We need to treat climate change as the emergency that it is

Veteran journalist Bill Moyers has told us the story of how Edward R Murrow, the pre-eminent US broadcast journalist of his time, insisted on covering what became Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. Murrow's bosses at CBS News had other priorities; they wanted reporters to cover dance competitions in Hamburg, Paris and London instead, explaining that Americans needed some happy news. Murrow wouldn't do it. "It'll probably get us fired," he told his colleagues, but he sent his correspondents to the German-Polish border; they arrived just in time to witness Hitler's tanks and troops roar into Poland. Suddenly, Europe was at war. And Americans heard about it because journalists at one of the nation's most influential news outlets defied convention and did their jobs.

Today, all of humanity is under attack, this time from an overheated planet – and too many newsrooms are still more inclined to cover today's equivalent of dance competitions. The record heat waves and storms of 2020 confirmed what scientists have long predicted: climate change is under way and threatens unparalleled catastrophe. And because carbon dioxide traps heat in the atmosphere for centuries, temperature rise and its effects are only getting started. As one scientist said as wildfires turned San Francisco's skies orange last September, "We're going to look back in 10 years, certainly 20 … and say, 'Wow, 2020 was a crazy year, but I miss it.'"

A handful of major newspapers are paying attention. But most news coverage, especially on television, continues to underplay the climate story, regarding it as too complicated, or disheartening, or controversial. Last month, we asked the world's press to commit to treating climate change as the emergency that scientists say it is; their response was dispiriting.

We created Covering Climate Now in April 2019 to help break the media's climate silence. Moyers talked about Murrow's determination to cover the news that matters at our inaugural conference. Since then, Covering Climate Now has grown into a consortium of hundreds of news outlets reaching a combined audience of roughly two billion people, and the climate coverage of the media as a whole has noticeably improved.

But that coverage is still not going nearly far enough. To convey to audiences that civilisation is literally under attack, news outlets should give more space to climate change stories. They should run more stories about the issue – especially about how climate change is increasingly affecting weather, economics, politics and other spheres of life – and they should run those stories at the top, not the bottom, of their homepages or broadcasts. News reports should also speak much more plainly, presenting climate change as an imminent, deadly threat.

This message is muted at best today, and the result is predictable. In the United States, only 26 percent of the public is "alarmed" about climate change, according to opinion polls analysed by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication (a member of the CCNow consortium). One reason why? Less than a quarter of the public hear about climate change in the media at least once a month.

Good journalism leads the conversation, and there is certainly plenty of climate news worth covering these days. In a pair of stunning developments last week, a court in The Netherlands ordered the Royal Dutch Shell oil company to reduce its own and its customers' greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent by 2030 in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Meanwhile, shareholders of ExxonMobil and Chevron rebelled against management's refusal to take strong climate action. A week earlier, the International Energy Agency declared that all new fossil fuel development must stop to prevent irreversible climate destruction. The climate emergency is upending politics, economics and virtually every other subject journalists cover, and newsrooms need to catch up.

They can start with the Climate Emergency Statement that CCNow issued in April as part of our Earth Day coverage. Co-signed by eight of our partners – Columbia Journalism Review, The Nation, The Guardian, Scientific American, Noticias Telemundo, La Repubblica, The Asahi Shimbun and Al Jazeera English – the statement's first sentence says, "It is time for journalism to recognise that the climate emergency is here." Emphasising that this was "a statement of science, not politics," the statement links to articles from peer-reviewed journals affirming this fact. The statement notes that the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated how well news outlets can cover emergencies when they commit to it, and it invites journalists everywhere to apply that same urgency to the climate story.

More than 30 news organisations have now signed the statement, but some major outlets told us privately they won't sign. The phrase "climate emergency" sounds like activism, they said; claiming that endorsing it might make them look biased. Instead, they added, they would let their climate coverage speak for itself.

But that's the problem: their coverage does speak for itself, and it is simply not reflecting the facts of the story. It is a fact that thousands of the world's scientists, including many of the most eminent climate experts, say humanity faces a climate emergency. Most major news outlets still present climate change as no more important than a dozen other public issues, when the fact is that if the world doesn't get it under control, fast, climate change will overwhelm every other issue. Another fact: the climate emergency comes with a time limit – wait too long to halt temperature rise and it becomes too late; CO2's long atmospheric life makes further temperature rise inevitable, perhaps irreversible.

We're not obsessed with whether a news outlet does or doesn't use the term "climate emergency"; what matters is whether the outlet's overall coverage treats climate change like an emergency. For example, does the outlet give the climate story the same 24/7 coverage it has devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic or, before that, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or other landmark events? Has it reoriented its newsroom and reassigned reporters to cover the climate story? Do its journalists present the story with a sense of urgency?

