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Ban announces independent review of UN-backed climate body



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) with Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman, IPCC

10 March 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the head of the United Nations-backed panel tasked with preparing regular scientific reports on the impact of climate change today announced that the body, which is facing growing attacks from global warming sceptics, will undergo an independent and comprehensive review.

In 2007, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) issued its Fourth Assessment Report, which found the warming of the climate is outpacing natural variability, driven largely by human activity.

But its credibility has come into question after revelations that the landmark publication contained some mistakes, including over the rate of Himalayan glacier melt.

Although there were “a very small number of errors” in the 3,000-page Fourth Assessment Report, “I have seen no credible evidence that challenges the main conclusions” of the publication, Secretary-General Ki-moon [underscored](#) to reporters today.

“Let me be clear: the threat posed by climate change is real,” he said. “Nothing that has been alleged or revealed in the media recently alters the fundamental scientific

consensus on climate change. Nor does it diminish the unique importance of the IPCC's work."

In fact, Mr. Ban said, the science underpinning climate change continues to be strong, with evidence collected since 2007 showing that it is picking up pace. "The need for action is all the more urgent." To this end, he stressed the necessity of transparency, accuracy and objectivity, as well as the importance of curtailing the possibility of any errors in the future.

IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri, at same press encounter, acknowledged criticism of the Fourth Assessment Report, but he said that the publication's findings remain "robust" and that its "major conclusions of that report are really beyond any reasonable doubt."

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

The InterAcademy Council (IAC), a scientific organization bringing together experts from around the world, has been tasked with reviewing the IPCC's processes and procedures to strengthen the quality of its reports.

The review will be led by IAC co-chairs Robbert Dijkgraaf, who heads the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science, and Lu Yongxiang, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"It will be conducted completely independently of the United Nations," Mr. Ban emphasized today.

Mr. Dijkgraaf said today that the IAC seeks to "assure nations that they will receive sound, scientific advice" so that "governments and citizens alike can make informed decisions."

Scientists will be selected to serve on a voluntary and unpaid basis to prepare a draft report on their findings, which will then undergo an intensive peer review by other scientists. "Only when the IAC board is satisfied" will the final report be issued, he said.

Characterizing the task as "forward-looking," Mr. Dijkgraaf said that there are "no preconceived conclusions."

The IAC, he said, has been asked to look into issues such as data quality assurance and control; procedures for correcting errors; and analyzing the IPCC's communications strategies.

The UN will fund the endeavour, and it seeks to submit its final report to Mr. Ban and the IPCC. It will also be transmitted to the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) and the World Meteorological Organization ([WMO](#)), which set up the IPCC in 1988.

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