



With breaking stories and  
newswire products from

# UN NEWS CENTRE



## UN-backed climate body says independent review will strengthen its work



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) gets climate change review from Harold Shapiro

30 August 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the head of the United Nations-backed panel tasked with preparing scientific reports on the impact of climate change today welcomed the findings of an independent review which called for major changes in management and procedures to enable the group to strengthen the quality of its assessments.

In March Mr. Ban and Rajendra Pachauri, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (**IPCC**), requested the review amid intense public debate about the science of climate change, as well as questions over the accuracy of the panel's reports.

"The report we are releasing today identifies and recommends fundamental reforms to IPCC's management structure," Robbert Dijkgraaf, co-chair of the InterAcademy Council (IAC) and head of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science, told a news conference at UN Headquarters in New York.

"The IPCC needs to strengthen its procedures to handle ever-larger and increasingly complex climate assessments as well as the more intense public scrutiny coming from a world grappling with how best to respond to climate change," he added.

In 2007, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning IPCC issued its landmark Fourth Assessment Report, which found the warming of the climate is outpacing natural variability, driven largely by human activity. The panel's credibility came into

question after revelations that the report contained some mistakes, including over the rate of Himalayan glacier melt.

The IAC, a scientific organization bringing together experts from around the world, makes a number of recommendations to strengthen the IPCC's management structure, including establishing an executive committee to act on the panel's behalf and ensure that an ongoing decision-making capability is maintained.

To enhance its credibility and independence, the executive committee should include individuals from outside the IPCC or even outside the climate science community. The IPCC should also appoint an executive director to lead the Secretariat, handle day-to-day operations, and speak on behalf of the panel, the IAC stated.

In addition, it recommended that the IPCC chair and the proposed executive director be limited to the term of one assessment, and that a rigorous conflict-of-interest policy be applied to senior IPCC leadership and all authors, review editors, and staff responsible for report content.

"We hope that today's report will help the IPCC move forward in a stronger, more transparent manner as it carries out future climate change assessments, which are so critical in helping the world understand and prepare for and respond to climate change," said Mr. Dijkgraaf.

Mr. Ban welcomed the review, and urged the 194 member governments of the IPCC to study it carefully and take appropriate action as soon as possible.

"Given the gravity of the climate challenge, the Secretary-General believes it is vital that the world receives the best possible climate assessments through an IPCC that operates at the highest levels of professionalism, objectivity, responsiveness and transparency," his spokesperson said in a [statement](#).

"The Secretary-General firmly maintains that the fundamental science on climate change remains sound. He continues to support the conclusions of the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, which have been repeatedly upheld and endorsed by numerous professional review boards across the globe," the statement added.

Mr. Pachauri called the recommendations "forward-looking" and said that IPCC members will carefully review them at the panel's plenary meeting, which will be held in October in Busan, Republic of Korea.

"We already have the highest confidence in the science behind our assessments. We're now pleased to receive recommendations on how to further strengthen our own policies and procedures."

The head of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), which along with the World Meteorological Organisation ([WMO](#)) co-hosts the IPCC, said today's report reaffirms the integrity, importance and validity of the panel's work while recognizing areas for improvement.

“These recommendations underscore that the IPCC remains the premier body for undertaking the risk assessment needed in such a complex field where knowledge – especially in respect to likely regional impacts – remains imperfect and where new knowledge is constantly being generated,” Executive Director Achim Steiner said in a statement.

He added that with the fundamental science underpinning the IPCC’s assessment reports not in doubt, and clear recommendations on how to move forward with regard to the panel’s administration, the international community must move beyond the current “paralysis” in developing an effective response to climate change.

The IPCC is currently preparing to start work on the Fifth Assessment Report, scheduled to be finalized in 2014.

**News Tracker: past stories on this issue**  
**Ban announces independent review of UN-backed climate body**