

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Climate Change Report Paints Dire Picture For Caribbean, World

Culture / **Published On October 09, 2018 07:45 AM /**

Staff **October 09, 2018**



A major report from the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change has alarmed leaders the world over and sent a shock through global citizens on the near-future consequences of changing weather patterns caused by global warming. The changes threaten to destroy the current way of life for tens of millions of people if governments across the continents fail to take drastic action.

According to the [report](#), issued on Monday by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.), worsening food shortages, mass die-off of coral reefs, growing wildfires, among other devastating consequences could impact planet earth as early as 2040.

The alarming findings paint a picture so grave that there is said to be "no document with historic precedent".

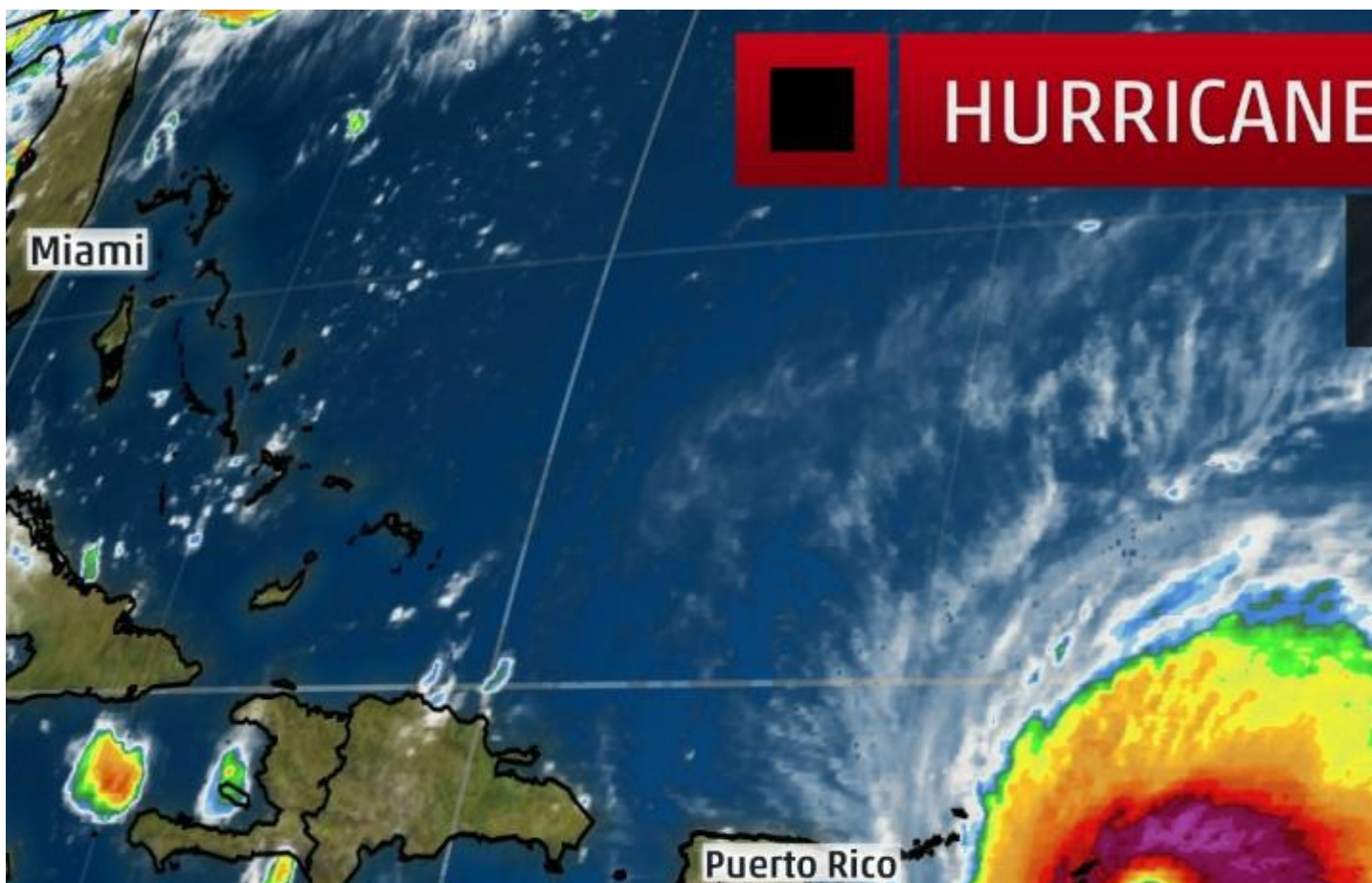
The I.P.C.C. found that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate, the atmosphere will warm up by as much as 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius) above preindustrial levels by 2040, which would see the rapid escalation of drought and poverty and overwhelmed coastlines.

Past reports had honed in on estimating global warming consequences at 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius), because that was the threshold scientists previously researched for the most dire consequences of climate change. But the heads of small island nations, spooked by rising sea levels, had also asked scientists to examine the effects of 2.7 degrees of warming, according to The New York Times.

For the Caribbean, the report serves as an impending catastrophe that island leaders can do little to change. The Caribbean's contribution to global warming is insignificant, but the consequences these islands will face -- and are already facing -- are dire. The Caribbean islands are like dots in a body of water whose levels continue to rise and waters continue to warm, creating perfect conditions for hostile weather that could possibly wipe out the Caribbean, relegating it to a memory parents talk to their children about.

And the evidence is already here. Last year, the Caribbean saw a number of deadly storms that ravaged a chain of islands from Dominica upwards all the way to Puerto Rico, and later the U.S. mainland. For some jurisdictions, including the U.S. Virgin Islands, the occurrence had no precedent: two Category 5 hurricanes in the span of two weeks, walloping the St. Thomas-St. John and St. Croix Districts and changing the course of the USVI forever.

And while the weather systems that have made landfall this year, including Florence in North Carolina, have steered clear of the USVI and most of the Caribbean, they continue to develop rapidly even though this year's season was predicted to be below average.



Hurricane Irma at Category 5 strength, loomed over the USVI in September 2017.

According to the report, to prevent 2.7 degrees of warming, greenhouse pollution must be reduced by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, and 100 percent by 2050. It also found that by 2050, use of coal as an electricity source would have to drop from nearly 40 percent today to between 1 and 7 percent. Renewable energy such as wind and solar, which make up about 20 percent of the electricity mix today, would have to increase to as much as 67 percent, according to The Times.

Whether world leaders could achieve such a feat, with U.S. President Donald Trump seemingly resigned to the coming calamity, is doubtful. The United States delegation joined more than 180 countries on Saturday in accepting the report's summary, albeit with a caveat. According to a State Department statement, "acceptance of this report by the panel does not imply endorsement by the United States of the specific findings or underlying contents of the report."

"We reiterate that the United States intends to withdraw from the Paris agreement at the earliest opportunity absent the identification of terms that are better for the American people," the statement said, aligning with the policies of Mr. Trump.

If world leaders do nothing to mitigate the impending crisis, the report puts the financial fallout to \$54 trillion at 2.7 degrees, and \$69 trillion at 3.6 degrees. Of note, the report says the world is already more than halfway to the 2.7 degree mark, and it said the U.S. could lose up to 1.2 percent of gross domestic product for every 1.8 degrees of warming.

There would be a "disproportionately rapid evacuation" of people from the tropics at 3.6 degrees of warming, the report found. "In some parts of the world, national borders will become irrelevant," said Aromar Revi, director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements and an author of the report, according to The Times. "You can set up a wall to try to contain 10,000 and 20,000 and one million people, but not 10 million."