

AAAS pushes for action on climate change

By Ginger Pinholster

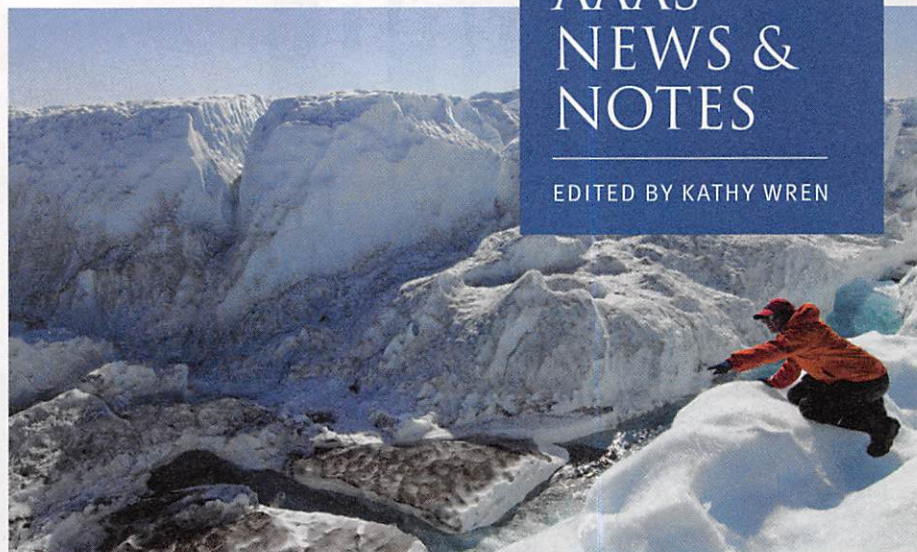
With world leaders convening this week for the United Nations Climate Summit, AAAS called for decisive political action, while also ramping up communication and training activities intended to underscore the reality and urgency of human-caused climate change.

Recognizing that the global financial burden of climate change “could be truly enormous,” AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner commended “President Obama and other world leaders who have signaled their commitment to work toward a legally binding, comprehensive agreement in 2015 by participating in the U.N. Climate Summit.” At press time, Leshner was also preparing to co-host a unique dialogue on the financial risks associated with a changing climate.

The 12 November event will bring together economists, policy-makers, and scientists, including Nobel Laureate Mario J. Molina, who chaired the panel that earlier this year produced the AAAS “What We Know” backgrounder on climate change. While scientists have reached consensus that climate change is already causing real physical and ecological losses, quantifying those impacts has been complicated by remaining scientific uncertainties.

Not knowing exactly “how bad the worst-case scenarios might be” has made it difficult to precisely define current and future climate-change costs, said Robert Litterman, a supporter of the “What We Know” report and Chairman of the Risk Committee at Kepos Capital LP, an asset-management firm. “This is basic risk management, but operating in difficult terrain, and clearly any attempt to quantify the appropriate policy response, will require scientists and economists working together, asking tough questions, and breaking the boundaries of their professional silos.” The upcoming event, which is co-organized by AAAS and Resources for the Future with support from the Rockefeller Family Fund and Lawrence H. Linden, will be webcast at www.rff.org/mariomolina.

Molina, co-winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his role in explaining the ozone hole, has pointed out that the costs of addressing climate change are sure to



Average global temperature has increased by about 1.4° F over the last 100 years, according to a AAAS project.

be lower now than in the future. In 2006, the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change estimated the overall costs of climate-change impacts to be at least 5% of global wealth, or gross domestic product (GDP), per year, now and in the future. By comparison, the Stern Review determined that stabilizing those effects would cost about 1% of global GDP annually. Economist Nicholas Stern increased that estimate in 2008, however, and although those findings have been subjected to intense scrutiny, the “What We Know” report also concluded that “the sooner we act, the lower the risk and cost” of climate change.

On other fronts, content for the Association’s popular Communicating Science program, which has served some 2100 participants at 46 workshops and 42 lectures so far, has been expanded to help scientists and engineers convey the facts about climate change.

AAAS has also launched a second phase of the “What We Know” project to ensure that climate-change messages reach the U.S. Hispanic community, which represented 17% of the U.S. voting population as of 2011. Molina took part in a television interview with Nuestra Tele Noticias 24 Horas (NTN24), which reaches 8.5 million mostly Spanish-speaking viewers. In concert with Climate Central, a Spanish-language interview with Molina was broadly disseminated to Hispanic meteorologists.

The English-language version of the “What We Know” report, co-chaired by James McCarthy of Harvard University and Diana Wall of Colorado State University and released with help from Climate Nexus, was the subject of at least 442 English-language

news stories. The report was provided to U.S. policy-makers, too, and the AAAS Office of Government Relations continues to communicate climate science on Capitol Hill. Most recently, for example, that work has addressed pending amendments such as H.R. 4435 that would prevent the Pentagon from leveraging climate science in support of national security goals. ■

Additional names for AAAS annual election

For more information on the 2014 election, please see AAAS News & Notes in the 29 August issue of *Science*.

GENERAL ELECTION

President-Elect: A. Paul Alivisatos, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory/Univ. of California, Berkeley; Barbara A. Schaal, Washington Univ. in St. Louis

Board of Directors: Michael S. Gazzaniga, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara; Steven M. Girvin, Yale Univ.; Mercedes Pascual, Univ. of Michigan; Sean C. Solomon, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory/Columbia Univ.

Committee on Nominations: Peter C. Agre, Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Institute; Frances H. Arnold, California Institute of Technology; Kenneth I. Berns, Univ. of Florida; Robert J. Birgeneau, Univ. of California, Berkeley; W. Carl Lineberger, Univ. of Colorado Boulder; Michael A. Marletta, Scripps Research Institute; Thom Mason, Oak Ridge National Laboratory; Marc Tessier-Lavigne, Rockefeller Univ.

SECTION ELECTIONS

History and Philosophy of Science

Chair Elect: Marsha L. Richmond, Wayne State Univ.