

UN hopes science review eases climate scepticism

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A review due on Monday (US time) can help restore public faith in the United Nations panel of climate scientists and its finding that global warming is man made despite errors in a 2007 report, the UN's environment chief said.

Achim Steiner also said extreme weather in 2010, such as floods in Pakistan or Russia's heatwave, were a "stark warning" of the need to act to slow global warming, as outlined by the UN panel.

He said he would be surprised if the review, spurred by mistakes in a 2007 report such as an exaggeration of the thaw of Himalayan glaciers, called for any radical overhaul of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The InterAcademy Council, comprising science academies around the world, is due to hand its review and recommendations for the future of the IPCC to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York.

Mr Steiner, head of the Nairobi-based UN Environment Program (UNEP), said the report follows others in 2010 that have backed the core findings by the IPCC that it is at least 90 per cent certain that mankind is driving global warming.

"Hopefully the release will be a moment where the public can reflect and say that all these reviews have not pointed to any fundamental flaw in the work," Mr Steiner said.

He said he had not seen the IAC report and would only get a copy 30 minutes before its release. He said those who were sceptical that global warming is man made had seized on a few mistakes to challenge the entire IPCC.

"There is a climate of doubt and uncertainty that has been created," Mr Steiner said. "This is not justified".

The IPCC shared the 2007 Nobel peace prize with US climate campaigner Al Gore.

Controversy

The controversy about the IPCC, following a UN summit in Copenhagen in December that fell short of agreeing a new global climate treaty, "has slowed down momentum", Mr Steiner said.

"It has created uncertainty in an area where that is not needed.



Review: IPCC is at least 90 per cent certain that mankind is driving global warming. (Reuters: Ilya Naymushin)

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"I suspect (the IAC) will make proposals for enhancing, strengthening, improving the process of working on climate reporting and the assessment.

"I'd be surprised, though I don't know, if there are fundamental changes" to the way the IPCC works, he said.

The recommendations will be debated by governments at a meeting in South Korea in October.

Possible reforms include making the IPCC quicker at coming up with reports, perhaps focusing more on regional effects. The IPCC now focuses on assessments of the global climate every six or seven years.

He said he doubted the IAC would discuss leaders of the IPCC, led by chairman Rajendra Pachauri.

"It was not the council's mandate to evaluate individuals," he said.

- Reuters

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