

EPISODE 5

Climate action now will have short- and long-term benefits

2 ANSWERS TO SCEPTICAL QUESTIONS

“We are already doing so much for climate protection. Isn’t that enough?”

It’s true that we’ve made substantial strides in recent years. Climate policies have shifted our trajectory away from a catastrophic 4-5°C temperature increase by 2100, bringing us closer to around 3°C. However, the reality is that our **current trajectory won’t keep global warming within safe limits**. That’s why **urgent and more ambitious actions are essential now**. What’s more: climate protection has some **immediate benefits on our lives**. For example, by avoiding the burning of oil, methane gas or coal, we ensure cleaner air to breathe and ultimately better health.

“2-3 °C or 1.5 °C warming... This is just a small difference. Why do we even bother to aim for 1.5 °C?”

The **difference between 2 to 3 °C and 1.5 °C global warming** may seem small on paper, but it has **significant consequences**. Maintaining global warming at 1.5°C, rather than allowing it to exceed 2°C or more, carries profound implications. To illustrate, limiting global warming to 1.5°C could **halve the number of people experiencing water stress** compared to a 2°C scenario (IPCC 2018). When we act now, we have the unique **chance to lock in a legacy** that lasts for thousands of years.

3 FAST FACTS

2 °C

– that is the global temperature increase by the end of the century, even if all countries fulfilled their current emission reduction pledges (Status: November 2022)¹.

800 million

– that’s the number of urban dwellers at risk to at least 0.5 metres of sea level rise and coastal flooding by 2050 if emissions don’t decrease².

1.7 °C

– this temperature rise could be a safe limit below which the Greenland ice sheet would not tip over³.

¹ Climate Action Tracker 2022, ² The Future We Don’t Want 2018, ³ Bochow et al. 2023

3 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Future pathways that reduce risk are still possible. Societal choices can take us down this better pathway.
- ▶ There are immediate short-term benefits to climate action, like improved air and water quality, which ultimately have positive impacts on our health.
- ▶ Actions this decade will reverberate for millennia, and every fraction of warming avoided is important. It is high time to really get serious about climate action.

3 ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

- ▶ What future pathways are available to us? This [illustration by the IPCC](#) shows different possible scenarios.
- ▶ [Global greenhouse gas emissions and warming scenarios](#) visualised by Our World in Data.
- ▶ This [article by the WEF](#) explains the different consequences between 1.5 and 2 °C of global warming.