

# UN scientist: fighting climate change saves costs

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Solar panels are used to generate electricity at the Greenpeace exhibit during the climate change conference in Durban, South Africa, Tuesday, Nov 29, 2011. International climate negotiators were at odds Tuesday on how to raise billions of dollars to help poor countries cope with global warming. AP Photo/Schalk van Zuydam)

(AP) -- The U.N.'s top climate scientist cautioned climate negotiators Wednesday that global warming is leading to human dangers and soaring financial costs, but containing carbon emissions will have a host of benefits.

Rajendra Pachauri, head of the Nobel-winning [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), summarized a litany of potential disasters at a U.N. climate conference in the South African city of Durban. Although he gave no explicit deadlines, the implication was that time is running out

for [greenhouse gas emissions](#) to level off and begin to decline.

Heat waves currently experienced once every 20 years will happen every other year by the end of this century, he said.

Coastal areas and islands are threatened with inundation by global warming, rain-reliant agriculture in Africa will shrink by half and many species will disappear. Within a decade, up to 250 million more people will face the stress of scarce water.

Increasingly frequent [weather disasters](#) have imposed heavy financial burdens, with some poor countries running up 90 percent of their national debt to deal with the aftermath of storms, droughts and floods, he said.

But the Indian scientist said "many impacts can be avoided, reduced or delayed" by reducing emissions.

To stabilize carbon concentrations in the atmosphere would slow economic growth by 0.12 percent per year, he said, but those costs would be offset by improved health, greater energy security and more secure food supplies.

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