

UN weather meeting agrees to refine climate data

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Associated Press Writer



Indonesia President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, right, talks to director of the U.N. Environment Program Achim Stiener, left, during an opening ceremony of the 11th special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia on Wednesday, Feb 24. 2010. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

(AP) -- World weather agencies have agreed to collect more precise temperature data to improve climate change science, officials said Wednesday, as U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged environment ministers to reject efforts by skeptics to derail a global climate deal.

Britain's Met Office proposed that climate scientists around the world undertake the "grand challenge" of measuring land surface temperatures as often as several times a day, and allow independent scrutiny of the

data - a move that would go some way toward answering demands by skeptics for access to the raw figures used to predict climate change.

"This effort will ensure that the datasets are completely robust and that all methods are transparent," the Met Office said. The agency added that "any such analysis does not undermine the existing independent datasets that all reflect a warming trend."

The proposal was approved in principle by some 150 delegates meeting under the auspices of the [World Meteorological Organization](#) this week in Antalya, Turkey. It comes after e-mails stolen from a British university and several mistakes made in a 2007 report issued by the U.N.-affiliated Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change prompted public debate over the reliability of climate change predictions.

Skeptics claim scientists have secretly manipulated [climate data](#) and suppressed contrary views - allegations that have been denied by researchers and the climate change panel.

Nevertheless, the Met Office said current measurements were "fundamentally ill-conditioned to answer 21st century questions such as how extremes are changing and therefore what adaptation and mitigation decisions should be taken."

Ban Ki-moon urged environment ministers meeting in Bali, Indonesia, on Wednesday to reject attempts by skeptics to undermine efforts to forge a climate change deal, saying global warming poses "a clear and present danger."

In a message read by a U.N. official, Ban referred to the controversy over the 2007 climate panel report that drew widespread criticism and calls for the panel's chairman, Rajendra Pachauri, to resign.

The report's conclusion that Himalayan glaciers would melt by 2035 turned out to be incorrect, an error that bolstered arguments from climate skeptics that fears of global warming are overblown.

A U.N. conference in Copenhagen in December failed to achieve a binding deal on curbing greenhouse gas emissions. But Ban said it was important that the conference set a target of keeping keep global temperatures from rising, and established a program of climate aid to poorer nations.

"To maintain the momentum, I urge you to reject last-ditch attempts by climate skeptics to derail your negotiations by exaggerating shortcomings in the ... report," Ban said at the start of an annual U.N. meeting of environmental officials from 130 countries on the Indonesian resort island of Bali.

"Tell the world that you unanimously agree that climate change is a clear and present danger," Ban said.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said his country will hold an informal meeting of all environmental ministers and officials in Bali on Friday to discuss how to reach a binding treaty in Cancun later this year on greenhouse gas reductions.

A U.N. study issued Tuesday said countries will have to significantly increase their pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the catastrophic effects of [climate change](#).

Sixty nations - including China, the United States and the 27-member European Union - met a Jan. 31 deadline to submit pledges to the U.N. for reducing greenhouse gases as part of a voluntary plan to roll back emissions. Together the countries produce 78 percent of the world's greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels.

Countries set a target in Copenhagen of keeping the Earth's average temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above the levels that existed before nations began industrializing in the late 18th century.

Scientists believe global emissions must be cut in half by mid-century to avoid the melting of glaciers and ice caps, the flooding of low-lying coastal cities and islands, and worsening droughts in Africa and elsewhere.

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