

Back-up Story: *Silent Moments*,

My wife and I stood on a beach in Iceland near the 63rd parallel north on an April morning. The rain was running down our faces. The temperature was down at 5° Celsius, and the wind was blowing up to 40 km/h. The wind and the breaking waves were louder than our shouting.

If you follow the line of latitude west from that beach, you will reach Greenland's east coast. Oceans and seas cover more than two-thirds of the earth. Greenland's and Antarctica's polar ice caps are melting six times faster than 25 years ago due to global warming. This number corresponds to the worst-case scenario scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in their 2019 *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*.

As sea levels rise, storms will become more violent, and more rain will fall. At the same time, major cities like Bangkok are sinking due to unrestrained construction and development. Around 600 million people will be affected. Climate change also affects storms' frequency and intensity, heat waves, droughts, and forest fires. "Australia shows us the road to hell," wrote *New York Times* opinion columnist Paul Krugman in a column in the winter of 2019. A few weeks later, stories followed about thawing permafrost in Siberia and its results, collapsing streets and buildings. In the early autumn of 2020, scientists found smoke particles in Europe's air from the forest fires on the West Coast of the US.

You don't need to be a scientist to understand the damage caused by rising sea levels, increasing drought, and dying glaciers. "If we are sensitive creatures and know where we are heading, why don't we stop?" asks Icelandic activist Andri Snær Magnason in his book *On Time and Water*.

One answer is provided by Mojib Latif, a professor at GEOMAR Helmholtz Center for Ocean Research in Kiel, Germany, in his book *Hot Time*. "It is like smoking," he says; "cause and effect are decoupled in the climate crisis." Most of the time, the health problems of smokers appear after decades. But then it is too late for a cure. A person who smokes knows the consequences of smoking but is not able or willing to change their behavior. The same happens with global warming. We know what will happen.

I compare the situation we live in with the only crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by the RMS *Titanic* in 1912. We are just a few miles away from an iceberg whose impact is not being taken seriously. The current captain, like the one who was convinced of the unsinkability of the *Titanic*, is not a human being but a world intoxicated by a mixture of populism, false information, lies, stupidity, and special interests. This dangerous cocktail does not inspire confidence in the future. "People should be scared — I'm scared," says David Wallace-Wells, author of the 2019 bestseller *The Uninhabitable Earth*.

We are losing what we love.

Contact:

Paul Christener
3532 Zaeziwil, Switzerland