

ipcc

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

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FUTURE OF THE IPCC

(Submitted by the IPCC Secretariat)

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FUTURE OF THE IPCC

Background note submitted by the IPCC Secretariat

Rationale

Rule 7 of Appendix C to the Principles Governing IPCC Work requires that the “size, structure and composition of the IPCC Bureau and any Task Force Bureau will be reviewed and amended, as necessary, by the Panel at least one Session prior to the Session at which the IPCC Bureau and/or any Task Force Bureau are elected.”

According to Rule 8 the “Term of the Bureau shall be sufficient for the preparation of an Assessment Report and shall extend approximately one year after the Session at which the Assessment Report has been accepted and shall end at the Session at which the succeeding IPCC Bureau is elected.” Rule 8 requires that the Term of the IPCC Bureau shall be defined at least one Session prior to the one at which the IPCC Bureau is elected.

Rule 8 further states that the “Term of any Task Force Bureau shall normally be the same as the Term of the IPCC Bureau, and elections for any Task Force Bureau shall take place at the same Session at which the IPCC Bureau is elected, unless decided otherwise by the Panel.”

Background

In the past the IPCC carried out at the end of every assessment process a discussion about the future of the IPCC, addressing questions such as mandate of the IPCC Working Groups, structure and scope of future products and scheduling of IPCC products and invited comments and input from inter alia governments and the scientific community.

After completion of the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) the IPCC Chair circulated on 4 January 2008 a discussion paper about “Some issues related to the future of the IPCC” (contained in Annex 2 of document IPCC-XXVIII/Doc.7) for comments by governments, IPCC observer organizations and authors involved in the AR4 assessment cycle.

At its 28th Session (Budapest, Hungary, 9-10 April 2008) the Panel considered the future of the IPCC. It decided to prepare a Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), which should be finalized in the year 2014. Therefore, according to Rule 8 the term of office of the current Bureau will end in the year 2015.

Due to lack of time, the large number of detailed submissions (see IPCC-XXVIII/INF.1 and Add.1), which provided guidance for the scoping of the next assessment, could not be considered at that session and a task group chaired by the IPCC Chair and composed of delegates from Belgium, the Netherlands, Morocco, USA, China and Uganda was set up to facilitate the consideration of the matter.

At the 30th Session (Antalya, Turkey, 21-23 April 2009) a number of decisions were taken on the basis of the task group report (IPCC-XXX/Doc.10) to guide the Fifth Assessment Report, including the AR5 scoping process, scoping of the Synthesis Report (SYR), participation of Developing countries (DCs) and countries with economy in transition (EITs) experts, regional issues and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). For longer term issues not covered by these decisions, the task group was invited to come up with a document identifying main issues to be addressed in the longer term.

At its 31st Session (Bali, Indonesia, 26-29 October 2009) the Panel further considered the future of the IPCC. IPCC Vice-chair Jean-Pascal van Ypersele reported on behalf of the task group on some of the longer term issues raised, and suggested to re-address those issues in more depth two years before the end of the fifth assessment cycle.

Meanwhile, the InterAcademy Council (IAC) was requested by the UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and the IPCC Chair to conduct an independent review of IPCC processes and procedures. The report by the IAC was published on 30 August 2010 and the Panel considered the recommendations at its 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Session and took a range of decisions on procedures, governance and management, conflict of interest policy and communications strategy.

Next Steps

In accordance with the overall schedule noted above considerations about the future of the IPCC should start at the 37th Session of the Panel. Consistent with its Terms of Reference, paragraph 3.b the Bureau at its 46th Session (Geneva, Switzerland, 28 February – 1 March 2013) was invited to provide guidance on how to introduce and advance the matter at the 37th Session of the Panel and onwards. A short background paper listing possible topics to be addressed was prepared by the IPCC Secretariat (BUR-XLVI/Doc.15). The Bureau agreed that the IPCC Secretary should seek views from governments in preparation of the 37th Session of the IPCC.

With her letter of 13 March 2013 the Secretary of the IPCC invited governments to provide their views on which topics and questions should be addressed with respect to the future of the IPCC, as well as suggestions about the process the Panel may establish for efficient and timely consideration of the matter. The letter by the Secretary, the collated submissions from governments and the background paper prepared for the 46th Session of the IPCC Bureau are provided in document IPCC-XXXVII/INF. 1.

The Panel is invited to consider the proposals and submissions and decide on how to further consider matters related to the future of the IPCC to allow that relevant decisions can be taken in time before the election of the next IPCC Bureau and Task Force Bureau.