



THE UNITED NATIONS

ipcc

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change



10 March 2010

Dear Dr. Dijkgraaf,

We are writing to request that the InterAcademy Council (IAC) conduct a thorough, independent review of the processes and procedures followed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in preparing its Assessment Reports.

As you are aware, the IPCC was established in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 43/53, to provide policymakers with a comprehensive and objective scientific risk assessment of the current status of climate change and its potential consequences for both people and the planet. The Assessment Reports of the IPCC, which are endorsed by the world's governments, are made possible thanks to the efforts of thousands of scientists who voluntarily contribute their time and expertise. Over the years, these reports have provided much of the scientific foundation for climate policy, in particular for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In recent months, a very small number of errors have been brought to light in the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the IPCC, a document containing thousands of peer-reviewed and independent scientific studies. However, the bedrock scientific consensus on climate change as described in the Fourth Assessment Report remains unchanged, and indeed was reaffirmed by the world's environment ministers meeting last month in Bali, Indonesia.

Given the gravity of the global threat posed by climate change, it is vitally important to ensure full confidence in the scientific process underpinning the assessments of the IPCC. Governments and the public at large look to the IPCC as the world's most authoritative scientific body for assessing climate risk and informing climate policy.

Dr. Robbert H. Dijkgraaf
Co-chair
InterAcademy Council
Amsterdam

As the IPCC embarks on its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), it is imperative that its work be as accurate, objective, comprehensive and transparent as possible, and that the potential for any future errors is minimized. It is vitally important that every step of the assessment process be clear, consistent, and comprehensible. The IPCC must also be able to respond quickly and transparently to any questions of its work, recognizing that the world now operates in a 24-hour media cycle.

To this end, we, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, along with the Chair of the IPCC, are requesting that the IAC conduct an independent review of the IPCC processes and its procedures for preparing future Assessment Reports. Please find Terms of Reference attached for this independent review.


Consultations for conducting such a review were carried out within the United Nations system, in particular with the organizations sponsoring the IPCC, WMO and UNEP, as well as with the Vice-Chairs and Co-Chairs of the IPCC. Consultations were also held in February 2010 with environment ministers and senior government officials at the 11th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum. While expressing support for the unique role and value of the IPCC, ministers also recommended the need for an independent review of the processes and procedures of the IPCC.

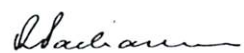
UNEP and WMO, the parent organizations of the IPCC, have agreed to provide administrative support and channel the necessary government funds to support this review.

In order for the IPCC to benefit from the recommendations of the IAC in preparing its Fifth Assessment Report, we would ask you to submit your report by 31 August 2010. The results of the review will then be submitted for consideration and decision to the 32nd Session of the IPCC to be held in October 2010.

We would be grateful if you would accept this invitation, and look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience. A similar letter has been addressed to Dr. Lu Yongxiang.

Yours sincerely,


BAN/Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations


Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri
Chairman
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



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Dr. Lu Yongxiang
Co-chair
InterAcademy Council
Amsterdam

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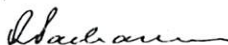
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Yours sincerely,



BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations



Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri
Chairman

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Independent Review of the IPCC Assessment Process

Terms of Reference

Background

By the 1980s, concerns about global climate change had become widespread. This catalyzed a demand for knowledge and action from governments, civil society, the UN and other stakeholders. Responding to the demand, and in keeping with UN General Assembly Resolution 43/53 of 6 December 1988, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 to provide the governments with objective, comprehensive and up-to-date information about climate change and its implications. Therefore, the initial task for the IPCC was to prepare a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to the state of knowledge of the science of climate change; social and economic impacts of climate change, and possible response strategies and elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate.

Since its creation, the IPCC has developed into a unique global assessment process that builds on broad participation of the best experts from different backgrounds and viewpoints, a robust multi-stage review process and strong partnership between the scientific community and the governments. The most important outputs of this process have been comprehensive scientific assessment reports about climate change released in 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2007. The reports provided authoritative policy-relevant, but not policy-prescriptive information on key aspects of climate, such as the physical science basis, impacts of and vulnerability to climate change in human and natural systems, options for adapting to impacts of climate change, and options for mitigation.

The IPCC is in the process of commencing work on its 5th Assessment Report. It has been IPCC practice that the Panel, which meets at least once a year at the level of government representatives, reviews its structure at the beginning of every assessment cycle and agrees on the scope and focus of the upcoming report. The structure and outline of the 5th Assessment Report have been agreed in the year 2009. The Panel also reviews its principles and procedures at regular intervals.

