

The Caribbean and Global Warming

Dramatic new projections for global warming have raised fears of the severe consequences for low-lying areas of the world, including in the Caribbean.

The results from computer modelling used by the British Met Office and released this week at a conference in Oxford suggest that a potentially devastating rise of four degrees celsius in the global temperature could happen sooner than expected this century – within the lifetimes of many people alive today. Dr Richard Betts of the Hadley Centre told the BBC that the results show that under a high carbon emission scenario "our best guess is that a four-degree increase would take place in the 2070s. But a plausible worst case scenario is that we could get it by 2060." A four-degree temperature rise would increase the chances of significant sea level rises by the end of this century. Professor Stefan Rahmstorf, from the Potsdam Institute, warned that such an increase would result in sea level rises of between 1 metre and 1.3 metres by 2100 compared to 1990 levels. At risk According to the World Bank, the Bahamas, Suriname, Guyana, Belize and Jamaica are among the countries in the Americas region most vulnerable to a one-metre increase. In Guyana for example, about 90 per cent of the population lives on the coastal belt which is 1.4 metres below sea level. "The crux of the sea level issue is that the sea starts rising very slowly," Professor Rahmstorf told the BBC. "But once it starts, it is virtually unstoppable. "Our best hope is that the rate of acceleration slows down. But that's not very reassuring." Scientists say that the likelihood that sea level rises happen slowly over several decades makes it possible to prepare for them. - BBC