

Scripps Chemistry Professor Named as Member of IPCC Review Committee

Nobel Prize-winning UC San Diego researcher Mario Molina to examine how climate panel prepares reports

May 13, 2010

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The InterAcademy Council (IAC), an organization of the world's science academies, has named Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego chemistry professor and Nobel Prize-winner Mario Molina to a 12-member committee that will conduct an independent review of the procedures and processes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The review was requested last month by the United Nations and the committee convenes its first meeting May 14 and 15 in Amsterdam. Molina is the only member of the committee to have served as an author of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, which was released in 2007.

The committee will review IPCC procedures for preparing its assessment reports. Among the issues to be reviewed are data quality assurance and control; the type of literature that may be cited in IPCC reports; expert and government review of IPCC materials; handling of the full range of scientific views; and the correction of errors that are identified after a report has been completed. The committee also will review overall IPCC processes, including management functions and communication strategies.

The IAC plans to deliver a peer-reviewed report with the committee's findings and recommendations to the U.N. by Aug. 30.

Molina, who is also creator of a center in Mexico City for strategic studies of energy and the environment, said the reviewers will consider the performance of the IPCC in light of recent criticisms about its inclusion of non-peer reviewed information in the 2007 report.

"I hope that out of the review comes some recommendations so that the IPCC functions even better than it has before," said Molina. "The committee will try to be very objective in assessing whether the IPCC functions properly and to see if there is any basis to dispute its main findings."

Harold Shapiro, an economist and former president of Princeton University and the University of Michigan, will chair the committee.

"We approach this review with an open mind," Shapiro said. "I'm confident we have the experts on this committee necessary to supply the U.N. with a stronger process for providing policymakers the best assessment of climate change possible."

The IAC committee, whose members were nominated by science and engineering academies around the world, includes experts representing several countries and disciplines.

Shapiro has chaired many U.S. National Academy of Sciences committees and served in a variety of other roles in efforts focused on the relationship between science and society, including as vice chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and as chair of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission.

Roseanne Diab, executive officer of the Academy of Science of South Africa, as well as professor emeritus of environmental sciences and honorary senior research associate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, will serve as vice chair of the IAC committee.

Shapiro and Diab will be joined on the committee by Carlos Henrique de Brito Cruz, scientific director of the Foundation for the Support of Research in the State of São Paulo, Brazil and professor at the Gleb Wataghin Physics Institute at the University of Campinas; Maureen Cropper, professor of economics at the University of Maryland, senior fellow at Resources for the Future in Washington, D.C., and former lead economist at the World Bank; Jingyun Fang, Cheung Kong Professor and chair, department of ecology, Peking University; Louise Fresco, University Professor, University of Amsterdam, and former assistant director-general at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization; Syukuro Manabe, from Tokyo University and currently a senior meteorologist, Princeton University; Goverdhan Mehta, National Research Professor and Bhatnagar Fellow, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; Peter Williams, honorary treasurer and vice president, The Royal Society, London, chancellor of the University of Leicester, and chairman of the National Physical Laboratory; Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker, secretary general, Human Frontier Science Program, Germany; and Abdul Hamid Zakri, senior adviser to the prime minister of Malaysia, and Tuanku Chancellor Chair, Universiti Sains Malaysia. (Full biographies of the committee members are available at www.interacademycouncil.net/ipccreview)

"I am pleased that such a distinguished group of experts from all over the world volunteered to serve on this review committee," said IAC co-chair Robbert Dijkgraaf, president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. "The InterAcademy Council was established to carry out this type of independent review, and I expect our report will prove valuable to the U.N. as well as to the scientific community."

"The IAC review will help ensure that future IPCC products have as strong a scientific basis as possible, giving governments and the public confidence in the findings and projections," added IAC co-chair Lu Yongxiang, president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The full statement of the review panel's task is available at www.interacademycouncil.net/ipccreview.

Founded in 2000, the IAC was created to mobilize top scientists and engineers around the world to provide evidence-based advice to international bodies such as the United Nations and World Bank -- including preparing expert, peer-reviewed studies upon request. The IAC Board is composed of the presidents of 15 academies of science and equivalent organizations -- representing Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus the African Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) -- and representatives of the InterAcademy Panel (IAP) of scientific academies, the International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS) and the InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP) of medical academies. The IAC Secretariat is hosted by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in Amsterdam. The IAC Board has final approval authority over conducting and publishing IAC studies.

Note to broadcast and cable producers: UC San Diego provides an on-campus satellite uplink facility for live or pre-recorded television interviews. Please phone or e-mail the media contact listed above to arrange an interview.

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