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Sceptics put their case to UN chief

Greg Roberts | December 14, 2007

A LETTER signed by 103 scientists who are climate change sceptics has been sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

At a press conference at the Bali meeting today, the scientists will release the letter publicly and outline their case downplaying the seriousness of global warming.

Their letter, a copy of which has been obtained by The Australian, says climate change is natural.

"It is not possible to stop climate change," the letter says. "It is a natural phenomenon that has affected humanity through the ages."

The letter says the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued "increasingly alarming" conclusions about the impact of carbon dioxide, a non-polluting gas that is essential to plant photosynthesis.

"While we understand the evidence that has led them to view emissions as harmful, the IPCC's conclusions are quite inadequate as justification for implementing policies that will markedly diminish future prosperity," the letter says.

"In particular, it is not established that it is possible to significantly alter global climate through cuts in human greenhouse gas emissions."

The letter says that contrary to the views of the IPCC, recent observations of phenomena such as glacial retreats, sea-level rises and the migration of temperature-sensitive species are not evidence for abnormal climate change.

It says none of these changes has been shown to lie outside the bounds of known natural variability and that the average rate of warming of 0.1 to 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade recorded by satellites during the late 20th century falls within known natural rates of warming and cooling over the past 10,000 years.

The letter says leading scientists, including senior IPCC representatives, acknowledge that today's computer models cannot predict climate. "Consistent with this, and despite computer projections of temperature rises, there has been no net global warming since 1998."

The letter's signatories include James Cook University researcher Bob Carter and retired University of Canberra vice-chancellor Don Aitken.

The letter says the focus on fighting climate change is distracting governments from adapting to the threat of inevitable natural climate variability.

"Attempts to prevent global climate change from occurring are ultimately futile, and constitute a tragic misallocation of resources that would be better spent on humanity's real and pressing problems," it says.

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