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SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT (AR6) PRODUCTS

Strategic Planning

(Submitted by the Acting Secretary of the IPCC)

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Strategic Planning

Background

At its 50th Session, held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 9 October 2015, the IPCC Bureau considered a schedule proposal tabled by the Acting Secretary of the IPCC which indicated meetings and other initiatives to be undertaken during 2016 in order to initiate the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle.

The IPCC Bureau had a preliminary exchange of views on the topic of a strategic plan for the sixth assessment cycle and a wide variety of views were expressed. The discussions covered issues such as, *inter alia*: enhancing the participation of developing countries in the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6); the early design of the contents of the Synthesis Report (SYR); the launching of the AR6 scoping process (for both the Special Reports and the Working Group Reports); communications during the sixth assessment cycle; the establishment of and configuration of the Technical Support Units (TSUs); methods for addressing emerging issues, for example the outcomes of 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; and, the value of creating a Task Group to prepare a business plan for the sixth assessment cycle.

No formal decisions were made by the 50th Session of the Bureau in this regard and it was agreed to consider this matter further at the 51st Session of the Bureau.

At the 51st Session of the Bureau the Deputy Secretary of the IPCC introduced a tentative schedule of strategic planning timeframes for the Sixth Assessment Report cycle. The main topics discussed were the overall length of the AR6 cycle, how many Special Reports could be feasible in procedural and logistics terms and how to address regional aspects during the assessment cycle.

The general feeling of the participants in the 51st Session of the Bureau was that the maximum feasible number of reports (including Special Reports and a possible report on regional aspects) would be three although some interventions supported more and others less. Some interventions questioned the desirability of having an independent volume on regional aspects while others supported it but there was convergence on the need for including regional assessments. The Chair of the IPCC concluded that the documentation to the 43rd Session of the Panel should include options for addressing regional aspects (see IPCC-XLIII/INF.19 on regional aspects).

Some interventions supported starting the scoping process of the main assessment report as soon as possible, adding a second scoping meeting and compressing the sequence of consultative periods in order to adopt the Synthesis Report in 2021 while others argued in favor of avoiding overlapping between such periods and other initiatives and pointed out the need for fresh information on scenarios before Working Group I could finalize its work. There was general support to produce the contribution of Working Group III before that of Working Group II and that a 6 months gap should be respected between the approval of the contributions of each Working Group as well as the adoption of the Synthesis Report.

There was general consensus that IPCC should be responsive to the needs of the UNFCCC and should finalize AR6 in a timely manner in view of the 2023 deadline set by the UNFCCC regarding the Global Stocktaking under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement. For similar reasons several interventions supported the need of aligning the IPCC assessment cycles with the UNFCCC Global Stocktaking cycle after 2023.

The Chair of the IPCC concluded at the 51st Session of the Bureau that the Acting Secretary should submit proposals to the 43rd Session of the Panel trying to reconcile all the opinions expressed from the floor.

This matter was also considered at the 34th and 35th meetings of the IPCC Executive Committee.

General framework

The rules contained in Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work on the Procedures for the preparation, review, acceptance, adoption, approval and publication of IPCC reports (“the rules”) has been observed in the production of the Strategic Timetable below and the Annex 1 to this document. The following aspects have been particularly considered:

- In line with rule 4.2 on general procedures for preparing IPCC reports, efforts should be made to avoid (or at least minimize) the overlap of government review periods for different IPCC Reports and with Sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC and its Subsidiary Bodies).
- In line with rule 4.2 on general procedures for preparing IPCC reports, expert review normally takes eight weeks, but no less than six weeks. Government and government/expert reviews should not be less than eight weeks, except to the extent decided by the Panel. .
- Without prejudging any decision that the Panel may take on the matter of Special Reports, the Strategic Timetable indicates how the production of one or even two Special Reports could fit in the timetable. It also indicates how the production of a Special Report by 2018 could fit in the timetable. Undertaking more than two Special Reports would imply overlapping in consultation and review process between different products.
- Without prejudging any decision that the Panel may take on the matter of Methodology Reports, the Strategic Timetable indicates how the production of one Methodology Report could fit in the timetable.
- The Strategic Timetable reflects a staged approval of IPCC AR6 products. One in 2018, two in 2019, one in 2020 and three in 2021. This is in line with paragraph 5 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4 on the Future Work of the IPCC which states that “All parts of an Assessment Report should be released within about one year but no more than eighteen months, with staggering between the WG reports allowing for information presented by one Working Group (WG) to be adequately reflected by other WGs and the SYR”.
- The Strategic Timetable indicates Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report to be produced before the contribution of Working Group II. This will facilitate the transfer of information from WGIII into WGII as well as providing additional time for the assessment of WGI to be used by WGII. In addition, this would be advantageous if the Panel decides to produce a report on regional aspects.
- In order to comply with paragraph 5 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4 quoted above, the consideration of regional aspects within the AR6 would need to be either integrated within each main product, or produced in parallel to some of the main products or otherwise, if a staged process is to be considered it might imply extending the AR6 cycle beyond the 7 years indicated in paragraph 1 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4 on the Future Work of IPCC (see IPCC-XLIII/INF. 19 on regional aspects).
- The Strategic Timetable tries to avoid overlap between major steps in the IPCC programme of work and key meetings under the UNFCCC. Overlapping with Conferences of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2018 and 2020 will be avoided by either advancing or delaying by few weeks the corresponding Sessions of the Panel taking into account the logistical considerations.

