

# Code Red and Code Green

Turning the climate crisis into an  
evergreening opportunity

**Dr Dennis Garrity**  
Board Chair, Global EverGreening Alliance



We are on the precipice of irreversible damage — and the prognosis for all of humanity is dire.

That's essentially the message of the global scientific community, embodied in last week's report published by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The data and climate projections make it clear that we must zero out our emissions by mid-century and remove the excess carbon spewed into our atmosphere. From fires to floods, we only have to look at this year's events to witness the devastating impacts of climate change.

We must act as a global community -- to avoid more frequent, more intense humanitarian crises and more terrible outcomes than we've experienced so far.

That's why UN Secretary-General Gutiérrez so colorfully stated that the IPCC report is "a code red for humanity." He said, "the alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse-gas emissions from fossil-fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible."

Fortunately, The Race to Zero is now picking up speed, spearheading the global energy transition. More than 120 countries have now pledged to net-zero emissions by mid-century, and over 5,000 corporations have also made net zero commitments. Now there is accelerating pressure on all of them to halve their emissions by 2030 – and thus make these commitments real and effective.

We also have a duty to prevent further destruction by ramping up our efforts to capture carbon from the atmosphere.

We can do this by enhancing the Earth's vegetation and soils to store much greater quantities of carbon. The beauty of this nature-based solution is that it can create a much more verdant and evergreen planet in the future. It is a solution that will benefit us all while helping to neutralize the accelerating effects of global heating.

We're in a race to green up and cool down. It's a race of many actions: To protect the precious forests and wetlands from further destruction and regenerate the vastly degraded forestlands by establishing a trillion more trees. It's also a race to restore and green up the health and productivity of the world's degrading rangelands and pasturelands. And it is a race to restore the world's fast-degrading farmlands -- with soil-improving practices and agroforestry.



These actions will not be a net cost to our societies: Rather, they are a great investment opportunity that will pay off in spades – for everyone, everywhere. This is a race in which every community in the world can pull together and assess the potential for more trees, grasses, and other vegetation that will store carbon while enhancing the productivity, protection, and beauty of the land and improving the livelihoods of millions. It can be the basis for a new land ethic that will be critical for our survival and that of all the species that inhabit the earth alongside us.

An evergreen and more verdant Earth is possible simply by learning to better care for the land on the only planet that we have.

Together, we can capture and store an additional 5 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year on the land by 2030, an additional 10 billion tons per year by 2040, and a further 20 billion tons per year by 2050. This, along with net-zero emissions, will enable humanity to begin the great transition to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the atmosphere – saving us from the worst effects of climate change.

These aspirations and goals are the basis for the EverGreening the Earth Campaign, spearheaded by the Global EverGreening Alliance. The success of this effort will contribute to the success of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), which is now just underway.

Can our sober recognition that this is ‘a code red for humanity’ be the spur to mobilize ourselves to also realize a ‘code green’ – the imperative to respectfully and rapidly evergreen our earth? A big part of our ability to continue thriving on this planet will surely depend upon it.

