



Should the global community not immediately embark on wide-ranging actions to narrow the greenhouse gas emissions gap, the chance of remaining on the least-cost path to keeping global temperature rise below 2°C this century will swiftly diminish and open the door to a host of challenges.

These are the conclusions of [the Emissions Gap Report 2013](#), a major international scientific report coordinated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and released as leaders prepare to meet for a new round of climate change negotiations in Warsaw.

It finds that although pathways exist that could reach the 2°C target with higher emissions, not narrowing the gap will exacerbate mitigation challenges after 2020.

Even if nations meet their current climate pledges, greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 are likely to be considerably above the level that would provide a likely chance of remaining on the least-cost pathway.

If the gap is not closed or significantly narrowed by 2020, the door to many options to limit temperature increase to a lower target of 1.5° C will be closed.

“As the report highlights, delayed actions means a higher rate of climate change in the near term and likely more near-term climate impacts, as well as the continued use of carbon-intensive and energy-intensive infrastructure. This ‘lock-in’ would slow down the introduction of climate-friendly technologies and narrow the developmental choices that would place the global community on the path to a sustainable, green future,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner in a [press release.&nbsp;](#)

Scientists agree that the risks of irreversible damage to the environment would increase significantly should the global average temperature rise above 2°C in relation to pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed that human activity is ‘extremely likely’ (95 to 100 per cent probability) to be the cause of this warming.

The report, which involved 70 scientists from 44 scientific groups in 17 countries, was funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The full report can be downloaded here:

See also UNEP’s Climate Change portal: <http://www.unep.org/climatechange/>