

World hit by record extreme weather events in 2007

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World hit by record extreme weather events in 2007: WMO

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Many parts of the world have experienced record extreme weather conditions including unusual floods, heatwaves, storms and cold snaps since the beginning of the year, the UN's weather agency said Tuesday.

Preliminary observations also indicated that global land surface temperatures in January and April reached the highest levels ever recorded for those months, the World Meteorological Organisation said in a statement.

The WMO said global land temperatures were likely to have been 1.89 degrees Celsius warmer than average in January and 1.37 degrees above average in April.

In Europe alone, April temperatures are thought to have been about four degrees above average, WMO scientist Omar Baddour told journalists.

The conditions match predictions of more frequent extremes given by scientists in the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), who are monitoring the progress and causes of global warming, Baddour underlined.

"The beginning of 2007 was very active in terms of extreme weather events," he said.

The WMO's list of extreme weather events includes current exceptionally heavy monsoon rains and floods in South Asia this summer which have affected 30 million people, as well as the severe flooding in Britain fuelled by the wettest May to July on record.

Other events include the summer heatwave in southeastern Europe, heavy rain in June that ravaged part of southern China and cyclone Gonu, the first documented tropical cyclone in the Arabian Sea that hit Oman and Iran in June, causing 50 deaths.

Abnormally heavy and early rainfall in Sudan caused the River Nile to overflow in June, while unusually heavy snowfall clad South Africa and parts of South America.

In May, swell waves up to 4.5 metres (15 feet) high swamped parts of the Maldivian islands, causing serious flooding and extensive damage, while across the world Uruguay was hit by the worst flooding since 1959, the WMO said.

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