



© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

A wake-up call

The recovery from COVID-19 should be focused on securing a sustainable, equitable and resilient future. There are six climate actions that need to underpin this recovery



◀ Berai, Mozambique. UN Secretary-General António Guterres visits a school damaged by Cyclone Idai. Cyclone Idai and Kenneth, which followed a few weeks later in spring 2019, combined to put approximately 2.2 million people in need of assistance across Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe

and social consequences and bring the disease under control.

But we must also recover better – and that means maintaining our focus on climate change. The planet's unfolding environmental crisis threatens vast devastation to lives and livelihoods. Biodiversity is in steep decline. The world's oceans are warming and filling with waste.

We must act decisively to protect people and planet from both the coronavirus and the existential threat of climate disruption. By committing now to building back better from today's tragic crisis, we can use the recovery from the effects of COVID-19 to secure a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future.

For that, we continue to need ambitious climate action on mitigation, adaptation

Second: where taxpayers' money is used to rescue businesses, it needs to be tied to achieving green jobs and sustainable growth.

Third: fiscal firepower must drive a shift from the grey to green economy, and make societies and people more resilient

Fourth: public funds should be used to invest in the future, not the past, and flow to sustainable sectors and projects that help the environment and the climate. Fossil fuel subsidies must end, and polluters must start paying for their pollution.

Fifth: climate risks and opportunities must be incorporated into the financial system as well as all aspects of public policy making and infrastructure.

Sixth: we need to work together as an international community.

These six principles can guide us in recovering better together. Gradual approaches are no longer enough. Governments must deliver the transformational change our world needs and that people demand.

The scientific community is clear. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by

The climate battle is a battle we can win. Technology is on our side. Scientists tell us it is not too late... All the tools and knowledge to move from the grey economy to the green economy are already available

and finance. We need to ensure we keep the promise of the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Despite the postponement of the next Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), we still need countries to come forward this year with enhanced nationally determined contributions and strategies to reach net zero emissions.

The COVID-19 crisis is a wake-up call. We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future. I am proposing six climate actions to shape the recovery and the work ahead.

First: as we spend huge amounts of money to recover from COVID-19, we must deliver new jobs and businesses through a clean, green transition.

45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, and reach net zero emissions by 2050. The main obligation rests on the main emitters. Those countries that contributed most to this crisis must lead the way.

The climate battle is a battle we can win. Technology is on our side. Scientists tell us it is not too late. Economists and asset managers tell us that climate smart investments are the key to competing and thriving in the 21st century. All the tools and knowledge to move from the grey economy to the green economy are already available.

Greenhouse gases, just like viruses, do not respect national boundaries. By working closely together we can rescue our planet and build a healthy and resilient future for people and planet alike. ●

By **António Guterres**,
Secretary-General, United Nations

All eyes and energies are rightly on the COVID-19 pandemic – the biggest test the world has faced since the Second World War. The impact of the coronavirus is immediate and horrific. We must work together to save lives, ease suffering, lessen the shattering economic