

Memo 05/09

Climate summit. Corrupt science

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Alexandra Township, Johannesburg.

I took this photograph in Alexandra Township. The flimsy shacks are built on an old refuse dump that is now being eroded away by the river. A large tree has already collapsed into the river. The wreckage of a Volkswagen Beetle had its roof stripped off to be used for the construction of a shack. The Jukskei River in the foreground is the most polluted river in South Africa. This is because of the complete lack of sanitation facilities in the shacks along its banks.

This Township is less than 20 km from the summit venue. How dare our Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism hold an expensive four-day summit on climate change, attended by 600 delegates, when thousands of people are living in abject poverty within 20 minutes driving distance from Midrand?

I have been involved in searching for solutions to these difficult sociological problems for more than 15 years. Resulting from my work in Alexandra, I was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General as a member of the United Nations Scientific and Technical Committee on Natural Disasters. This United Nations body functioned at the same time as another United Nations body the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

However, there was no communication between the two bodies. This was for the simple reason that our studies demonstrated without doubt that increases in the loss of life from natural disasters were due to growing human populations and forced occupation of areas exposed to floods and droughts. The photograph above is an example.

Our thorough studies demonstrated that there was no evidence of increases in the frequency or magnitude of floods and droughts. This is not what the UNFCCC wanted to hear.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 by two high level international agencies. These were the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It has produced several assessment reports at roughly five-yearly intervals. The latest was issued in 2007. From the beginning, the approach adopted by the IPCC was directly contrary to the recommendations of other United Nations bodies. The claims of increases in floods and droughts have no substance.

Search for solutions

The development of solutions to this very important sociological problem is very difficult. I described it in my United Nations commissioned study *Risk and Society – an African Perspective* that was published in 1999.

Coincidentally, another United Nations initiative was published at the same time. This was the *Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge*. It was the output of a combined UNESCO/ICSU **World Conference on Science** held at Budapest, Hungary in June 1999. It emphasised the need for vigorous scientific debate and multidisciplinary approaches to the difficult problems of the future.

These are some extracts from the Budapest Declaration. The emphases are mine.

We seek active collaboration across all the fields of scientific endeavour, i.e. the natural sciences such as the physical, earth and biological sciences, the biomedical and engineering sciences, and the social and human sciences.

Today, there is need for a vigorous and informed democratic debate on the production and use of scientific knowledge...Greater interdisciplinary efforts, involving both natural and social sciences, are a prerequisite for dealing with ethical, social, cultural, environmental, gender, economic and health issues.

Scientists have a special responsibility for seeking to avert applications of science, which are ethically wrong or have adverse impact.

The practice of scientific research and the use of knowledge from that research should always aim at the welfare of humankind.

The social responsibility of scientists requires that they maintain high standards of scientific integrity and quality control, share their knowledge, communicate with the public and educate the younger generation.

You will not find examples of vigorous debates or the results of multidisciplinary studies in the IPCC assessment reports.

Each and every one of these essential research requirements will be ignored in the scientific presentations at the Midrand Summit.

My involvement

Ever since my involvement in the climate change issue, I have repeatedly requested that we get together to seek solutions related to the climate change problem. All my approaches were rebuffed. Not only have the climate alarmists ignored the solidly-based recommendations of the other United Nations bodies, but they have done their best to suppress all contrarian research.

At the previous Midrand conference on climate change held in October 2005, the Minister firmly rejected the idea of any cooperation with scientists in the other disciplines who were more cautious. Now we have another climate summit. Once more the delegates will be exposed to one-sided presentations based on environmental concerns. The delegates will not hear any balanced views on the subject.

I was invited to present my views on natural disasters at a conference in Ecuador, South America. I requested the audience to imagine that the hall was full of people directly exposed to natural hazards. What would their reaction be to the conference proceedings I asked?

Now I ask the climate summit organisers the same question. What do they think the reaction of the people from Alexandra Township would be if they were invited to attend the summit?

In the following memos I will have much more to say on the whole climate change charade that will be presented at Midrand.

Is it too much to expect that these memos will end up on the desk of the Minister? His scientific advisers are misleading him.

Please pass this memo on to other South African scientists so that they can appreciate the damage that is being done to the image of science as an honourable profession.

Regards