

"I see very little hope for the world"

Chairman of Shell (Ron Oxburgh), on carbon dioxide emissions.

"Climate change is the most severe problem we are facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism"

Government's chief scientific adviser (Sir David King)

What is global warming?

Climate change is the direct effect of a massive increase in greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere. This, in turn, is caused by carbon dioxide being released from fossil fuels, the draining of peat bogs and the destruction of forests.

We are now seeing the added effect from another greenhouse gas, methane, being released from intensive animal farms, the draining of wetlands and from beneath the oceans which were previously cold enough to hold it in a harmless form.

Basically, we are destroying our own planet by using too much energy and consuming too many resources too quickly.

What will happen?

If we continue living in the same way, we can look forward to the following:

- Global temperatures will rise by eight degrees.
- The ice caps will completely melt and the sea level will rise by about 38 feet.
- The rising sea will cover most of our major capital cities and best farmland.
- Frequent massive storms and violent extremes in weather will be normal.
- Large land masses will turn to desert and their forests will die.
- Whole populations will become refugees as their land becomes uninhabitable.

When will this take place?

It has already started. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, from which this information was taken, estimates that it will happen during the next 100 years.

What else?

The Gulf Stream, which keeps Britain warm, is slowing down. It is being affected by the flow of water in the opposite direction from the melting ice caps and increased outflow from rivers in Siberia. If it stops, our climate would suddenly become much colder, much like Greenland, with snow and ice covering much of the country.

What needs to be done?

With no consensus between world governments, things don't look good.

It is up to us, as individuals, to take action and to persuade the governments, energy and fuel companies to stop destroying the earth.