Key strategic considerations

There are three key strategic considerations that are pivotal for the construction of the timetable:

- a. The first is paragraph 1 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4 on the Future Work of the IPCC which establishes a maximum length of 7 years for the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) and paragraph 28 of the same Decision which establishes that the AR6 cycle ending one year after the session at which the final product of the AR6 has been accepted, expected to end in 2022.
- b. The second is that it is unlikely that Working Group I (WG I) would be able to submit to the Panel its contribution to the AR6 before November 2020. The main reasons are that the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6) simulations are expected to be submitted to the archive in 2017-18 and the time that it will take for publications using CMIP6 output which form the basis for the near- and long-term climate projections in WG I might be at least one year later and this should be taken into account when setting the cut-off date for publications to be considered by WG I. Therefore, under this scenario the contribution of WG I will only be transmitted to the Panel eleven months before the deadline set in paragraph 28 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4 for the acceptance of SYR by the Panel. This would imply that in order to match the deadline set, the Panel will need to consider the contribution of WG III only two months after having done so for WG I, will need to consider the contribution of WG II only two months after having done so for WG III, and will need to consider the SYR only three months after having done so for WG II contribution. Extending the time gap between the consideration of the different products would require a decision of the Panel overrunning decisions made at its 41st Session. Adding an additional regional report, if not integrated within the other products, would imply a parallel process or otherwise extending the deadline set by the Panel at its 41st Session, by about 3 months (until January 2022).
- c. In order to meet the needs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) the Panel would need to consider a Special Report (SR1) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways in September 2018.

Strategic Timetable

December 2016	Panel consideration of Methodology Report outline Panel consideration of outline of SR1
April 2017	Panel consideration of outline of SR2
October 2017	Panel consideration of outline for AR6
September 2018	Panel consideration of SR1
May 2019	Panel consideration of SR2 Panel consideration of Methodology Report
November 2020	Panel consideration of WG I contribution to AR6
February 2021	Panel consideration of WG III contribution to AR6
May 2021	Panel consideration of WG II contribution to AR6
September 2021	Panel consideration of SYR AR6

Annex 1 provides, for information only, a tentative schedule of the main milestones related to this Strategic Timetable.

In line with section 4.2 of the Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work on the Procedures for the Preparation, Review, Acceptance, Adoption, Approval and Publication of IPCC Reports, and in the light of the very tight deadlines the panel may consider to authorize reducing Expert reviews and Government and government/expert reviews to 6 weeks where necessary.

Considerations for the preparations of the Seventh Assessment Report (AR7)

Article 14, paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement sets that “The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement shall undertake its first global stocktake in 2023 and every five years thereafter...”. Paragraph 100 of UNFCCC COP21 Decision adopting the Paris Agreement indicates that among the sources of input for the global stocktake to be considered by the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC serving as the Parties to the Paris Agreement would be “(b) the latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change”.

This may suggest that an IPCC assessment cycle of 5 years would be most appropriate to meet the needs of the UNFCCC.

The Panel may consider options for shortening the IPCC assessment cycle to 5 years for the AR7 and thereafter, mindful that this would imply the revision of some aspects of the current IPCC rules, including:

- a. Making the Technical Support Units (TSUs) more permanent structures. This would eliminate inefficiencies inherent to the dismantling of old TSUs and establishing new ones, including migration of information, recruitment and getting up to speed by new staff, etc. The more permanent TSUs could be either centralized or decentralized and could be established on the basis of an open call for tenders to member States. This would allow the newly elected members of the IPCC Bureau to start working full speed from day one. An example of such a business model could be the operation of the Topic Centers (similar to TSUs) under the European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET)¹ and the European Environment Agency (EEA)².
- b. Running the elections before the assessment cycle is completed so that the Bureau-elect has between six months and one year for settling down and setting up the new TSUs before taking office.
- c. Launching the call for nominations for the scoping of the new assessment cycle just before the previous cycle is finalized. In this way the scoping process could start immediately after the elections. Arguably, decisions by member States and observer organizations on who to nominate are not related to the outcome of the elections. In this way the newly elected Bureau(x) could proceed with the selection of nominees for the scoping meeting(s) shortly after the elections.
- d. Shortening the review processes.
- e. Conducting the process of evaluating lessons learned during the assessment cycle back to back with the consideration of the SYR. This would reduce the cycle by 6 months.

The non-necessarily mutually excluding options outlined above might help to shorten the IPCC assessment cycles to 5 years.

Actions suggested to the Panel

In the light of all the above the Panel is invited to:

- a. Consider whether to produce one, two or more SRs during the AR6 assessment cycle.
- b. Consider whether a Methodology Report should be produced during the AR6 assessment cycle.

