



Thematic Session – Climate Science

Session Notes



CLIMATE SUMMIT 2014

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September 23, 2014

Co-Chairs

- **H.E. Mr. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj**, President of Mongolia
- **H.E. Mr. Donald Ramotar**, President of Guyana

Moderator

- **Mr. Paul Tsietsi Monare**, Weather Anchor, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)

Panellists

- **Ms. Aleqa Hammond**, Premier of Greenland
- **Dr. Thomas Stocker**, Co-Chair of the Working Group I, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC)
- **Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre**, Director -General, International Union for conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- **Ms. Barbara Frost**, Chief Executive, Water Aid

Opening and closing interventions from the two Co-Chairs

Opening: President Tsakhigiin Elbegdorj, Mongolia

- Coping with and adapting to climate change is one of the most pressing challenges faced by humanity today.
- Climate science appears as a key tool for this critical task for the future of our planet.
- The climate challenges of today are likely to become more acute in the future. The youth of today will see the second half of this century and the effects of anthropogenic climate changes. We have to fully recognize the strong stake that young people have in the future. ***“This Climate Summit is an opportunity the international community cannot miss. We have to act now”.***

Closing: President Donald Ramotar, Guyana

- Our session has highlighted that climate change is indeed one of the most serious threats in the world today and that science and research have a key role in helping us understand and address related impacts.
- From the policy point of view, countries need to fulfill their promise to provide 0.7% of GDP for ODA.
- ***“Science has not only pointed out problems but also identified many of the solutions”***. What is needed now is commitment and political will to make them happen.

Opening Remarks by the Moderator

Paul Tsietsi Monare, Weather Anchor, South African Broadcasting Corporation

- Climate change has shaped human history. Today, we are observing unprecedented changes due the increase of greenhouse gas emissions and it is time to act. The purpose of the session is to discuss how climate science can inform policy and motive people for ambitious climate action.

Panel Discussion

Aleqa Hammond, Premier of Greenland, Denmark

- Greenland is one of the places on Earth where climate change is the most evident. Living with the most monitored glacier in the world our people are experiencing the impacts of climate change on a daily basis. ***“We knew what climate change was even before that the world came to us in English”***.
- Science is important and it is now proving what hunters and fisherman have been saying for a long time. Climate change has profound impacts on the environment, but also on the local economy and culture.
- Science is important but it is only one part of the solution. The other one is the traditional knowledge gathered by people for thousands of years. ***“Science and traditional knowledge must go hand in hand”***; they can both provide benefits to policy makers. Education is needed at all levels.
- There is also the need to explore opportunities provided by climate change.

Thomas Stocker, Co-chair of IPCC WG I

- Warming of the climate system is unequivocal. Human influence on the climate system is clear.



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- Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Today we have a choice between keeping the planet below 2 degrees Celsius or a business as usual scenario leading us to a world that is fundamentally different from the one we know today.
- Robust science is fundamental. It has provided the evidence of global warming and convinced the public and decision makers that there is a problem and that we have to act.
- It is critical to translate science in a simple language. The scientific community has done a lot of progress in this regard, including through the development of synthesis reports and policy briefs.
- Scientists are excellent ambassadors of climate change knowledge and should be further empowered to share it with decision makers and the general public in order to multiply the messages.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

- Working together is of utmost importance in addressing the climate challenge. This concerns bringing together natural and social sciences and bridging the divides between different sectors of societies.
- ***“For society to understand the potential of science, we need to demonstrate that it benefits both the environment and people’s lives and livelihoods”.***
- There is no need for the ‘perfect science’ to take action, we know enough to take action now.
- We look for a change of mindsets, life styles and behaviors at every levels, from the global to the local and community level. ***“Science is a powerful tool for learning how to do things differently”.***
- We also have to better integrate gender considerations in the climate change discussions.

Barbara Frost, Chief Executive of WaterAid

- Changes in weather patterns due to climate change affect the poor in priority, particularly the 700 million without access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion people without access to proper sanitation and hygiene.
- Urgent adaptation measures are needed to protect poor and vulnerable communities from floods, droughts and resource shortages. This needs to be done if we want to live by 2030 in a world without people living in extreme poverty.
- Real life stories highlight the critical role that education has in empowering communities. Education is critical for understanding and adapting to climate change, and build community resilience for the next extreme event.

- Reaching a meaningful climate agreement during UNFCCC COP 21 goes hand in hand with agreeing on a post 2015 sustainable development agenda with poverty eradication at its center.

Audience Q&A

H.E. Mr. Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu

- Tuvalu and Greenland are facing similar climate challenges.
- The importance of science cannot be overlooked but its application is often difficult at the local level.
- We need to downscale climate models to reflect the impacts on SIDS and have meaningful action on the ground

Reply from Dr. Stocker:

- *Regional information is indeed critically needed.*
- *We welcome scientific programmes that would take climate models and use them in conjunction with the regional scientific and traditional knowledge.*

John Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

- USA is committed to advancing climate science. Science is a global public good essential for decision-making.
- President Obama's Executive Order on Climate Resilient International Development includes a range of measures such as releasing powerful data to enable planning for resilience, outlook for extreme weather risk, training of meteorologists in developing countries...
- Special importance is also given to ocean science.

Eugenia Kalnay, Professor of atmospheric and oceanic science in the University of Maryland, member of the SG's UN Scientific Advisory Board on Sustainability

- While dealing with climate change issues it is important to consider the issues of population and economic interests.

Maarten van Aalst, Director, Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre

- Local decision makers need better climate information.
- Innovative tools to raise public awareness and bridge the gap between science and policy exist and need to be scaled up.

Overall Summary

Science tells that the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, with unprecedented changes over decades to millennia, and that human influence is the dominant cause. The



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thematic session on climate science session offered an interactive and close examination of the science – policy interface emphasizing the need for urgent decisions underpinned by scientific findings. Climate change can make our sustainable development efforts ineffective, undermining poverty reduction, food security, safety and health and make adaptation more costly and difficult, if not impossible.

To act intelligently, we as individuals and decision makers in the public and private sector need access to sound science, information and climate services. Additional investments in science to further enhance knowledge and reduce uncertainty are certainly needed, but there is no need to wait for 100% certainty. The knowledge base for informed action is available to guide climate policies and decisions from the national to the local scale.

For Further Information

Wendy Watson-Wright

Executive Secretary

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

Assistant Director General a.o., Natural Sciences

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

w.watson-wright@unesco.org

Christian Blondin

Director

Cabinet and External Relations Department

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

cblondin@wmo.int

Angus Mackay

Manager, Climate Change

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

Angus.mackay@unitar.org

Marianne Chaumel

UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team

chaumel@un.org



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