

New UN report offers stark warning on climate change

BY LANDON FRIED
STAFF WRITER

According to a new report from the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world faces irreversible damages from global warming caused by human activity. "Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems," according to the report.

The report synthesized earlier findings from the IPCC to make one, relatively brief document outlining the possible consequences.

"Science has spoken," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. "There is no ambiguity in their message. Leaders must act. Time is not on our side."

The studies say that global warming could easily have detrimental consequences reaching outside the realm of environmental damage. Although much of the climate change debate has centered on a debate of economy vs. environment, this report says the two are intertwined.

"Climate change impacts are expected to exacerbate poverty in most developing countries and create new poverty pockets in countries with increasing inequality, in both developed and developing countries," it states.

According to the report, global warming and climate change could have unprecedented effects on economics. The changes would

also have a disproportionately large effect on poorer populations around the world.

"Climate-related hazards affect poor people's lives directly through impacts on livelihoods, reductions in crop yields or the destruction of homes, and indirectly through, for example, increased food prices and food insecurity," the synopsis report said.

Given the results from the midterm elections in the U.S., President Obama may have difficulty passing climate change agreements through the Senate. A few Republicans have already expressed their doubts on the IPCC's report.

"Similar to previous reports, the latest findings appear more political than scientific," said Congressman Lamar Smith from Texas. "People are tired of the repackaged rhetoric. It's time to stop fear mongering and focus on an honest dialogue about real options."

"(Obama plans to) forge a sweeping international climate change agreement to compel nations to cut their planet-warming fossil fuel emissions, but without ratification from Congress," according to an Aug. 26 New York Times article. Instead, the treaty will identify the nations most responsible for global warming and pressure them into action without using legal obligation.

"I don't think we're going to get a huge, all-encompassing international solution that has the same success (at the global level) as we've seen (at the local level)," said Kyle Dell, assistant professor

of political science and co-chair of environmental studies. "It has to be a much more grassroots, bottom-up approach to global warming."

North Carolina may feel the consequences of climate change even more than other states.

A 2008 report from AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies report estimated that North Carolina would see a 22.6 percent loss in agricultural profit over the next century, solely because of

climate change, while the coastal areas of North Carolina have already seen changes.

The state could eventually experience dramatic changes from global warming if land ice continues to melt.

"There is high confidence that sustained global mean warming greater than a threshold would lead to the near-complete loss of the

Greenland ice sheet over a millennium or more, causing a sea-level rise of up to 7 meters," the U.N. report said.

While the U.S. and the world have made minimal advancement on the issue of climate change, the IPCC has pressed a clear and urgent message on the issue: we already face dire consequences.



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The Greenland ice sheet may completely disappear as a result of global warming

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Questions go unanswered in the trial of three UNCG employees

BY CARLTON SKINNER
STAFF WRITER

About a month ago, three long-time employees of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's relations department were fired after the administration found they had been operating a side photography business out of the college. Now, after three long weeks, the "UNCG Three" have been cleared of all felony charges.

While the UNCG community rejoices, the affected staff members will still have to fight to return to their jobs, and as the dust settles there are still several questions that remain unanswered. Why were they really fired? Did they really deserve 22 felony charges? Should the case have been made public record? Could this happen at Guilford?

Their actions not only cost them their jobs, but could also have cost them their freedom. They were charged with a total of 22 felony counts, some of which included multiple counts of obtaining equipment through false pretenses.

Two of the employees also falsified their time sheets, allegedly to cover work they did for the side business while on the job, while their supervisor knowingly approved them.

"When we discovered that we had employees operating a for-profit business out of the university, on university time and with university equipment, we were obligated to do two things," said UNCG Chancellor Linda Brady. "First, we had to take disciplinary action because we are stewards of taxpayer dollars and the public's trust. Second, we were legally obligated to report what we found to law enforcement authorities. We weren't seeking criminal penalties because that's not our role."

The district attorney's office determined that all three employees were guilty of multiple Class H felonies, which could have landed them in prison. Fortunately for them, the charges have recently been dropped. Instead of facing jail time, David Wilson and Chris English will now be expected to pay back the money they made while using UNCG's facilities and equipment to run their business.

"The university may have been able to handle (the case) in house, but then they would have set a precedent for others to feel entitled to doing the same thing," said Zachary Morgan II '14. "Colleges are already strapped as it is, without their staff stealing from them."

Now people in the UNCG community are questioning whether or not the UNCG three was truly deserving of these charges and whether or not the University should have taken the issue into the public sphere by reporting the crimes to the authorities.

Several other UNCG faculty have suggested that Paul Mason, UNCG's vice chancellor, was ill-prepared to manage the situation, and that perhaps grievances previously lodged against Mason by members of the UNCG three were the true reason they were fired.

This raises the question: could this sort of thing happen at a private institution like Guilford College? According to Brady's statement, the issue lies in the fact that UNCG is a public university that relies on state funding for support.

While the community waits for answers to these questions, one thing is for certain: it may take months of private meetings before the community knows anything for sure, and it could take even longer for the three affected in this case to move on while the University takes its time in making its final decision on the matter.