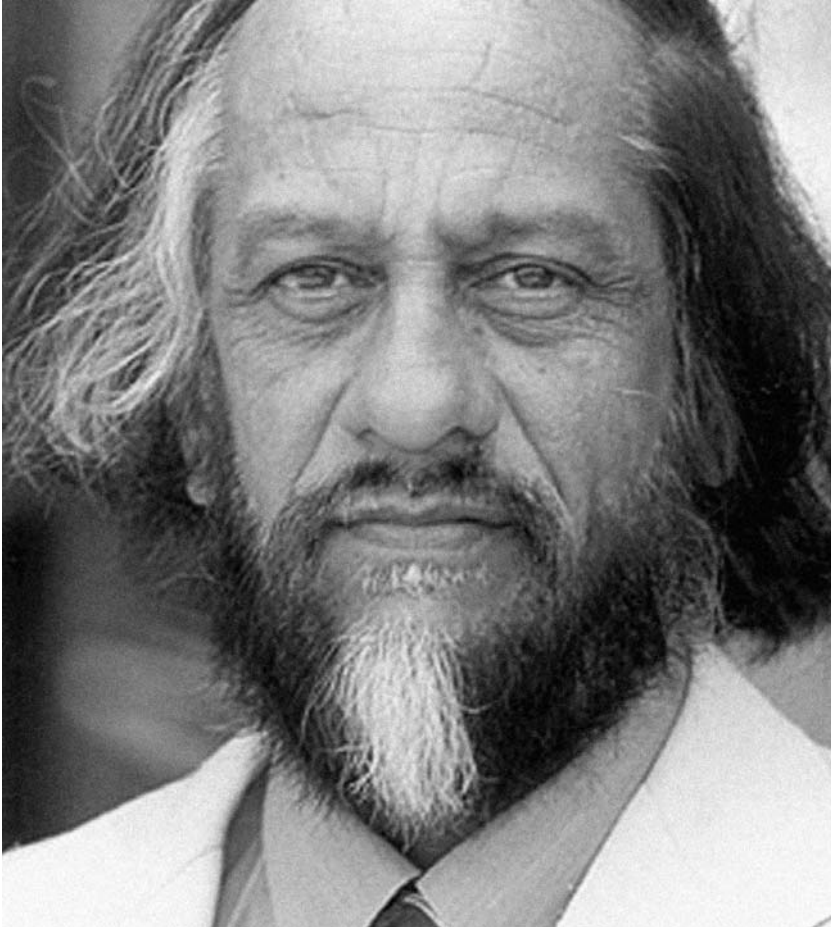


Dialogue with

R. K. Pachauri
The Nobel prize 2007
The voice of science
and knowledge

María Gabriela Mata Carnevali





Born in a beautiful land of mountains, Nainital, at the north of India, Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri (August 20, 1940), obtained an M.S. in industrial engineering in 1972, a Ph.D. in industrial engineering, and a Ph.D. in economics from North Carolina State University. He has taught on the faculty of Yale University, West Virginia University, North Carolina State University in the US and the Administrative Staff College of India in Hyderabad. He is the author of 23 books and several journal articles.

Before The Nobel prize, in acknowledgement of his environmental contributions, Dr. Pachauri was awarded the “Padman Bhushan” in 2001—one of India’s highest civilian awards that recognizes distinguished service to the nation- and the “Officier De La Légion D’Honneur” by the Government of France in 2006.

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Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri is the chief of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) since 2002.

The IPCC (<http://www.ipcc.ch/>), a UN body comprising 3,000 atmospheric scientists, oceanographers, ice specialists, economists and other experts, is the world's top scientific authority on global warming and its impact.

The panel has been given the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change, the Nobel committee said.

*Dr. Pachauri kindly accepted to answer some questions via email for *Humania del Sur*.*

1) What is for you the significance of having been awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize?

The significance of the IPCC receiving the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize lies in the fact that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has acknowledged the link between stabilizing the earth's climate and the maintenance of peace. Also the Nobel Peace Prize has focused attention on climate change as an important global issue because of the worldwide attention the peace prize receives.

