

Taking The Temperature Episode 3

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SPEAKERS

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Hello, and thank you for tuning in to this Taking the Temperature policy update from Julie's Bicycle. My name is Becky, I'm an environmental sustainability project manager at Julie's Bicycle, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a white woman in my 30s with long light brown hair, and wearing a blue dress, earrings and I'm sat in front of a mantelpiece with a sprawling plant on my left. I'm going to be covering the latest environmental policy updates, and news, and there's really plenty going on right now to cover. So let's kick off with the headlines from the latest IPCC reports. For those of you who might be new to this, the IPCC is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And it's the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. They produce reports for policymakers, which bring together all of the latest science. And this latest report marks the end of the CIP assessment cycle, which started all the way back in 2015. So part one, or AR6, details how and why the earth's climate is changing. And it told us that human influence on the climate is now an established fact. And that we're going to reach 1.5 to 2 degrees of warming within the next 12 years. It told us that weak or no mitigation will lead to catastrophic impacts across the globe. But of course, those catastrophic impacts won't hit everywhere, or everyone in the same way. The impacts are disproportionate, and they're going to hit the most vulnerable people. First, for example, Pacific island nations, which lie just a few feet above sea level. Well, those who are on low wages and live in city apartments who are unable to afford air conditioning. These people are the people that are least responsible for historical emissions, but they will still be impacted the most severely. For the first time, the report announced that we're experiencing more extreme weather and climate events, and that these events are also becoming more intense. It told us that extreme weather events such as droughts, precipitation and floods, will only get worse with each additional bit of warming. The report came out during last year's record breaking heat waves that concluded that not only things are getting hotter, but they're getting hotter faster than previously thought. The second part came out in February 22. And that looked at the impacts of climate change, adaptation and vulnerability. It describes the mass species mortalities that are occurring as increased heat waves, droughts and floods are already exceeding plants and animals tolerance thresholds. Human induced climate change is also affecting the lives of billions of people across the world, exposing millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, especially across Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and on low lying Islands and the Arctic. Those exposed to the worst impacts of climate change are the people that are least able to adapt, but the effectiveness of any adaptation decreases with each increase in

temperature. And with each degree of warming those losses and damages increase, which means more loss of life, and the ecosystems that were a part of both human and non human. By April, the IPCC had issued its third and final report in the series. This report focused on mitigation, explaining that limiting methane emissions to 1.5 or 2C requires rapid and deep emissions cuts across all sectors of the global economy. For the first time, the report acknowledges that disproportionate suffering and different levels of vulnerability to climate change experienced by different communities and regions are a result of the historical and ongoing patterns of colonialism. After decades of climate justice campaigners fighting to make these connections, decision makers can no longer ignore this. They have to respond to the issue with policies and crucially, investment to address these historical injustices, protect impacted communities and help them to adapt before climate change takes more lives.

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What does this all mean in practice? It means dramatic, immediate, transformational, systemic could change. We need responses and solutions from across sectors that also address social inequalities and take into account the inequalities of climate impacts. If we've got any hope of stabilising the climate at 1.5, or 2 degrees of warming, then no further fossil fuel exploitation can take place. This to be successful, we need to substantially reduce the amount of fossil fuels that we're using, through investing in energy efficiency, electrification, rapidly moving to low emission energy sources such as renewables, and to some extent by using alternative energy carriers such as hydrogen. The report also places emphasis on the importance of demand side measures for the first time advocating for the role of changing diets and the role that that can have in helping to reduce emissions faster, which would require less carbon dioxide removal and mitigation measures. The report also tells us that well, solutions such as tree planting have the potential to live to deliver large scale emissions reductions and removals, they cannot fully compensate for the delayed action in other sectors. So solutions exist, enough solutions if we're able to deploy them fast enough. However, from a policy perspective, there remains a significant gap between greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, which cover around 90% of global emissions, and the current climate laws that are in place to achieve them, which cover only around 53% of global emissions. Unfortunately, at the UK level, the picture is no different. The recent climate change committee report which assesses the government's policy effectiveness, concludes that the net zero strategy from the UK will cover just 1/3 of the UK emissions reductions required to meet our targets. A group of environmental campaigners, including Friends of the Earth, and the Good Law Project decided that this was not okay. They took the issue to the High Court and in a historical ruling the the high court they took the issue to the High Court and in a historical ruling, the government's net zero strategy has been found to be unlawful and too vague due to the lack of insufficient detail on how those emissions reduction targets will be met. And the lack of sector specific time bound targets. It's in breach of the Climate Change Act 2008, which enshrined the net zero by 2050 Target into UK law. With the government in the midst of a leadership battle, we'll have to wait to see what action is going to be taken. The court ruling came as the UK - as the UK's temperature hit the highest records, exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. Extreme heat warnings were issued across the country. We saw train lines buckle, airport runways melts and wildfires spread causing the fire service to be busier than it's been since World War Two. The weather events provided a collective glimpse of how woefully ill prepared our buildings and infrastructure of temperature extremes such as these. Temperature records have been broken around the world. As early as March, India was experiencing temperatures of 47 degrees C, the highest March temperatures in 122 years. By the end of April, temperatures in Pakistan hit 49 degrees, which was exceeded but in May, with records of 51 degrees, a global heat record for 2022. Portugal also broke its July record reaching temperatures of 47 degrees, with over 1,000 people dying of heat related illnesses. These extreme events mean that homes and cities are becoming increasingly uninhabitable. Millions of potential

climate refugees will soon have to find new homes, new land for crops and businesses or take the risk of trying to endure insufferable conditions. The IPCC reports predicts that around 50 to 75% of the world's population could be exposed to periods of life threatening climatic conditions by 2100. But some are worried that this trend is happening sooner than scientists expected.

