

2014/14/ST

## IPCC STATEMENT

6 April 2014

BERLIN, 6 April - With reference to an article that appeared on 6 April 2014 in the Mail on Sunday, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is issuing the following statement:

### **Errors in publications cited by the Working Group II report**

The Mail on Sunday has reported that there are errors in the Final Draft of the contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which was released on 31 March 2014.

The errors in question relate to publications written by Professor Richard Tol, who is also one of the coordinating lead authors of the Working Group II report.

The IPCC has clear procedures for dealing with errors in its own reports<sup>1</sup>. It will issue an erratum to its reports if an alleged error is substantiated after the report is published. An erratum will also be issued if an error in one of the publications cited by the IPCC means that the IPCC report is wrong.

The IPCC understands that Professor Tol is planning to issue errata on some of his papers referenced in the Working Group II report, but has not yet done so.

The IPCC can only initiate its erratum policy in this case once the journals in which Professor Tol published his papers have issued their own corrections.

Professor Tol withdrew in September 2013 from the core writing team that produced the Summary for Policymakers. However he participated actively in the approval process for the Summary in March 2014 and agrees with the final wording on all statements related to the chapter on which he worked.

### **The Summary for Policymakers of the Working Group II report**

The Mail on Sunday article also misrepresents the process by which the Summary for Policymakers of the Working Group II report was approved, and provides incorrect references in the underlying report to excerpts it quotes from the Summary for Policymakers.

The IPCC was set up to provide governments with assessments of all the scientific information related to climate change. The IPCC does not conduct its own research, but assesses relevant scientific publications to tell governments what is known and not known about climate change. The mandate of the IPCC requires it to look at the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts, and options for adaptation and mitigation. The IPCC reports are not restricted to climate science but explicitly required to look at the impacts of climate change, among other things.

IPCC assessments are requested by its 195 member governments, and compiled by teams of hundreds of scientists nominated by governments, observer organizations and the scientific community. Following repeated drafting and review, a final draft of the report including its Summary for Policymakers is sent to governments for comments. This is in preparation for a meeting of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc\\_error\\_protocol.pdf](http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc_error_protocol.pdf)

government delegates that examines the Summary for Policymakers line by line, in dialogue with the scientists who wrote it. Governments may propose changes to the Summary in order to improve clarity but the changes must be in line with the full report, and the scientists have the last word on whether to accept the changes that are proposed.

The Mail on Sunday also quotes some passages from the Working Group II Summary for Policymakers on migration and refugees, wars and conflicts, famine, and extreme weather, which it claims are “sexed up” from statements in the underlying report. In doing so it misleads the reader by distorting the carefully balanced language of the document.

For instance, the Mail on Sunday quotes the Summary as saying climate change will ‘increase risks of violent conflicts’. In fact the Summary says that climate change can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts by amplifying factors such as poverty and economic shocks. The Mail on Sunday says the Summary warns of negative impacts on crop yields, with warming responsible for lower yields of wheat, maize, soya and rice. In fact the Summary says that negative impacts of climate change on crop yields have been more common than positive impacts, with wheat and maize yields negatively affected in many regions and effects on rice and soybean yields smaller in major production regions.

The references to the underlying report cited by the Mail on Sunday in contrast to the Summary for Policymakers also give a completely misleading and distorted impression of the report through selective quotation. For instance the reference to “environmental migrants” is a sentence describing just one paper assessed in a chapter that cites over 500 papers – one of five chapters on which the statement in the Summary for Policymakers is based. A quoted sentence on the lack of a strong connection between warming and armed conflict is again taken from the description of just one paper in a chapter that assesses over 600 papers. A simple keyword search shows many references to publications and statements in the report showing the opposite conclusion, and supporting the statement in the Summary that “Climate change can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts in the form of civil war and inter-group violence...”.

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