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Africa climate adaptation costs could soar to US\$350b annually by 2070

Warsaw, Poland (PANA) - The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has warned that the failure by governments to close the "emissions gap" to keep warming below 2 degrees Celsius will result in Africa facing huge financial challenges in adapting to climate change.

A report released by UNEP in Warsaw, Poland, which is hosting the annual round of the UN climate negotiations running until Friday, estimates that adaptation costs for Africa could reach approximately US\$350 billion annually by 2070, should the two-degree target be significantly exceeded, while the cost would be around US\$150 billion lower per year if the target was to be met.

The Africa's Adaptation Gap report, released Tuesday and endorsed by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), confirms the World Bank's Turn Down the Heat Reports that "there is a 40 percent chance that we will inhabit a '3.5-4°C World' if mitigation efforts are not stepped up from current levels."

Africa is already facing adaptation costs in the range of US\$7-15 billion per year by 2020 and these costs would rise rapidly after 2020, since higher levels warming will result in higher impacts, according to the report which says additional adaptation funding is imperative to control damage and build resilience.

Even if nations meet their current climate pledges, greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 are likely to be 8 to 12 gigatonnes of CO₂ (GtCO₂e) above the level that would provide a likely chance of remaining on the least-cost pathway consistent with holding warming below 2°C.

"Africa cannot risk failure of implementing serious adaptation measures, especially with Africa's predicted population rise of 2 billion by 2050 and the current ecosystem degradation trajectory," said President of AMCEN and Tanzanian Minister of State for the Environment Terezya Huvisa.

The report cautions that, even if the world does manage to keep warming below 2°C, Africa's adaptation costs will still hover around US\$35 billion per year by the 2040s and US\$200 billion per year by the 2070s - with total costs reaching 1 per cent of the continent's GDP by 2100.

"Missing the 2°C window will not only cost governments billions of dollars but will risk the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people on the African continent and elsewhere," UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said.

"Even with a warming scenario of under 2°C by 2050, Africa's undernourished would increase 25-90 per cent. Crop production will be reduced across much of the continent as optimal growing temperatures are exceeded. The capacity of African communities to cope with the impacts of climate change will be significantly challenged.

"I would like to welcome the decision by AMCEN to endorse the recommendations of the Africa Gap report; an important step towards strengthening political will and building resilient national policies," Steiner added.

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