

Opening remarks for the Twelfth Session of Working Group I

R K Pachauri, Stockholm, Sweden

Monday 23rd September 2013

Your Excellency Madame Lena Ek, Minister of Environment, Government of Sweden

My colleagues, Vice Chairs of the IPCC,

Dr. Qin Dahe and Dr Thomas Stocker, Co-Chairs of WGI

Dr Renate Christ, Secretary of the IPCC

Dr. Halldor Thorgeirsson from the Secretariat of the UNFCCC

Authors of the Working Group I report

Distinguished delegates,

Members of the media and friends,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be here at the opening of this Twelfth Session of Working Group I of the IPCC, during which the IPCC will consider the Working Group I contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report, covering the physical science basis. Let me take the opportunity on behalf of the IPCC to express my deep gratitude to the Government of Sweden for hosting this Session in the beautiful city of Stockholm, and to welcome the authors of the report and all the distinguished delegates who are present at this meeting. Stockholm ushered in a new era in human consciousness in 1972 with the UN Conference on the Human Environment, where incidentally climate change did receive some attention, but clearly our knowledge on the subject at that stage was neither as strong nor as widespread as it is today.

This Working Group I Session will approve the Summary for Policy Makers and accept the full report. This is happening at a time when the world is awaiting the outcome of this Session with great expectation, because of its obvious significance in respect of the current status of global

negotiations and the ongoing debate on actions to deal with the challenge of climate change. As you are aware, the last comprehensive assessment report of the IPCC, the AR4 was published in 2007. The world, therefore, values the release of the most up to date, unbiased, comprehensive and scientific information contained in the AR5, so that we can be fully informed about climate change and about the choices we have before us in dealing with projections of climate change that this report would provide us. There are justifiable expectations that the AR5 will be an outstanding, scientifically robust, policy relevant and informative report, which will go far beyond previous assessments, and we are here to meet these expectations.

This meeting marks an extremely important phase in the history of the IPCC and the Panel's activities, as we are in the middle of the review being undertaken by the governments which are part of the UNFCCC. I would like to commend the Co-Chairs, the authors and the TSU of Working Group I for giving us this landmark achievement. In the quarter century of IPCC's existence a progression of knowledge has been provided by this unique enterprise involving the governments of the world and the best scientific talent that is available on this planet. The work of the IPCC and the AR4 in particular have already created a deep level of awareness worldwide on various aspects of climate change and the scientific realities associated with it. Since then the two special reports brought out in in 2011 have provided a wealth of information and knowledge on renewable energy sources and their relevance to mitigation of GHG emissions and extreme events and disasters as a result of climate change along with the means by which we can advance adaptation to deal with them. The IPCC also saw from the experience with these two special reports the effectiveness of outreach efforts, and of course information dissemination was greatly assisted by efforts undertaken by many to spread the findings of recent IPCC reports to every section of human society on the globe.

But I believe that this meeting marks a new milestone in the understanding of climate change. The draft WGI Report, of course, addresses topics such as temperature change and sea-level rise, but this time it has also focused in depth on several other features whose relevance has increased over time. Since IPCC's work by definition is required to be policy relevant, the

findings of this Working Group report would give us a better understanding of a vital element of the global commons, the implications for the availability and health of key resources like land and water, and their sustainable management, which are fundamental basic aspects of life on this planet. Land and water affect every form of life, and they in turn would be affected by climate change. Working Group II and III will provide us with knowledge related to the costs and implications of inaction and details of options available to us for action. This would be in keeping with the UN General Assembly resolution endorsing the establishment of the IPCC in 1988 which mandated the IPCC in its assessment reports to cover “realistic response strategies”. While assessment of those strategies will come largely from the contributions of Working Groups II and III, the essential foundations of that understanding and key knowledge on the rationale for action as well as the implications for inaction come out of this report.

