

Climate change: do more now or risk catastrophe, warns energy agency

IEA says deep disparity between words and action on climate change risks failing to cap global temperatures

Jillian Ambrose

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A spotter helicopter flies through thick bushfire smoke in Nana Glen, near Coffs Harbour, Australia. The country's raft of wildfires are being blamed on the climate crisis. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

The world's existing climate policies will not be enough to end the upward march of record energy emissions rising beyond 2040 without a "grand coalition" of governments and investors, according to the global energy watchdog.

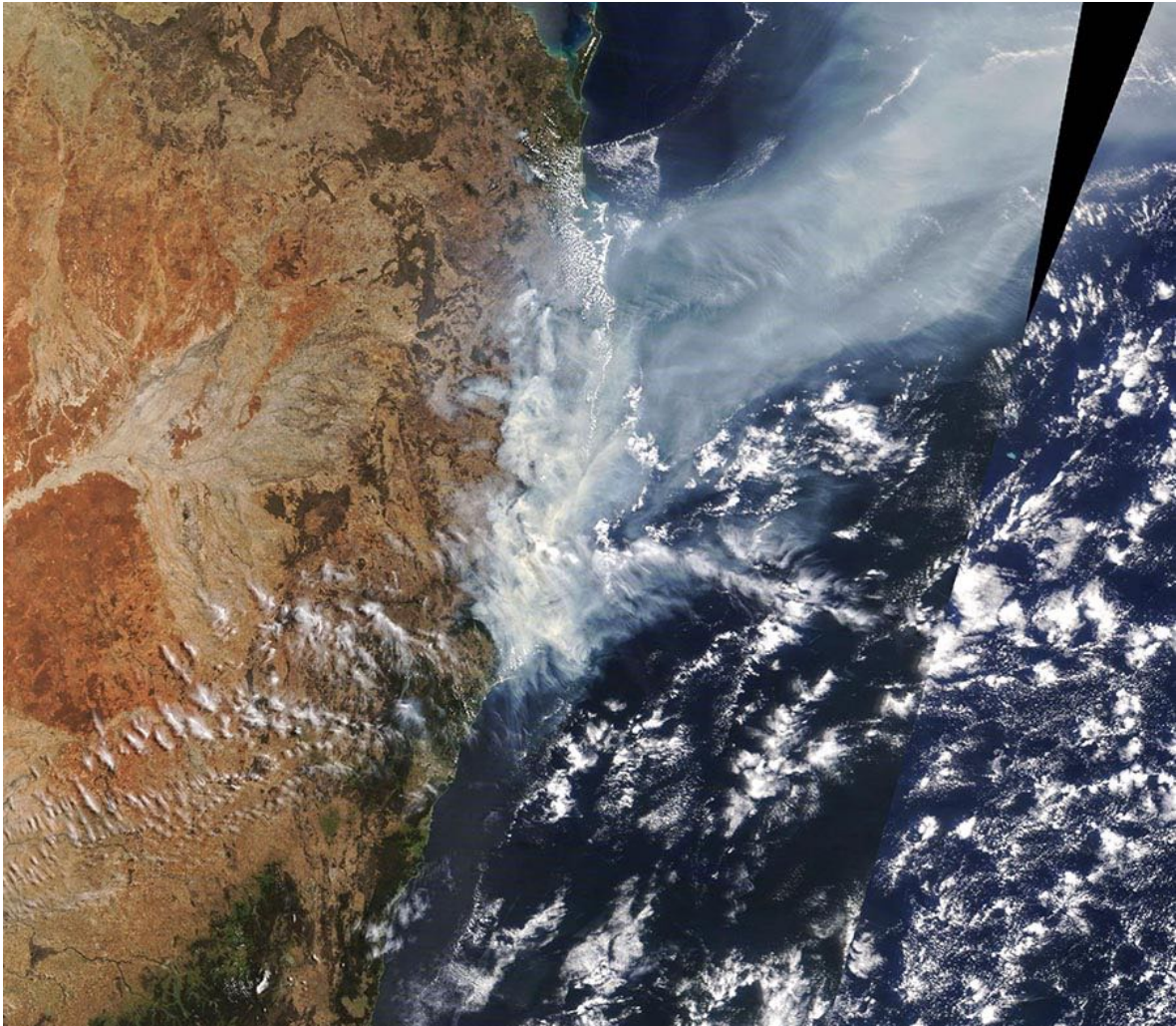
The International Energy Agency said carbon emissions from **the global energy industry** reached a new record in 2018 despite progress in renewable energy in recent years.

The IEA expects the growth of renewables to accelerate over the coming decades, but warned it would not be enough to put a ceiling on the energy sector's emissions before 2040.

Dr Fatih Birol, **the IEA's executive director**, said there was a “deep disparity” between the aim to tackle the climate crisis by curbing carbon emissions and the existing policies which had allowed a “relentless upward march” for emissions.

The IEA's latest figures estimate that carbon emissions are on track to keep rising by 100m tonnes a year for at least another 20 years under existing policy plans.

This rate would be two-thirds slower than the emissions hikes recorded in previous decades, but would fall very far short of what is needed to achieve the goals of the Paris agreement.



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“We will need to see great political will around the world,” Birol said. “This is why I believe that the world needs to build a grand coalition encompassing governments, investors, companies and everyone else who is genuinely

committed to tackling climate change.”

The IEA said it presented the modelling based on stated policies to “hold up a mirror” to global governments to show the consequences of their policies.

“We think that governments’ current plans could bring us to **a catastrophic implications for the climate of this planet**. In order to be in line with the Paris targets there is a need for huge efforts in pushing energy efficiency, renewable energy and all other clean energy technologies,” Birol added.

The record carbon emissions for 2018 are only marginally below the levels forecast by the IEA almost 10 years ago despite the quicker than expected rollout of wind and solar power.

Birol said the “disappointing” efforts towards better energy efficiency and **a boom in coal use in China** had scuppered the momentum of clean-energy technologies.

Energy efficiency is one of the most important levers for policymakers to help reduce carbon emissions across the economy, according to the IEA’s report, yet efforts to cut energy waste have fallen to record lows even as the climate crisis has climbed the political agenda.

Under the IEA’s sustainable development model, global carbon emissions from the energy sector should peak immediately and fall to 10 gigatonnes (or 10bn tonnes) by 2050. This would require emissions in advanced economies to fall at an average of 5.6% every year until 2050, and by 3.2% in developing economies.