

Nobel laureate: Face up to climate change, no escaping Earth (Update)

December 7 2019, by Jim Heintz and David Keyton



Nobel Physics Laureate Didier Queloz speaks during a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019. (Jonas Ekstromer /TT News Agency via AP)

An astronomer who shares this year's Nobel physics prize for discovering a planet outside the Earth's solar system is taking issue with people who shrug off climate change on the grounds that humans will eventually leave for distant planets.

Didier Queloz was one of several Nobel laureates who spoke about climate change at a news conference Saturday in Stockholm.

"I think this is just irresponsible, because the stars are so far away I think we should not have any serious hope to escape the Earth," Queloz said.

"Also keep in mind that we are a species that has evolved and developed for this planet. We're not built to survive on any other planet than this one," he said. "We'd better spend our time and energy trying to fix it."

Several other Nobel winners also urged that climate change be taken seriously. The remarks came as a two-week global summit on climate change is taking place in Madrid.

Esther Duflo, one of the Nobel economics laureates, cautioned that dealing with climate change "will require a change in behavior, particularly in the rich countries" that are heavy consumers of goods and energy.

She disagreed with those who believe there is no need to consume less as long as that consumption is fueled by renewable energy.

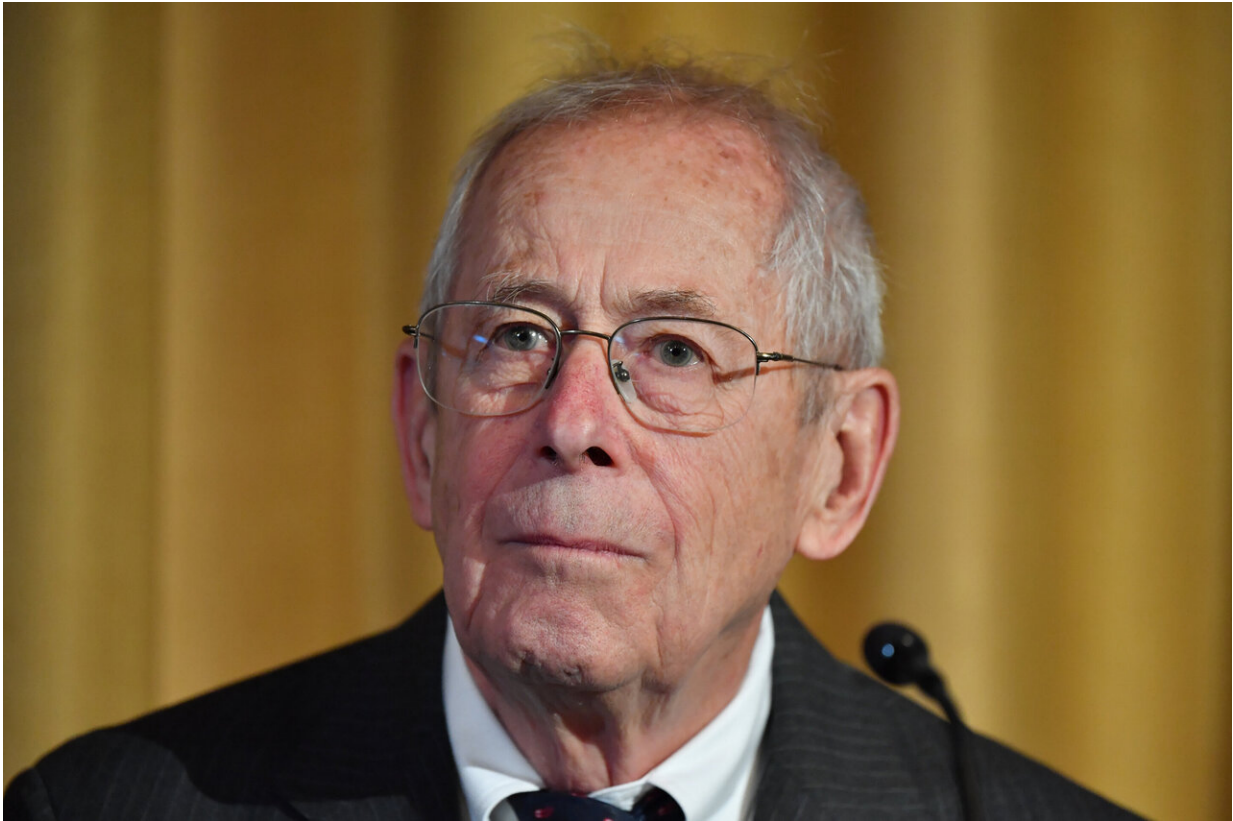
"It would be great if that were the case but I don't think we can count on it necessarily," Duflo said.



Chemistry Laureate Stanley Whittingham attends a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019. (Jonas Ekstromer /TT News Agency via AP)

M. Stanley Whittingham, who shared this year's Nobel chemistry award for helping to develop lithium-ion batteries, said "to help solve the climate issue, the time is right now, but we have to be pragmatic. ... We can't just turn off all the CO₂."

Canadian-American James Peebles, who won half of this year's 9-million-kronor (\$948,000) Nobel physics prize for studying what happened soon after the Big Bang, later told The Associated Press that he is excited about the current wave of youthful climate change protesters.



Nobel Physics Laureate James Peebles attends a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019. (Jonas Ekstromer /TT News Agency via AP)

"I see these people in Princeton, my hometown, as they go marching for control of climate. It is a wonderful thing. I love their enthusiasm, their energy, their devotion to something very worthwhile," he said.

Whittingham also told the AP that he believed the climate protests would produce results.



From left, Nobel Laureates in Economic Sciences Michael Kremer, Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee attend a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019. (Jonas Ekstromer /TT News Agency via AP)

"Maybe some of the young folks don't realize how long it takes. But I go back to the Vietnam War era and the United States, where it was really the young people that pushed the politicians to get out and stop that nonsense," he said.

The Nobel prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, economic and literature are being presented Tuesday in the Swedish capital.

© 2019 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Nobel laureate: Face up to climate change, no escaping Earth (Update) (2019, December 7) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-12-nobel-science-laureates-stress-urgency.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.