

# Hands off Mother Earth!

## Stop Geoengineering - Our home is not a laboratory

Industrial societies have produced unprecedented ecological crises: climate change, depleted fresh water, build-up of toxins, collapse of ecosystems and accelerating species extinction. The transgression of natural limits for private gain has compromised the integrity and survival of our living planet, Mother Earth. This way of living on the Earth has become unsustainable. Common sense says we must act to build a fairer civilization, one that steps more lightly on the planet – and fast.

### A bad idea whose time has come

But common sense isn't the only option on the table. A group of increasingly influential scientists, corporations and think tanks, backed by some of the governments that carry the largest climate debt, are proposing a different path out of this crisis: a Plan B. Rather than changing harmful production and consumption patterns, they want to massively re-engineer our planet so that it can withstand the ravages of industrial societies. Their proposals to “fix” global warming range from changing the chemistry of the oceans to polluting the upper atmosphere with sulphur particles.

*“If we could come up with a geoengineering answer to this problem, then Copenhagen wouldn't be necessary. We could carry on flying our planes and driving our cars.”*

Richard Branson, billionaire chairman of Virgin Group



Large-scale proposals to intentionally manipulate planetary systems are known as **geoengineering**. They are now under active consideration by politicians in the US and the UK, with more investment being advocated by the UK Royal Society and its industrial allies. Some of the world's richest men (eg. Richard Branson and Bill Gates) and the most powerful corporations (eg. Shell, Boeing) are getting involved.

There is no reason to trust that a small group of men from industrialized countries will geoengineer the planet with integrity or intelligence, or keep the rights of vulnerable peoples in mind. They acknowledge that these plans carry huge risks and they are ready to gamble.

### Global Experiments: There is no Planet B

In March 2010, 175 self-selected experts met in Asilomar California, to discuss how to carry out controlled climate engineering experiments – not in computer simulations but in the real world. While it was billed as an international conference, only 14 countries were represented! Included in those discussions were geoengineering companies such as Climos Inc, an ocean fertilization firm that hopes to profit from dumping iron in the sea. Some governments are already funding geoengineering research and the financial investments are anticipated to grow – unless we stop them.

There is no such thing as “*controlled experimentation*” on our one and only Mother Earth. The geoengineering experiments that would provide the data these scientists want would already cross the line from inadvertently affecting planetary systems to purposely messing with them.

In the process of testing these technologies, the world's peoples (and other living organisms) would become experimental subjects without having ever given their consent. To cite just one example, shooting sulfates into the stratosphere could perhaps cool the earth, but it could also severely disrupt Asian and African monsoons threatening the sources of water and food for 2 billion people!

***We can't afford such experiments on our only home, planet Earth.***

**Raise your hand to defend Mother Earth!**

In the past two years, geoengineers have created an illusion of a consensus that we need to get on with “research”, which necessarily includes experimentation. This consensus is a fiction. The majority of the world's peoples and governments do not know what geoengineering is, have not been consulted on what they think and have nothing to gain from the search for a technological fix that will delay long-overdue emissions reduction in the countries that got us into the climate crisis in the first place. There is no example in history where rich and powerful governments or corporations have introduced a technological change that has not increased their power and privilege.



## Why is Geoengineering so Dangerous?

**Large-scale:** For any geoengineering technique to have an impact on the climate, it will have to be deployed on a massive scale, and unintended consequences are also likely to be massive and irreversible, especially in the global South.

**Unreliable:** Geoengineering messes with poorly understood complex systems such as the climate and ocean ecology. Interventions could go awry because of mechanical failure, human error, incomplete knowledge, natural phenomena (like volcanic eruptions), trans-boundary impacts, irreversibility or funding failures.

**The perfect excuse:** Geoengineering appears to offer Northern governments and industry an option other than reducing greenhouse gas emissions and moves them even further away from acknowledging their climate debt.

**Unequal:** OECD governments and corporations – who have denied climate change or prevaricated for decades -- are the ones with the budgets and the technology to execute this gamble with our home.

**Unilateral:** Many proposed geoengineering techniques could be relatively cheap to deploy, and the technical capacity to do so will be within reach of some individuals, corporations and states in the coming decade. Multilateral mechanisms to prevent unilateral attempts at planetary modification are urgently needed.

**Treaty violation:** Many geoengineering techniques can have military applications and they would violate the UN Environmental Modification Treaty of 1978. In addition, treaties protecting our oceans, human rights and biodiversity, to cite just a few, contain provisions that need to be respected.

**Commercializing the climate:** Competition is already stiff in the patent offices among those who think they have a planetary fix for the climate crisis. The prospect of a private monopoly holding the “rights” to modify the climate is terrifying.

**Carbon profiteering:** Some geoengineers, including those promoting ocean fertilization and biochar, have already tried to profit from carbon trading schemes by making these unproven technologies eligible for offsets.

## Join us in opposing geoengineering

We are:

- **Telling geoengineers:**  
**Hands Off Mother Earth!**
- **Telling governments:**  
**Ban geoengineering experiments** nationally & under the United Nations.
- Calling on peoples' movements and civil society organizations to **recognize Mother Earth as our common home**, whose integrity should never be violated by geoengineering experimentation or deployment.

The changes we need are social, economic and political.

Geoengineering is a dangerous distraction.



More information: [www.etcgroup.org](http://www.etcgroup.org)

Endorse these demands by sending us a message:  
[join@handsoffmotherearth.org](mailto:join@handsoffmotherearth.org)

See what else you can do at:

[www.handsoffmotherearth.org](http://www.handsoffmotherearth.org)