



Written by [James Murphy](#) on September 9, 2023

## António Guterres: “Climate Breakdown Has Begun”

On Wednesday, UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a statement declaring that the “climate breakdown has begun.” Guterres made the claim after the the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) — a branch of the UN dedicated to weather and climate — declared that Earth had just suffered through the hottest three-month period on record.

The WMO [cited](#) data from the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service, and further claimed that 2023 is on track to be the globe’s second-warmest year on record, after 2016.



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“The dog days of summer are not just barking, they are biting,” Guterres [said](#).

“Our planet has just endured a season of simmering — the hottest summer on record. Climate breakdown has begun,” he further claimed.

First, the climate was [“boiling”](#); now, according to Guterres, it’s also “biting.”

Despite the alleged fact that “climate breakdown has begun,” the secretary-general still begged world leaders for more action on the climate front.

“Scientists have long warned what our fossil fuel addiction will unleash.... Surging temperatures demand a surge in action. Leaders must turn up the heat now for climate solutions. We can still avoid the worst of climate chaos — and we don’t have a moment to lose,” he said.

According to the WMO, the entire planet is hot, and El Niño is not responsible for any of it.

“The northern hemisphere just had a summer of extremes - with repeated heatwaves fuelling devastating wildfires, harming health, disrupting daily lives and wreaking a lasting toll on the environment. In the southern hemisphere Antarctic sea ice extent was literally off the charts, and the global sea surface temperature was once again at a new record,” said Petteri Taalas, secretary-general of the WMO. “It is worth noting that this is happening BEFORE we see the full warming impact of the El Niño event, which typically plays out in the second year after it develops.”

According to some scientists, Earth has already reached the 1.5°C warmer than pre-industrial levels milestone, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned us will lead to disastrous climate effects going forward.

“Eight months into 2023, so far we are experiencing the second warmest year to date, only fractionally cooler than 2016,” said Carlo Buontempo, director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service. “And August was estimated to be around 1.5°C warmer than pre-industrial levels. What we are observing, not only new extremes but the persistence of these record-breaking conditions, and the impacts these have on both people and planet, are a clear consequence of the warming of the climate system.”

If all of this rhetoric seems a bit hyperbolic, especially to those of us who have lived through the past



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three months and have truly not seen much out of the ordinary — it is summer in the northern hemisphere, after all — be assured that the hyperbole is political in nature and not scientific in the least.

Such language is meant to create fear so that we will do what people like Guterres tell us to do, with a minimum of questions. It's treating the global population like children.

David Thunder, a university lecturer and researcher in moral, political, and social philosophy from the University of Navarra, explained this exact phenomenon on X.

"This is infantilising discourse because it relies almost exclusively on fear, without producing any good evidence that we are heading for Armageddon," Thunder said.

"Climate breakdown has begun." This is how the head of the UN discusses climate policy. This is infantilising discourse because it relies almost exclusively on fear, without producing any good evidence that we are heading for Armageddon. [pic.twitter.com/glVbeksnta](https://t.co/IS0BuFg01U)  
<https://t.co/IS0BuFg01U>

— David Thunder (@davidjthunder) [September 7, 2023](#)

"We're seeing scientists use their authority to make wild and unsubstantiated projections, mathematical projections of doomsday scenarios that we're going to confront, projections that are not verified, that are not corroborated as the years go by," he said in an accompanying video.

And when it's not the scientists bullying us into climate subservience, it's political hacks such as Guterres doing the bullying.

"So, can we please get over this idea that scientists, speaking as scientists, can intimidate us, railroad us into accepting a particular set of controversial policies?" asked Thunder.

Exactly. Climate scientists and the politicians they work for do not own crystal balls that tell them exactly how the immensely complex climate system will react to our interventions decades ahead of time. They just don't know.

"When people tell us that they know that these specific interventions are going to have this specific effect over the next 50 years on global temperatures, they're either lying to us, or they're deeply confused about the power of science and what it can, in fact, tell us with any confidence," Thunder pointed out.

According to Thunder, we should have learned our lesson during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We've been manipulated and blackmailed during the pandemic into accepting highly destructive interventions in the social fabric. So, I sincerely hope the people will not be manipulated again, will not be intimidated again, by the same sorts of fear tactics that were used during the pandemic."

Nothing that happened during the pandemic would be as destructive as doing away with fossil fuels without a reliable alternative. And, currently, nothing — with the possible exception of nuclear power — is even remotely reliable.



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