

Further Clarification of my Remarks about the IPCC and Consensus

Given the continued interest around the world in my article due to appear in *Progress in Physical Geography*, and my remarks therein about consensus and the IPCC, this is a further clarification (additional to the one posted yesterday, 15 June) of my position ...

The ambiguity in the original Hulme & Mahony article emerges from the caricatured example I offer of a 'claim' which I suggest is disingenuous [OED: 'not straightforward or candid'], namely when I wrote '*2,500 of the world's leading scientists have reached a consensus that human activities are having a significant influence on the climate*'. This is far too general a claim for the very specific point I was seeking to make about expert judgement and consensus-making.

I should therefore instead have written in the original PiPG article, "*Claims [made by commentators, not the IPCC] such as '2,500 of the world's leading scientists agree that most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid 20th century is very likely [greater than 90% likelihood based on expert judgement] due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations' are disingenuous*". This much more specific example would have served my point much better. This specific statement from the IPCC AR4 was initially crafted by a small team of detection and attribution experts, then evolved under review from other experts and then was further reviewed, amended and finally approved by governments. Another example would be the statement: 'It is very unlikely [less than 10% likelihood based on expert judgement] that the MOC [Meridional Overturning Circulation] will undergo a large abrupt transition during the 21st century'. Most authors engaged by the IPCC are not qualified to participate in such specific knowledge crafting about the MOC.

Some commentators have called my point pedantic, but I think it is important to explain how knowledge is assessed by experts and how headline statements come into being. By the way, I think this is an entirely credible process of knowledge assessment, but people should not claim that it is more than it is.

And for the record ... I believe that the warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid 20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations.

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