Media Alert

COP28 Action shows sea-level rise could flood half the Climate Summit if today’s emissions continue

*International Cryosphere Climate Initiative*  
*Scientists and Youth Demonstration at COP28*

December 9th, 2023, 10-10:30am  
In front of Global Climate Action Area (B7, between Buildings 92 and 93)

Dubai, COP 28, 7.12.2023:
As negotiators continue to wrangle over a phase-out of fossil fuels at COP28 in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, leading scientists, global youth and negotiators from low-lying nations will highlight the potentially disastrous implications of climate-change-induced sea level rise for the host city.

A line of COP delegates will form a chain of yellow “hazard” tape along what would be the redefined Dubai coastline – which would cut straight through the middle of the COP28 venue -- if fossil fuel emissions continue at their present rate.

The demonstration is based on a possible 10 meters of sea level rise by 2300 if we continue on today's path. “That figure is from Antarctica alone,” says Dr. Florence Colleoni, a leading Antarctic researcher with the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). “This is actually a conservative estimate. In fact if Greenland and other factors were added, 15 meters by 2300 cannot be ruled out, according to the IPCC.”

"Loss of ice and snow would have devastating consequences if emissions continue at present levels,” says Dr. James Kirkham of the *International Cryosphere Climate Initiative*, which organized the event. “The *State of the Cryosphere 2023* Report presented here at COP28 confirms that even the upper Paris Agreement limit of 2°C would spell disaster for much of the planet because of the cryosphere’s global impact and long-term response.”

“But we are currently heading towards temperature rise of almost 3°C,” added Kirkham, also Chief Scientific Advisor to the *Ambition on Melting Ice* (AMI) high-level group on Sea-level Rise and Mountain Water Resources. “That risks triggering nearly all of Greenland, much of West Antarctica, and even vulnerable portions of East Antarctica to unstoppable sea-level rise, potentially at the massive scale and faster rates we’re demonstrating here today. Policymakers at COP28 must pay attention to this new science, because the decisions made here will impact hundreds of millions of people for centuries.”

While the line shows what could happen in Dubai by 2300, based on detailed maps from *Climate Central*, low-lying coastal cities all over the world will be equally impacted, some far earlier. Sea-level rise from climate change is already affecting many areas of the planet today. “Under any temperature rise scenario, countries with large coastal populations, from Bangladesh to China, India and the Netherlands, will be at risk, said Dr. Benjamin Strauss, CEO of Climate Central. “Megacities on every continent will have to brace for major impacts, including Lagos, Bangkok, Mumbai, Shanghai, London, Buenos Aires and New York.”

The 10-meter projection is based on the worst IPCC scenario. But given current rates of CO2 rise in the atmosphere, “we must stop concentrating only on what were once considered the most likely scenarios”, says Kirkham: “The floods just a few weeks ago showed how extreme rainfall can impact a desert state like Dubai. Roads were waterlogged and flooded after heavy rainfall and thunderstorms. People were advised to avoid beaches due to extreme weather conditions, traffic and flights disrupted. Imagine what several metres of sea level rise would do.”

The only way to keep sea-level rise in check is for COP28 to produce an agreement for urgent action to keep temperature rise at or below 1.5°C. “Once we consider the global and irreversible impacts from cryosphere on the entire planet, an agreement at COP28 for a phase-out of fossil fuels, with emissions peaking by 2025 is the only pathway fully consistent with the 1.5°C limit,” concluded Pam Pearson, Director and Founder of ICCI. “1.5°C is the only way to slow down sea-level rise to adaptable levels. We still have time to prevent
an accelerating chain of economic loss and growing political instability; but time is growing increasingly short, and the ice can’t wait.”

Interview and photo opportunities:
Dr. Florence Colleoni, Dr. James Kirkham, Dr. Benjamin Strauss, Pam Pearson and several other reviewers of the State of the Cryosphere 2023 Report will be available for interview.

Dubai attached or see for mapping tools: https://coastal.climatecentral.org
See also: https://picturing.climatecentral.org/location/25.197197,55.2721824

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About ICCI
ICCI (www.iccinet.org), a non-partisan research and independent organization, was founded soon after COP-15 in Copenhagen by former climate negotiators and cryosphere scientists to focus on climate policies related to polar and mountain regions, in coordination with current negotiators and the scientific community.

ICCI is hosting the Cryosphere Pavilion (Zone B7, Building 87 and Zone B6, Building 71); and also serves as the secretariat to the Ambition on Melting Ice (AMI) high-level group on Sea-level Rise and Mountain Water Resources, founded by 20 nations at COP27 in Egypt (www.ambitionmeltingice.org).

About Climate Central
Climate Central is a non-advocacy, non-profit science and news organization providing authoritative information to help the public and policymakers make sound decisions about climate and energy.