

# **What's up with the IPCC?**



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# Glaciers in the Himalaya: a real error

- In the WGII contribution, chapter on Asia (10), also reported in the WGII technical summary
- Two main wrong claims:
  - *the likelihood of [Himalayan glaciers] disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high*
  - *Its total area will likely shrink from the present 500,000 to 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> by the year 2035*
- Facts:
  - melting is not that fast; in addition, some Himalayan glaciers may last longer because they are higher in altitude
  - but the majority of the world glaciers are retreating (WGI)

# Glaciers in the Himalaya

## what went wrong

- Application of IPCC procedures for inclusion of non-peer-reviewed literature :
  - Rules requires each chapter team to review the quality and validity of each source before incorporating results from the source into an IPCC Report
  - Use of such literature is mainly intended to fill gaps where few peer-reviewed documents are available, e.g. for case studies, while here information was available from WGI
- The review did not succeed in removing this particular error (out of 3000+ pages)
  - no expert or government informed chapter authors in time, but some warned that the paragraph is lacking consistency and appropriate likelihood qualifiers

# Agricultural yields in Africa

- Issue is how the information was summarized in the (approved) Synthesis report:

*By 2020, in some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%.*

- This appears to be oversimplified, since the key statement in the underlying report is

*In other countries, additional risks that could be exacerbated by climate change include (...) deficiencies in yields from rain-fed agriculture of up to 50% during the 2000-2020 period*

- However, AR4 contains evidence that increased frequency or intensity of drought due to climate change could occur in some parts of Africa

# Area under sea level in the Netherlands

- AR4 Europe chapter (12) contains a sentence that is imprecise :

*The Netherlands is an example of country highly susceptible to both sea level rise and river flooding because 55% of its territory is below sea level'.*

- The area below **mean** sea level is about the half of this 55% figure; a corrected sentence could be

*“... because 55% of the Netherlands is at risk of flooding”.*

*Note: 55% also approximates the area below the level reached by sea water during extreme storms*

- The imprecise AR4 sentence was received from a Dutch gov. agency (!) and is found in many sources; the 55% figure is used in AR4 for information only

# Amazon forest susceptibility to rainfall reduction

- Not an error - AR4 message is ok
- Criticism relates to WGII, Latin America chapter(p596):
  - “Up to 40% of the Amazonian forests could react drastically to even a slight reduction in precipitation”
- The cited source for this sentence is a WWF/IUCN report, but
  - this report is based on reliable sources (Nature paper),
  - the sentence is consistent with surrounding text in AR4 WG II as well as in WG I and peer reviewed references
  - it has been confirmed by other peer-reviewed studies since publication of AR4

# Recent trends in disaster economic losses

- Not an error - AR4 message is ok
- AR4 states that one study detected an increase in economic losses due to climate related disasters, corrected for exposure, but that other studies did not
- A Sunday Times article suggested that this is all there is in AR4 about extremes and disasters, but this not the case, as AR4 addresses
  - observations of past changes
  - projections of future changes
  - in sectors ranging from heat waves and precipitation to wildfires

# Use of ice-climbing records

- Not an error
- WGII Chapter 1 authors did not use ice-climbing records as evidence of possible changes in snow and ice cover.
- They did, quite properly, use them in a Table of examples as evidence of the effects of altered snow and ice cover on ice climbing as a recreational activity.



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# Measures taken



- ⌘ *Responses (cfr IPCC web site)*
- ⌘ *Errata: in process*
- ⌘ *Corrections: TBD at Bureau/Plenary (October)*
- ⌘ *Internal review of procedures + strict implementation for the two Special Reports due in 2011 (Disasters & extreme events; Renewable energy)*
- ⌘ *Review by Inter Academy Council (due: 31/8, for discussion at October plenary)*

# Global Temperature Change

(NASA GISS)

## Global Land–Ocean Temperature Index

