



PRESS RELEASE

Ocean acidification must be on the Copenhagen agenda, world's scientists warn

Ocean acidification, one of the world's most important climate change challenges, may be left off the agenda at the United Nations Copenhagen conference, the world's science academies warned today (Monday 1 June 2009). Ocean acidification is expected to cause massive corrosion of our coral reefs and dramatic changes in the makeup of the biodiversity of our oceans and to have significant implications for food production and the livelihoods of millions of people.

The warning is made in a joint statement published by the InterAcademy Panel on International Issues (IAP). 70 national science academies signed the statement.

IAP Co-Chairs, Chen Zhu - Minister of Health, P.R. of China - and Howard Alper - Chair and President, Science, Technology and Innovation Council, Canada - said: "There has been much talk among the science community over the past few years about ocean acidification and its potentially catastrophic consequences, but it has failed to receive the political attention it demands. Its absence from discussions to-date is of immense concern, and we call for its immediate inclusion as a vital part of the climate change agenda."

The statement calls for world leaders to explicitly recognise the direct threats posed by increasing atmospheric CO₂ emissions to the oceans and its profound impact on the environment and society. It emphasises that ocean acidification is irreversible and, on current emission trajectories, suggests that all coral reefs and polar ecosystems will be severely affected by 2050 or even earlier.

Zhu and Alper added "The implications of ocean acidification cannot be overstated. Unless we cut our global CO₂ emissions by at least 50% by 2050 and thereafter, we could be looking at fundamental and immutable changes in the makeup of our marine biodiversity. The effects will be seen worldwide, threatening food security, reducing coastal protection and damaging the local economies that may be least able to tolerate it."

The statement has been issued during the UNFCCC conference in Bonn this week that will ultimately shape the Copenhagen negotiations, where agreement must be reached on carbon emission reduction targets needed to avoid dangerous climate change.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

IAP is a global network of the world's science academies, launched in 1993. Its primary goal is to help member academies work together to advise citizens and public officials on the scientific aspects of critical global issues. IAP is particularly interested in assisting young and small academies achieve these goals and, through the communication links and networks created by IAP activities, all academies will be able to raise both their public profile among citizens and their influence among policy makers

Website: www.interacademies.net

For further information and a complete copy of the statement, please contact:

iap@twas.org

tel: +39-040-2240 680/681

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Signatories of the IAP Statement

- TWAS, the academy of sciences for the developing world
- Albanian Academy of Sciences
- National Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences, Argentina
- Australian Academy of Science
- Bangladesh Academy of Sciences
- The Royal Academies for Science and the Arts of Belgium
- Brazilian Academy of Sciences
- Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- Cameroon Academy of Sciences
- RSC: The Academies of Arts, Humanities and Sciences of Canada
- Academia Chilena de Ciencias
- Chinese Academy of Sciences
- Colombian Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences
- Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Cuban Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
- Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters
- Academia de Ciencias de la República Dominicana
- Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt
- The Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters
- Académie des Sciences, France
- Georgian Academy of Sciences
- Union der Deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften
- Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina
- The Academy of Athens
- Academia de Ciencias Medicas, Fisicas y Naturales de Guatemala
- Indian National Science Academy
- Indonesian Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Sciences of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Royal Irish Academy
- Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
- Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei
- Science Council of Japan
- Royal Scientific Society of Jordan
- Islamic World Academy of Sciences
- African Academy of Sciences
- Kenya National Academy of Sciences
- The Korean Academy of Science and Technology
- Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts
- National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Akademi Sains Malaysia
- Mauritius Academy of Science and Technology
- Academia Mexicana de Ciencias
- Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts
- The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Academy of the Royal Society of New Zealand
- Nigerian Academy of Sciences
- Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters
- Pakistan Academy of Sciences
- Palestine Academy for Science and Technology
- Academia Nacional de Ciencias del Peru
- Academia das Ciencias de Lisboa
- Académie des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal
- Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Slovak Academy of Sciences
- Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Academy of Science of South Africa
- Royal Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences of Spain
- National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka
- Sudanese National Academy of Science
- Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
- Academia Sinica, Taiwan, China
- Tanzania Academy of Sciences
- The Caribbean Academy of Sciences
- Turkish Academy of Sciences
- The Uganda National Academy of Sciences
- The Royal Society, UK
- US National Academy of Sciences
- Academia de Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales de Venezuela
- Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences

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