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Now from this summer's heat waves to the upcoming cold of winter, the issue of fuel poverty, blackouts and soaring energy bills. Cornwall Insight predicts that energy bills in the UK are likely to hit £4,649.72 a year for a typical household. With the with the January changed the energy price cap. Ofgem cited that the reasons for the rise is because of the cost of oil and gas as a result of bouncing back from the pandemic, strong demand in Asia for gas, a cold winter in the Northern Hemisphere, and events in Ukraine threatening Russian supplies. However, analysis from Carbon Brief shows that 96% of the increase in gas help in energy bills household bills is down to an 11 fold increase in gas prices since 2019. So there's something here that doesn't quite add up. While many of us were setting our thermostats as low as we could bear last winter, or switching off entirely fossil fuel companies, Shell and BP, announced that they were on course for record combined profits of 14 billion pounds. While we were offered a meagre 200 pound loan on our energy bills, Shell and BP paid no corporation tax or production levies on North Sea oil operations between 2018 and 2020, claiming tax relief of nearly 400 million pounds and paid shareholders more than 44 billion in dividends. And despite what all of their advertising says the biggest fossil fuel companies invest less than 5% of their money in renewables, and this will fall to 3% by October. Campaigners have pressured the government to impose a one off 25% windfall tax on fossil fuel companies, or temporary targeted energy profits levy. However, buried in the announcement is the fact that oil and gas companies will get a 90% tax cut if they extract more fossil fuels in the UK. That's not give us hope. Analysis from the latest IPCC reports shows that a quarter of fossil fuel projects that are faced with resistance from campaigners ended up being cancelled, fighting back works. So how about nature and biodiversity? The Environment Agency has just released a report called working with nature, which describes the significant landscape level changes that are needed, combined with nature based solutions in order to hold the biodiversity crisis in England. The report says that the threat to biodiversity and the mass loss of biodiversity in England underpins our ability to survive and should be viewed as an existential risk. The report suggests that England needs more bigger and better joined up spaces for nature. It adds that the current islands of habitat that exist cannot prevent further loss of nature. This report came out ahead of COP15, which is the meeting of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. This is distinct from the more well known COP which focuses on climate change. And this is where progress towards previously agreed biodiversity targets, which aims how to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 will be reviewed. Countries are also expected to adopt the global biodiversity framework, which is a bit like a Paris Agreement for nature. It aims for people to live in harmony with nature by 2050. Preliminary talks this year been held in Geneva and Nairobi. And they've aimed to agree the details of the framework, which will build on the biodiversity targets from the last decade, of which the UK failed to meet 17 out of 20 of those targets. The new global biodiversity framework includes 21 targets and 10 milestones to 2030, which will help to build towards the 2050 goal. The targets include the goal of ensuring 30% of land and marine areas globally are conserved for nature by 2030, particularly those of importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people. Other targets include the contribution of nature to climate mitigation, and increasing access to green and blue spaces in cities. COP15 has been been delayed more than once since 2020. But the recent talks in Nairobi revealed a new date for COP15, which will take place between the 5th and 17th of December in Montreal and be hosted by China.

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Negotiations however, are really far from straightforward. The questions being asked are complex and they need to be addressed with justice and equity at the fore. For example, who should conserve what percent of land and where? How can we ensure that the area based approach respects the rights of Indigenous peoples. And how should biodiversity rich countries be rewarded for protecting rather than profiting from their biodiversity, especially as the world's by most biodiverse regions tend to be found in less economically developed countries? How international finance for biodiversity be implemented? And who will be able to access it? And how can we accurately measure progress and impacts the list of questions goes on. During the preliminary talks, a group of developing countries, including biodiversity rich countries, such as Brazil, India, the African group, which is made up of 54 African Union member states, and Bolivia called on developed countries to commit to jointly mobilising \$100 billion dollars to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. Another challenging point for negotiations are the calls for countries to reduce subsidies for sectors such as intensive agriculture and fossil fuels, which directly contribute to biodiversity loss, and instead redirect these funds towards nature conservation. However, some of the positive outcomes for Nairobi include that China has agreed to fund travel to the conference for less developed countries and small island states to be able to participate. Another step in the right direction for justice is the inclusion of target 22, a target which is aimed at gender equality in the implementation of the framework. It recognises that women and girls are often hold unique knowledge on biodiversity conservation, but too often not included in the decision making. And finally, to wrap up some news from the United States, so a landmark piece of climate legislation has just been passed by the US House. The Inflation Reduction Act 22, or the IRA sets out plans for an investment of around \$375 billion dollars in climate action over the next decade. The Democrats are hailing the bill as one of the most significant pieces of climate legislation that has ever been passed in the States. It's expected to cut emissions by 40% below 2005 levels by 2030. However, critics of the bill, including many climate justice campaigners are pointing out that it's not as clean and green as it looks on the surface. Alongside its climate commitments, the bill continues to make concessions to the fossil fuel industry, including new drilling and pipelines, which will lock the US into ongoing fossil fuel emissions, as well as impact on the usually poorer indigenous or black and brown neighbourhoods where the extraction takes place. The bill will also give generous support to unproven technologies such as carbon capture and storage and hydrogen, which will be incentivized through tax credits that will largely benefit the oil and gas industry. This is just a horrific continuation of the fossil fuel industry's history of ongoing human rights abuses, forcing people from that land, polluting it and taking away access to food, clean water health and resources. Campaign groups are calling for Biden to declare a climate emergency and build on the bill's commitments to make more ambitious steps towards the climate tackling the climate crisis. So let's see what happens next. Thank you for listening to this taking the temperature update from Julie's Bicycle. For updates for from Julie's Bicycle you can follow us on socials using the handle at Julie's Bicycle