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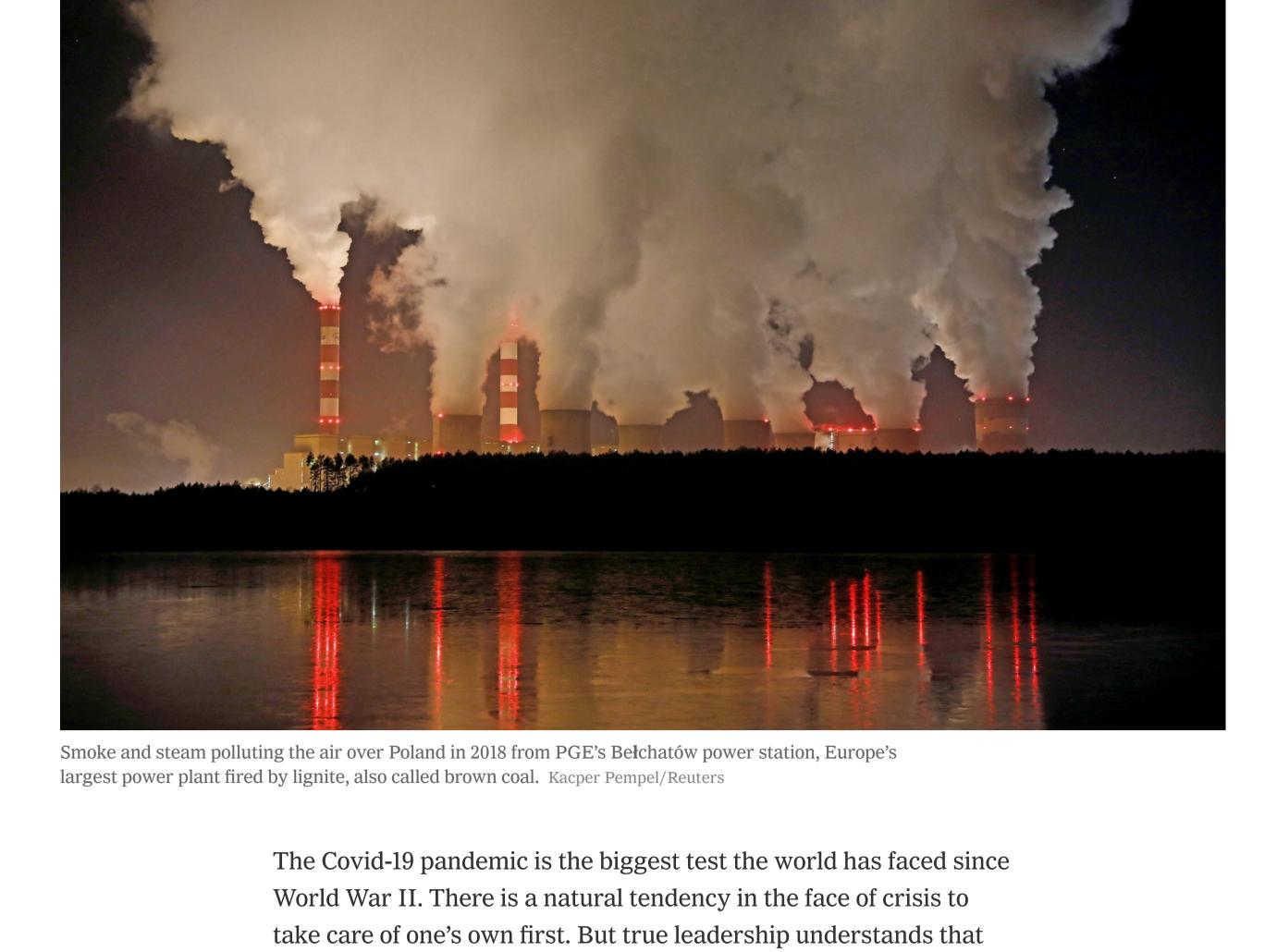
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Account ~

A Time to Save the Sick and Rescue the

Planet With closer cooperation among nations, the head of the United Nations argues, we could stop a pandemic faster and slow climate change.

