

# Hottest April day ever recorded – maybe: World Meteorological Organization

Deadly storms in India and record temperatures in Pakistan are an indication that more extreme weather events are happening globally owing to climate change, United Nations weather experts said on Friday.

Amid flash-floods in the East and Horn of Africa – and sand and dust storms in the Arabian Gulf – Clare Nullis from the [World Meteorological Organization](#) (WMO) told journalists at UN headquarters in Geneva that this week's storms in northern India had reportedly left more than 100 dead.

" We've never seen a temperature above 50 degrees C in April."  
– Clare Nullis (WMO)

What may well be the hottest temperature ever recorded for April, was registered this week in Pakistan, she added. A weather station in the city of Nawabshah registered 50.2 degrees Celsius on Monday; or 122.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

"This is April – not June and July – this is April," she exclaimed. "We don't normally see temperatures above 50 degrees: in fact, as we're aware, we've never seen a temperature above 50 degrees C in April."

Moving considerably further south, to another climatic region of the world, A WMO committee of experts also announced on Thursday that a record high temperature recorded for the Antarctic which was set back in in March 2015, still stands.

The record high reading, was under threat of being surpassed by a temperature recorded at a nearby weather station, in the same period of warm weather, and in more or less the same location.

The existing record of 17.5 degrees Celsius was recorded at the Argentine Research Base Esperanza, near the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, on 23 March.

The rival reading which, if verified, would have set a new record, was registered a day earlier in the same area, at an automatic weather station established by the Czech Republic on Davies Dome. But polar meteorology experts examined the data closely and made their long-awaited announcement on Friday that the existing record still stands.

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## UN leaders vow to stamp out workplace sexual harassment

Leaders from across the UN system on Friday pledged to increase efforts to stamp out sexual harassment within their ranks; ensuring a zero-tolerance approach where abusers are held accountable, and staff feel safe to report incidents.

UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), according to a [note to correspondents](#) issued by his Spokesperson, “reiterated that he was seriously concerned by all allegations of sexual harassment at the United Nations and has made addressing this issue a top priority.”

“Harassment of any kind offends the principles of what we stand for as an organization and undermines our core values and our work,” Mr. Guterres told the Chief Executives Board (CEB), which has been meeting this week in London, and brings together 31 chief executives of UN agencies, funds and programmes.

The board meeting, which began in the UK capital on Wednesday, included a special session on addressing sexual harassment, led by the UN chief.

He restated his personal commitment to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

In a CEB statement, the chiefs said that sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on gender inequality, and that it has no place in the UN system.

They also reiterated their collective commitment to zero-tolerance of harassment cases; to strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts; and to foster a safe and inclusive working environment.

They also pledged to drive action in three key areas – reporting, investigation and decision-making. Measures include providing mechanisms such as 24-hour helplines for staff to report harassment and access support; as well as instituting fast-track procedures to receive, process and address complaints and providing mandatory training.

The Secretary-General, the note said, “is putting greater power into the hands of women” throughout the UN, with more women than men now in the [Senior Management Group](#).

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# Midwives 'lead the way with quality care', as world marks International Day

Midwives are vital to driving sustainable development and key to helping mothers, and expectant-mothers, make informed, healthy choices, said the United Nations health agency's chief nurse on Friday.

WHO's Chief Nursing Officer, Elizabeth Iro, said ahead of the International Day of the Midwife, marked on Saturday, that communities everywhere were best served by letting midwives work together with mothers and their newborns, to provide continuity of care, as children develop.

"This is based on research that demonstrates that not only is [continuity of care preferred by women but also that there are profound impacts](#), including a 24 per cent reduction in pre-term births," said Ms. Iro.

Evidence has also found that professionally-qualified midwives are able to meet 87 per cent of the needs of women and newborns, she added.

The International Day of the Midwife, observed each 5 May, recognizes the vital role these healthcare professionals have in preventing maternal and newborn deaths and empowering women to make the best choices for themselves and their babies.

The theme for this year's celebration of one of the world's oldest and most important professions is: "Midwives leading the way with quality care."

In her message, Ms. Iro also highlighted the importance of the role of midwives in delivering on the globally-agreed [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Key health targets to meet development goal 3, include progress on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.



UNICEF/Keïta

Midwife Fadimata Maïga holds a newborn infant before placing it beneath an infant radiant warmer in order to proceed to a newborn health assessment at the Baraouéli Health Center in Baraouéli, Ségou region, Mali.

At health facilities and in communities, midwives help women and newborns work together to improve child health overall.

“This puts midwives at the centre of delivering this agenda,” highlighted the WHO official.

