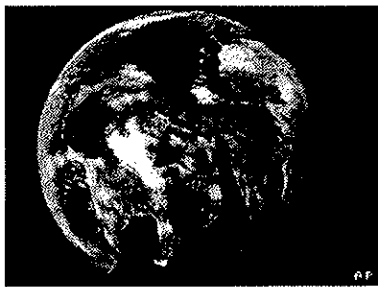


# World 'appeasing' climate threat

By Alex Kirby

BBC News Online environment correspondent



Looking at home - but it cannot go on like this

**One of the UK's best-known scientists, Professor James Lovelock, says only a catastrophe will prompt the world to tackle the threat of climate change.**

He says the global climate treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, is simply an attempt to appease a self-regulating Earth system.

Professor Lovelock thinks the Earth's attempts to restore its equilibrium may eliminate civilisation and most humans.

He wants a rapid end to the destruction of natural habitats, which he says are key to planetary climate and chemistry.

**“ We are at war with the Earth itself. We are Gaia's target now**

” Professor James Lovelock

Professor Lovelock won acclaim for developing the Gaia Hypothesis, which suggests the Earth functions as a single organism which maintains the conditions necessary for its survival.

His latest comments were made at a conference at Dartington Hall in Devon. He told a collection of scientists, civil servants and others concerned about climate change of his concern at the prospect facing the Earth.

Professor Lovelock said: "In the late 1930s when I was a student we knew that war was imminent, but there was no clear idea of what to do about it.

### **Future fears**

"I find a marked similarity between attitudes over 60 years ago and those now towards the threat of global [climate] change.



Professor James Lovelock: Gaia will seek a balance (*Image: Sandy Lovelock*)

"Most of us think that something unpleasant may soon happen but we are as confused over what to do about it as we were in 1938.

"Our response so far is just like that in 1938, an attempt to appease. The Kyoto agreement is uncannily like that of Munich, with politicians out to show that they do respond but in reality are bidding for time."

Professor Lovelock said global warming was "the response of our outraged planet", and the consequences for humanity were likely to be far worse than any war.

"We are at war with the Earth itself", he said. "We are Gaia's target now." Professor Lovelock added that we had still to wake

up to the seriousness of our plight, with some people continuing to deny that global change even existed.

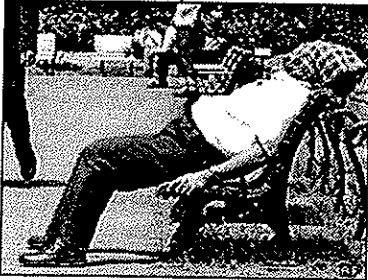
Heeding them, or the deep Greens who rejected science, would allow the planet to return to its normal state of health, "but by eliminating the majority of humans and probably civilization as well".

Repeating his call for humans to use the best technology, including nuclear energy, Professor Lovelock said: "There may be a way to come to terms with Gaia and survive, and it is to take the hi-tech road.

"We must stop fretting over the minute statistical risks of cancer from chemicals or radiation.

### **Scorched Earth policy**

"Our goal should be the cessation of fossil fuel consumption as quickly as possible, and there must be no more natural habitat destruction anywhere.



Periods of very hot weather may become more frequent

"To attempt to farm the whole Earth to feed people, even with organic farming, would make us like sailors who burnt the timbers and rigging of their ship to keep warm.

"The natural ecosystems of the Earth are not just there for us to take as farmland; they are there to sustain the climate and the chemistry of the planet."

In place of sustainable development, Professor Lovelock called

for "a well-planned sustainable retreat", a programme that would dwarf the space and military programmes.

He said his hope lay "in that powerful force that takes over our lives when we sense that our tribe or nation is threatened from outside".

Professor Lovelock told BBC News Online: "I do think it will take a disaster to wake us up.

"We had one in Europe last summer with the heatwaves which killed 20,000 people. I'm afraid it will take more of the same, or something else like that, to stir us."

Tony Juniper, from Friends of the Earth, said there was much to admire in Professor Lovelock's thinking but it was crazy to consider nuclear power as a solution.

"One of the advantages of nuclear power is that it produces fewer carbon dioxide emissions than fossil fuels, but weighed against this are a great many disadvantages - and top of the list is what to do with the very deadly radioactive waste," he told the BBC.