

Mainau Declaration 2015 on Climate Change

We undersigned scientists, who have been awarded Nobel Prizes, have come to the shores of Lake Constance in southern Germany, to share insights with promising young researchers, who like us come from around the world. Nearly 60 years ago, here on Mainau, a similar gathering of Nobel Laureates in science issued a declaration of the dangers inherent in the newly found technology of nuclear weapons—a technology derived from advances in basic science. So far we have avoided nuclear war though the threat remains. We believe that our world today faces another threat of comparable magnitude.

Successive generations of scientists have helped create a more and more prosperous world. This prosperity has come at the cost of a rapid rise in the consumption of the world's resources. If left unchecked, our ever-increasing demand for food, water, and energy will eventually overwhelm the Earth's ability to satisfy humanity's needs, and will lead to wholesale human tragedy. Already, scientists who study Earth's climate are observing the impact of human activity.

In response to the possibility of human-induced climate change, the United Nations established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide the world's leaders a summary of the current state of relevant scientific knowledge. While by no means perfect, we believe that the efforts that have led to the current IPCC Fifth Assessment Report represent the best source of information regarding the present state of knowledge on climate change. We say this not as experts in the field of climate change, but rather as a diverse group of scientists who have a deep respect for and understanding of the integrity of the scientific process.

Although there remains uncertainty as to the precise extent of climate change, the conclusions of the scientific community contained in the latest IPCC report are alarming, especially in the context of the identified risks of maintaining human prosperity in the face of greater than a 2°C rise in average global temperature. The report concludes that anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the likely cause of the current global warming of the Earth. Predictions from the range of climate models indicate that this warming will very likely increase the Earth's temperature over the coming century by more than 2°C above its pre-industrial level unless dramatic reductions are made in anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases over the coming decades.

Based on the IPCC assessment, the world must make rapid progress towards lowering current and future greenhouse gas emissions to minimize the substantial risks of climate change. We believe that the nations of the world must take the opportunity at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015 to take decisive action to limit future global emissions. This endeavor will require the cooperation of all nations, whether developed or developing, and must be sustained into the future in accord with updated scientific assessments. Failure to act will subject future generations of humanity to unconscionable and unacceptable risk.

Mainau Island, Germany

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