In view of the relevance of the IPCC assessments for global and sub-global policy-making processes, and to reduce the occurrence and minimize the potential impact of errors in the preparation of reports, further strengthening the IPCC processes and procedures is necessary to ensure continued scientific credibility of its assessments. A proposal to carry out a review of IPCC processes and procedures was communicated by the IPCC Secretariat to IPCC member governments in mid-February 2010. This was supported by environment ministers and government delegations at the 11th Session of the UNEP Global Ministerial Environment Forum held at Bali during 24-26 February 2010.

Subsequently, the United Nations Secretary-General and the Chair of the IPCC have come to the conclusion that an independent review of the IPCC process and the procedures for preparing reports is desirable. The executive heads of the founders of the IPCC, the Executive Director of UNEP, and the Secretary-General of WMO, concur with this conclusion. Collectively, they have decided to entrust this task to the InterAcademy Council (IAC), because it embodies the collective expertise and experience of national academies from all regions of the world. The IAC has agreed to undertake this task.

In carrying out this task, it is expected that the IAC, through its networks of national academies of sciences, will engage high-profile experts from relevant fields to prepare a report that presents recommendations on possible revisions of the IPCC procedures and other measures and actions. The recommendations will allow the IPCC to respond to future challenges and ensure ongoing quality of its reports. The review should pay attention to all IPCC Working Groups and the Task Force, and address the specific challenges by integrating different disciplines including from the physical, natural, social and economic sciences.

Scope, Objectives and Expected Outputs

In undertaking its work, the IAC will take into account the "Principles Governing IPCC Work", including their Appendices: Appendix A "Procedures for the preparation, review, acceptance, adoption, approval and publication of the IPCC reports" and its Annexes (hereinafter referred to as IPCC Procedures); Appendix B "Financial Procedures for the IPCC"; and Appendix C "Rules of Procedures for the Election of the IPCC Bureau and Any Task Force Bureau". It will also review IPCC policies and processes for admitting observer organizations and other relevant guidelines. The IAC will agree on its own rules of procedure and workplan, which clearly illustrate how it will ensure achieving the objectives of the review, including the modalities for necessary consultations.

The proposed terms of reference for the review are:

1. Review IPCC procedures for preparing reports including:
 - Data quality assurance and data quality control;
 - Guidelines for the types of literature appropriate for inclusion in IPCC assessments, with special attention to the use of non peer-reviewed literature;
 - Procedures for expert and governmental review of IPCC material;
 - Handling of the full range of scientific views; and
 - Procedures for correcting errors identified after approval, adoption and acceptance of a report.
2. Analyze the overall IPCC process, including the management and administrative functions within the IPCC, and the role of UNEP and WMO, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, with a view to strengthen and improve the efficiency of the assessment work and effectively ensure the consistent application of the IPCC Procedures.
3. Analyze appropriate communication strategies and the interaction of the IPCC with the media to ensure that the public is kept apprised of its work.
4. Prepare a report on the outcome of the consultations referred to above, including:
 - Methodology of the report preparation and measures taken to ensure high quality of the report findings;
 - Recommendations for amendments to the IPCC procedures;

- Recommendations concerning strengthening the IPCC process, institutions and management functions;
- Any other related recommendations;
- Outline of a plan for the implementation of recommendations.

General Principles of Work

1. The IAC will conduct its work independently according to its procedures for carrying out expert studies. Other than providing relevant information, neither IPCC, WMO nor UNEP will have any oversight or control over the review process.
2. The Co-Chairs of the IAC will transmit the final report to the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General and the IPCC Secretariat, with copies to the Executive Director of UNEP, and the Secretary-General of WMO.

Support for the Independent Review

1. Experts contributing to the review will do so without any remuneration for their services.
2. UNEP and WMO will provide technical and secretarial support and financial resources, as requested by the IAC and as mutually agreed.

Schedule of the Independent Review

Because the organizational work for the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC has already begun, it is urgent that the IAC submits its report at the latest by 31 August 2010, to allow for the submission of a document for consideration at the 32nd Session of the IPCC in October 2010. Timely submission is essential to allow governments to consider the Report in advance of the Session and to be prepared to decide on actions that may be necessary. In this way the findings of the review can be built into the fifth assessment cycle in its early stages.