Aljazeera

The cancer patients being treated in their homes due to COVID

Cremona and Milan, Italy – "We can leave the house now, right?" Ermelinda Bonesi, an energetic 72-year-old asks the oncologist and the nurse visiting her apartment in Gussola, a village about 30 minutes from the city of Cremona, in Lombardy, Italy.

Ermelinda has been self-isolating for nearly two months after she – and then her husband – caught the coronavirus. The hope is that today her PCR test will show a negative result and that she will be able to resume her chemotherapy, for the breast cancer she has been battling on and off for 30 years. It is recommended that cancer patients with COVID suspend their chemotherapy treatment as it can increase the risk of severe complications from the virus.

"What really depresses me though, is this virus," Ermelinda says as nurse Roberta Marchi finishes swabbing her nose.

"Oh I thought that would be your husband," jokes Margherita Ratti, an oncologist in her mid-30s, finding in the gentle 70-something Saverio Ghizzini the perfect scapegoat to lighten the mood. Saverio's eyes smile above the protective mask as the women burst into laughter. He stands a few metres away, beyond the large arch dividing the 70s-style, pea-green kitchen from the living room, keeping due social distance from the visitors.

As her caregiver, he is the only member of the family she has physically seen in months.

"[It's been nearly] two months since I stopped my treatment," Ermelinda explains. "I am perfectly fine, I've no symptoms at all. Even with my therapy, I've always been well. But this is my third relapse, so I am afraid," she says, as suspending chemotherapy means giving her cancer an opportunity to grow.

Uncertainty and additional hurdles have been a fixture of everyone's life everywhere in the world, but for vulnerable cancer patients those feelings, as well as the potential repercussions, are amplified. While accessing hospitals for life-saving treatment became a source of stress and – potentially – contagion, isolation from family and friends further amplified the inevitable feeling of loneliness that accompanies the battle against an illness that others can seldom understand.

Ermelinda sits at the kitchen table where on a disposable cloth nurse Roberta Marchi has set up the equipment for a blood test Ermelinda will need to take before resuming her therapy.

She makes carefully measured movements to take Ermelinda's blood pressure and other health parameters, trying as much as possible to avoid touching any surface with her body or equipment.

Since the Cremona public hospital – the main hospital in the city of 72,000 people – launched a home assistance unit for cancer patients during the first wave of the pandemic, Roberta has been one of the two nurses tasked with coordinating visits for about 60 patients, organising the schedule according to doctors' specialisations while doubling up as a driver. The programme gets support from the local cancer care NGO Medea and private funders.

Doves and hawks set to battle over Biden's $6 trillion budget proposal

US president Joe Biden's $6 trillion budget proposal will take the public debt to its highest ever level, and so it must be debated thoroughly by Congress. Unfortunately, many of those well-positioned to scrutinize the plan have already surrendered their credibility in discussing fiscal matters. Yet, it is future generations who will bear the cost.

America's political elite present themselves as falling into one of two camps: fiscal doves and fiscal hawks. A more accurate description is fiscal doves and fiscal hypocrites.

The doves support big government and tolerate budget deficits because they are confident that effective government spending will grow the economy. They are the masterminds behind Biden's proposal.

Doves want the US to lead the way in green investments, and they also back infrastructure spending as they feel that underinvestment in this area has been stunting the US economy. Doves also think that taxes on the rich are morally justifiable and do not hurt economic growth.

The fiscal hypocrites are more ambivalent toward big government than are doves, but still don't mind deficits when they control the budget. This is because the hypocrites like to spend on themselves and their constituents, possibly through the waging of horrific wars. Their political myopia renders them unconcerned by the prospect of future generations footing the bill for such fiscal imprudence.

However, when fiscal hypocrites are out of office, they transform into rhetorical hawks: they brandish their Ronald Raegan tattoos and distribute copies of Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations.

While budget deficits caused by military aggression remain laudable, shortfalls caused by welfare spending are an affront to the constitution. One consistent position for whoever is in power is that taxes on the rich cripple the economy, hurting both rich and poor.

The problem for Americans is that fiscal hypocrites have lost all credibility from 20 years of egregious duplicity. Possible intellectuals were previously willing to join ranks with fiscal hypocrites to articulate well-founded fears about the impact of rising public debt. However, today, the fiscal hypocrites have become so deceitful that scholars risk tarnishing themselves by joining a hypocrite-led political coalition.

Consequently, no legislatively powerful group can push back against Congress-controlling fiscal doves. Formerly, some doves would have been open to intellectually sound arguments against big government, such as the potential inefficiency of government spending, the possibility of a bloated public sector impeding private enterprise, or the risk of deficit-induced price inflation. After all, in 1996, the centrist US president Bill Clinton famously declared that "the era of big government is over."

But today, there are no credible peers left to challenge the doves' orthodox views. The hypocrites have themselves to blame, having failed to heed the lessons a child can draw from a cursory reading of Aesop's fables, such as the boy who cried wolf.

