

A conversation with the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative, September 2, 2016

Participants

- Andy Parker – Research Fellow, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies and Project Director, Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative (SRMGI)
- Dr. Steven Hamburg, PhD – Chief Scientist, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and Co-Chair, SRMGI
- Danielle Putnam – Senior Major Gifts Officer, EDF
- Cassandra Ely – Manager, SRMGI and EDF
- Helen Toner – Senior Research Analyst, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by representatives of the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with representatives of the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative (SRMGI) as part of a grant update. Conversation topics included SRMGI's recent meeting in Jamaica, plans for future meetings, engagement of meeting attendees, and other updates.

Recent meeting in Jamaica

In July 2016, the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative (SRMGI) held a 1-day meeting at the University of the West Indies (UWI) campus in Kingston, Jamaica. Its local partners were the UWI and the Jamaican chapter of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences (CAS), whose role is similar to that of the United States' National Academy of Sciences (NAS). This was SRMGI's first meeting in the Caribbean region. A few years ago, SRMGI and CAS had made plans to organize a meeting, but these fell through; SRMGI was eager to reactivate this partnership.

Approximately 50 people attended the meeting; most were academics, the majority of whom were affiliated with the UWI. NGO representatives and policymakers also attended, though in smaller numbers; this might have been because the campus is located outside of the city, or due to an insufficient amount of outreach with NGOs. A special advisor to the Jamaican Minister of Science, Energy and Technology and another government minister – Horace Chang – gave the opening keynote address.

The meeting was successful and generated stimulating discussions. In general, attendees were interested in continuing to engage around solar geoengineering governance and research issues; a similar level of enthusiasm was shown by attendees of SRMGI's previous initial meetings in Africa and Asia. There was some skepticism around the potential future use of solar geoengineering and whether Jamaican stakeholders would have a role in these discussions.

Media coverage of the meeting included radio interviews and newspaper stories. SRMGI was pleased that the meeting's costs came in under budget.

The CAS has invited SRMGI to present at its upcoming biannual general meeting, which will bring together representatives of its national chapters.

Plans for future meetings

SRMGI has formed, or is seeking to form, partnerships with local organizations to organize meetings in other regions. Some partnerships took time to come together but are now gaining momentum.

Brazil

SRMGI will partner with Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE) to host a meeting in San Jose dos Campos on November 22, 2016. A "save the date" email will be sent to invitees shortly.

India

SRMGI will partner with a Delhi-based NGO, the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), to host a meeting in Delhi on November 29, 2016. As this is the second meeting organized through this partnership, the main focus will be building on the groundwork laid during the 2011 meeting. Dr. Arunabha Ghosh, CEEW's Chief Executive Officer, was a member of SRMGI's former working group.

Jordan

SRMGI is planning to organize a meeting in Jordan; both the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) are interested in being partners.

Thailand

SRMGI plans to run a meeting in Bangkok in early 2017 and has been in talks with two local organizations that it hopes will partner on the meeting.

Kenya

SRMGI will likely partner with the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) to organize a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi is an appropriate location, as it is where the AAS and the African office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are located. Another local organization is being approached to become the third meeting partner.

China

SRMGI hopes to partner with Beijing Normal University (BNU) to plan a meeting in Beijing in Spring 2017.

Philippines

SRMGI expects to run a meeting in Manila in early 2017, and is in discussion with a local partner organization about dates and a location.

South Pacific

SRMGI's desired partner in the South Pacific already has a full program in 2017. It will reinitiate its search for a regional partner with the help of one of its partners, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), a global organization that helps catalyze linkages between national scientific academies in developing and developed countries.

Pakistan

SRMGI will run a session on 6 December at part of the Sustainable Development Conference being run by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Islamabad.

Bangladesh

SRMGI plans to run a meeting with local partners the Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies, in the first few months of 2017.

Engagement of meeting attendees

Some individuals have made efforts to remain engaged after attending SRMGI meetings, though it can be challenging to demonstrate influence within the geoengineering policymaking field. For example, an Ethiopian professor who attended SRMGI meetings went on to attend geoengineering summer schools and was invited to a high-level geoengineering governance meeting in Italy in October 2015. Two other attendees ended up presenting a paper at a similar meeting in Berlin in early 2015.

SRMGI would like to bring together SRMGI meeting alumni at the next Climate Engineering Conference, which will be held in Berlin in the late summer or early autumn of 2017. Attendees of the Jamaican meeting were very enthusiastic about this possibility.

Building regional networks

After the three meetings co-organized by SRMGI and AAS in 2012 and 2013, there was considerable follow-up discussion around how to maintain the resulting momentum. Finding an effective way to formalize the engagement of stakeholders from developing countries is a common challenge in many scientific fields. One potential solution is to create layers of regional networks, which can also help ensure that the voices of stakeholders from different regions are adequately represented in international discussions. The African Academy of Science was particularly interested in formalizing regional engagement, possibly through the creation of an African working group. If the Nairobi meeting takes place, the AAS might organize a private workshop focused on this question. If an effective model for regional engagement is established in Africa, it could potentially be used in other regions.

Earlier in 2016, Mr. Parker attended a meeting in Japan focused on engagement around solar radiation management geoengineering in the Asia-Pacific region. Participants were interested in continuing this engagement. Though no specific plans have been made, SRMGI is communicating with stakeholders about the possibility of organizing a regional workshop, which could eventually help catalyze the creation of local networks in the region.

Other updates

Website

SRMGI revamped its website; the launch went smoothly.

Staffing

Mr. Parker is spending approximately 40% of his time on SRMGI-related work.

Sabina Caris recently began working with SRMGI as an analyst based out of TWAS. She is moving into a project manager role and will be responsible for running SRMGI's upcoming meetings. This will help free up some of Mr. Parker's time, as well as that of Ms. Ely's team at the Environmental Defense Fund.

*All Open Philanthropy Project conversations are available at
<http://www.openphilanthropy.org/research/conversations>*