Such an exercise in producing a comprehensive and robust scientific assessment would not have been possible without the dedicated leadership of the Working Group Co-Chairs, and I take this opportunity to compliment and thank them. I would also like to express my gratitude to the hundreds of authors who have worked tirelessly and with great determination to ensure that the needs of the AR5 are fully met. I would like to remind you of how gratified we were to receive such an enthusiastic response from the scientific community worldwide when we were forming the author teams of the AR5, which went beyond in magnitude and scale the precedents that we had set with earlier reports. It is of significance to recall that 60 percent of the authors selected for the AR5 were new to the IPCC process and this is a very important feature that the world must know, because it shows the inclusivity and openness of the IPCC for drawing in talent from all quarters and the emphasis we place on new knowledge and expertise and fresh perspectives and approaches.

We are also indebted to the member governments of the IPCC who support the entire process of the IPCC, and have provided guidance, direction and review comments so valuable for the contents of the AR5, and endorse the work of the scientific community. Having been associated with four of the five assessment reports of the IPCC, first as a lead author for Working Groups II

and III in the Second Assessment Report, as Vice Chair in the TAR and as Chair in the AR4 and AR5, I can say that the strength of the IPCC lies in the harnessing of scientific talent under the umbrella of the 195 member governments. This ensures the incorporation of valuable insights on policy-relevant issues that ensure the usefulness of the contents of IPCC reports. It is notable that a unique organization such as the IPCC, through which science and its policy relevance are bound together, has been able to attain a level of scientific credibility and policy relevance among decision-makers and the public all over the world, largely on account of our structural characteristics and operational processes.

What are the next steps? We have come a long way since the AR5 Scoping Meeting in Venice in 2009. We have also learnt from experience. In 2010 in response to a heightened level of public scrutiny, the Secretary General of the UN and I requested the InterAcademy Council to conduct an independent review of the IPCC processes and procedures in order to strengthen the capacity of the IPCC to respond to future challenges and to ensure the ongoing quality of its reports. I am proud to say today that all of IAC's recommendations in terms of management and governance, processes and procedures, communications and conflict of interest have been implemented, with one exception which was not feasible for practical reasons. I would also like to highlight in this regard the rapid efforts made by the Panel to give practical shape and substance to the recommendations of the IAC. In 2011, the IPCC approved two special reports on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation (SRREN), and on Extreme Events and Disasters and Advancing Climate Change Adaptation (SREX), of which the relevance continues to grow today. The Task Force on Inventories was very active in responding to the invitation of the UNFCCC to develop supplementary guidance on wetlands and completed its work in early 2013. Now, the release of the WGI contribution to the AR5 is the first of three substantive reports that combined will cover all aspects of climate change and will reach culmination in just over twelve months' time. WG II's contribution to the AR5 on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability will be approved by the Panel in March 2014; WG III's contribution to the AR5 on mitigation of climate change will be approved in April 2014; and the Synthesis Report in October 2014. Now it is crucial that we ensure that the findings of the AR5 are

disseminated with determined efforts to reach every part of the globe. We should also expect diverse reactions to the report, given the heightened scrutiny and interest that we are now subject to, but we will continue to provide assessments that are robust, objective and scientifically valid, produced within systems of transparency and openness.

My final words would be a message to the governments. The findings of the AR5 will provide the scientific basis on which governments will be able to consider different options and solutions to climate change within the ongoing UNFCCC process, and I hope that informed, enlightened and forward-looking policy-making will actively use scientific assessments produced by the IPCC. The approval of the WGI contribution to the AR5 sets the stage for a positive outcome in the UNFCCC negotiations, and I hope that this and subsequent AR5 reports will facilitate the parties of the UNFCCC in coming up with an agreement that all countries can embrace by 2015. In this context, it is crucial that the findings of the WGI report are presented effectively to the upcoming 19th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Warsaw, Poland. May I once again thank our Swedish hosts and the local organizing committee for their work in helping with organising this meeting. I would also like to thank my senior colleagues at the IPCC and the staff of the Secretariat who have as always risen to the occasion and played a major role not merely in helping in the organization of this meeting, but also in facilitating the smooth completion of the WG reports. Thank you to all the distinguished delegates and the authors who have made it here, and I wish you a very productive and successful meeting. My final thanks to Her Excellency the Minister for favouring us with her presence.

Thank you very much.