2) The IPCC has helped the World to learn more about climate change. The price you shared with Al Gore seems to have rewarded

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a communicative endeavour. For years, Oil companies such as Exxon pretended that climatic change wasn't real or that the risks it involved were been exaggerated. Exxon and others sponsored deceptive journalism and groups that passed for «centres for reflection.» The IPCC and Mr. Al Gore firmly resisted these interest groups, and presently Exxon Mobil and other key oil companies are far more honest and constructive with regard to these matters. What is to follow?

There has been widespread dissemination of information on climate change, particularly after the release of the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC. It appears that decision makers are finally listening to the voice of science and knowledge, which as I said in my acceptance speech at Oslo is now «loud and clear».

A number of skeptics now acknowledge the scientific reality of climate change, and this is a healthy sign, because it is only through the understanding of all stakeholders that we would get action to meet this challenge. Hence, I hope what is to follow would be a global response that adequately meets the problem at the global level.

3) Do you really believe international agreements to have real possibilities of saving our civilization from the consequences of global warming?

International agreements are crucial to the solution of global problems such as climate change. I think it is now being accepted by all the countries of the world that a multilateral agreement under the umbrella of the UN is essential and the only means to meet the challenge of climate change at the global level.

4) What is for you the cause of the failure of the Kyoto treaty and, more recently, of the lack of agreement in Bali?

The Kyoto protocol did not get adequate commitment from all the countries of the world because both the leadership and the public in several countries were not totally convinced about the threat of climate change.

I would not agree that Bali produced a lack of agreement. In my view, the Bali Conference of the Parties clearly showed the importance of knowledge, because the discussions there were driven essentially by the output of the IPCC. It certainly was a major step forward on which we would now have to build future action.

5) How must diverging environmental criteria between rich and poor countries be managed?

Environmental damage affects both rich and poor countries both at the local as well as global level. The worst affected are the poorest sections of the society in poor as well as rich countries. However, at the global level the principle of common but differentiated responsibility places a large responsibility on the shoulders of developed countries. They have to take urgent and effective measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

6) What do you think of the role NGOs have played and must continue to play?

I think NGOs have a critical role to play not only in highlighting the problem but also in disseminating information and knowledge and most importantly in devising solutions that could establish the effectiveness of actions that need to be taken.

7) In what aspects not doing anything or not doing enough can affect world peace? Do you think it may even threaten the survival of our species?

If we do not do enough then world peace could be affected on account of the impacts of extreme events. The effects on agriculture and water resources, which would only lead to higher deprivation and movement of large populations, could lead to conflict. Scarcity of resources such as water can also lead to conflict. If we have abrupt and irreversible events that could lead to sea level rise of several meters then clearly there would be a threat to our species because of the havoc that such a development would create for hundreds of millions of people round the world.

8) Is climatic information relevant for «development»? Do you think the concept of «development» needs to be forsaken altogether or at least be radically revised?

Development and adaptation as well as mitigation measures have to be defined in a comprehensive manner by which these are not seen as

objectives in opposition. Sustainable development would require the integration of responses to climate change both in respect of mitigation as well as adaptation.

9) What do you think of James Lovelock's opinion that it is too late for achieving «sustainable development» and his proposal that we engage in a «sustainable retreat»? And what do you think of his endorsement of fission as a provisional source of energy until research makes fusion available as a cleaner and longer-term source of energy? Is fusion really safer and more ecologically viable than fission?

James Lovelock is right in that some societies there would have to be a sustainable retreat. These are societies that could be considered as mal-developed, where the current structure and pattern of development is unsustainable in the use of energy and natural resources. But this need not be the approach to be followed by every society, because there are substantial differences across countries. Fission and fusion can provide cleaner and longer term sources of energy but these are not without problems or promise. We would need technological changes of various kinds to make sustainable development possible.

10) Do you deem convenient that scientific projects similar to that of the IPCC be launched as a response to other global challenges, such as the global loss of biodiversity, desertification, overfishing, pollution of soils and waters and so on?

IPCC has undoubtedly been a very successful model of scientific endeavour but I am not too sure whether it can be replicated blindly in other areas. Perhaps in a global assessment of water something similar may be useful.

11) What would be your advise from the heart to global leaders?

My advise to global leaders would be to understand the message from new knowledge on climate change which will lead to losers across the world and there would be no winners at all. Every society represented by leaders at the global level would suffer harmful consequences in the long run unless we do something with a sense of urgency.

Development and adaptation as well as mitigation measures have to be defined in a comprehensive manner by which these are not seen as objectives in opposition.