

2018 spike in energy demand spells climate trouble: IEA

March 26 2019, by Marlowe Hood



Fossil fuels satisfied nearly 70 percent of a jump in global energy demand last year which outstripped the expansion of renewables and helped drive record-high greenhouse gas emissions

A 2.3 percent jump in global energy demand last year outstripped the

expansion of renewables and helped drive record-high greenhouse gas emissions, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Tuesday.

Fossil fuels satisfied nearly 70 percent of that growth for the second year running, with natural gas accounting for 45 percent of the rise in [energy consumption](#), according to the Agency's Global Energy & CO2 Status Report.

Double-digit growth in solar and wind power generation—31 percent for solar—was still not fast enough to meet soaring [electricity demand](#) that also pushed up the use of coal, the most carbon-intensive of fuels.

"We have seen an extraordinary increase in [global energy demand](#) in 2018, growing at its fastest pace this decade," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol.

"But despite major growth in renewables, global emissions are still rising, demonstrating once again that more [urgent action](#) is needed on all fronts" to tackle [climate change](#), he added.

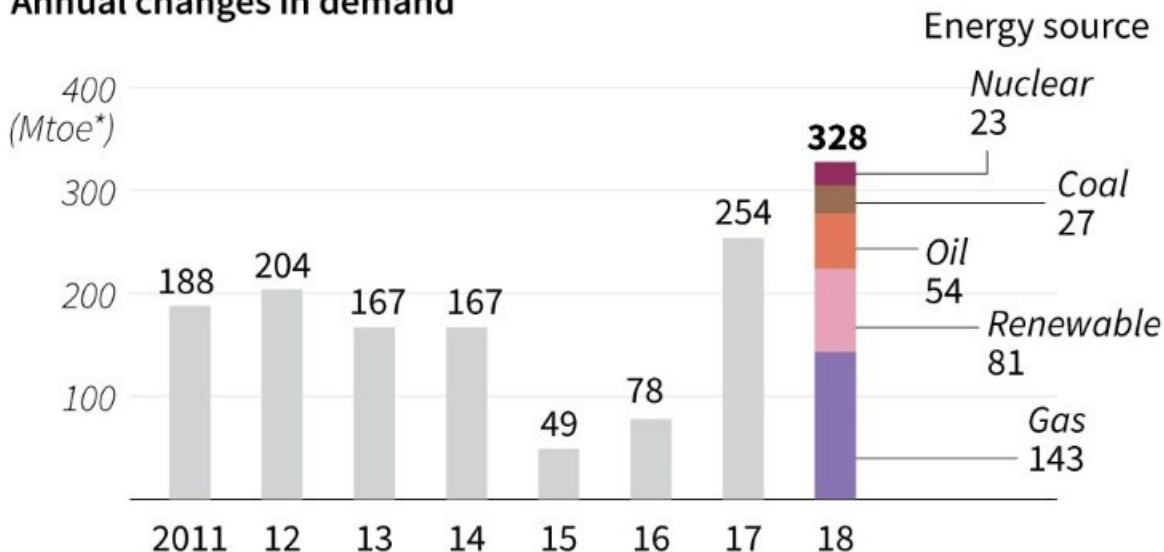
Energy-related global CO2 emissions rose 1.7 percent to a record 33 billion tonnes last year compared to 2017, which likewise saw unprecedented levels of carbon pollution.

CO2 emissions in 2018 from coal used to generate power surpassed 10 billion tonnes for the first time, Birol said.

Growth in global energy demand

A 2.3 percent jump in global energy consumption in 2018

Annual changes in demand



* Millions of tonnes of oil equivalent

Source : IEA

© AFP

Chart showing the annual growth in global energy demand.

That [energy](#) mostly came from coal-fired plants a dozen years old on average—not even a quarter of their typical lifespan.

This raises the question of whether their continued use—much less the construction of new ones—is compatible with the 2015 Paris climate treaty, which calls for capping global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and at 1.5C if possible.

'Fuel' of the future

"Whilst not impossible, if we do not address the emissions of coal power plants in Asia, to comply with our climate goals will be extremely challenging," Birol told AFP.

The planet is currently on track to heat up by about 4C.

Global coal consumption in 2018 rose only in Asia, especially China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, the report found.

Another discouraging trend given efforts to tame global warming was a slowdown last year in energy efficiency gains to 1.3 percent, only half the average improvement rate for the 2014-2017 period.



Double-digit growth last year in solar and wind power generation was still not fast enough to meet soaring electricity demand that also pushed up the use of coal, the most carbon-intensive of fuels

Overall, CO₂ emissions in 2018 increased by 0.5 percent for every one percentage point gain in global economic output, compared to a 0.3 percent average increase since 2010.

The main drivers of the surge in worldwide energy demand were a robust global economy along with expanded heating and cooling needs in some countries.

Demand for electricity—which the IEA has called the "fuel of the future"—grew by a brisk four percent, accounting for half of the overall growth in primary energy demand.

Loading the atmosphere with greenhouse gases at current rates, scientists have said, will eventually lead to an unliveable hothouse planet.

In an electro-shock report published in October, the UN's climate science panel (IPCC) concluded that only a wholesale transformation of the global economy and consumer habits could forestall such a climate catastrophe.

CO₂ emissions must drop 50 percent by 2030—and reach "net zero" by 2050—if the rise in Earth's temperature is to be checked at the safer limit of 1.5C, it said.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: 2018 spike in energy demand spells climate trouble: IEA (2019, March 26) retrieved 25

April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-03-spike-energy-demand-climate-iea.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.