

UN chief calls for urgent action on climate change

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U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, left, meets with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, Saturday, Sept. 3, 2011. Ban is in Australia for a one-day official visit. (AP Photo/Andrew Taylor, Pool)

(AP) -- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Thursday that urgent action was needed on climate change, pointing to the famine in the Horn of Africa and devastating floods in northern Australia as examples of the suffering caused by global warming.

Ban lashed out at [climate change](#) skeptics during a speech at the University of Sydney, arguing that science has proven climate change is real.

Ban is in Australia for a series of meetings following his attendance at an

annual forum of South Pacific island leaders in New Zealand earlier this week. He also made stops in the [Solomon Islands](#) and Kiribati, low-lying South Pacific island nations threatened by [rising sea levels](#).

"Watching this high tide standing on the shore of Kiribati, I said, 'High tide shows it's high time to act,'" Ban said. "We are running out of time."

Ban has repeatedly highlighted the issue of climate change during his South Pacific tour, which comes ahead of a major [climate summit](#) in Durban, South Africa, in November. Delegates from 193 nations will try to hammer out a global agreement to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases that scientists say are behind climate change.

Ban dismissed accusations that previous summits haven't resulted in any measurable changes, pointing to the 2010 meeting in Cancun, Mexico, where countries agreed to try to keep the global average temperature from rising 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels. Scientists say there could be a severe impact on agriculture, sea levels, water resources and human health were the temperature to rise more than that.

Drought and conflict in the Horn of Africa have left millions of lives at risk, and [extreme weather events](#) such as severe flooding that devastated [northern Australia](#) earlier this year will only grow more frequent as climate change accelerates, Ban warned.

"This is a global race to save the planet," he said.

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