Authentic hawks remain active as an intellectual force, but they have been completely expunged from elite political circles, being replaced by imprudent fiscal hypocrites. That leaves two future scenarios for Americans.

The good scenario is that the doves are correct, and the economy prospers. In that case, the hawks might reconsider their views, while everyone will continue to ignore the fiscal hypocrites.

The bad scenario is that the doves are wrong, and the economy tanks. In that case, the US has to go through years of economic pain until a new generation of hawks enters the political elite and fixes the problems.

While I sincerely hope that a good scenario emerges, I regard the latter as more likely. I worry about the retirement savings I have invested in the US, and about the health of the world's most pivotal and influential economy, which will affect my children's future. And while being angry at doves is the easy option, they deserve minimal blame because they are at least presenting their views in good faith. Some may be economically illiterate, but they respond to reason, and so a sustained effort can bear fruit. Instead, my ire will be reserved for the fiscal hypocrites, who have destroyed people's ability to constructively debate government spending due to a short-sighted effort to secure power. Perhaps one tax that fiscal doves and hawks can agree on would be a levy on hypocrisy – the most satisfying way to balance the budget.

AFP

Saudi's World Defense Show reveals 'overwhelming' interest: Organizers

Saudi Arabia's World Defense Show organizers say they have received "overwhelming" interest from hundreds of global, local and regional companies and industry heavyweights looking to attend or exhibit at the show.

They have urged exhibitors to book now as 70 per cent of exhibition space has been allocated to leading global manufacturers, multinationals and SMEs across the defense industry. To date, confirmed or reserved applications covering almost three quarters of the available exhibition space at the inaugural show in Riyadh from 6-9 March 2022.

Major global players including defense giants Lockheed Martin, Embraer, General Dynamics and Rolls-Royce are among those to have booked space. They will be joined by defense and security government bodies and Saudi entities including Saudi Arabian Military Industries and Military Industries Corporation as well as several local industry players.

Significant interest has been recorded from the Far East, which considers Saudi Arabia – located at the crossroads of three continents – to be a critical market given its welcoming investment environment, ease of doing business and government support to foreign investments.

Confirmed participants from this region include NORINCO and the Korea Defense Industry Association.

Shaun Ormrod, Chief Executive Officer of World Defense Show, said: "The overwhelming interest from local and global defense reflects World Defense Show's unique proposition – creating an unmatched meeting environment for industry leaders in the heart of Saudi Arabia, one of the world's leading defense industry markets, to discuss the future of interoperable defense.

"We are greatly looking forward to introducing a new global platform showcasing integrated defense capabilities on the international defense show circuit."

The announcement came after the World Defense Show operations team officially started Phase 2 of construction on the 800,000 sqm venue site– featuring the world's first purpose-built military event demo runway.

More than one million tons of earth have already been processed in preparation for the construction of the flagship event's exhibition halls, access roads and car parking areas.

According to the organizers, the first of two halls are on track for completion by October this year. By December 2021, the second hall will be completed along with a runway, static display area, land demonstration track and courtyard. The site will also feature dozens of hospitality suites playing host to high-level meetings between suppliers and buyers.

Under the Patronage of Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the World Defense Show is Saudi Arabia's flagship defense event founded by GAMI, focusing on military interoperability across air, land, sea, security and satellite defense systems.

The biennial event will enable the industry to keep pace with developments across defense and technology. The speed at which these developments take place compels the defense industry to cooperate across borders and domain expertise to generate opportunities throughout the defense value chain.

Trilateral meeting vows to work for peace in Afghanistan

From P1

pendent, sovereign and democratic state that enjoys security and stability, achieves development and prosperity, and lives in harmony with its neighbors."

The three sides maintained that resolution of the Afghan issue should fully reflect the "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" principle. The Afghan government could play a leading role in Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation process to draw up a plan jointly with all parties that reflects extensiveness and inclusiveness.

The three sides support all multilateral efforts that are conducive to building political consensus in Afghanistan, and the international community and to promoting Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation process. They support the international community, particularly the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in making positive contribution to advancing the peace and reconciliation process. They believed that Afghanistan's neighboring countries, as the most direct stakeholders in relation to Afghanistan's domestic situation, should play a more important, constructive role in this regard.

China and Afghanistan recognized that Pakistan has continued to host with dignity and honor millions of Afghan refugees for decades as a consequence of the protracted Afghan conflict. They emphasized that a time-bound and well-resourced return of Afghan refugees to their homeland and their re-integration in the Afghan society should be part of the comprehensive peace agreement.

China and Pakistan reaffirmed their firm support for the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan and readiness to expand economic and trade ties with Afghanistan, support Afghanistan in enhancing its capacity for independent development. **The Kabul Times**