¹ <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/>

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/>

- c. Consider whether regional assessments should be integrated within the main products of the AR6, or should be included in an additional stand-alone volume, or both.
- d. Consider the overall length of the AR6 assessment cycle and whether an extension of the deadline for considering the Synthesis Report would be appropriate in order to allow six months gaps between the consideration of the contributions of WG I, WG III, WGII and the Synthesis Report, this being within the 18 months maximum limits set in paragraph 5 of Decision IPCC/XLI-4.
- e. Consider to authorize reducing Expert reviews and Government and government/expert reviews to 6 weeks where necessary.
- f. Give a preliminary consideration to the options for the preparations of the Seventh Assessment Report (AR7).

Year	Month	Working Group I Report	Working Group III Report	Working Group II Report	Synthesis Report	Regional aspects	SR1	SR2 ?	TFI	IPCC/Bureau	COMMENTS	
2016	1											
	2						IPCC Bureau meeting on SRs	IPCC Bureau meeting on SRs		IPCC Bureau-51		
	3											
	4						IPCC decisions on Special Reports	IPCC decision on Special Reports	IPCC decision on MR	IPCC-43		
	4						Call for Scoping Nominations	Call for Scoping Nominations	Call for Scoping Nominations			
	5											
	6											
	7							Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on scoping nominations		
	7											
	8									Scoping Group meeting		
	9	Call for Scoping Nominations						Scoping Group meeting				
	10								Scoping Group meeting		IPCC Bureau-52	
11											UNFCCC: COP-22, 7-18 November; Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement to develop modalities for the global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Agreement and to report to the Conference of the Parties	
12							IPCC approval of the SR outline		IPCC decision on MR outline	IPCC-44		
2017	1	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Decision on Scoping Nominations	Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations		Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations	IPCC Bureau-53		
	2											
	3								Decision on selection of Authors			
	3	AR6 pre-Scoping Meeting						Decision on selection of Authors				
	4							IPCC approval of the SR outline		IPCC-45		
	5						LAM 1	Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations			UNFCCC: SB46 8-18 May	
	6								LAM1a (non-AFOLU) and LAM1b (AFOLU)			
	7	AR6 Scoping meeting										
	8	WG Sessions to draft the Outline implementation plan (doc) and background information (inf)						LAM 2	Decision on election of Authors	Science meeting	IPCC Bureau-54	
	9								LAM2			
	10	IPCC approval of the AR6 outline						FOD Expert Review	LAM 1		IPCC-46	
	10	Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations	Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations	Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations		Call for CLA/LA/RE Nominations						
11											UNFCCC: COP-23/SB47, 6-17 November	
12							LAM 3	LAM 2	FOD Expert Review			

Year	Month	Working Group I Report	Working Group III Report	Working Group II Report	Synthesis Report	Regional aspects	SR1	SR2 ?	TFI	IPCC/Bureau	COMMENTS	
2018	1								FOD Expert Review			
	2	Decision on election of Authors	Decision on election of Authors	Decision on selection of Authors		Decision on selection of			Science meeting	IPCC Bureau-55		
	3						SOD Gov&Exp Review	FOD Expert Review	LAM3	IPCC-47		
	4											
	5	LAM1						LAM 4			UNFCCC: SB48 30 April-10 May	
	6							FGD Gov Review of SPM	LAM 3	SOD Gov&Exp Review		
	7									IPCC Bureau-56		
	8		LAM 1									
	9							IPCC acceptance/adoption/ approval	SOD Gov&Exp Review	LAM4	IPCC-48	
	10			LAM1								UNFCCC: COP24/SB49 5-16 November
	11	LAM 2										
	12								LAM 4	FGD Gov Review of MR		
2019	1					LAM 1						
	2											
	3				Decision on selection of SYR Core Writing Team			FGD Gov Review of SPM		IPCC Bureau-57		
	4	FOD Expert Review	LAM 2									
	5			LAM 2				IPCC acceptance/adoption/ approval	IPCC adoption/acceptance Methodolgy Report	IPCC-49		
	6				Second SYR Scoping Meeting						UNFCCC: SB50 17-27 June	
	7	LAM 3				LAM 2						
	8		FOD Expert Review									
	9											
	10			FOD Expert Review							IPCC Bureau-58	
	11		LAM 3		FOD Expert Review	CWT 1						UNFCCC: COP25/SB51 11-22 November
	12	SOD Gov&Exp Review									IPCC-50	
2020	1											
	2			LAM 3			FOD Expert Review					
	3	LAM 4								IPCC Bureau-59		
	4		SOD Gov&Exp Review									
	5					LAM 3				IPCC-51		
	6			SOD Gov&Exp Review	CWT 2							UNFCCC: SB52 1-11 June
	7		LAM 4		SOD Gov&Exp Review							
	8	FGD Gov Review of SPM										
	9			LAM 4								
	10						SOD Gov&Exp Review				IPCC Bureau-60	
	11	IPCC acceptance/adoption/ approval									IPCC-52	UNFCCC: COP26/SB53 9-20 November
	12		FGD			CWT 3						

