

Scripps Researchers Signatories to G-8-related Open Letter on Climate Change

Climate scientists Richard Somerville, Mario Molina among those calling for major reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, transition to clean energy

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Scripps Institution of Oceanography/ University of California, San Diego

Two climate researchers from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, are among 25 leading scientists urging world leaders to acknowledge the threat of global warming and recognize an opportunity to transition to cleaner forms of energy.

Image credit: Beck Energy

In an open letter released by the European Climate Foundation, a philanthropic organization based at The Hague, Netherlands, the scientists addressed representatives of the world's 17 largest economies, including members of the G-8 countries, convening today in L'Aquila, Italy, for the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate. The scientists asked leaders to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050 and asked developing nations to commit to making major gains in energy efficiency before United Nations climate change talks take place in Copenhagen in December.

Richard Somerville

In the statement, the scientists also asked developed countries to "commit to peak global greenhouse gas emissions by no later than 2020 and reduce them by at least 50 percent relative to 1990 levels by 2050."

"We still have a small window of time for action, but that window will close soon," said Somerville, a distinguished professor emeritus at Scripps. "It's like giving up smoking. The time to do it is now. Don't wait until you've been diagnosed with lung cancer. Giving up smoking then won't save your life."

In addition to Somerville, Mario Molina, a Nobel Prize-winning climate scientist at UCSD, joined colleagues from the United States, Australia, India, Japan and several European countries in signing the open letter.

Mario Molina

G-8 leaders announced on July 8 that they had set a goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half and to not allow average global temperatures to exceed those of preindustrial times by more than 2° C (1.6° F).

"We are trying to convey the urgency of this issue," Somerville said. "The science is clear. It tells us that reducing greenhouse gas emissions has to happen very soon, and the reductions must be large and must be global. Procrastinating further just increases the odds that climate change will be unacceptably severe. Now is the time for decisive action by world leaders."

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