

Headline: World halfway to 2-degree threshold

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THE WORLD is halfway to the critical 2-degree threshold as record temperatures in 2015 meant the earth was warmer by one degree Celsius than at the start of the 20th century, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Last December, representatives of 195 nations that gathered in Paris for the United Nations Climate Change Conference agreed to keep the increase in global temperature at below 2 degrees Celsius—considered the threshold that separates humanity from the most destructive and dangerous effects of global warming.

The Paris Agreement pegged global efforts toward limiting the increase in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In a statement on the Status of the Climate in 2015 released Tuesday, the UN agency WMO said that last year saw temperature records shattered by a wide margin—attended by intense heat waves, exceptional rainfall, devastating drought and unusual tropical cyclone activity.

In 2015, the strong El Niño as well as human-caused global warming pushed the global average surface temperature to 0.76 degree Celsius above the average observed in 1961-1990.

In the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture put the loss in food crops attributed to the current El Niño at P3.4 billion in 2015—excluding farm damage caused by strong typhoons which also reached billions of pesos.

“Our planet is sending a powerful message to world leaders to sign and implement the Paris Agreement on climate change and cut greenhouse gases now before we pass the point of no return,” WMO secretary general Petteri Taalas said in a press statement.

Taalas said the worst-case scenarios could be averted by taking urgent and far-reaching measures to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

He said that in addition to mitigation, governments must strengthen climate change adaptation by investing in disaster early warning systems, as well as climate services like drought, flood and heat-health management tools.

According to the WMO report, droughts must be addressed more proactively through integrated drought management, which involves guidance on effective policies and land management strategies as well as best practices for coping with drought.

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