

UN says Glasgow climate summit at risk of failure

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A UN report said there is a 40 percent chance that average global temperature in one of the next five years will be at least 1.5C (2.7F) warmer than pre-industrial levels [Abdelaziz Boumzar/Reuters]

United Nations, September 17 (RHC)-- A critical meeting on climate change later this year in Scotland is at risk of failure due to mistrust between developed and developing countries and a lack of ambitious goals among some emerging economies, UN chief Antonio Guterres has said. "I believe that we are at risk of not having a success in COP26," Guterres told Reuters news agency.

“There is still a level of mistrust, between north and south, developed and developing countries, that needs to be overcome. We are on the verge of the abyss and when you are on the verge of the abyss, you need to be very careful about what the next step is. And the next step is COP26 in Glasgow.”

A report published by a range of UN agencies on Thursday said the pace of climate change has not been slowed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the world remains behind in its battle to cut carbon emissions.

There is now a 40 percent chance that average global temperature in one of the next five years will be at least 1.5C (2.7F) warmer than pre-industrial levels, the report said.

On Monday, Guterres and the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson will host a meeting of world leaders on the sidelines of the annual high-level week of the UN General Assembly in a bid to build the chances of success at the climate conference, being held from October 31 to November 12.

“My objective and the reason why we are convening a meeting on Monday is exactly to build trust, to allow for everybody to understand that we all need to do more,” Guterres said. “We need the developed countries to do more, namely in relation to the support to developing countries. And we need some emerging economies to go an extra mile and be more ambitious in the reduction of air emissions,” he said.

Monday’s meeting, which will be both virtual and in-person, will be closed to allow for “frank and open discussions” on how to deliver success in Glasgow, said a senior UN official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

“Until now, I have not seen enough commitment of developed countries to support developing countries ... and to give a meaningful share of that support to the needs of adaptation,” said Guterres.

Developing countries tend to be the most vulnerable to costly climate impacts, and the least resourced to deal with them. For years, they have been struggling to secure the funds to help them prepare for climate disruptions that rich nations pledged in 2009 to ramp up to \$100 billion annually.

So far, the money that has arrived has focused on emissions reduction rather than adaptation. Of the \$78.9 billion in climate finance transferred by rich countries in 2018, only 21 percent was spent on adaptation.

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