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U.N. Panel Finds Climate Change Behind Some Extreme Weather Events

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At least some of the weather extremes being seen around the world are a consequence of human-induced [climate change](#) and can be expected to worsen in coming decades, a United Nations panel reported on Friday.

It is particularly likely that greenhouse gas emissions related to human activity have already led to more record-high temperatures and fewer record lows, as well as to more extremes of precipitation and to greater coastal flooding, the report said.

Whether inland flooding is getting worse because of human influence is murkier, the report said. Nor can any firm conclusion be drawn at this point about the human influence on [hurricanes](#), typhoons, hail storms or [tornadoes](#).

The findings were released in Kampala, Uganda, by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), a high-profile United Nations body assigned to review and report periodically on developments in climate research. The group won the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore in 2007 but later became a target of [controversy](#) related to minor factual errors in a large report that it had issued that year. It has tightened its procedures in the hope of preventing future errors.

The new report on extreme weather, one of a string of reports that the I.P.C.C. is issuing on relatively narrow issues, did not break much ground scientifically, essentially refining findings that have been emerging in a string of [papers](#) in recent years.

Indeed, the delegates meeting in Kampala adopted scientifically cautious positions in some areas. For instance, some researchers have presented evidence suggesting that hurricanes are growing more intense because of climate change, but the report sided with a group of experts who say that such a claim is premature.

Nonetheless, the report predicted that certain types of weather extremes will grow more numerous and more intense as human-induced global warming proceeds in coming decades.

“It is virtually certain that increases in the frequency and magnitude of warm daily temperature extremes and decreases in cold extremes will occur in the 21st century on the global scale,” the report said. “It is likely that the frequency of heavy precipitation or the proportion of total rainfall from heavy falls will increase in the 21st century over many areas of the globe.”

Even as such extremes are projected to increase, human vulnerability to them is increasing as well, the report said. Rising populations and flawed decisions about land use, like unchecked coastal development, are putting more and more people in harm’s way, the report said.

“Rapid urbanization and the growth of megacities, especially in the developing countries, have led to the emergence of highly vulnerable urban communities, particularly through informal settlements” — meaning slums — “and inadequate land management,” the report said.

Increases in population density and in the value of property at risk, rather than changes in the climate, are the likeliest explanation for rising disaster losses in many countries, the report said. It called on governments to do a better job of protecting people and heading off catastrophes before they strike.

The report, approved in its final form at an I.P.C.C. session on Friday morning, is a 29-page summary of a larger document with more scientific detail that is not expected to be ready until February. The group’s next all-encompassing review of climate science is due in 2013.

The findings are being issued at a time of unusual weather disasters around the globe, from catastrophic flooding in Asia and Australia to blizzards, floods, heat waves, wildfires and windstorms in the United States that cost the country tens of billions of dollars.

In two weeks, negotiators from across the globe are to convene in Durban, South Africa to try, as they have been for nearly 20 years, to come up with more effective ways of reining in the greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are causing the climate to change. Analysts are not optimistic about any major breakthrough at those talks.

