

'Whitewash' could slow global warming: Peruvian scientist

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This undated file picture shows part of the Pastoruri snowcapped mountain in the central Peruvian Andes. A Peruvian scientist has called on his country to help slow the melting of Andean glaciers by daubing white paint on the rock and earth left behind by receding ice so they will absorb less heat.

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Eduardo Gold, president of non-governmental organization [Glaciers](#) of Peru, made the suggestion in a presentation Tuesday to the country's parliamentary commission on climate change.

His idea has already attracted interest from the World Bank, and is among a series of projects to counter climate change that the

organization is considering, Gold told AFP.

"Little by little the glaciers are turning brown. The brown areas and rocks absorb more heat, speeding up the process of glacial melting. Our suggestion is to recreate the original white color and the conditions needed for recovery," Gold recently told official news agency Andina.

The phenomenon is known as "positive feedback": the more the glaciers disappear, the more earth there is to absorb radiant heat and reinforce [global warming](#).

Gold says the paint that would be used is environmentally friendly and made from a base of lime, without chemical components.

It could be made by local residents and could create some 15,000 jobs over five years, he added.

The idea of using white paint to combat climate change is not new. It has been proposed by US Energy Secretary and Nobel Physics Prize winner Steven Chu, as a way to use "geo-engineering" to lessen global warming.

While the idea has already been implemented in some places, including in New York, where some roofs have been painted white, Gold is the first person to propose applying the idea to something on the scale of glaciers.

The glaciers of the tropical Andes are particularly vulnerable to [climate change](#) and have lost at least 30 percent of their surface over 30 years, according to some scientists. Others put the figure much higher.

Gold was invited to address Peruvian lawmakers after he was chosen as a finalist in a contest financed by the World Bank. The winner of the competition will be announced before the end of 2009.

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