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Bert Bolin, 82, Is Dead; Led U.N. Climate Panel

By [DENNIS HEVESI](#)

Bert Bolin, a pioneering climatologist and the first chairman of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President [Al Gore](#) for their warnings about [global warming](#), died Sunday in Stockholm. He was 82.

The cause was stomach cancer, Henning Rodhe, a chemistry professor and colleague of Dr. Bolin at Stockholm University, told Agence France-Presse. Professor Rodhe said Dr. Bolin (pronounced bo-LEEN) “was thrilled” that the [United Nations](#) panel had shared the Nobel Peace Prize. “He was supposed to have gone to Oslo to accept the prize, but was too sick,” Professor Rodhe said.

Last month, while visiting [Sweden](#), Mr. Gore told Dr. Bolin in a written statement: “Bert, you set up the framework for the I.P.C.C. and without your contributions we would not have come to where we are today. Thank you for starting the process.”

Dr. Bolin traveled to Washington in May 1959 and, according to The New York Times, told the [National Academy of Sciences](#) that a 25 percent increase in the amount of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere during the 150-year period ending in 2000 could be expected. Carbon dioxide, he said then, was the cause of a warming trend of two to three degrees in the previous 50 years.

He was chairman of the United Nations panel from 1988 to 1997 and, with scientific expertise and acquired diplomatic skills, shepherded the panel through the first two of its influential climatological assessment reports.

“You’re dealing with people from all countries, all perspectives, all different points of view; people who are strongly attached to particular ideas,” Dan Reifsnyder, the State Department’s deputy assistant secretary for environment and sustainable development, said Thursday. “Somehow Bert got this group to work together to produce objective scientific and technical reports that come very close to policy.”

The panel, created in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization, brought together 3,500 scientists from around the world and set them in three working groups. One examines atmospheric chemistry and greenhouse gas emissions. The second deals with the impacts of various degrees of climate change. The third researches the possibilities for mitigation.

The concerns expressed in the first of the two assessments issued during Dr. Bolin’s chairmanship, in August 1990, led to the drafting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the first international document bringing nations together to deal with the issue. The framework, first promoted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992, has 192 signatories, including the United States.

The second assessment issued during Dr. Bolin’s tenure, in 1995, led to the Kyoto Protocol, which called on industrialized countries to collectively limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. The United States signed the protocol in 1998, but the document has never been sent to the Senate for its consent.

“Bert was responsible for helping to assure that the I.P.C.C. remained an objective scientific and technical body,” said Mr. Reifsnyder, who worked with Dr. Bolin for many years.

Bert Richard Johannes Bolin was born in Nykoping, Sweden, on May 15, 1925. He graduated from the Uppsala University in 1946. He earned a master’s degree in 1949 and a doctorate in 1956, both in meteorology, at Stockholm University. He was hired as an associate professor there and remained on the faculty until 1990.

Dr. Bolin’s marriage to Ulla Frykstrand ended in divorce in 1979. His survivors include three children: Dan, Karina and Goran.

Early in his career, Dr. Bolin began researching what is called the carbon cycle.

“It’s sort of a big Ferris wheel that circulates carbon dioxide between the atmosphere, the oceans and plant life after it is emitted by humans, or naturally,” said Michael Oppenheimer, a professor of geosciences and international affairs at Princeton. “Bolin did fundamental work toward modern understanding of the state of carbon dioxide emissions.” He also contributed, Dr. Oppenheimer said, toward determining how much extra carbon dioxide results from deforestation.

But his greatest achievement, Dr. Oppenheimer said, may have been “as a scientific statesman.”

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