

2016 set to break heat record despite slowdown in emissions

By **KARL RITTER**
Associated Press

MARRAKECH, Morocco — Global temperatures are soaring toward a record high this year, the U.N. weather agency said Monday, while another report showed emissions of a key global warming gas have flattened out in the past three years.

The reports injected a mix of gloom and hope at U.N. climate talks in Marrakech this week.

“Another year. Another record. The high temperatures we saw in 2015 are set to be beaten in 2016,” said Petteri Taalas, the head of the World Meteorological Organization.

WMO’s preliminary data through October showed world temperatures, boosted by the El Nino phenomenon, are 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

That’s getting close to the limit set by the global climate agreement adopted in Paris last year. It calls for limiting the temperature rise since the industrial revolution to 2 degrees C or even 1.5 degrees C.

WMO said 16 of the 17 hottest years have occurred this century. The only exception was 1998, which was also an El Nino year.

Taalas said parts of Arctic Russia saw temperatures soaring 6-7 degrees C above average. “We are used to measuring temperature records in fractions of a degree, and so this is different,” he said.

Environmental groups and climate scientists said the report underscores the need to quickly reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases blamed for warming the planet.

Another report released Monday delivered some positive news, showing global CO2 emissions have flattened out in the past three years. However, the authors of the study cautioned it’s unclear whether the slowdown, mainly caused by declining coal use in China, is a permanent trend.

“It is far too early to proclaim we have reached a peak,” said co-author Glen Peters, a senior researcher at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo.

The study, published in the journal Earth System Science Data, says global CO2 emissions from fossil fuels and industry are projected to grow just 0.2 percent this year.

That would mean emis-



In this May 2015 file photo, a woman cools herself on a hot summer day in Hyderabad, in the southern Indian state of Telangana. The U.N. weather agency said on Monday that 2016 is set to break the record for the hottest year since measurements began in the 19th century.

AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A., File

Climate envoy: World moving forward with or without U.S.

MARRAKECH, Morocco (AP) — China and other countries will stay committed to the Paris Agreement on climate change, irrespective of what the next U.S. administration decides to do, the outgoing U.S. climate envoy said Monday.

Jonathan Pershing told reporters at U.N. climate talks in Morocco he doesn’t know what President-elect Donald Trump’s “outlook” on climate policy will be. But Pershing said his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, told him that China intends to move ahead regardless.

“Of course they are going to move forward,” he said. “I’m hearing the same from the Europeans. I’m hearing the same from the Brazilians. I’m hearing the same from Mexico, and from Canada, and from smaller nations like Costa Rica and from Colombia.”

Trump has called global warming a “hoax” on social media and promised during his campaign to “cancel” the Paris deal adopted last year. But many countries are hoping he will change his mind once in office.

“It is in the interest of the United States to deliver clean energy policies,” said European Union Climate Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete.

sions have leveled off at about 36 billion metric tons in the past three years even though the world economy has expanded, suggesting the historical bonds between economic gains and emissions growth may have been severed.

“This could be the turning point we have hoped for,” said David Ray, a professor of carbon management at the University of Edinburgh, who was not involved with the study. “To tackle climate change those bonds must be broken and here we have the first signs that they are at least starting to loosen.”

Chinese emissions were down 0.7 percent in 2015 and are projected to fall 0.5 percent in 2016, the researchers said, though noting that Chinese energy statistics have been plagued by inconsistencies.

Peters said it’s unclear whether the Chinese slowdown was due to a restructuring of its economy or a sign of economic instability,

but the unexpected emissions reduction “give us hope that the world’s biggest emitter can deliver much more ambitious emission reductions.”

China, which accounts for almost 30 percent of global carbon pollution, pledged to peak its emissions around 2030 as part of the climate pact adopted in Paris last year. Many analysts say China’s peak is likely to come much earlier — and may already have occurred.

“A few more years of data is needed to confirm this,” said Bill Hare of Climate Analytics.

Even if China’s emissions have stabilized, growth in India and other developing countries could push global CO2 levels higher again. India’s emissions rose 5 percent in 2015, the study said.

The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States — the world’s No. 2 carbon polluter — could also have an impact.

U.S. emissions fell 2.6 percent last year and are projected to drop 1.7 percent this year, as natural gas and renewables displace coal in power generation, the study showed. But it’s unclear whether those reductions will continue under Trump, who has pledged to roll back the Obama administration’s environmental policies, including the Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon pollution from power plants.

BRIEFLY

U.S. forces may have committed war crimes

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — U.S. armed forces and the CIA may have committed war crimes by torturing detainees in Afghanistan, the International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor said in a report Monday, raising the possibility that American citizens could be indicted even though Washington has not joined the global court.

“Members of U.S. armed forces appear to have subjected at least 61 detained persons to torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity on the territory of Afghanistan between 1 May 2003 and 31 December 2014,” according to the report issued by Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s office.

The report added that CIA operatives may have subjected at least 27 detainees in Afghanistan, Poland, Romania and Lithuania to “torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity and/or rape” between December 2002 and March 2008.

Most of the alleged abuse happened in 2003-2004, the report said.

Prosecutors said they will decide “imminently” whether to seek authorization to open a full-scale investigation in Afghanistan that could lead to war crimes charges. State Department spokeswoman Elizabeth Trudeau said the U.S. does not believe an ICC investigation is “warranted or appropriate.”

Giuliani emerges as secretary of state favorite

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani has emerged as the favorite to serve as secretary of state in Donald Trump’s incoming administration, a senior Trump official said

on Monday — another indication the president-elect is putting a prize on loyalty as he narrows down his Cabinet picks.

The official, who was not authorized to speak on the record and requested anonymity, said there was no real competition for the job and that it was Giuliani’s if he wanted it. But a second official cautioned that John Bolton, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, remained in contention for the job.

Giuliani, 72, would be an out-of-box choice to lead the State Department. A former mayor, federal prosecutor and top Trump adviser, he lacks extensive foreign policy experience. Known for his hard-line law-and-order views and brusque manner, he would set a very different tone than previous holders of the job, including Trump’s ex-rival Hillary Clinton, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

Obama refuses to criticize Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Monday abandoned his dire warnings and dark predictions about his newly elected successor and urged Americans to give President-elect Donald Trump time to rise to the daunting responsibilities of the office, breaking sharply from his Democratic allies who have quickly condemned Trump’s first major decisions.

In his first extended remarks on the election, Obama sought to reassure an anxious world and nation about his successor’s commitments to alliances, at times appearing almost sanguine about a future Trump administration.

Although he would not explicitly say Trump was qualified for the office, he said he believed the first-time officeholder would do his best to unite the nation, calling him pragmatic.

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