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Managing Growing Climate Risk 50 Years After the First Global Conference on the Environment



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This year marks the 50th anniversary since the first global conference on the environment was held in 1972 in Stockholm. It has also been 30 years since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed in 1992. Is it because of a failure of multilateralism, or because society simply chasing the unattainable, that climate projections have only gotten worse year after year?

In its latest *State of the Global Climate 2021* report released in May 2022, the World Meteorological Organization claimed that greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rise, ocean heat and ocean acidification all set new records in 2021. This was despite a short-lived emission cut at the start of the pandemic in early 2020 when lockdowns brought human activities to a standstill.

Emissions need to drop consistently at

a rate of 7.6 percent per year between 2020 and 2030 for the world to be on track towards the 1.5°C temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

The gloomy implications of global warming on various aspects of life, such as food, health, water, ecosystems, biodiversity, and disaster events, have been widely studied and communicated. Climate impacts on businesses and the military have likewise been assessed and reported. The message is consistent: unless climate change is mitigated, the world is likely to see a doomsday scenario sooner than later.

Low-carbon energy transition is the cornerstone of climate mitigation efforts. The International Renewable Energy Agency estimated that USD22.5 trillion of investment is needed between 2016 and 2050 in the power sector to make a global energy transformation happen.

Many countries have pledged net-zero goals in the last three years. Last year, investments in renewable energy dominated the new power generation capacity and accounted for about 70 per cent share of a total of USD530 billion spent. This may sound encouraging as it signals a shift in preferences towards clean energy. However, despite last year's larger worldwide spending on clean technologies and efficiency, renewable investment still needs to more than triple in the 2020s to make the 1.5°C goal possible.

What this represents is the reality that ongoing mitigation efforts are good but insufficient. The rallying cry has been consistent: the world needs to be more ambitious in terms of the speed and scale of low-carbon transition.

Given the current emission mitigation pathway, it is hardly surprising that the Working Group III of the IPCC's AR6 Report, which was released in April this year, announced that the world is likely to miss the 1.5°C target after all.

Two questions then arise. Why have the current mitigation responses to a time-sensitive temperature goal been largely ineffective? If simply providing climate scenarios is insufficient to deal with climate change, then what more can the international community do to minimise climate-related impacts?

In addition to strengthening ongoing climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, governments need to focus more closely on varied dynamics at the community level in responding to such initiatives. Increased sensitivity to the various norms, values and preferences that different communities have in perceiving the environment and its challenges, and their sense about uncertainties and the future, can play a key role in not only reducing resistance and tension within and across different communities, but also getting all communities onboard climate-related efforts. A more inclusive approach can potentially lead to better results while preserving the cohesiveness of social fabric that is in-

creasingly threatened by differing views on climate change.

This is where the global community stands 50 years after it came together to discuss the environment for the first time. The global community has had its successes as seen in slowed net forest loss rates over the past decade; in increased enthusiasm about low-carbon energy initiatives; and in stronger environmental awareness in society, among others. But it has also had its challenges as exemplified in the current geopolitical tensions involving Russia and the West, which have important repercussions on the energy sector and climate mitigation efforts. Other types of distractions may occur in the future, and successes and challenges on environment-related agenda will continue to oscillate as the world faces different types of adversities. Where the global community will be in the next 50 years in the fight against the changing climate thus remains to be seen.

Suggested Readings

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key Findings*. Rome: FAO, 2020. <<https://www.fao.org/3/CA8753EN/CA8753EN.pdf>>.
- International Energy Agency. *World Energy Investment 2021*. Paris: IEA, 2021. <<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/5e6b3821-bb8f-4df4-a88b-e891cd8251e3/WorldEnergyInvestment2021.pdf>>.
- International Renewable Energy Agency. *Transforming the Energy System – and Holding the Line on the Rise of Global Temperatures*. Abu Dhabi: IRENA, 2019. <https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2019/Sep/IRENA_Transforming_the_energy_system_2019.pdf>.
- Shukla, Priyadarshi R., Jim Skea and Andy Reisinger, eds. *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*. Working Group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_Full_Report.pdf>.
- United Nations Environment Programme. *Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat is On – A World of Climate Promises Not Yet Delivered*. Nairobi: UNEP, 2021. <<https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2021>>.
- World Meteorological Organization. *State of the Global Climate 2021*. Geneva: WMO, 2022. <https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=11178#:~:text=The%20global%20mean%20temperature%20in,seven%20warmest%20years%20on%20record> .