“As midwives we have come a long way” she said, “to help all women, newborns and their families to not only survive but to thrive and transform the world we live in.”

## Safe hands save lives

Hand Hygiene Day is also being marked on 5 May, highlighting the importance of the simple but beneficial act of washing your hands regularly to ward off infections or disease.

“It’s in your hands: prevent sepsis in health care”, is the theme this year.

According to Ms. Iro, it’s a practice that is all the more important for midwives, as [sepsis](#) – a life-threatening condition – affects three million newborns, can kill up to five hundred thousand before they are a month old, and causes one in ten maternal deaths.

“Join us and be a champion [promoting hand hygiene and preventing sepsis in health care](#),” she said.

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## Ukraine: 200,000 children forced to learn in bullet-riddled classrooms

Some 200,000 girls and boys in eastern Ukraine are commuting to schools whose classroom walls are often riddled with bullets, and playgrounds scattered with metal remnants of war.

That's according to the [United Nations Children's Fund](#), UNICEF, in a statement released on Friday.

"Children are learning in schools with [bullet holes in the walls](#) and sandbags in windows, bomb shelters in the basements and shrapnel in school yards," said UNICEF's Ukraine Representative, Giovanna Barberis.

"The education system in eastern Ukraine has been in the crossfire for more than four years. All sides of the conflict must respect international humanitarian law and ensure that schools are safe places for children to learn."

More than four years of conflict in eastern Ukraine between government forces and separatists has taken a devastating toll on the education system. At least 45 schools have been damaged or destroyed over the last 16 months; in addition to the more than 700 schools affected overall since the conflict began.

The children are extremely nervous of shelling and teachers try to calm them down, but it's hard for them – *Principal Elena Mihatskaya*

Many schools and kindergartens are located along both sides of eastern Ukraine's so-called "contact line" that divides government and non-government-controlled areas. This means that classrooms are often close to military bases and security check points, increasing the risk that they may step on unexploded weapons of war, or be caught in crossfire.

"The children are extremely nervous of shelling and teachers try to calm them down, but it's hard for them," said Principal Elena Mihatskaya, whose secondary school in the town of Krasnohorivka has been shut down since last May due to massive damage caused by a shell. "It's hard for kids to cope because they are nervous and stressed."

UNICEF helps provide psychosocial support and mine-risk education to hundreds of thousands of children, youth and caregivers. The agency also supports repairs to damaged schools and kindergartens and distributes vital education supplies such as learning kits, furniture sets and sports equipment.

This year, UNICEF has appealed for \$23.6 million to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to children and families affected by the conflict in

eastern Ukraine. To date, less than 15 per cent of this appeal has been met.

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## [‘Bad’ fats targeted in new global health guidelines](#)

People everywhere need to cut down on their consumption of artery-clogging fatty foods, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) is urging, in a new report released on Friday.

The initiative is a bid to prevent some of the 17 million deaths caused every year by cardiovascular diseases, which have been linked to food containing saturated fats and trans-fats.

Saturated fats are commonly found in butter, salmon, egg yolks and cows’ milk.

WHO wants adults and children to reduce their intake of these fats to just 10 per cent of total daily energy needs.

And the UN health agency wants trans-fats – which are found in baked and fried foods and cooking oil – to account for just one per cent of daily calorie intake.

“Producers can use another fat with the same property and you can have your wonderful croissant that does not contain any trans-fats.” – *Dr. Francesco Branca, WHO*

The good news is that there are healthier alternatives to food laden with “bad” saturated and trans-fats which are often labelled as “hydrogenated”– an indication that hydrogen has been added, making them easier to use.

“If we really want to get rid of the dangers of the excess trans-fat then there must be a very strong, energetic action from governments to ensure that manufactured products do not use hydrogenated vegetable oil,” said Dr. Francesco Branca, WHO’s nutrition director.

“The removal of trans-fat which has been done in many countries is not even noticed by the consumer,” he added, “so the producers can use another fat with the same property and you can have your wonderful croissant that does not contain any trans-fats.”

Before WHO publishes its draft guidelines officially later this year, it intends to hold public consultations around the world to ensure that they best meet regional needs.

Dr Branca highlighted that since the UN agency first issued advice on saturated and trans-fats in 2002, there has been significant progress in raising awareness about the threat they pose – particularly in richer nations.

But although Western Europe has “almost eliminated” industrial trans-fat use today and Denmark has banned it altogether, Dr Branca cautioned that poorer regions faced major challenges in tackling the threat.

These include several countries in Eastern Europe, as well as India, Pakistan, Iran, many African states and Argentina.

In some cases Dr Branca warned that trans-fat levels in some popular street foods are as much as 200 times the recommended daily intake.