

Rajendra K. Pachauri

Chairman of the IPCC

C/O World Meteorological Organization
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Dear Dr. Pachauri,

The undersigned organizations would like to express our concerns about the upcoming IPCC joint working group expert meeting on geoengineering to be held in Lima, Peru, June 20-22, 2011.

Geoengineering, the intentional large-scale manipulation of the Earth's systems to modify the climate, is one of the most serious issues the international community will face in the decades ahead. The prospects of artificially changing the chemistry of our oceans to absorb more CO₂, modifying the Earth's radiative balance, devising new carbon sinks in fragile ecosystems, redirecting hurricanes and other extreme weather events are alarming. The potential for accidents, dangerous experiments, inadequate risk assessment, unexpected impacts, unilateralism, private profiteering, disruption of agriculture, inter-state conflict, illegitimate political goals and negative consequences for the global South is high. The likelihood that geoengineering will provide a safe, lasting, democratic and peaceful solution to the climate crisis is non-existent.

The IPCC aims to be "policy relevant" and "policy neutral," and must take great care not to squander its credibility on geoengineering, a topic that is gathering steam precisely when there is no real progress on mitigation and adaptation. The IPCC's announcement of the expert meeting already suggests that geoengineering has a place in the portfolio of legitimate responses to climate change (a highly contestable claim), and that the role of the IPCC is to define what that role is. Permit us to stress that this is not primarily a scientific question; it is a political one. International peasant organizations, indigenous peoples, and social movements have all expressed outright opposition to such measures as a false solution to the climate crisis.

The Scientific Steering Group of this expert meeting includes well-known geoengineering advocates who have called for steep increases in funding for research and for proceeding with experimentation, as well as scientists who have patents pending on geoengineering technologies and/or other financial interests. Asking a group of geoengineering scientists if more research should be done on the topic is like asking a group of hungry bears if they would like honey. Their predictable answer should be viewed with skepticism. At the same time, independent organizations, which have devoted years of critical research to geoengineering, are not allowed to participate, even as observers.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the IPCC appears to be wading into waters beyond its expertise and mandate. The expert meeting, for instance, describes "appropriate governance mechanisms" as part of its mandate, and participants will discuss the "suitability of existing governance mechanisms for managing geoengineering, including social, legal and political factors." This is a crucial discussion that has already begun at the international level among governments and civil society, most notably at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan in 2010. That meeting agreed to adopt a *de facto* moratorium on real-world experimentation until a number of conditions are met. The critical question of governance is one that needs to be fully debated by the international community, with *all* interested states, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples and farmers' organizations taking part in a clearly democratic, multilateral transparent and accountable way. Scientists from the IPCC should participate in that debate, but they do not have the expertise or legitimacy to determine the suitability of existing governance mechanisms.

In the months ahead, as the Fifth Assessment Report is prepared, civil society organizations concerned with climate change and geoengineering will closely scrutinize the IPCC's work. In particular, we will look for the

IPCC to come out clearly and strongly in favour of the strict application of the precautionary principle and against any real-world geoengineering experimentation.

On the expert meeting, before its report is published and its conclusions are shared more broadly, we urge the IPCC to ensure that a variety of civil society voices is heard, understood, and taken into account, particularly from the global South. This will provide much-needed common sense and a global perspective, as well as a counterpoint to the more prominent and extreme positions of some Northern scientists engaged in geoengineering research.

We thank you for your attention to these issues and look forward to your reply.

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