CLIMATE CHANGE

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

The most ambitious climate plans are also the most credible

Bold and non-binding national climate commitments are more credible and lead to greater change than less ambitious but binding pledges.

Laura Millan Lombrana

Bloomberg

2 September 2022

To fight climate change, environmentalists may have to give up a core belief

Right now, many roadblocks stand in the way of building wind, solar, and the transmission lines that can carry their power to America's city centres. And while Democrats have a bill in the works to speed that sort of permitting, most environmentalists oppose it — because it could also promote oil and gas development.

Shannon Osaka

The Washington Post

2 September 2022

How Pakistan floods are linked to climate change

The devastating floods in Pakistan are a "wake-up call" to the world on the threats of climate change. The record-breaking rain would devastate any country, not just poorer nations. The human impacts are clear - thousands were rescued from floodwaters, while ministers warn of food shortages after almost half the country's crops were washed away.

Georgina Rannard

BBC

2 September 2022

Women lead marine restoration efforts in the UNESCO Seaflower Biosphere Reserve

Women represent just 38 per cent of all ocean scientists. A women-led community organisation in the Seaflower UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the Caribbean is working to restore some of the most important marine ecosystems in the world and paving the way for bigger women's representation in ocean science.

United Nations

2 September 2022

PUB raises S\$800 million in inaugural green bond issuance

Proceeds from these bonds will finance projects to strengthen Singapore's water security and sustainability. The Projects under the framework include the deployment of floating solar photovoltaic panels on reservoirs to harness renewable energy and implementing decarbonisation solutions in water plants.

Ian Cheng

Channel News Asia

2 September 2022

Singapore aiming to have emissions reach net zero by 2050; public feedback sought

Singapore is considering setting 2050 as the year for Singapore to have its planet-warming emissions reach net zero. It is also deciding whether to raise its 2030 climate target to support the longer-term goal.

Audrey Tan

The Straits Times

6 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

State of gender equality and climate change in ASEAN

The regional flagship report analyses the gendered impacts of climate change in the Southeast Asia and suggests ways to enhance and mainstream gender equality into climate-relevant sectoral policies and actions.

Jenny Yi-Chen Han, Camille Pross, Rashi Agarwal, and Stockholm Environment Institute

Jakarta: ASEAN

2022

Climate change remains top global threat across 19-country survey

Among the many threats facing the globe, climate change stands out as an especially strong concern among citizens in advanced economies. A median of 75% across 19 countries in North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region label global climate change as a major threat.

Jacob Pushter, Moira Fagan and Sneha Gubbala

Pew Research Center

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Global Methane, Climate and Clean Air Forum 2022

The Forum is a premier global event that brings together policymakers, industry leaders, technical experts, and researchers from around the world to discuss opportunities to protect the climate and improve air quality with a special focus on methane.

Washington, D.C., USA

26-29 September 2022

World Habitat Day

In 2022, World Habitat Day under the theme "Mind the Gap. Leave No One and Place Behind" seeks to draw attention to the growing inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been exacerbated by the triple 'C' crises — COVID-19, climate and conflict.

Worldwide

3 October 2022

ENERGY SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

After 34-year gap, the Philippines has a nuclear facility again

The PRR-1 SATER is expected to be a training reactor for research reactor operators, regulators and users. It will support recently launched nuclear education programmes at the University of the Philippines Diliman and Mapua University.

Joanne Liou

IAEA

24 August 2022

New developments in NPP – Micro-reactors in the field of military application

Technology has advanced so rapidly that in the foreseeable future, nuclear reactors can be used as a standalone energy source to power military bases and equipment, but the use needs to be better regulated to minimise any proliferation concerns.

Alvin Chew

RSIS Commentary

26 August 2022

Renewable energy, green economy areas where Singapore, Saudi Arabia can forge closer cooperation

Saudi Arabia and Singapore both have strategic positions between Asia and Europe. There are many opportunities for cooperation in dynamic growth areas including transport, logistics, energy, technology and the digital economy

The Straits Times

6 September 2022

China droughts highlight energy challenge as climate heats up

Hotter and drier weather is set to push China's already enormous energy consumption higher in the coming years. That means policymakers will need to skilfully manage a transition away from fossil fuels towards green energy

Kyle Mullin

Al Jazeera

7 September 2022

Vietnam needs laws for sustainable energy development

The absence of laws on energy and in particular renewable energy is causing an imbalance between the stages of production, transmission and consumption of coal-fired power, solar power, and wind power in Vietnam.