By António Guterres Mr. Guterres is the secretary general of the United Nations. Before that, he was the United Nations high commissioner for refugees. April 28, 2020



there are times to think big and more generously. Such thinking

The impact of the coronavirus is immediate and dreadful. We must

act now and we must act together. Just as we must act together to

address another urgent global emergency that we must not lose

sight of — climate change. Last week, the World Meteorological

Organization released data showing that temperatures have

already increased 1.1 degrees centigrade above preindustrial

was behind the Marshall Plan and the formation of the United

Nations after World War II. This is also such a moment. We must work together as societies and as an international community to save lives, ease suffering and lessen the shattering economic and

social consequences of Covid-19.

on planetary health.

levels. The world is on track for devastating climate disruption from which no one can self-isolate. Now, on every continent and in every sea, climate disruption is becoming the new normal. Human conduct is also leading to severe biodiversity loss, changing animal-human interaction and distorting ecosystem processes that regulate our planetary health and control many services that humans depend on. Science is screaming to us that we are close to running out of time approaching a point of no return for human health, which depends

Addressing climate change and Covid-19 simultaneously and at

enough scale requires a response stronger than any seen before to

safeguard lives and livelihoods. A recovery from the coronavirus

crisis must not take us just back to where we were last summer. It

economies and societies — a more resilient and prosperous world.

is an opportunity to build more sustainable and inclusive

Recently the International Renewable Energy Agency released data showing that transforming energy systems could boost global G.D.P. by \$98 trillion by 2050, delivering 2.4 percent more G.D.P. growth than current plans. Boosting investments in renewable energy alone would add 42 million jobs globally, create health care savings eight times the cost of the investment, and prevent a future crisis.

I am proposing six climate-positive actions for governments to consider once they go about building back their economies, societies and communities. First: As we spend trillions to recover from Covid-19, we must deliver new jobs and businesses through a clean, green transition. Investments must accelerate the decarbonization of all aspects of our economy.

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Second: Where taxpayers' money rescues businesses, it must be

creating green jobs and sustainable and inclusive growth. It must

not be bailing out outdated polluting, carbon-intensive industries.

Third: Fiscal firepower must shift economies from gray to green,

making societies and people more resilient through a transition

Fourth: Looking forward, public funds should invest in the future,

by flowing to sustainable sectors and projects that help the environment and climate. Fossil fuel subsidies must end and polluters must pay for their pollution.

that is fair to all and leaves no one behind.

Fifth: The global financial system, when it shapes policy and

into account. Investors cannot continue to ignore the price our

planet pays for unsustainable growth.

alone.

that direction

bottom lines.

equitable world.

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infrastructure, must take risks and opportunities related to climate

Sixth: To resolve both emergencies, we must work together as an

international community. Like the coronavirus, greenhouse gases

respect no boundaries. Isolation is a trap. No country can succeed

Development Goals laid out by the United Nations in 2015 provide

the blueprint and the tools for a better recovery. While Britain and

international climate conference until 2021, we cannot afford to

waver on climate action or scale down ambition. Governments

must honor their commitments to present new national climate

The Paris Agreement on climate change and the **Sustainable**

Italy have sensibly decided to postpone this year's annual

plans and longer-term strategies to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. I urge the European Union to place the Green Deal presented last year at the heart of its economic response to the pandemic and to maintain its commitment to submit a new and more ambitious

climate plan and long-term strategy consistent with getting to

climate neutrality by 2050. I make a similar appeal to all G20

countries, which collectively account for more than 80 percent of

global emissions and over 85 percent of the global economy. We cannot solve the climate crisis without the G20's coordinated leadership. I welcome the leadership shown by countries like South Korea, which has managed the pandemic in an exemplary manner and supported other countries in doing so, and now is looking at leading the way with its own Green New Deal. It is also

encouraging to see Japan's Mizuho Financial Group announcing it

would stop new financing for coal-fired power plants, and other

organizations like the Simitomo Misui Financial Group moving in

And just last week, the smallest and most vulnerable members of

our United Nations family, the small island nations, recommitted to

climate ambition even in the midst of the Covid disaster. Their leadership should serve as an inspiration to all. Young people the world over have been demanding stronger, faster and more ambitious climate action because they understand that it is the only way to secure their future. Similarly, many influential business leaders tell us that climate action and sustainable

development are the only ways to protect and strengthen their

rare and short window of opportunity to rectify that — by rebuilding a better world, not reverting to one that is good for only a minority of its citizens. We must act now to tackle the coronavirus globally for all of our sakes — and, at the same time, pursue immediate ambitious

For years, we have failed our young by damaging the planet and

failing to protect the people most vulnerable to crises. We have a

António Guterres, the ninth secretary general of the United Nations, took office in 2017. The Times is committed to publishing a diversity of letters to the editor. We'd like to hear what you think about this or any of our articles. Here are some tips. And here's our email: letters@nytimes.com.

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