



## Press Conference: COVID-19 / Earth Day - WMO

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### Shotlist

1. Wide shot: exterior, Place des Nations, Geneva, with broken chair sculpture and UN Geneva in background.
2. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Professor Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General: “This drop of emissions of six per cent, that’s unfortunately short-term good news. So, in the most likely case we would easily go back to the normal (emission levels) next year and there might even be a boost in emissions because some of the industries have been stopped and so forth.”**
3. Medium shot: from outside UN Geneva with flag alley beyond fence.
4. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Professor Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General: “When it comes to pollutants, for example like nitrous oxide; so particles, their lifetime is typically from days to weeks, so the impact is seen more rapidly. But these changes in the carbon emissions, they haven’t had any impact on climate so far.”**
5. Close-up: UN Geneva flag alley, flags and UN building in background, with UN logo and lettering visible.
6. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Professor Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General: “We have also seen improvements in air quality in several parts of the world and that has been the case in China, in India and also here close to us in the Po Valley in northern Italy, which is one of the most polluted areas in Europe. And we have seen that also in individual cities like Paris.”**
7. Close-up: UN building in bright sunlight, shot from below, showing UN logo and lettering.
8. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Professor Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General: “Climate change is of a different magnitude of the problem as compared to COVID; COVID is having short-term health problems - causing health problems for the mankind - and this economic impact may be lasting**

**for a few years.”**

9. Medium shot: UN flag alley with UN flag in background; all are fluttering gently.
10. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Professor Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General: “And if we are unable to mitigate climate change, we would see persistent health problems, especially hunger and inability to feed the growing population of the world and there would be also more massive impact on economics.”**
11. Wide shot: UN Geneva, main entrance.

## Story

### Fall in carbon emissions linked to COVID-19 won't halt climate change, says UN weather agency chief

An expected drop in greenhouse gas emissions linked to the global economic crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic is only “short-term good news”, the head of the UN weather agency said on Wednesday.

“This drop of emissions of six per cent, that’s unfortunately (only) short-term good news,” said Professor Petteri Taalas, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General, a likely reference to a temporary 5.5 to 5.7 per cent fall in levels of carbon dioxide that has been flagged by leading climate scientists including the Center for International Climate Research.

He added: “In the most likely case we would easily go back to the normal (emission levels) next year and there might even be a boost in emissions because some of the industries have been stopped, and so forth.”

Latest data from WMO published to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day on 22 April indicates that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere rose to new records last year.

Levels of carbon dioxide were 18 per cent higher from 2015 to 2019 than the previous five years, according to WMO’s [Global Climate 2015-2019](#) report.

The gas “remains in the atmosphere and oceans for centuries. This means that the world is committed to continued climate change regardless of any temporary fall in emissions due to the Coronavirus epidemic,” the report states, with data indicating that CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations are on track “to reach or even exceed 410 ppm by the end of 2019”.

The forecasted fall in carbon emissions is mirrored by decreases in levels of common air pollutants from car exhausts and fossil fuel energy, such as nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) particles.

“Their lifetime is typically from days to weeks, so the impact is seen more rapidly,” Professor Taalas said. “But these changes in the carbon emissions, they haven’t had any impact on climate so far.”

Highlighting the dramatic improvement in air quality in major cities and industrialised regions “in several parts of the world”, the WMO chief noted that this has been the case “in China, in India and also here close to us in the Po Valley in northern Italy, which is one of the most polluted areas in Europe. And we have seen that also in individual cities like Paris.”

Climate change was “of a different magnitude” to the problems posed by the new coronavirus, Professor Taalas insisted, underscoring its sometimes fatal health risk, along with a devastating economic impact that “may be lasting for a few years”.

Given the fact that the last 50 years have seen the physical signs of climate change - and their impacts – gathering speed at a dangerous rate, the WMO head insisted that unless the world can mitigate climate change, it will lead to “persistent health problems, especially hunger and inability to feed the growing population of the world and there would be also more massive impact on economics”.

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, carbon dioxide levels have gone up 26 per cent, and the world’s average temperature has increased by 0.86 degrees Celsius (33.5 Fahrenheit).

The planet is also 1.1 degree (nearly 34 Fahrenheit) warmer than the pre-industrial era and this trend is expected to continue, WMO said.

In its latest report warning of the impacts of climate change, the UN agency confirmed that the last five years were the hottest on record.

Others key indicators showed an acceleration of climate change in the past five years.

These include ocean heat and acidification, sea level, glacier mass balance and Arctic and Antarctic sea ice.