Vietnam News Agency

8 September 2022

As South Korea moves to expand nuclear power, disquiet grows among nearby residents

The government is proposing an additional six nuclear plants by 2036 on top of the current 24 reactors, raising deep concerns among hundreds of Korean residents living in the most densely built area in the world for nuclear power.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

8 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Expanding the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and climate change adaptation: Opportunities and challenges

This NTS Insight examines how nuclear technology can be deployed to strengthen climate adaptation measures and presents case studies from several Southeast Asian countries that have nuclear research and scientific programmes.

Julius Cesar Trajano

NTS Insight No. IN22-04

Singapore: NTS Centre, RSIS

2022

Will the benefits of Laos's future hydropower infrastructure projects outweigh the costs?

Some have framed a dichotomy between Laos's sustainable development building on hydroelectricity and their negative environmental impacts. This chapter argues that since 2010, Laos has already had sufficient electricity to meet relevant sustainable development goals.

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros

Chapter 3 in The Displaced: Disrupted Trade, Labour,

and Politics in the Mekong River Basin

Tokyo: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Japan

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

IAEA Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme

This aims to inspire and encourage young women to pursue a career in the nuclear field, by providing highly motivated female students with scholarships for Master's programmes and an opportunity to pursue an internship facilitated by the IAEA.

Vienna, Austria

30 September 2022 (deadline for applications)

Singapore International Energy Week

SIEW is an annual platform for energy professionals, policymakers and commentators to share best practices and solutions within the global energy space.

Singapore

25-28 October 2022

FOOD SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Indonesia proposes ASEAN food bank to deal with food insecurity

During a public lecture at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, the Coordinating Economic Minister of Indonesia shared on the need for a regional food bank that can be useful in the event of food supply disruptions.

M. Taufiqurrahman

Jakarta Post

30 August 2022

Craving India's food security success

India presents a potential role model in minimising the impacts of COVID-19 on extreme poverty and food insecurity. India's combination of laissez-faire and food-security-focussed stockpile management presents a potential role model for ASEAN member states, where laissez-faire approaches prevail.

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros

East Asia Forum

3 September 2022

Ukraine war threatens global food security

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is having important impacts on global food security, which are made more acute by the pandemic. World leaders will need to earnestly consider putting an end to the war against the ramifications of a potential global food crisis.

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Margareth Sembiring

Jakarta Post

5 September 2022

Commentary: Lessons from Singapore's former pig farmers about business transformation

Global and local challenges like climate change and rising costs may offer new opportunities for daring and determined Singaporeans, whether they are farmers, entrepreneurs, or policymakers, just as pig farmers in 1984 gradually diversified into new sectors or experimented with other food products.

Choo Ruizhi

TODAY

6 September 2022

India's rice export ban paralyzes trade in Asia as prices rise

India, the world's biggest exporter of rice, banned shipments of lower-priced broken rice last 8th September, and imposed a 20 percent duty on exports of various other types of rice.

Reuters

The Jakarta Post

12 September 2022

Asean region critical to tackling food security, but countries must deal with multiple risks

Amid rising food price inflation and climate challenges facing the ASEAN region, spokesperson from Singapore-based Commodities Intelligence Centre has highlighted trade opportunities for countries which serve as agri-commodity powerhouses, including Indonesia and Malaysia (palm oil), Thailand (sugar) and Vietnam (coffee).

Uma Devi

Business Times

14 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Food insecurity beyond borders: Untangling the complex impacts of Ukraine war on global food security

While conflict has historically influenced food insecurity within countries, the Ukraine war is of a different nature, as it is worsening food insecurity in other countries too. This NTS Insight untangles the dynamics of conflict-induced food insecurity beyond borders amid the ongoing war.

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Margareth Sembiring

NTS Insight, No. IN22-03

Singapore: NTS Centre, RSIS

2022

Effect of nutrition counselling with a digital job aid on child dietary diversity: Analysis of secondary outcomes from a cluster randomised controlled trial in rural Bangladesh

Nutrition counselling of mothers by community health workers using a digital job aid can improve dietary diversity and consumption of animal-sourced protein among 6- to 23-month-old children. Policymakers should consider wider programmatic use of digital device-aided nutrition counselling for community-based programmes.

Sk Masum Billah et al.

