

# Experts say adapting to climate change can pay off manifold

September 10 2019, by Frank Jordans

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Valentino Ingraham washes clothing to remove salt and dirt amid the rubble of his mother's property destroyed by Hurricane Dorian in Rocky Creek East End, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Sunday, Sept. 8, 2019. The motors of his family's boats were also destroyed. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

A group of leaders from business, politics and science have called for a

massive investment in adapting to climate change over the next decade, arguing it would reap significant returns as countries avoid catastrophic losses and boost their economies.

The Global Commission on Adaptation, comprising dozens of prominent figures including Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, urged governments and businesses to tackle the inevitable consequences of climate change, in addition to trying to curb it.

In their 81-page report released Tuesday, the experts proposed investing \$1.8 trillion between 2020 and 2030 in areas such as early warning systems, infrastructure that can withstand rising sea levels and extreme weather, and boosting agriculture to cope with droughts. Other areas they propose investing in are bolstering scarce water resources and improving mangrove forests that provide key protection to vulnerable shorelines in developing nations.

Ban cited Bangladesh's response to two devastating cyclones as a good example of the way countries can adapt to environmental threats. Following the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in 1970 and 1991, the South Asian nation reinforced flood defenses, built shelters and trained volunteers, sharply cutting the death toll in subsequent storms.



A toilet stands amid the rubble of what was once a home after it was destroyed by Hurricane Dorian one week ago in Pelican Point, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Sunday, Sept. 8, 2019. The toll from the storm in the Bahamas stood at 44 Monday but officials have warned that the number of deaths is likely to rise as security forces and other teams search devastated areas of the northern Bahamas. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

He also pointed to recent environmental devastation in the Bahamas as further proof of the importance of preparing for climate change.

"Just one cyclone devastated the country," Ban said. "Of course there's a very good way of weather forecasting but when these countries are well-prepared in infrastructures and provide some shelters (...) then we could have reduced as much as possible the damages that we have seen now."



The commission said protection measures have allowed valuable land to be used in places such as the Netherlands and London that would otherwise have risked flooding.

While rich countries already have the means to invest in such measures, poor nations risk losing out, the group said.

"If we do not act now, climate change will supercharge the global gap between the haves and have-nots," said Ban.



Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, fourth right, speaks with attendees on the sidelines of a press conference for the release of a report on adapting to climate change in Beijing, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2019. A group of leaders from business, politics and science called Monday for a massive investment in adapting to climate change over the next decade, arguing it would

reap significant returns as countries avoid catastrophic losses and boost their economies. (AP Photo/Sam McNeil)



In this Monday, Sept. 9, 2019, photo, former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks during an interview on the sidelines of a press conference for the release of a report on adapting to climate change in Beijing. A group of leaders from business, politics and science called Monday for a massive investment in adapting to climate change over the next decade, arguing it would reap significant returns as countries avoid catastrophic losses and boost their economies. (AP Photo/Sam McNeil)



Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks with attendees on the sidelines of a press conference for the release of a report on adapting to climate change in Beijing, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2019. A group of leaders from business, politics and science called Monday for a massive investment in adapting to climate change over the next decade, arguing it would reap significant returns as countries avoid catastrophic losses and boost their economies. (AP Photo/Sam McNeil)





Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks during a press conference for the release of a report on adapting to climate change in Beijing, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2019. A group of leaders from business, politics and science called Monday for a massive investment in adapting to climate change over the next decade, arguing it would reap significant returns as countries avoid catastrophic losses and boost their economies. (AP Photo/Sam McNeil)



A road cuts through the rubble of homes that belong to the same family, destroyed by Hurricane Dorian in Rocky Creek East End, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Sunday, Sept. 8, 2019. Bahamians are searching the rubble, salvaging the few heirlooms left intact by the Category 5 storm. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

Christiana Figueres, a former U.N. official who helped forge the 2015 Paris accord, said talk on adaptation has for years been neglected, compared with efforts to mitigate, or lessen, climate change.

"Mitigation and adaptation are actually two sides of the very same coin," she said. "If we delay mitigation any further we will never be able to adapt sufficiently to keep humanity safe. And if we delay adaptation we will pay such a high price that we would never be able to look at ourselves in the mirror."



The report was released ahead of a U.N. summit on climate change later this month.

**More information:** Global Commission on Adaptation: [gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/home](https://gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/home)

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