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To the Chair of the
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
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Our reference

IZ/2010003378

Copy to

CC Mrs Teresa Ribera, EU-
Presidency Commissioner Connie
Hedegaard

Date January 28, 2010

Subject Request to suggest improvements in the application of the rules of IPCC

Dear Dr. Pachauri,

Recently, a mistake was brought to my attention in the paragraph on Himalayan glaciers, on page 493 in chapter 10, Asia, of the contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report. It concerns the statement that the Himalayan glaciers will have disappeared by the year 2035, where it should have stated the year 2350. Other related mistakes are in the text in the same paragraph and in table 10.9.

I want to express my concern on this issue. Mistakes like the one concerning the Himalayan glaciers could undermine the high standing of the IPCC, and ultimately the acceptance of a common knowledge base for climate change policies. The mistakes raised questions in the international media and in the Netherlands Parliament.

I note that you as chair of IPCC, the current co-chairs of the working groups and the vice-chairs of IPCC have made a statement on the website in which you regret the mistake, reaffirm that IPCC's procedures are robust and emphasise that it is essential that these rules are indeed strictly applied. I welcome this statement, but think it is in itself not sufficient to forestall future mistakes, nor to fully restore the shaken confidence in IPCC as the leading process to assess all knowledge relevant to climate change.

As far as we know now we are dealing here with one incident, but the questions raised go to the heart of the IPCC process . These questions are the following.

- 1) Has there been a sufficient level of attention of the author team of this particular chapter?
- 2) How is it possible that the comments raised in both the expert reviews and the government review did not lead to the recommended corrections?
- 3) Comments by the government of Japan were taken into account when agreeing the SPM, but the error was not corrected in the underlying report. How could this happen?

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Therefore, I urge the Bureau of IPCC to scrutinize the current procedures and practices of IPCC, and in particular how the strict implementation of these procedures can be improved. I request the Bureau to present options to improve the implementation of the procedures and practices well in advance of the next session of the Panel for its decision . In preparation of this decision I suggest the IPCC Bureau to invite governments to submit their views on improvements serving as input to the decision making at the next plenary.

I also would like the Bureau of IPCC to request the current Bureau of Working Group II to evaluate the handling of the comments of the expert reviews and government review by the authors of the AR4 Working Group II report, chapter 10. We also think an Erratum should be issued to the Working Group II contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report, comprising of the corrected paragraph on Himalayan glaciers, related figures and tables, as well as any other mistake that will be identified in the evaluation of chapter 10, and any other mistake in the AR4 Working Group II report that the previous and current Bureau of Working Group II know of.

Finally, I request the Bureau of IPCC to involve the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services to assist in the scrutiny of procedures and practices. I am convinced this would lend the necessary independence to this exercise, which is in turn instrumental to fully retain the confidence in IPCC procedures and practices.

I would appreciate it if you could forward this letter and your response to all members of IPCC.

I like to thank you for the efforts you personally put into improving the conduct of IPCC in a world that puts ever increasing demands on this unique process, and I have every confidence that you and the IPCC Bureau will do everything to restore IPCC from the present dent in its reputation.

Yours sincerely,

dr. Jacqueline Cramer
Minister for the Environment and Spatial Planning.

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