



A SUMMIT OF SCIENCE FOR POLITICS

Newsletter for the World's most important scientific congress on climate change



The panel speakers at the closing session had serious questions to consider. From the left: Prof. Will Steffen, Prof. Stefan Rahmstorf, Prof. Dan Kammen, Prof. Lord Nicholas Stern, Former Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Photo: Lizette Kabré, University of Copenhagen

The University of Copenhagen organised the scientific congress in cooperation with the partners in the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU):

- Australian National University
- ETH Zürich
- National University of Singapore
- Peking University
- University of California - Berkeley
- University of Cambridge
- University of Copenhagen
- University of Oxford
- The University of Tokyo
- Yale University

Six strong climate messages to the world

The IARU International Scientific Congress on Climate Change brought six key messages of urgency but optimism to the world. Though the latest research results show that the climate system is trailing along the worst case scenarios of the latest IPCC report - and in some cases even worse than that - the congress showed that we possess both the understanding of the climate as such and the tools to change that development. If the political will can be established, the task of stopping catastrophic climate change can be overcome.

"The reception of the key messages has been very encouraging", says Katherine Richardson, chair of the Scientific Steering Committee of the congress.

"As organizers we have been invited to present the results at several occasions and the press coverage showed that the congress became the pivotal event we hoped it to be", she says.

More than 200 media representatives attended the congress and so far almost 2,000 registered articles about the congress have been published.

"It is encouraging to see that climate change is being taken so seriously. It shows that the 2007 IPCC report really opened the eyes of not only scientists but also politicians, media and the general public", says Katherine Richardson.

In the coming months, the six preliminary key messages presented at the closing session of the IARU congress

will serve as the basis for a synthesis report from the congress. This report will be ready in June 2009 and will substantiate the messages and explain the scientific background in an approximately 30 page long report intended to be understood by the common interested reader.

The six preliminary key messages were drafted by the congress Writing Team based on a reading of all abstracts, the plenary presentations and input from the chairs of the 58 sessions. The synthesis report is being written by the Writing Team, based on input from the session chairs and scientific plenary speakers. The Writing Team consists of 12 internationally respected scientists from all continents. The report will be peer reviewed by the Earth System Science Partnership and a group of scientists designated by the IARU universities. The report will be handed over to COP15 policy makers.

A full description of the writing team and the review process can be found at the congress website:

http://climatecongress.ku.dk/about/Review_Procedures/

Sign up for a notification when the Synthesis Report is published at:

<http://climatecongress.ku.dk/box/alert/synthesisreport/>

Volunteers made it all go smoothly

Almost 300 volunteers helped the participants at the congress find their sessions, find the lunch or just get the most out of their three days at the congress. With the motto: "If I don't know, I will find out", the volunteers filled the odd variety of jobs needed to make a congress of this size run smoothly.

"The volunteers really did a tremendous job of making sure that participants could always find help when they

needed it. I'm really impressed with the effort they put into the job", says Torben Timmermann, Head of Climate Office, University of Copenhagen.

The volunteers though unpaid came from all over the world. Many of them were students hoping to meet the scientists whose work they had been studying, but the group also included a 68-year old schoolteacher from Holland who extended her stay in Copenhagen to be a part of the congress.

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Find the **Abstract Book** as a part of the **IOP Conference Series** on the **Congress website**

climatecongress.ku.dk

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Congress confirmed strategic choices

For Star Sponsor COWI, the climate change congress confirmed their strategy as a company that places itself as a "broker" of new knowledge between research institutions and companies.

"The congress showed us that

there is indeed a strong need for a company like ours that helps transfer knowledge on climate change as quickly and reliably as possible", says Stig Christensen.

COWI does not normally enter into larger sponsor deals, but the purpose of the congress - to bring the most updated knowledge on climate change into play - corresponded so well with the overall vision of the company that

it took on the role as one of eight Star Sponsors.

"And with great benefit too", emphasizes Stig Christensen. The company chose not to build a traditional congress stand, but instead sent a lot of employees to the different sessions to listen, learn and meet new contacts.

"The congress was a chance to get a lot of updated knowledge at once.

We had about 35 people there and we made some very interesting connections with knowledge centers that I believe could become valuable partners. And I think we have 6 or 7 specific business opportunities that came directly out of our work with the congress", says Stig Christensen.

The six preliminary key messages of the IARU Scientific Congress on Climate Change:

Key Message 1: Climatic Trends

Recent observations confirm that, given high rates of observed emissions, the worst-case IPCC scenario trajectories (or even worse) are being realised. For many key parameters, the climate system is already moving beyond the patterns of natural variability within which our society and economy have developed and thrived. These parameters include global mean surface temperature, sea-level rise, ocean and ice sheet dynamics, ocean acidification and extreme climatic events. There is a significant risk that many of the trends will accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climatic shifts.

Key Message 5: Inaction is Inexcusable

There is no excuse for inaction. We already have many tools and approaches - economic, technological, behavioural, management - to deal effectively with the climate change challenge. But they must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the societal transformation required to decarbonise economies. A wide range of benefits will flow from a concerted effort to alter our energy economy now, including sustainable energy job growth, reductions in the health and economic costs of climate change and the restoration of ecosystems and revitalisation of ecosystem services.

Key Message 2: Social Disruption

The research community is providing much more information to support discussions on "dangerous climate change". Recent observations show that societies are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change, with poor nations and communities particularly at risk. Temperature rises above 2C will be very difficult for contemporary societies to cope with and will increase the level of climate disruption through the rest of the century.

Key Message 6: Meeting the Challenge

To achieve the societal transformation required to meet the climate change challenge, we must overcome a number of significant constraints and seize critical opportunities. These include reducing inertia in social and economic systems; building on a growing public desire for governments to act on climate change; removing implicit and explicit subsidies; reducing the influence of vested interests that increase emissions and reduce resilience; enabling the shifts from ineffective governance and weak institutions to innovative leadership in government, the private sector and civil society and engaging society in the transition to norms and practices that foster sustainability.

Key Message 3: Long-Term Strategy

Rapid, sustained, and effective mitigation based on coordinated global and regional action is required to avoid "dangerous climate change" regardless of how it is defined. Weaker targets for 2020 increase the risk of crossing tipping points and make the task of meeting 2050 targets more difficult. Delay in initiating effective mitigation actions increases significantly the long-term social and economic costs of both adaptation and mitigation.

Key Message 4: Equity Dimensions

Climate change is having, and will have, strongly differential effects on people within and between countries and regions, on this generation and future generations, and on human societies and the natural world. An effective, well-funded adaptation safety net is required for those people least capable of coping with climate change impacts, and a common but differentiated mitigation strategy is needed to protect the poor and most vulnerable.