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Ed Rubin, the voice of conscience on climate change

• The Nobel laureate, author of the special report of the IPCC, gives citizens the responsibility of electing politicians sensitive to the environment

MARTI PAOLA, Barcelona

18/06/2016 00:05 | Updated 06/18/2016 1:06

Ed Rubin, one of the most influential experts in the world on climate change, visited Barcelona recently and added his critical voice about the direction of the planet. Rubin, lead author and coordinator of the special report on the capture and storage of carbon by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for its work, jointly with Al Gore, continues to support the natural and ecological sources of energy as the most viable alternative.

In this video interview, the American researcher says that governments have a fundamental role in solving this problem and, therefore, during the Spanish election campaign encourages citizens to choose judiciously those politicians who will lead national policies to address the situation, because without them there will be no solution.

"The planet's temperature has risen by almost one degree Celsius in the last century, and these pollutants remain in the atmosphere for many centuries, with their current levels at the highest in the last million years," he explains with a pedagogical flare to emphasize that climate change is already more than just a threat.

Four innovative solutions

In Barcelona, at a conference organized by the Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC), Rubin spoke about what kinds of innovations are needed to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and focused on four strategies: reduce energy demand in the most important sectors of the economy, improve the efficiency of energy use, replace fossil fuels with high carbon content (such as coal and oil), and finally capture and isolate the CO₂ emitted from the use of fossil fuels to prevent its release into the atmosphere.

“What power company would invest a lot of money on carbon capture and storage technology if there is no incentive or obligation to cut CO₂ emissions?”

On the proposal to capture pollutants, the Nobel laureate, who speaks perfect Castilian and has strong links with the city of Valencia, believes that power plants and other large industrial sources could capture their CO₂ and isolate it in deep geological formations or in depleted oil and gas deposits. This is an option that has gained prominence in recent years, with initiatives already launched to develop and demonstrate the feasibility of this method to mitigate climate change.

The role of governments

Edward Rubin, professor of environmental engineering and science from Carnegie Mellon University in the United States, focused on the lack of government policies as a cause of the current situation. "What power company would invest a lot of money on carbon capture and storage technology if there is no incentive or obligation to cut CO₂ emissions? How many people would be willing to buy an advanced vehicle that costs much more than a conventional car just to reduce their carbon footprint?" asks Rubin.

"Only through government actions that require or make it financially feasible to reduce pollutant emissions are markets created for the products and services that enable such reductions," he adds.