

## **Global warming set to hit Europe badly: environment agency**

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Europe is facing the worst climate change in five millennia as a result of global warming, the European Environment Agency (EAA) warned. Europe's four hottest years on record were 1998, 2002, 2003 and 2004, the agency said Tuesday.

"Ten percent of Alpine glaciers disappeared during the summer of 2003 alone," the report said.

"At current rates, three-quarters of Switzerland's glaciers will have melted by 2050. Europe has not seen climate changes on this scale for 5,000 years."

The report was issued at the agency's headquarters in Copenhagen, coinciding with the first full day of debate at key UN talks on curbing the greenhouse gases that stoke global warming.

In the 20th century, the average global temperature rose 0.7 C (1.25 F) as a result of burning coal, gas and coal -- the carbon fuels that are mainly to blame for the rise.

But the rise in Europe was 0.95 C (1.71 F), 35 percent higher, because of the continent's vulnerable location and smaller land mass, the EAA said.

"Without effective action over several decades, global warming will see ice sheets melting in the north and the spread of deserts from the south. The continent's population could effectively be concentrated in the centre," EAA Executive Director Jacqueline McGlade said.

The European Union is striving to limit the overall global rise in temperature to 2 C (3.6 F) by implementing the UN's Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse-gas pollution and encouraging the use of cleaner resources.

But McGlade warned: "Even if we constrain global warming to the EU target of a two-degree (Celsius) increase, we will be living in atmospheric

conditions that human beings have never experienced. Deeper cuts in emissions are needed."

The report, "The European Environment -- State and Outlook 2005," is an assessment of environmental quality in 31 countries that is published every five years.

Global warming is listed as one challenge, alongside preserving biodiversity and marine ecosystems, land and water resources and tackling air pollution.

The 12-day Montreal talks, which opened Monday, gather signatories of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto's parent treaty.

Their main task is to take the first steps towards deciding how to shape commitments for reducing greenhouse gases after the present "commitment period" under the Protocol runs out in 2012.

In its present format, Kyoto requires only industrialised ratifying countries to make target reductions in the pollution.

But it does not include the biggest polluter, the United States, which walked out of the pact in 2001, nor China and India, which are now big emitters of carbon dioxide, included in the reductions targets.

The report covers the 25 nations of the European Union (EU) plus Bulgaria, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Romania and Turkey.