

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIRMAN ON THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 2nd DECEMBER 2013**

Question

“In relation to the statement in its Energy Report under ‘key issues’ that carbon emissions are having a major impact on the global climate, would the Chairman confirm that this was taken directly from IPCC literature and, if so, would he advise whether his Panel undertook any work to verify those comments?

Would the Chairman give details of the ‘international agreement’, scientific consensus’ and ‘evidence on climate change’ that his Panel have researched, or whether those statements were also taken from IPCC literature without question?

Is the Chairman aware that the film ‘Inconvenient Truth’ was found by a British Court to be a political, as opposed to scientific, work?

Would the Chairman advise what work, if any, his Panel undertook to verify the statement by the IPCC co-Chair that ‘continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system’?”

Answer

I am happy to confirm that the statements referred to are taken from publications of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

As Deputy Baudains will be aware, the IPCC is an intergovernmental body established by the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization. Its organisation is explained on the IPCC website (<http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml>), which for the benefit of other Members is reproduced in part below:

‘The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. In the same year, the UN General Assembly endorsed the action by WMO and UNEP in jointly establishing the IPCC.

The IPCC is a scientific body under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). It reviews and assesses the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic information produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change. It does not conduct any research nor does it monitor climate related data or parameters.

Thousands of scientists from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC on a voluntary basis. Review is an essential part of the IPCC process, to ensure an objective and complete assessment of current information. IPCC aims to reflect a range of views and expertise. The Secretariat coordinates all the IPCC work and liaises with Governments. It is supported by WMO and UNEP and hosted at WMO headquarters in Geneva.

The IPCC is an intergovernmental body. It is open to all member countries of the United Nations (UN) and WMO. Currently 195 countries are members of the IPCC. Governments participate in the review process and the plenary Sessions, where main decisions about the IPCC work programme are taken and reports are accepted, adopted and approved. The IPCC Bureau Members, including the Chair, are also elected during the plenary Sessions.

Because of its scientific and intergovernmental nature, the IPCC embodies a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision makers. By endorsing the IPCC reports, governments acknowledge the authority of their scientific content. The work of the organization is therefore policy-relevant and yet policy-neutral, never policy-prescriptive.'

The IPCC website also explains the very thorough process of scientific research and review which its findings are based on. The Panel is in no position to challenge their findings or depart from the consensus of world wide scientific opinion. I believe it would have been irresponsible for the Panel to have attempted to do so.

The United Kingdom Government has also accepted the IPCC conclusions. In the Government Response of 27th September 2013 to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), Secretary of State Edward Davey described it as: **'the most authoritative, credible analysis of climate change science ever.'**

Prof David MacKay FRS, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Department of Energy and Climate Change, said:

'This latest report is the most authoritative and comprehensive report to date of our understanding of climate change. The scientific consensus is that the world has warmed and will warm more, owing to human activities. There is robust evidence that human greenhouse gas emissions are already changing our world; global temperatures have risen every decade for the last three decades, oceans are acidifying, rainfall patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, arctic sea ice is declining, and some extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense.

It is predicted, from simple physics, that the more humanity increases the quantities of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the warmer the Earth will become. The far-reaching consequences of this warming are becoming understood, although some uncertainties remain. The most significant uncertainty, however, is how much carbon humanity will choose to put into the atmosphere in the future. It is the total sum of all our carbon emissions that will determine the impacts. We need to take action now, to maximise our chances of being faced with impacts that we, and our children, can deal with.'

The full Government Response can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/response-to-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change-ipcc-fifth-assessment-report-ar5-the-latest-assessment-of-climate-science>

Regarding the part of Deputy Baudains' question referring to former US Vice-President Al Gore's 2006 film 'An Inconvenient Truth', the Panel did not form any opinion of this during its review, as it was not part of the evidence considered. However, as the Deputy has raised this matter I have looked into it and cannot agree with his conclusion concerning this case.

For the benefit of Members the case was heard in the Civil Court in London during September and October 2007. It was brought by a school governor against the UK Secretary of State for Education, in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the film being distributed to schools. According to reports of the case, the judge ordered that teaching notes accompanying the film should be modified to clarify the speculative (and occasionally hyperbolic) presentation of some issues. The judge did identify statements that had political implications he felt needed qualification in the guidance notes for teachers, and ordered that both qualifications on the science and the political implications should be included in the notes. He indicated that he did not support the assertion that the nine main points highlighted in his judgment were erroneous. About the film in general, he said: *'It is substantially founded upon scientific research and fact, albeit that the science is used, in the hands of a talented politician and communicator, to make a political statement and to support a political programme'*; and: *'I have no doubt that (...), the Defendant's expert, is right when he says that: Al Gore's presentation of the causes and likely effects of climate change in the film was broadly accurate.'*

The full text of the judgment can be read at:

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2007/2288.html>