

Our ref.: 7012-10/IPCC/AR5

To Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors and Review Editors for the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)

Geneva, 15 July 2010

Dear Colleague,

I am writing you to apologize for any misunderstanding that ensued from my letter of 5 July 2010 (ref: 7004-10/IPCC/AR5) and from a guide that some of you received about how to interact with the media. These documents sent contradicting messages on a vitally important subject—how we communicate to the public.

In my letter, I cautioned you to “keep a distance from the media” if asked about your work for the IPCC. This was a poor choice of words on my part and not reflective of IPCC policy. My only intent was to advise new authors not to speak “on behalf of the IPCC” because we are an inter-governmental body consisting of 194 states.

I want to reassure everyone the IPCC is a transparent organization. At a time when the work of climate scientists is undergoing intense scrutiny, it is essential that we promote clear and open communication with the media and the public.

While the media have at times been critical of the IPCC, I have a profound respect for their responsibility to inform the public about our activities. A free flow of information is a fundamental component of our commitment to transparency.

Last weekend, a guide entitled “Background & Tips for Responding to the Media” was circulated to several hundred Working Group II authors. This document was produced to help scientists communicate effectively with journalists. However, I was unaware of its distribution.

For those who received my letter and the media guide, it is understandable that you may be confused. So, please allow me this opportunity to provide a clear advice about your interactions with journalists.

- First of all, the IPCC does not seek in any way to discourage you from engaging in discussions with the media about your own work. To the contrary, we see such interaction as an important way of making your research more accessible to the public.
- Second, all of us at the IPCC are immensely proud of our author team and have no interest in micro-managing your interactions with the media. I only remind you that the AR5 process is in its beginning stages and our final report is several years away. No one, including me, can speak to the likely findings of the AR5.

- Lastly, we ask that you forward all media inquiries about official IPCC policies to the Working Group co-chairs or the IPCC Secretariat. This protocol is not an attempt to muzzle anyone. It is a standard procedure for large inter-governmental organizations and is intended to draw a distinction between the official work of the IPCC and your own work or that of your institution.

We welcome your input on this issue. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or the IPCC Secretariat at ipcc-sec@wmo.int

I have always believed that the IPCC's role goes beyond preparation of assessment reports and must increasingly expand into outreach efforts. As you know, the IPCC and the UN jointly requested the InterAcademy Council to review IPCC policies and procedures, including how we communicate to the public. The IAC review is due in late August and its findings will be fully considered at the IPCC's 32nd Plenary Session in October.

Let me close by thanking each of you for your contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report. The importance of your work and the level of your dedication cannot be overstated. The AR5 authors are our greatest asset and we are keen to build on your expertise and enthusiasm to conduct an outstanding assessment.

Yours sincerely,



(Rajendra K. Pachauri)
Chairman of the IPCC