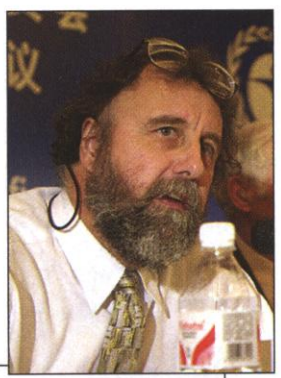
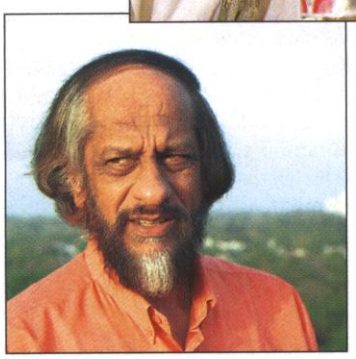
Politics and the IPCC

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON Climate Change (IPCC) met for its 19th plenary session from 17 to 20 April in Geneva to conclude its work on the Third Assessment Report (TAR) and to set the stage for a fourth assessment to be completed by 2007. As past chair of the IPCC (1988–97), I was invited to the meeting, and I wish to give my views on what happened in Geneva.

The work on the TAR has been very successful under the chairship of Robert Watson of the United States. Without exception, delegates praised Watson for his leadership, unsparing devotion, and ability to engage leading scientists in both developed and developing countries. The participation by developing countries in the assessment work has increased significantly during Watson's tenure. The TAR describes present knowledge, but avoids dictating what needs to be done, as this is obviously a political issue. It acknowledges that there are still uncertainties about what the future may bring, but emphasizes the seriousness of the situation. Until the fourth assessment is available, the TAR will be a valuable document as countries try to reach agreements on appropriate measures to be taken within the aegis of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.





(Top) Robert Watson. (Bottom) Rajendra Pachauri.

It is thus surprising that the United States did not nominate Watson for reelection as chair, but rather supported the nomination by India of Rajendra Pachauri. Many scientists were taken aback, and Portugal, after consulting many European countries as well as New Zealand, protested by proposing Watson for reelection. Furthermore, the United Kingdom suggested the possibility of electing two cochairs, one from a developed and one from a developing country.

This was the situation when the session opened in Geneva. India, of course, welcomed the U.S. support of Pachauri, and some key oil- and gas-producing countries supported him as well. Brazil nominated a third candidate, Jose Goldenberg, a well-known energy expert and former minister for research and education, as well as for the environment, in Brazil.

There was insufficient consensus to alter a previous decision of the IPCC dictating that it should have a single chair in charge of its activities. A large majority of Asian and African countries backed the Indian nomination, partly as an expression of their desire to see a representative of a developing country lead the IPCC. In the final vote, Pachauri received 76 votes, Watson 49, and Goldenberg 7, making Pachauri the new chair of the IPCC.

It is now essential that any political controversy be eased so that we can have a truly scientific and unbiased fourth assessment. Close cooperation between developing and developed countries is also a necessity. These are the prime challenges for the new chair.

Pachauri is a world-renowned expert in the field of energy research and has shown great leadership in creating and building the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) in New Dehli. The most important task will be to retain the apolitical form of working that has characterized past activities and to get back to the scientific, technical, and socioeconomic analyses that must be the foundations for the next IPCC assessment. Participation by scientists and experts in developed countries, where much of the relevant basic research and technical development is carried out, must be secured. The cochairs of the three IPCC Working Groups and the Task Force for Greenhouse Gas Inventories will have a crucial role to play in this context.

In his concluding speech, Watson offered his services to the panel and expressed his sincere wish that a way for him to do so could be found. Pachauri expressed his willingness to find ways to achieve this. In my view, this is of the utmost importance for the IPCC not to lose Watson's experience and knowledge.

Let me emphasize again the need for a genuine spirit of cooperation between developed and developing countries to combat global climate change; I know that many scientific colleagues of mine from the developed world are anxious to do so. The required reductions of future global emissions of greenhouse gases will only be possible if the lead is taken by developed countries, as is clearly expressed in the Convention on Climate Change. This implies necessarily that the present very large differences in per capita emissions of carbon dioxide between countries must be reduced to secure sustainable development in developing countries [see figure 1 of (*1*)] and simultaneously to strive for reduction of global emissions. The key issue is how this can best be achieved. Better understanding of all facets of the climate change issue is required. The task for the IPCC is to provide this knowledge.

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Reference

1. B. Bolin, H. Kheshgi, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* **98**, 4850 (2001).

Biological Weapons, War Crimes, and WWI

AMBASSADOR THOMAS GRAHAM JR., IN HIS editorial "Biological weapons and international law" (29 March, p. 2325), proposes that Saddam Hussein could be charged with a war crime for the possession of biological weapons. What he does not add is that if this is the only war crime he is charged with in the trial, Hussein has a good chance of going free based on the criminal law principle of *nulla poena sine lege*.

Graham focuses predominately on the Geneva Convention and state practice to conclude that the possession of biological weapons constitutes a war crime. In reality, the Geneva Convention does not forbid the possession of biological weapons, nor is there