



Environment damage behind a quarter of premature deaths, diseases: UN report

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It calls for immediate changes in the way the world eats, generates energy and handles its waste

- A quarter of all premature deaths and diseases worldwide are due to manmade pollution and environmental damage, the United Nations said in a landmark report on the planet's parlous state.
- Deadly emissions, chemicals polluting drinking water, and the accelerating destruction of ecosystems crucial to the livelihoods of billions of people are driving a worldwide epidemic that hampers the global economy, it warned.
- The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) — a report six years in the making compiled by 250 scientists from 70 nations — depicts a growing chasm between rich and poor countries as rampant overconsumption, pollution and food waste in the developed world leads to hunger, poverty and disease elsewhere.
- As greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise amid a preponderance of droughts, floods and superstorms made worse by climbing sea levels, there is a growing political consensus that climate change poses a future risk to billions.
- But the health impacts of pollution, deforestation and the mechanised food-chain are less well understood.

Health emergencies

- The GEO compiles a litany of pollution-related health emergencies.
- It said that poor environmental conditions “cause approximately 25% of global disease and mortality” — around 9 million deaths in 2015 alone.
- Lacking access to clean drinking supplies, 1.4 million people die each year from preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and parasites linked to pathogen-riddled water and poor sanitation.
- Chemicals pumped into the seas cause “potentially multi-generational”

adverse health effects, and land degradation through mega-farming and deforestation occurs in areas of earth home to 3.2 billion people.

- The report says air pollution causes 6-7 million early deaths annually.
- The report called for a root-and-branch detoxification of human behaviour while insisting that the situation is not unassailable.
- It also called for a rapid drawdown in greenhouse gas emissions and pesticide use to improve air and water quality.

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