



CLIMATE CHANGE

Pachauri Defeats Watson in New Chapter for Global Panel

In a pitched battle that one scientist called a political “coming of age” for the field, Indian engineer and economist Rajendra Pachauri last week became the chair of the Geneva-based Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). His election has sparked speculation about the fate of a 14-year-old organization that has relied on consensus to deliver three influential reports on the likely causes and impact of global warming.

Pachauri defeated Robert Watson, chief scientist of the World Bank and a former

delegates rejected a proposal that would have split the chair between a developed- and a developing-country representative.

The intense politicking in Geneva was a radical departure for the panel, which in the past has chosen its leaders by acclamation. Some researchers fear that the controversy could discourage the best physical scientists from participating in the next round of climate assessments, due out in 2007, and weaken IPCC’s reputation for credibility and consensus. They also worry that such contentious

behavior will extend to matters of science. “This is a new precedent,” says James McCarthy, a Harvard University oceanographer who has co-chaired an IPCC working group. “In the past we always managed to avoid a vote” for chair.

But other IPCC officials say that the election marks a natural transition for an organization with 192 members and one that must focus more on the social and economic effects of global warming than on the scientific causes. “This is the organization’s coming of age,” says Ogunlade

Davidson, a mechanical engineer at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, who attended the Geneva meeting. “When it was smaller, it was easier to get consensus, but that has to change.”

Pachauri, head of New Delhi’s private nonprofit Tata Energy Research Institute, served as a vice chair under Watson. He is the third IPCC chair—Sweden’s Bert Bolin was the founding chair—and the first who is not a physical scientist. He sees the vote as a mandate for his plan to emphasize the socioeconomic effects of climate change on specific regions of the world. “This election,” he asserts, “will not cast a shadow on the scientific objectivity of this august body.”

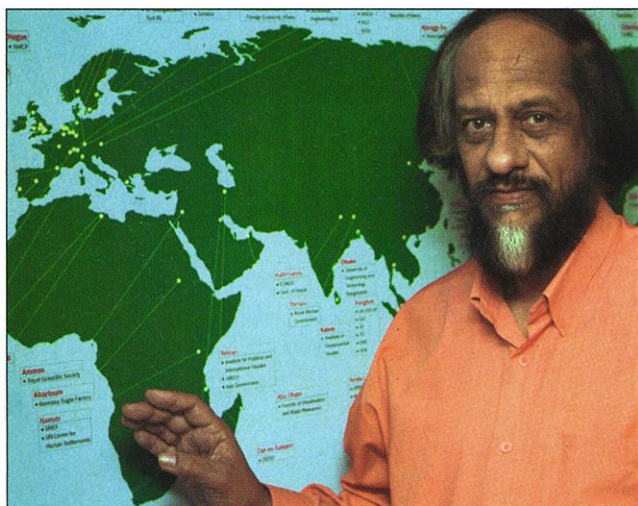
However, Goldemberg fears that the hotly contested election may have damaged the panel. “I’m worried that all of this has changed its character,” says Goldemberg, a physicist who is widely known in international scientific circles. Watson and Bolin “were able to attract the best scientists,” he says, adding that he has “great doubts” that someone from outside the climate sciences would be able to do the same.

The U.S. delegation was unusually “subdued” in Geneva, says Pachauri, although some researchers say it was actively trying to unseat Watson. “He’s the bearer of news they don’t want to hear,” says William Moomaw, a chemist and environmental policy professor at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. Watson agrees that the Bush Administration wanted to oust him, but he questions whether their position was also an attack on the panel’s credibility. “Some elements of the energy industry want to weaken the IPCC,” he says. “But I don’t think the U.S. government wants to.”

Europeans, many of whom backed Watson, say they are ready to move on. “We are willing to close ranks and get back to business,” says Bert Metz of the Netherlands’ National Institute of Public Health and the Environment, who was in Geneva. Watson agrees: “The challenge is to get this discussion behind us.” Watson says he is eager to continue working with the panel, but only if he has a “clearly defined role.” Although Pachauri offered conciliatory words to Watson in Geneva, he did not spell out such a role for his predecessor.

—ANDREW LAWLER

With reporting by Pallava Bagla in New Delhi.



Global reach. India’s Rajendra Pachauri is the new chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Clinton Administration environmental official, who was seeking a second 5-year term. The vote, by secret ballot, was 76 to 49. Pachauri enjoyed the support of the U.S. government (*Science*, 12 April, p. 232), which was looking for an alternative to Watson, as well as that of most Asian and African countries, which were pleased to see someone from the developing world put up for the post. Watson was backed by many European and Pacific island states, which saw Watson as a staunch advocate of independent science and the need to take climate change seriously. José Goldemberg, a former Brazilian environment minister, emerged as a last-minute candidate but secured only seven votes. The

HIGH-ENERGY PHYSICS

Neutrino Census Nails Chameleon Particles

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO—The publicity particles known as neutrinos are back in the spotlight. At a meeting here this weekend,* physicists from the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory (SNO) in Ontario, Canada, released much-anticipated measurements of the flow of neutrinos from the sun and other sources. The results put the final nail in the coffin of the decades-old solar neutrino paradox and eliminate a once-favored assumption

* Joint meeting of the American Physical Society and the High Energy Physics Division of the American Astronomical Society, 20–23 April.