



## Headline statements from the Summary for Policymakers\*

### Observed Changes and their Causes

**Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.**

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea level has risen.

Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the pre-industrial era, driven largely by economic and population growth, and are now higher than ever. This has led to atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide that are unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years. Their effects, together with those of other anthropogenic drivers, have been detected throughout the climate system and are *extremely likely* to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In recent decades, changes in climate have caused impacts on natural and human systems on all continents and across the oceans. Impacts are due to observed climate change, irrespective of its cause, indicating the sensitivity of natural and human systems to changing climate.

Changes in many extreme weather and climate events have been observed since about 1950. Some of these changes have been linked to human influences, including a decrease in cold temperature extremes, an increase in warm temperature extremes, an increase in extreme high sea levels and an increase in the number of heavy precipitation events in a number of regions.

### Future Climate Changes, Risks and Impacts

**Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems. Limiting climate change would require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which, together with adaptation, can limit climate change risks.**

Cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide largely determine global mean surface warming by the late 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Projections of greenhouse gas emissions vary over a wide range, depending on both socio-economic development and climate policy.

Surface temperature is projected to rise over the 21<sup>st</sup> century under all assessed emission scenarios. It is *very likely* that heat waves will occur more often and last longer, and that extreme precipitation events will become more intense and frequent in many regions. The ocean will continue to warm and acidify, and global mean sea level to rise.

Climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems. Risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development.

Many aspects of climate change and associated impacts will continue for centuries, even if anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are stopped. The risks of abrupt or irreversible changes increase as the magnitude of the warming increases.

\* Headline statements are the overarching highlighted conclusions of the approved Summary for Policymakers which, taken together, provide a concise narrative. The four statements in boxes here are those summarizing the assessment in the Summary for Policymakers, sections 1-4.

## Future Pathways for Adaptation, Mitigation and Sustainable Development

Adaptation and mitigation are complementary strategies for reducing and managing the risks of climate change. Substantial emissions reductions over the next few decades can reduce climate risks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, increase prospects for effective adaptation, reduce the costs and challenges of mitigation in the longer term, and contribute to climate-resilient pathways for sustainable development.

Effective decision making to limit climate change and its effects can be informed by a wide range of analytical approaches for evaluating expected risks and benefits, recognizing the importance of governance, ethical dimensions, equity, value judgments, economic assessments and diverse perceptions and responses to risk and uncertainty.

Without additional mitigation efforts beyond those in place today, and even with adaptation, warming by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will lead to high to very high risk of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts globally (*high confidence*). Mitigation involves some level of co-benefits and of risks due to adverse side-effects, but these risks do not involve the same possibility of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts as risks from climate change, increasing the benefits from near-term mitigation efforts.

Adaptation can reduce the risks of climate change impacts, but there are limits to its effectiveness, especially with greater magnitudes and rates of climate change. Taking a longer-term perspective, in the context of sustainable development, increases the likelihood that more immediate adaptation actions will also enhance future options and preparedness.

There are multiple mitigation pathways that are likely to limit warming to below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels. These pathways would require substantial emissions reductions over the next few decades and near zero emissions of carbon dioxide and other long-lived greenhouse gases by the end of the century. Implementing such reductions poses substantial technological, economic, social, and institutional challenges, which increase with delays in additional mitigation and if key technologies are not available. Limiting warming to lower or higher levels involves similar challenges, but on different timescales.

## Adaptation and Mitigation

Many adaptation and mitigation options can help address climate change, but no single option is sufficient by itself. Effective implementation depends on policies and cooperation at all scales, and can be enhanced through integrated responses that link adaptation and mitigation with other societal objectives.

Adaptation and mitigation responses are underpinned by common enabling factors. These include effective institutions and governance, innovation and investments in environmentally sound technologies and infrastructure, sustainable livelihoods, and behavioral and lifestyle choices.

Adaptation options exist in all sectors, but their context for implementation and potential to reduce climate-related risks differs across sectors and regions. Some adaptation responses involve significant co-benefits, synergies and trade-offs. Increasing climate change will increase challenges for many adaptation options.

Mitigation options are available in every major sector. Mitigation can be more cost-effective if using an integrated approach that combines measures to reduce energy use and the greenhouse gas intensity of end-use sectors, decarbonize energy supply, reduce net emissions and enhance carbon sinks in land-based sectors.

Effective adaptation and mitigation responses will depend on policies and measures across multiple scales: international, regional, national and sub-national. Policies across all scales supporting technology development, diffusion and transfer, as well as finance for responses to climate change, can complement and enhance the effectiveness of policies that directly promote adaptation and mitigation.

Climate change is a threat to sustainable development. Nonetheless, there are many opportunities to link mitigation, adaptation and the pursuit of other societal objectives through integrated responses (*high confidence*). Successful implementation relies on relevant tools, suitable governance structures and enhanced capacity to respond (*medium confidence*).

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