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World's glaciers melting at record rate – UN



16 March 2008

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[DocumentID=530&ArticleID=5760&l=en](http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=530&ArticleID=5760&l=en))) urged countries to agree on a new emissions reduction pact.

According to the UNEP-backed World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS), data from nearly 30 reference glaciers in nine mountain ranges indicate that between the years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the average rate of melting

and thinning more than doubled.

The centre, based at Switzerland's University of Zurich, has been tracking glaciers for more than one century, and has noted that while between 1980-1999 average ice loss had been 0.3 meters per year compared to 0.5 meters after the start of the new millennium.

“The latest figures are part of what appears to be an accelerating trend with no apparent end in sight,” said Wilfried Haeberli, WGMS Director.

On average, one meter water equivalent corresponds to 1.1 metre in ice thickness, which suggests a further shrinking in 2006 of 1.5 actual meters and since 1980 a total reduction in thickness of ice of just over 11.5 meters, or nearly 38 feet.

“There are many canaries emerging in the climate change coal mine,” said Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director. “The glaciers are perhaps among those making the most noise and it is absolutely essential that everyone sits up and takes notice.”

2009 will be a crucial year, with the “litmus test” coming in Copenhagen, Denmark, where the negotiations process for a successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol is scheduled to conclude, he said. “Here governments must agree on a decisive new emissions reduction and adaptation-focused regime. Otherwise, and like the glaciers, our room for manoeuvre and the opportunity to act may simply melt away.”

The WGMS research found that some of the most dramatic glacier shrinking has occurred in Europe with Norway's Breidalblikkbrea glacier thinning by close to 3.1 meters during 2006 compared with a thinning of 0.3 meter in the previous year.

However, some glaciers – such as Echaurren Norte in Chile – posted increases.

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