



ETC Group
News Release
22 June 2011
www.etcgroup.org

IPCC treads carefully on geoengineering: UN panel says it will review science but take no stand on governance

LIMA, Peru – As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) wound up its expert meeting on geoengineering in Lima, Peru, which included all three IPCC Working Groups, it committed to remain “policy relevant but not policy prescriptive.” Despite getting off on the wrong foot (no transparency), with some of the wrong experts (scientists with financial interests), on some of the wrong topics (governance), the IPCC has now confirmed that it will not make recommendations to governments regarding research funding for the controversial technologies, governance models or the legality of experimentation.

At a press briefing following the close of the expert meeting, the IPCC stated that its focus will be “establishing the scientific foundations for an assessment of geoengineering.” This assessment would include risks, costs, benefits and social and economic impacts, intended and unintended consequences as well as uncertainties and gaps in knowledge and will be based solely on peer-reviewed literature. “Of course, a real assessment of geoengineering will need to be much broader than a scientific peer-review process,” said Silvia Ribeiro of ETC Group from Lima, though outside the meeting. “Civil society organizations have been clear that we do not want these dangerous technologies developed; they are a new threat from the very same countries that are responsible for the climate crisis in the first place!”

Dr. Chris Field, Co-chair of Working Group II (vulnerability, adaptation, impacts), said that while the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) would consider peer-reviewed literature on the question of governance, that debate would take place “at higher levels” – presumably referring to intergovernmental negotiations ongoing at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which adopted a [moratorium](#) on geoengineering activities in October 2010. Dr. Ramon Pichs-Madruga, Co-chair of Working Group III (mitigation), stated that all stakeholders would have a chance to comment on the IPCC’s treatment of geoengineering in the regular schedule of IPCC meetings over the next two years, and that civil society input was welcome, particularly given geoengineering’s controversial nature.

The CBD is in the midst of holding a series of consultations that have been open to organizations of varying viewpoints. This is in marked contrast to the series of Chatham House chats on geoengineering governance that have taken place over the past year. Overwhelmingly, those have been invitation-only and dominated by geoengineering advocates (e.g., [Asilomar conference on climate intervention](#), the Royal Society’s [Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative](#), the [International Risk Governance Council](#)).

Last week, 160 organizations from around the world sent [an open letter](#) to IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri expressing concerns about the IPCC expert meeting. “The IPCC has assured us it will go forward carefully in this work, and will not overstep its mandate by making governance recommendations. We will be closely following the process,” said Ribeiro. “Geoengineering is too dangerous to too many people and to the planet to be left in the hands of small group of so-called experts. Geoengineering should be an issue at the Rio+20 conference in June 2012.”

For more information:

Silvia Ribeiro, ETC Group, silvia@etcgroup.org;
cell phone: +52 1 55 2653 3330

Pat Mooney, ETC Group, etc@etcgroup.org;
cell phone: +1 613 240 0045

Diana Bronson, ETC group, diana@etcgroup.org;
cell phone: +1 514 629 9236