

## Obituary: Bob Scholes



*Picture Courtesy of University of Witwatersrand*

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The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has learned with shock and sadness of the death of long-time IPCC author Bob Scholes, who died aged 63 on 28 April 2021 while on a hike in Namibia. Professor Scholes was an author of the Third, Fourth and Fifth IPCC Assessment Reports.

Scholes also led many aspects of the expert work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), including co-chairing the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment. Recently, together with the Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group II, Hans-Otto Pörtner, he co-chaired the Scientific Steering Committee of the IPCC-IPBES co-sponsored workshop on climate change and biodiversity that was held in December 2020.

He was Distinguished Professor of Systems Ecology and Director of the Global Change Institute at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. In a statement the University said it was “shocked and saddened by the sudden loss of such a giant in the field of climate science, not only in South Africa, but in the world.”

“He was among the top one per cent of environmental scientists worldwide, based on citation frequency, and published widely in the fields of savanna ecology, global change, and earth observation,” it said.

In tribute, Working Group II Co-Chair Debra Roberts, the IPCC Bureau Member from South Africa, said: “We have lost one of our very best. Bob was a pioneer in all that he did. He was a commanding intellect and never allowed anyone to be complacent about science.”

“He was generous with his knowledge, a mentor to many and someone who cared deeply about Africa, its ecosystems and its people. He committed his life to understanding the way the planet works and how we might find ways of dealing with its challenges. As a result he played leading roles in the IPCC and IPBES assessments, and both communities will be

poorer without him. There is no doubt in my mind that he lives on through his work - a lasting legacy to this generation and many more to come. Hamba kahle Bob," she said.

Bob Scholes had over three decades of field experience in many parts of the African savannas and the world. Among his other international commitments, Scholes was a member of the steering committees of several Global Earth Observation (GEO) bodies including chair of the Global Terrestrial Observing System and the Group on Earth Observation Implementation Planning Task Team.

Born in 1957, Bob Scholes was a Foreign Associate of the US National Academy of Sciences, Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, Member of the South African Academy and a winner of South Africa's National Science and Technology Forum Lifetime Contribution to Science Award.

He is survived by his wife Professor Mary Scholes and a son.