

Climate skeptics push back over new rise in carbon

Some see record high reflecting global economic gains

By Valerie Richardson

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The World Meteorological Organization warned this week that concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached a new high last year, but critics of climate change alarmism say that's not necessarily a bad thing, saying it was a reflection of economic progress around the world.

More carbon dioxide in the atmosphere should be applauded because it means that more people in developing nations gained access to energy, along with "all the life-improving benefits that go with it," said Paul Knappenberger, associate director of the Center for the Study of Science at the libertarian Cato Institute.

"This rise is a continued reminder of the steady drumbeat of human progress," said Mr. Knappenberger in a Wednesday statement. "The carbon dioxide that is building in the atmosphere, at least in part, gets there through human emissions of carbon dioxide that are the by-product of burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) to produce the vast majority the energy that has powered mankind's industrial and technical ascent since the Industrial Revolution."

In its annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, the World Meteorological Organization reported Tuesday that carbon-dioxide level hit 396 parts per million (ppm) in 2013, 2.9 ppm higher than in 2012, which represented the fastest increase since the start of reliable recordkeeping in 1984.

The findings prompted WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud to declare in a statement that "pleading ignorance can no longer be an excuse for not acting."

"We know without any doubt that our climate is changing and our weather is becoming more extreme due to human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels," Mr. Jarraud said.

“We must reverse this trend by cutting emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases across the board,” he added. “We are running out of time.”

But that increase hasn't resulted in an uptick in the global mean temperature, as former meteorologist Anthony Watts pointed out in a Tuesday post on the climate-change website [Watts Up With That?](#)

He noted that there has been no warming on the earth's surface for 19 years and no warming in the lower troposphere in nearly 18 years.

Mr. Knappenberger agreed that there is concern that elevated levels of carbon dioxide could result in global warming, but argued that a “growing body of scientific evidence suggests that the projections of climate change that have been made by the current family of computerized climate models has been overdone.”

“We continue to detail the evidence that the earth's ‘climate sensitivity’ to carbon dioxide is less than expected,” said Mr. Knappenberger. “Our most recent summary of the new, relevant literature on this topic is available here. Less warming means less resultant impacts which mean less worry about rising CO₂ levels (and less impetus for government action).”

Mr. Knappenberger cited an upcoming book by Alex Epstein of the Center for Industrial Progress, “The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels,” which he said makes “a compelling case for why we should continue to embrace and expand fossil fuel use.” The book is slated to be released Nov. 13 by Portfolio Hardcover.

The Geneva-based WMO is the United Nations' “authoritative voice on the state and behavior of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces and the resulting distribution of water resources,” according to the agency's website.