Maternal and Child Nutrition 18, No. 1

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

RSIS Distinguished Public Lecture by His Excellency Airlangga Hartarto

During this public lecture, Indonesia's Coordinating Economic Minister of Indonesia shared his view on the need for a funding mechanism to allow shipments of basic food staples across countries in the event of disruptions.

Recorded Webinar

29 August 2022

Feeding Asia: Food crisis stokes innovation

The current food crisis has been exacerbated by inflation, climate change, supply chain disruptions, urban migration and ageing societies. This webinar will examine how Asia can feed more people, with fewer resources, in the decades to come.

Webinar

29 September 2022

HEALTH SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Covid, monkeypox, polio: Summer of viruses reflects travel, warming trends

A warming climate, vanishing forests and global travel have accelerated the spread of pathogens from animals to people, as well as among people in different parts of the world.

Mark Johnson

The Washington Post

1 September 2022

5 virus families that could cause the next pandemic, according to the experts

A recently released report recommends that we learn more about viruses and their hosts across the five most concerning virus families. These causes of disease could fuel the next pandemic.

Allen Cheng, et al.

The Conversation

5 September 2022

A key to long Covid is virus lingering in the body, scientists say

Recent research suggests that the COVID-19 virus remaining in some people's bodies for a long time may be causing longer-term complications.

Sumathi Reddy

The Wall Street Journal

8 September 2022

Self-sterilising plastic kills viruses like Covid

Scientists have developed a virus-killing plastic that could make it harder for bugs, including COVID-19, to spread in hospitals and care homes.

James Gallagher

BBC

9 September 2022

China restricts domestic travel as Covid outbreaks persist

China is stepping up its COVID-19 defenses as a key Communist Party meeting looms, restricting internal travel further as swathes of the country remain under tight lockdowns.

Angus Whitley and Linda Lew

Bloomberg News

9 September 2022

Human progress set back five years by virus, other crises

A new UNDP report says that an unprecedented array of crises, chiefly among them the COVID-19 pandemic, has set human progress back five years and fueled a global wave of uncertainty.

AFP

Taipei Times

9 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Infodemics and health misinformation: A systematic review of reviews

This review compares and summarizes the literature regarding infodemics and health misinformation, and identifies challenges and opportunities for addressing the issues of infodemics.

Israel Junior Borges do Nascimento et al.

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 100, No. 9
2022

Strengthening Australia's pandemic preparedness

This report provides a strategic overview of key science and technology-enabled solutions to better prepare Australia for future pandemics.

Anthea Moisi, Laura Thomas, and Greg Williams

CSIRO Futures

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The story is far from over - lessons learned from COVID-19 policies in Asia & Africa

The discussion focused on research findings from studies conducted in Kenya, Singapore, and Thailand to discuss lessons for application in response to competing priorities of governments as they seek to strike a balance between public health and economic considerations.

Recorded Webinar

7 July 2022

Lessons learned and best practices from COVID-19 pandemic management

This webinar discussed lessons learned and best practices from COVID-19 pandemic management in India.

Recorded Webinar

24 August 2022

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Planetary health: An alternative framework for disaster governance in ASEAN?

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the search for a better way of managing human activities and their environmental impact thereby zeroing in on the specific actions needed to maintain a balance for Planet Earth's sustainability.

S. Nanthini and Lina Gong

RSIS Commentary

17 August 2022

Urban resilience: a 21st century challenge

As urban populations continue to increase amid intensification of the effects of climate change, urban disasters are set to affect more people than ever before. As such, strategies to build urban resilience are quickly becoming an urgent matter of global concern.

S. Nanthini

RSIS Commentary

19 August 2022

Why humanitarians should stop hiding behind impartiality

Understanding the politics behind crises can help aid workers avoid unintended consequences.

Joshua Craze and Alicia Luedke

The New Humanitarian

22 August 2022

Anticipatory action in disaster management: Global and regional developments

Although there has been a scale-up of anticipatory action in the humanitarian and development spaces, there are still important questions surrounding the extent to which anticipatory action has been operationalised in Southeast Asia.

Christopher Chen

IDSS Paper

31 August 2022

Pakistan floods pose urgent questions over preparedness and climate reparations

As Pakistan reels from some of its worst flooding ever, survivors are asking why more was not done to prepare communities long known to be at risk.

