

Once cited as "the defining challenge of our generation" by the US Secretary General Ki-Moon, climate change is a significant and lasting change to weather patterns (rainfall, temperature, snow or wind patterns) over long periods of time (10 years or longer). Climate change can result from natural factors (changes in the sun's energy or the Earth's orbit), natural processes within the climate system (changes in ocean circulation) or human activities that change the atmospheric makeup or land surface of the Earth.

"Climate change" is often simultaneously used as "global warming" in discussions, but the two are different. Global warming refers to the rising average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans and its projected continuation. Current research leaves little doubt that human activity has caused part of the global warming and climate changes that we are currently seeing.