



ETC Group  
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## Civil Society Organizations to IPCC: Take Geoengineering off the Table!

Today, 125 international and national organizations, representing at least 40 countries from all continents, sent an open letter to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), demanding a clear statement of its commitment to precaution and to the existing international moratorium on geoengineering. The IPCC will hold an expert meeting on geoengineering 20-22 June in Lima, Peru. ([The letter is available and open for signatures here.](#))

Geoengineering is the deliberate manipulation of Earth systems to alter the climate, including high-risk technologies such as blasting particles into the stratosphere to mimic volcanic eruptions (to block sunlight) and “fertilizing” oceans to grow plankton blooms for carbon sequestration. Formerly in the realm of science fiction, geoengineering has been gaining ground as a possible – even necessary, some argue – response to the climate crisis.

Climate manipulation has been on the radar of powerful Northern governments for decades. Originally conceived as a military strategy, climate manipulation has been rebranded as geoengineering: a weapon in the war on climate change.

The U.S. and UK governments appear especially open to the prospect of geoengineering, which is no surprise, according to Silvia Ribeiro of the ETC Group: “It’s a convenient way for Northern governments to dodge their commitments to emissions reduction.” Ribeiro continues, “But the climate is a complex system; manipulating climate in one place could have grave environmental, social and economic impacts on countries and peoples that had no say on the issue. Scientists estimate that blasting particles into the stratosphere could alter monsoon and wind patterns and put at risk the food and water sources for 2 billion people.”

“As the world watched the Australian airline industry thrown into chaos this week by volcanic ash drifting from Chile, it’s absurd that the IPCC is considering how to do the same thing on purpose. The potential for unilateralism and private profiteering is great; the likelihood that geoengineering will provide a safe, lasting, democratic and peaceful solution to the climate crisis is miniscule,” said Ricardo Navarro, of Cesta and Friends of the Earth International, detained in Buenos Aires due to the volcanic ash.

In October 2010, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity established a moratorium on geoengineering. Nonetheless, Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC [told](#)

[The Guardian last week](#), “We are putting ourselves in a scenario where we will have to develop more powerful technologies to capture emissions out of the atmosphere,” referring to geoengineering techniques. [Also in The Guardian, John Vidal writes today, quoting the organizations' letter](#): Leaked documents ahead of key Lima meeting suggest UN body is looking to slow emissions with technological fixes rather than talks.

Meenakshi Raman from Third World Network - Malaysia, another signatory of the letter to the IPCC, argues, “It is completely misguided for Ms. Figueres to suggest that we work on sucking carbon out of the atmosphere rather than stop putting it in; it is equally misguided for the IPCC to assume that geoengineering has any place at all in what they call the ‘[portfolio of response options](#)’ to climate change.”

The open letter criticizes the IPCC for renegeing on its pledge to be “policy-neutral.” The Scientific Steering Committee (SSG) that organized the expert meeting includes geoengineering researchers who have advocated increases in research funding and real-world experimentation, as well as scientists with patents pending on geoengineering technologies and/or other financial interests. The SSG did not allow committed civil society organizations to participate, even as observers. Still, the IPCC says it will take up the issue of “governance” and “social, legal and political factors.”

Raman stresses that the IPCC has no place taking up the issue of geoengineering governance because “this is not a scientific question; it’s a political one.”

La Via Campesina, the world’s largest small-scale farmers network, is concerned that the impacts of climate manipulation on agriculture would be felt particularly by peasants in the South and that tinkering with the oceans could destroy the livelihoods of thousands of small fishermen. Via Campesina argues, “Geoengineering is a false solution to climate change and so dangerous to nature and to the world’s people, it should be banned.”

Alejandro Argumedo from the indigenous organization ANDES (Peru) agrees. Argumedo is one of the organizers of activities for civil society organizations, which will take place in Lima at the same time as the IPCC’s expert meeting: “The IPCC shut out civil society from their meeting, even though the Panel’s experts plan to discuss the 'social factors' of geoengineering. 125 international and national organizations from around the world just gave them something to talk about.”

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**Hands Off Mother Earth / HOME** campaign in opposition to geoengineering  
[www.handsoffmotherearth.org](http://www.handsoffmotherearth.org)

**ETC Group, *Geopiracy: The Case Against Geoengineering*:**  
<http://www.etcgroup.org/en/node/5217>