Zuha Siddiqui

The New Humanitarian

5 September 2022

Floods, heatwaves, landslides, food security: Southeast Asians air climate concerns in new report

Floods, heatwaves and rainfall-induced landslides are the top concerns in Southeast Asia on climate change with almost half of its citizens – 49.3 per cent – saying there is a lack of political will to mitigate the threats.

Amy Chew

South China Morning Post

9 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Strengthening partnerships to counter non-traditional security threats in the Indo-Pacific

This report analyses how cooperation on non-traditional security threats can act as a catalyst for building stronger partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. It considers countries in South Asia, South-east Asia, as well as Small Island Countries in Oceania.

Sreeparna Banerjee and Pratinashree Basu

ORF Special Report

2022

The state of the humanitarian system

This report assesses the size, shape and performance of the humanitarian system. Based on evidence from practitioners, crisis-affected populations, academics, policy-makers and donors, it aims to provide a view into the performance of the international humanitarian system during crises.

A. Obrecht, S Swithern and J. Doherty

London: ALNAP/ODI

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management 2022

With the theme of "The Future of Disaster Resilience is Now: Are We Ready?", the SPDDM 2022 brought together governments, militaries, international organisations as well as other actors in the humanitarian sphere to discuss dynamic future of the disaster management landscape.

Recorded Conference

19 August 2022

Understanding Climate Change Loss and Damage and Links to Humanitarian Action

This webinar explored the concept of loss and damage. By looking at losses and damages experienced by individuals, communities, and governments, panelists explained how adequate funding could reduce the impacts of crises.

Recorded Webinar

25 August 2022

MIGRATION

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

The century of climate migration: Why we need to plan for the great upheaval

With climate-driven migration adding to the already large number of migrants, there is an urgent need to plan for the future – a future which is rapidly approaching for all countries, whether wealthy or poor.

Gaia Vince

The Guardian

18 August 2022

'Feeling like prisoners': The plight of Rohingya refugees today

Five years since the mass exodus of over 700,000 Rohingya from Myanmar, little has changed. Calls have been made to repatriate them, but this seems unlikely given Myanmar's current political situation.

Joseph Stepanisky

Al Jazeera

25 August 2022

How European courts are wrongfully prosecuting asylum seekers as smugglers

Since the 2015 migration crisis, there has been a trend of European countries prosecuting asylum seekers and migrants as smugglers – a trend that is only increasing.

Ottavia Spaggiari et al

The New Humanitarian

1 September 2022

The right tools for a coherent regional response to forced migration

A reform of the Bali Process is urgent before the next forced migration crisis in the Asia-Pacific. Suggestions for reform include the incorporation of the lived experiences of migration when creating policies and strengthening early warning systems.

Caitlin McCaffrie

The Interpreter

5 September 2022

Migration reform to be approved by 2024, say parliament leaders and diplomats

The European Parliament will approve the Pact on Migration and Asylum and will adopt legislation before the next European election in 2024. This will enable more harmonisation in EU migration policy, decreasing delays in asylum applications.

Benjamin Fox and Eleonora Vasques

Euractiv

8 September 2022

How South Asian countries can protect their migrant workers abroad

South Asian countries should ramp up their diplomatic presence in countries by harnessing all sources of diplomatic leverage and signing agreements and MOUs that guarantee protections for their citizens in host countries

Elaine Zhang

New Atlanticist

8 September 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Exploring the environment-conflict-migration nexus in Asia

This study examines the nexus between climate change, migration and conflict within Asia, seeking to provide insights for policy-makers, international organisations and humanitarian groups.

Sara Vigil et al

Stockholm Environment Institute

2022

Asia-Pacific migration data report 2021

This Report looks at the migration landscape in the region in 2021, with a focus on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It monitors progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Migration Governance Indicators.

International Organization for Migration

Bangkok: Asia-Pacific Regional Data Hub

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Migrant Integration Governance After the Pandemic: Lasting Adaptations?

This webinar examined how government strategies, practices, and instruments of integration policymaking have adapted during the pandemic. Presenters also discussed how policymakers ensured effective and agile responses in a context of COVID-19-induced disruption, and the lessons learned from such policies.

Recorded Webinar

30 June 2022

Global Evidence Review on Health and Migration: Capturing the evidence on access to essential antibiotics in migrant and refugee populations

The WHO held a high-level webinar to share the findings of the Global Evidence Review. By exploring evidence on access and use of essential antimicrobials in international migrant populations, this review provides policy considerations to support policy-makers in addressing national and global challenges.

Recorded Webinar

6 September 2022