

Solar Geoengineering could cause a climate disaster, we need to stop it

MEXICO, PHILIPPINES, CANADA – As one of the first civil society organizations to raise the alarm about the dangers of geoengineering, ETC Group strongly opposes the Climate Overshoot Commission’s report launched in New York today, especially its endorsement of unproven carbon removal technology, and the potential for this report to open the door to solar geoengineering.

The Climate [Overshoot Commission](#) is a group of former politicians set up by a team of pro-geoengineering scientists and organizations. Several of its original members have stepped down since its launch: members of the commission, as well as members of the Youth Engagement Group, [have raised concerns](#) that the commission is operating in a way that is top-down, not representative and tokenizing youth.

“[Solar geoengineering](#) will have so many negative impacts, that even those promoting it have no choice but to recognize its problems”, said Silvia Ribeiro, Latin America Director at ETC group.

Solar geoengineering is extremely risky and also [untested and untestable](#) because only very large-scale deployment over at least two decades could reveal what effect it would have on climate. This kind of testing cannot be called “experimental”, it would in fact be regular deployment with the associated negative environmental, social and geopolitical impacts. “Asking for “small” experiments as the Overshoot Commission implies in their report, will not generate more knowledge about the effects of solar geoengineering on climate, it is nothing more than a way to justify supporting more and larger experiments to enable eventual deployment,” added Ribeiro.

Because of its many risks, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) decided, in 2010, to call for a moratorium on geoengineering. The Overshoot Commission should recognize this precautionary call and the need to strengthen it by ensuring that no open field experiments are permitted.

Geoengineering research will be used to benefit those who want to profit from these dangerous technologies, as [recently happened in Mexico](#) with the US company Make Sunsets' experiments. The people conducting these illegal experiments explicitly said they were based on the research of David Keith, a vocal geoengineering entrepreneur scientist and one of the Overshoot Commission's organizers.

“The Overshoot Commission is currently pushing to develop a framework that could allow them to do larger research and open air experiments,” says Neth Daño, ETC’s Asia Director.

“Calling for international governance and international dialogues is a poor substitute to real UN-led democratic, informed, multilateral governance. As geoengineering will have so many unequal impacts, all governments, but also all potentially affected people and communities must have the right to assess this technology before any deployment is even considered,” added Daño.

Over 400 scientists from all over the world have called for a [Solar Geoengineering Non-Use Agreement](#) because they concluded that solar geoengineering is too risky, can't be governed in a fair and democratic way and could be misused by powerful actors or countries controlling the technology.

“A strong moratoria would allow democratic and participatory social debates without leaving countries, communities and Indigenous peoples territories exposed to be used and abused as a testing ground for open air experiments” said ETC group's Silvia Ribeiro.

None of the technologies mentioned in the Climate Overshoot Commission's report, including the carbon removal proposals, are ready for deployment, most are just speculative. For instance, a new report by ETC Group found that industrial seaweed cultivation, a carbon removal technique championed by industry, will not capture carbon and could cause harm to existing ecosystems that naturally capture carbon.

([The Seaweed Delusion: Industrial Seaweed will not Cool the Climate or Save Nature](#)).

Calling for carbon markets, investments and public subsidies to these technologies is a very dangerous distraction from real emission reductions and the support needed for the real solutions to climate change.

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Note to editors

[Solar geoengineering](#) comprises a set of large-scale technological proposals to reflect back part of the sun rays, in an attempt to reduce the increase in the earth's temperature caused by global warming and climate change. It does not address the root causes of climate change and CO2 emissions would continue, creating new climate risks.

Deployed at scale, solar geoengineering could have dangerous environmental, climatic, social and geopolitical risks. Among other impacts, it could cause severe changes to weather patterns like the monsoon, and negatively impact the sources of food and water for millions of people in

the tropics. Furthermore if a large-scale experiment was initiated and then interrupted, scientists predict that the earth's temperature could skyrocket suddenly, a process known as "termination shock". [Solar geoengineering experiments](#) are a bad idea, as they won't provide the needed information but will entrench the development of the technology at large scale.

Hundreds of environmentalists, women, farmers and Indigenous groups, climate activists and civil society organizations all over the world have already [called for this technology to be banned](#). Because of the great risk it poses to communities and biodiversity, the [UN Convention on Biological Diversity called for a moratoria](#) against the deployment of geoengineering in 2010, a call that is still in place.

In 2021, [the Saami Council and environmental organizations](#) rejected a solar geoengineering experiment planned for Kiruna, Sweden, to be conducted by the Harvard project Scopex. The Saami Council also rejected solar geoengineering taking place anywhere in the world, since they fundamentally opposed this technology, which would inherently have transboundary impacts. They called on Harvard to stop all open air experiments and research on solar geoengineering.

The following year, over 370 scientists from all over the world, called for the establishment of an international [Solar Geoengineering Non-Use Agreement](#) because they concluded that solar geoengineering is too risky, can't be governed in a fair and democratic way and could be misused by powerful actors or countries controlling the technology.

See the following resources for more information:

Lost in Translation: Lessons from the IPCC's 6th Assessment Report

<https://www.boell.de/en/2023/03/06/lost-translation-lessons-ipccs-6th-assessment-report> =

The Big Bad Fix: The Case Against Climate Geoengineering

<https://www.etcgroup.org/content/big-bad-fix>

More information from ETC Group on geoengineering

<https://www.etcgroup.org/issues/climate-geoengineering>

Geoengineering Monitor

<https://www.geoengineeringmonitor.org/>