

IGF Workshop Proposal Form

1. Proposer: (Contact Person)
Ricardo Grassi – IPS Academy
Bhanu Neupane - UNESCO

2. Thematic Track:
Environment

Proposal Information

3. Title:
Tackling Climate Change Disinformation- Beyond Confusion, Inspiring Action

4. Description:
Anthropological climate change is threatening the survival of humanity. In the fight against climate change, disinformation is a spanner in the works. Climate change disinformation downplays the severity of climate change and humanity's role in exacerbating the consequences. If disinformation is believed, individuals may be discouraged from acting to reduce their environmental impact, slowing down our fight against climate change.

The Internet, especially social media platforms, has become a major vector of climate change disinformation, and emerging technologies have been misused to produce and further disseminate disinformation.

As part of the fight against climate change, it is important to address the two key suppliers of information – the producers and the disseminators. Supply-side solutions work on the suppliers of information, to curb the production of false information, remove it from circulation or prevent its spread by yielding more true information.

5. Avenues for Problems and Solutions

There are measures which respond to disinformation from both types of information producers. Legal and political regulation strategies can discourage and punish dissemination of disinformation. For example, media platforms can also commit to self-regulatory standards, such as the European Commission's Code of Practice on Disinformation. The Code of Practice includes measures such as removing fake accounts and limiting the visibility of sites that promote disinformation, and was signed by Facebook, Google, Twitter, and others.

Social media companies can also make use of AI enabled engine and algorithms to identify and address disinformation. Facebook, for example, now reviews little-known websites whose articles get sudden surges of traffic, which is a red flag for misinformation and clickbait

Finally, producing true information helps to consistently communicate facts in an approachable way in order to build up a resilient reality that citizens should understand before encountering false information. In this effort, independent and quality media are key. An example is Fact Avalanche, an online tool that alerts participants when a false tweet about climate change is released, and invites them to respond using proven scientific facts, to “bury” disinformation under truth.

6. Key Policy Questions:

1. How are existing and emerging digital technologies being used to facilitate the production and dissemination of disinformation about climate change?
2. How can the same technologies be used to combat disinformation and circulate verified scientific information to the general public?
3. What sort of policies/regulations can be formulated to combat climate change disinformation facilitated by technologies?

7. Relevance

The potential contributions of Internet and digital technologies on the fight against climate change have been often touted, particularly its ability to provide information and avenues for collaboration, facilitating understanding and ultimately action. Our workshop aims to explore the opposing side to this phenomenon, which is emerging as a potent force; the use of the Internet to foster disinformation and discourage serious action against the climate threat.

This misuse of Internet and digital technologies is an area that needs to be subject to more governance, both in terms of self-regulation and innovative responses from the private sector, and potentially policymaking from governments.

8. Workshop Format:

The workshop will be conducted in a **Panel Format** where a diversity of experts, journalists and climate scientists will explore climate change disinformation and the various implications.

The diverse stakeholders invested in climate change information, including journalists, climate activists, academics will discuss the phenomena of climate disinformation and how they, in their various fields, observe this phenomenon and are affected by it, as well as some measures that can be taken. They will also further explore the supply side aspect of climate change disinformation and discuss various information management strategies that can advocate for accurate information.

These stakeholders will give a concise **10 minute presentation** (presuming there are 5 speakers) and then proceed to a **40 minute panel discussion** on the topic with questions from the floor.

9. Expected outcomes of the workshop:

- To facilitate an open dialogue between policy makers and experts regarding the forms and implications of climate change disinformation.
- Discuss the current platforms and available resources that monitor and fact-check information. As well as discuss ways to formulate a strategy for information dissemination that overrides any disinformation.
- Explore the prospects of forming new collaborations and long-term projects that propel accurate information surrounding climate change, particularly initiatives making use of Internet and new technologies.

10. Diversity of Team

In terms of speakers, we have endeavoured to be as inclusive as possible by including stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, in terms of gender, age group, and region. Additionally, our speakers are from stakeholder groups who have different expertise and perspectives on the issue, including journalists, scientists, and youth activists.

Our team is similarly diverse, composed of equal numbers of men and women, and hailing from Europe and Asia.

11. Suggested Speakers

	Speaker	Position and Organisation
1	Bhanu Neupane (moderator)	UNESCO Programme Specialist
2	Ricardo Grassi	President IPS Academy and Director General of Citizens' Platform
3	Martina Klimes	Advisor for Water and Peace and Stockholm International Institute for Water
4	Astrid Caldas	Senior climate scientist with the Climate & Energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists
5	Vanessa Nakate	Uganda Fridays for Future - Youth Activist

12. Organizers

- ◇ Dr Bhanu Neupane, UNESCO Communication and Information Sector, Universal Access to Information Section
- ◇ Ricardo Grassi, President IPS Academy and Director General of Citizens' Platform on Climate Change and a Sustainable World
- ◇ Ms Melissa Tay, UNESCO Communication and Information Sector, Universal Access to Information Section
- ◇ Ms Asha Fowdar, UNESCO Communication and Information Sector, Universal Access to Information Section
- ◇ Dr Martina Klimes, Stockholm International Water Institute

13. Relation to SDGs

- **GOAL 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
Target 16.10 – Fundamental Freedoms and Public Access to Information

- **GOAL 13: Climate Action**

Target 13.2 - Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

14. Links to UNESCO work

UNESCO has a dual mandate on creating and disseminating accurate climate change information to its Member States and the public.

Firstly, under the World Summit on Information Society processes, UNESCO's Communication and Information sector is charged with Action Line C3, which includes developing access and solutions to ensure universal access to scientific information and knowledge. Since then, Member States have also reaffirmed that one of UNESCO's goals should be to build inclusive knowledge societies, an important component of which is to ensure dissemination of correct information and data.

Secondly, the Climate Change Initiative was launched by UNESCO in 2015, to help Member States to mitigate and adapt to climate change¹. This would, of course, include the creation and dissemination of accurate information about climate change.

Some examples of our efforts include data and climate information services on water security, earth sciences, biodiversity and the ocean, through various programmes such as the International Hydrological Programme (IHP)². Additionally, climate change education is part of the Education for Sustainable Development programme, and resources for teaching climate change in schools have been created³. More specific to the media field, [journalism handbooks](#) for reporting on climate change have been created.

UNESCO has also begun to work on combatting disinformation. The publication [Journalism, 'F*ke News' and Disinformation: A handbook for Journalism Education and Training](#), for example, educates journalists on fighting back against disinformation and misinformation through media and information literacy. The MILCLICKS initiative also uses social media to raise awareness about media literacy and debunk disinformation, including about climate change⁴. UNESCO also co-chairs the Broadband Commission working group on freedom of expression and addressing disinformation⁵, which is conducting research into strategies to combat disinformation.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/addressing-climate-change>

² <https://en.unesco.org/themes/addressing-climate-change/climate-knowledge-science-and-culture>

³ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/addressing-climate-change/climate-change-education-and-awareness>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/MILCLICKS/photos/a.1376296219082702/2545986408780338/?type=3&theater>

⁵ <https://broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/WG4-2019.aspx>