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WWF International
Avenue du Mont-Blanc
1196 Gland
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 364 9111
Fax: +41 22 364 0456
www.panda.org

Press Release

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Transforming world's energy systems an urgent necessity

(BERLIN, 13 April) – WWF backs a call in a major UN scientific report released today that the world should more than triple investments in sustainable, safe low-carbon energy sources as the main measure to mitigate climate change.

The report, agreed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), says that the world should triple or quadruple investments in clean energy solutions. WWF goes further, saying that the overwhelming majority of new investments should be made in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The report finds that mitigation of climate change will have limited economic impact in the years ahead compared to the very significant costs of inaction. The report also finds that delaying actions to mitigate climate change will substantially increase the difficulty of the transition to lower emissions levels in the future.

WWF echoes the IPCC findings and renews its call for increased investments in renewable sources of energy.

“The longer we delay on tackling climate change, the harder the challenge becomes,” said Samantha Smith, leader of the WWF’s Global Climate & Energy Initiative. “Transforming the world’s energy systems is now an urgent necessity if we are to avoid the dangerous impacts of global warming.”

The IPCC report makes clear that acting on emissions now is affordable, but delaying further increases the costs. The energy sector is by far the largest emitter of greenhouse gases and, therefore, is the key battleground of change.

“We know more effort is needed, and quickly. Delaying new mitigation efforts will make it much harder to transition the world’s energy systems to a sustainable, equitable and low-emissions future,” Smith said.

WWF concludes that the low-carbon emission scenarios proposed by the IPCC require that we must start leaving fossil fuels in the ground right now. This presents both an investment and political challenge.

“Renewable energy can no longer be considered a niche market. Renewables must – and should – eventually take the full share of the global energy market within the next few decades,” said Dr Stephan Singer, WWF director of global energy policy.

WWF is currently running a global campaign, Seize Your Power, that is calling for investments to be pulled out of fossil fuels and switched into renewable energy. In light of the IPCC report, WWF continues to believe that investments in renewable energy must be scaled up rapidly.

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Notes for Editors

1. CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes contributed about 78% of the total GHG emission increase from 1970 to 2010, with a similar percentage contribution for the period 2000-2010. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
2. Globally, economic and population growth continue to be the most important drivers of increases in CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion. The contribution of population growth between 2000 and 2010 remained roughly identical to the previous three decades, while the contribution of economic growth has risen sharply. Between 2000 and 2010, both drivers outpaced emission reductions from improvements in energy intensity. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
3. Without additional efforts to reduce GHG emissions beyond those in place today, emissions growth is expected to persist driven by growth in global population and economic activities. Baseline scenarios, those without additional mitigation, result in global mean surface temperature increases in 2100 from 3.7°C to 4.8°C compared to pre-industrial levels. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
4. International cooperation is required to effectively mitigate GHG emissions and address other climate change issue. Climate change has the characteristics of a collective action problem at the global scale, because most greenhouse gases accumulate over time and mix globally, and emissions by any agent (e.g., individual, community, company, country) affect other agents. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
5. Delaying mitigation efforts beyond those in place today through 2030 could substantially increase the difficulty of keeping global temperature change below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
6. Infrastructure developments and long-lived products that lock societies into GHG-intensive emissions pathways may be difficult or very costly to change, reinforcing the importance of early action for ambitious mitigation. This lock-in risk is compounded by the lifetime of the infrastructure, by the difference in emissions associated with alternatives, and the magnitude of the investment cost. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
7. Decarbonizing electricity generation is a key component of cost-effective mitigation strategies in achieving low-stabilization levels (430–530 ppm CO₂eq). In the majority of low-stabilization scenarios, the share of low-GHG electricity supply (comprising renewable energy, nuclear and Carbon Capture and Storage CCS) increases from the current share of approximately 30% to more than 80 % by 2050, and fossil fuel power generation without CCS is phased out almost entirely by 2100. *(Source: IPCC WG3 report)*
8. Mitigation is defined by the IPCC as an anthropogenic (man-made) intervention to reduce the sources of greenhouse gases or enhance their sinks.
9. Information on WWF's global campaign, Seize Your Power, is available here: www.panda.org/syp



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For more information:

Mandy Jean Woods, WWF-International,

Tel: [+49 151 1885 4855](tel:+4915118854855) email: mwoods@wwf.org.za, twitter: @mandyjeanwoods

George Smeeton, WWF-UK,

Tel: [+44 7917 052 948](tel:+447917052948), email: GSmeeton@wwf.org.uk, twitter: @GSmeeton

Sylvia Ratzlaff, WWF-Germany,

Tel: [+49 151 1885 4846](tel:+4915118854846), email: sylvia.ratzlaff@wwf.de, twitter: @RatzlaffWWF

About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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