% of its territory, will likely disappear regardless of successes in the global fight against climate change. Around 32% of the country's permafrost coverage will melt by 2100 even if global carbon emissions fall sharply, the IPCC experts wrote.

If emissions are not dramatically reduced in the coming years, around 76% of Russia's permafrost coverage is likely to melt.

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Floods will become more frequent and devastating. According to the report, the maximum river discharge of Siberia's rivers is likely to double by 2050 while the region's floodplains could grow by 2-5%.

In summer 2019, southern Siberia's Irkutsk region was struck by devastating flooding that killed dozens, displaced thousands and caused millions of dollars of damage to infrastructure and agriculture.

Precipitation will increase. While some parts of the world will see increasingly frequent droughts, Russia's Far East and Arctic can expect to see an increase in average precipitation, likely leading to frequent extreme heavy rains by 2050, the report's authors wrote.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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