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IPCC takes decisions on future work

NAIROBI, Feb 27 – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has taken a series of decisions to make its reports more accessible and involve developing countries more closely in its work.

The decisions, following a review of the future work of the IPCC over the past year and a half, pave the way for the IPCC to prepare its next cycle of reports, which will be initiated by elections for a new Bureau and Chair in October 2015.

“We have taken stock of our future. We have been through a detailed process to examine how to continually improve our work, to make it as relevant and useful as possible, not only for government policymakers but for society at large,” said Acting Chair Ismail El Gizouli.

Among the moves agreed to this week at its Session in Nairobi, Kenya, the Panel decided to increase the representation of African and Asian countries in the IPCC Bureau by increasing the number of its members to 34 from 31.

It also decided to continue preparing comprehensive assessment reports every five to seven years, which also cover regional aspects of climate change, taking into account the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in determining its future reports and their timing.

It agreed that the different parts of an assessment report should be released within about a year, but no more than 18 months, with a staggering between working group contributions to allow information presented by one working group to be adequately reflected in the other working group contributions and the Synthesis Report.

“I am very pleased with the progress we made this week,” said Renate Christ, Secretary of the IPCC. “The Panel addressed a wide range of issues to enhance the timing and quality of the IPCC’s reports. The IPCC is in good hands and well prepared for the future.”

This meeting, hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme at its headquarters in Nairobi, was the IPCC’s first since completing the Fifth Assessment Report in November 2014, the most comprehensive assessment of the science relating to climate change ever undertaken.

The IPCC generally examines its operations and products at the end of an assessment cycle. The latest review, to help determine how the IPCC works in future, the kind of reports it produces and how it can draw on the contributions of all its members, began in October 2013.

Selection of decisions taken by the IPCC at its 41st Session in Nairobi on 24-27 February

Structure and operations of the IPCC

- Increase the representation of African and Asian countries on the IPCC Bureau by increasing the number of its members to 34 from 31;
- Request the Secretariat and Technical Support Units to command a respectful workplace, emphasizing policies and practices that promote diversity, fairness, collaboration and inclusiveness.

Frequency and scheduling of reports

- Continue to produce assessment reports every 5 to 7 years;
- Parts of an assessment report to be issued within about a year and at most 18 months of each other.

Making reports more user-friendly

- Ensure that up-to-date digital technology is used to share and disseminate information;
- Seek advice from various specialists to make IPCC reports more readable.

Enhancing the role and contribution of developing countries

- Improve access for authors to non-English language scientific literature;
- Encourage the authors of non-English language literature to serve as expert reviewers, contributing authors and chapter scientists;
- Allow the possibility of both countries providing co-chairs for a working group or task force to host a technical support unit to enhance the profile and improve working conditions for co-chairs from developing countries;
- Consider how to broaden the nomination process for authors and review editors;
- Encourage the use of research assistants or chapter scientists to support authors;
- Encourage co-chairs and other Bureau members to engage experts from developing countries in technical support units, as authors and as reviewers;
- Increase the number of IPCC activities in developing countries;
- Arrange briefings and training sessions for government representatives, e.g. before IPCC sessions;
- Use communications and outreach activities to provide experts with information about the IPCC process and how they can participate in IPCC work;
- Consider ways of training and supporting young scientists from developing countries, even though training and capacity-building is beyond the mandate of the IPCC.

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For more information, including links to the IPCC reports, go to:

www.ipcc.ch

Information about the work of the Task Group on the Future Work of the IPCC, including relevant documents, can be found at: <http://ipcc.ch/apps/future/>

The full agenda of the meeting and other relevant documents can be found here:

http://ipcc.ch/scripts/session_template.php?page=41ipcc.htm

What is the IPCC?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the world body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

The IPCC does not do its own research, conduct climate measurements or produce its own climate models; it assesses the thousands of scientific papers published each year to tell policymakers what we know and don't know about the risks related to climate change, and identifies where there is agreement in the scientific community, where there are differences, and where further research is needed.

Thus the IPCC offers policymakers a snapshot of what the scientific community understands about climate change rather than promoting a particular view. IPCC reports are policy-relevant without being policy-prescriptive. The IPCC may set out options for policymakers to choose from in pursuit of goals decided by policymakers, but it does not tell governments what to do.

To produce its reports, the IPCC mobilizes hundreds of scientists who – like the Chair and other elected officials – work as volunteers. These scientists and officials are drawn from diverse backgrounds. They are not paid for their work at the IPCC. Only a dozen permanent staff work in the IPCC's Secretariat.

The members of the IPCC, comprising the Panel, are its 195 member governments. They work by consensus to endorse the reports of the IPCC and set its procedures and budget in plenary meetings of the Panel. The word "Intergovernmental" in the organization's name reflects this. It is not a United Nations agency, but is sponsored by two UN organizations – WMO and UNEP.

IPCC reports are requested by the member governments and developed by authors drawn from the scientific community in an extensive process of repeated drafting and review. Scientists and other experts participate in this review process through a self-declaration of expertise. The Panel endorses these reports in a dialogue between the governments that request the reports and will work with them and the scientists that write them. In this discussion the scientists have the last word on any additions or changes, although the Panel may agree by consensus to delete something.

The Fifth Assessment Report

The IPCC produces comprehensive assessment reports on climate change every six years or so. The IPCC completed the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) with the release of the Synthesis Report on 2 November 2014. AR5 is the most comprehensive assessment of climate change ever undertaken. Over 830 scientists from over 80 countries were selected to form the author teams producing the report. They in turn drew on the work of over 1,000 contributing authors and over 1,000 expert reviewers. AR5 assessed over 30,000 scientific papers.

Besides the Synthesis Report, AR5 includes the contributions of IPCC Working Group I (the physical science basis of climate change), of Working Group II (impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability), and of Working Group III (mitigation of climate change).

The Synthesis Report distills, synthesizes and integrates the findings of the working group contributions into a concise document. This integrated approach allows the Synthesis Report to draw together the assessment of past changes in climate as well as projections for the future from

the three working group reports as well as the two Special Reports brought out in 2011. It covers both adaptation and mitigation to provide an overview of possible risks and solutions.