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We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN

Urgent changes needed to cut risk of extreme heat, drought, floods and poverty, says IPCC

5 The world's leading climate scientists have warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5°C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

10 The authors of the landmark report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released on Monday say urgent and unprecedented changes are needed to reach the target, which they say is affordable and feasible as mentioned in the Paris agreement pledge to keep temperatures between 1.5°C and 2°C.

The half-degree difference could also prevent corals from being completely eradicated and ease pressure on the Arctic, according to the 1.5°C study, which was launched after approval at a final plenary of all 195 countries in Incheon in South Korea.

15 "It's a line in the sand and what it says to our species is that this is the moment and we must act now," said Debra Roberts, a co-chair of the working group on impacts. "This is the largest clarion bell from the science community and I hope it mobilises people."

20 Policymakers commissioned the report at the Paris climate talks in 2016, but since then the gap between science and politics has widened. Donald Trump has promised to withdraw the US – the world's biggest source of historical emissions – from the accord. The first round of Brazil's presidential election on Sunday put Jair Bolsonaro into a strong position to carry out his threat to do the same and also open the Amazon rainforest to agribusiness.

25 The world is currently 1°C warmer than preindustrial levels. The IPCC makes clear that climate change is already happening, and warned that every fraction of additional warming would worsen the impact.

At 1.5°C the proportion of the global population exposed to water stress could be 50% lower than at 2°C, it notes. Food scarcity would be less of a problem and hundreds of millions fewer people, particularly in poor countries, would be at risk of climate-related poverty.

Adapted from *The Guardian*, October 8th, 2018