

Don't fight, adapt

We should give up futile attempts to combat climate change

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Sonny Tumbelaka/AFP/Getty Images UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the UN climate conference in Bali.

Open Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Dec. 13, 2007

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon

Secretary-General, United Nations

New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Re: UN climate conference taking the World in entirely the wrong direction

It is not possible to stop climate change, a natural phenomenon that has affected humanity through the ages. Geological, archaeological, oral and written histories all attest to the dramatic challenges posed to past societies from unanticipated changes in temperature, precipitation, winds and other climatic variables. We therefore need to equip nations to become resilient to the full range of these natural phenomena by promoting economic growth and wealth generation.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has issued increasingly alarming conclusions about the climatic influences of human-produced carbon dioxide (CO₂), a non-polluting gas that is essential to plant photosynthesis. While we understand the evidence that has led them to view CO₂ emissions as harmful, the IPCC's conclusions are quite inadequate as justification for implementing policies that will markedly diminish future prosperity. In particular, it is not established that it is possible to significantly alter global climate through cuts in human greenhouse gas emissions. On top of which, because attempts to cut emissions will slow development, the current UN approach of CO₂ reduction is likely to increase human suffering from future climate change rather than to decrease it.

The IPCC Summaries for Policy Makers are the most widely read IPCC reports amongst politicians and non-scientists and are the basis for most climate change policy formulation. Yet these Summaries are prepared by a relatively small core writing team with the final drafts approved line-by-line

by government representatives. The great majority of IPCC contributors and - reviewers, and the tens of thousands of other scientists who are qualified to comment on these matters, are not involved in the preparation of these documents. The summaries therefore cannot properly be represented as a consensus view among experts.

Contrary to the impression left by the IPCC Summary reports:

z Recent observations of phenomena such as glacial retreats, sea-level rise and the migration of temperature-sensitive species are not evidence for abnormal climate change, for none of these changes has been shown to lie outside the bounds of known natural variability.

z The average rate of warming of 0.1 to 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade recorded by satellites during the late 20th century falls within known natural rates of warming and cooling over the last 10,000 years.

z Leading scientists, including some senior IPCC representatives, acknowledge that today's computer models cannot predict climate. Consistent with this, and despite computer projections of temperature rises, there has been no net global warming since 1998. That the current temperature plateau follows a late 20th-century period of warming is consistent with the continuation today of natural multi-decadal or millennial climate cycling.

In stark contrast to the often repeated assertion that the science of climate change is "settled," significant new peer-reviewed research has cast even more doubt on the hypothesis of dangerous human-caused global warming. But because IPCC working groups were generally instructed (see http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/docs/wg1_timetable_2006-08-14.pdf) to consider work published only through May, 2005, these important findings are not included in their reports; i.e., the IPCC assessment reports are already materially outdated.

The UN climate conference in Bali has been planned to take the world along a path of severe CO₂ restrictions, ignoring the lessons apparent from the failure of the Kyoto Protocol, the chaotic nature of the European CO₂ trading market, and the ineffectiveness of other costly initiatives to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Balanced cost/benefit analyses provide no support for the introduction of global measures to cap and reduce energy consumption for the purpose of restricting CO₂ emissions. Furthermore, it is irrational to apply the "precautionary principle" because many scientists recognize that both climatic coolings and warmings are realistic possibilities over the medium-term future.

The current UN focus on "fighting climate change," as illustrated in the Nov. 27 UN Development Programme's Human Development Report, is distracting governments from adapting to the threat of inevitable natural climate changes, whatever forms they may take. National and international planning for such changes is needed, with a focus on helping our most vulnerable citizens adapt to conditions that lie ahead. Attempts to prevent global climate change from occurring are ultimately futile, and constitute a tragic misallocation of resources that would be better spent on humanity's real and pressing problems.

Yours faithfully,

[\[List of signatories\]](#)

Copy to: Heads of state of countries of the signatory persons.

Signatories of an open letter on the UN climate conference

Published: Tuesday, December 18, 2007

- following are signatories to the Dec. 13th letter to the Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations on the UN Climate conference in Bali:

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