Following the science to take climate action and make sure COP26 keeps the 1.5 degree goal alive

Thank you to our panel and all our journalists colleagues who have joined as well to discuss this latest IPCC report.

I have to say If ever there was going to be a wake up call for the world when it comes to climate, then it is this report.

It does show all too clearly the impact of human activity, and, indeed, the deficiency of our response to date, and why we need to act now on what the science is telling us.

There is another clear message to take away from this.

The future is not yet written.

The very worst of climate change is still avoidable.

If we look back to Paris in 2015, world leaders got together and said that they would do everything they could to limit global temperature rises to well below 2 degrees, aiming for 1.5.

What this report shows is that 1.5 degrees is still achievable.

But that it is retreating and it is retreating fast.

So we do need to follow the science, take action this year and make sure at COP26 we are able to crebilly say that we have kept 1.5 degrees alive.

Our experts on the panel today will speak to the latest science in the report.

But I want to begin by talking briefly about the current political process to keep 1.5 degrees within reach.

Now, based on all the conversations I've had, I can tell you that there is a clear desire amongst governments to keep 1.5 degrees within reach.

And I've heard this on many occasions – at the Ministerial meeting, which I hosted in London in July, and at the G20 ministerial meeting I attended in Naples.

But the reality is that we need far more in terms of action.

And action that actually follows the facts.

The science shows us that to keep 1.5 alive we must halve global emissions by 2030, and reach net zero emissions by mid-century.

That is still the case following this report.

And so what we do need is for all countries to commit to net zero, and to make short term emissions reduction targets, their 2030 NDCs, to take them there.

Now you will have seen in June all the G7 nations stepping up to the plate with ambitious NDCs aligned with net zero by 2050.

And what we really need now is all the major emitters to play their part.

And of course I refer to the G20 group of nations, which is going to be absolutely key to our 1.5 degree future.

Together, they represent 80 percent of global emissions, around 85% of the global economy. And they absolutely matter.

Yet only 13 of the G20 have committed to net zero.

And only 8 have submitted new NDCs that are more ambitious than their previous ones.

This really must change before COP26 in November.

The IPCC has been clear that 1.5 degrees requires decarbonisation of every sector of the economy.

And at COP26 we must send a clear market signal to get the transition moving faster.

In terms of the work we are doing, we are focussing particularly on four areas: power, transport, deforestation, and methane.

Because each of these makes a significant contribution to global emissions and warming.

And because technologies and solutions are readily available and cost-effective for dealing with emissions in these areas.

Let’s take power for a start.

We know now that solar and wind are now cheaper than coal and gas around the world.

And analysis shows that to keep 1.5 alive, OECD countries must end the use of coal power by 2030, and the rest of the world by 2040.

So, and I’ve said this before and I repeat again, COP26 must be that COP that we consign coal power to history, with countries committing to end the use of coal power at home and to stop financing coal abroad.

Secondly, road transport. This sector accounts for 10 percent of global emissions.

And to keep 1.5 degrees alive, we want countries to commit to all new cars and vans being zero emission by 2040, or 2035 in those countries with the largest automotive markets.

Thirdly, deforestation.

Land use is responsible for 23 per cent of total global emissions.

And halting and reversing deforestation by the end of this decade is going to play a really vital role in keeping 1.5 degrees within reach.

And that means ensuring global markets reward sustainable production.

We are also determined to drive global action on methane, which has the potential to avoid around 0.3 degrees of warming by the 2040s if we get it right.

Additionally, to deliver a 1.5 degree world we are going to need finance.

So, one of the key COP priorities is to get finance flowing to climate action, both public and private, especially to emerging markets and developing economies, and particularly for adaptation.

Because the reality is that even under a scenario of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, we are going to need to protect ourselves, and particularly the most vulnerable countries, from the effects of our changing climate.

On finance, we are encouraging all private finance institutions to commit to net zero by 2050, as well as to work with development banks, the MDBs, to mobilise finance to developing economies.

And I am urging developed countries to honour their promise to raise $100billion a year in international climate finance, which was first promised in 2009.

And, my message for those donor countries who have not yet made ambitious multi-year commitments, they need to come forward with further finance commitments at the United Nations General Assembly, in September, including commitments on adaptation finance.

We also urge countries yet to do so to announce their net zero commitments and NDCs at that meeting.

And I am encouraging every nation to step up action on coal, on cars, on forests, and on methane.

To follow the facts. To work together. And keep 1.5 degrees alive. By ultimately listening to the science.

And that is what we are here to do today.

I am really very pleased to be joined by Sir Patrick Vallance, the UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

Katharine Mansell, the climate science communications lead at the European Climate Foundation.

Professor Jim Skea, who is Chair in Sustainable Energy at Imperial College London.

And Dr Tamsin Edwards, who is a climate scientist in the Department of Geography in King’s College London.

We are going to start with opening remarks from each of our panelists.

So I am going to turn first to you Tamsin, you of course were one of the authors of this seminal report.

Can you please tell us what are the key lessons it contains for us?