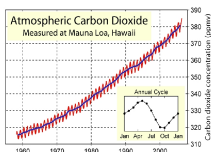


26 November 2008

By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Carbon levels recorded in Hawaii over the last four decades
Wikimedia Commons

[Largest CO2 Levels Recorded Last Year](#)

The gas exceeded expectations, after a steady grow through 2007

Officials from the UN World Meteorological Organization concluded in their latest report that the levels of methane, nitrous oxide (NO₂) and carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere reached their largest ever recorded levels, though they increased steadily over 2007. Methane levels registered their largest increase over the last decade in a single year, which prompted scientists to say that this gas may soon become as dangerous as CO₂ or NO₂.
"The major greenhouse gases - CO₂, methane and N₂O - have all reached new highs in 2007. Two of them, CO₂ and N₂O, are increasing steadily and there is no sign of leveling off of those two gases," said WMO expert, Geir Braathen, during a news conference, also adding that existing data were insufficient to predict if methane would level off or continue rising next year as well. On the bright side, chlorofluorocarbons, the compounds responsible for ozone depletion in the atmosphere, registered lower levels than last year, which means that the 1987 Montreal Protocol, which banned the use of these substances worldwide, actually paid off and that the ozone layer could soon begin to recover, though the hole over Antarctica will probably still be around for a while. "The Montreal Protocol, through the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances, has actually had a positive effect also on climate," Braathen added at the conference. The new UN report will probably serve as a starting point for next week's UN meeting in Poznan, Poland, where officials from multiple nations will meet to discuss an agreement that will replace the Kyoto Protocol. This document will expire in 2012, and 2009 is the deadline for worldwide authorities to come up with something better. Copenhagen will host the decisive talks in December 2009, when the United States, China and India are expected to join in. The US did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol under the Bush administration, but president-elect Barack Obama already voiced support for the initiative, which prompted immediate [responses](#) from UN officials.