

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL  
TWENTIETH SESSION  
Paris, 19-21 February 2003

IPCC-XX/Doc. 4  
ITEM 4  
(19.XI.2002)  
ENGLISH ONLY

**FRAMEWORK AND SET OF CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES  
FOR SPECIAL REPORTS, TECHNICAL PAPERS AND REPORTS  
ON METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

(Submitted by the Secretary)

This document contains a proposal in response to decisions 4, 5 and 6 taken at the 18th session of the IPCC in Wembley/UK, 24-29 September 2001, which requested the development of a framework and set of criteria for establishing priorities when the Panel is taking decisions relating to Special Reports and Technical Papers.

# **FRAMEWORK AND SET OF CRITERIA TO GUIDE THE SETTING OF PRIORITIES FOR SPECIAL REPORTS, METHODOLOGY REPORTS AND TECHNICAL PAPERS**

## **1. Background**

1.1 During its consideration of the future IPCC work programme, and timing and characteristics of the fourth Assessment Report (AR4) the Panel at its 18<sup>th</sup> session, 24-29 September 2001, Wembley, UK, addressed, *inter alia*, the questions:

- (a) whether comprehensive reports should be supplemented by shorter, more focussed Special Reports on specific issues (decision 4); and,
- (b) whether the IPCC should be responsive to requests by the UNFCCC (decision 5) and other Conventions and organisations (decision 6) to prepare Special Reports and Technical Papers?

1.2 In its Decision 4 IPCC-18 requested the new Bureau to develop a framework and set of criteria for establishing priorities to be approved by the Panel. This framework would also apply to issues addressed in Decisions 5 and 6 of that Session.

1.3 The Panel agreed to provide inputs and guidance to the new Bureau on issues to be considered in the formulation of the framework and set of criteria for establishing priorities for Special Reports, Technical Papers and reports on methodological issues. In this context the Panel noted that mechanisms be developed to ensure:

- (a) greater consideration of cross cutting issues including sustainable development;
- (b) appropriate representation of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
- (c) that the non-English literatures is appropriately assessed;
- (d) a deeper engagement with industry and NGOs – possible formation of IPCC-industry and IPCC-NGO task groups;
- (e) greater transparency of the Bureau;
- (f) stability of IPCC financing; and,
- (g) whether or not the synthesis report should act as guide to the rest of the assessment.

1.4 In relation to setting priorities for the IPCC's work programme the IPCC Bureau considers that:

- (a) In future work programmes priority should be given to the AR4.
- (b) The IPCC should continue to be responsive to the information needs of UN conventions addressing climate change issues that require some under-pinning scientific and/or technical assessment. Requests from UNFCCC should be accorded higher priority than requests from other Conventions and organisations.
- (c) In addition to direct requests, IPCC's own initiative would be a key element in formulating and choosing Special Reports. Where appropriate, the IPCC strives to serve the policy community (UNFCCC and other) with relevant information in a pro-active fashion.

1.5 The Bureau also considers that for the IPCC to agree to a request, that request needs to be consistent with its mandate and role of assessing information relevant for the understanding of the risks of human induced climate change. Furthermore, it must be noted that while dealing objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies, IPCC reports are neutral with respect to policy. Other important points to consider are timeliness of provision of information, e.g. whether a scientific technical assessment or methodology is required to inform important policy decisions, and whether sufficient new scientific technical knowledge is available to justify a new assessment or methodology report.

1.6 Finally, in deciding whether to prepare Special Reports, Technical Papers and reports on methodological issues their implications on the IPCC's overall resource situation, both financial and human resources, (especially the availability of experts) need to be considered carefully. All requests, including those from the UNFCCC, should be balanced against the needs of the IPCC's comprehensive assessment (currently the Fourth Assessment) report activities before they are added to the work programme.

1.7 Based on these considerations two guides for the decision processes relating to Special Reports, Methodology Reports and Technical Papers are given below.

## **2. Guidance for Decisions relating to Special Reports and Methodology Reports**

2.1 The IPCC Bureau developed, and proposes to the Panel, the following guidelines for decisions relating to Special Reports and Methodology Reports:

### **Scientific Basis.**

***S.1 Is there sufficient scientific literature/technical advance to merit analysis at the Special Report/Methodology Report level - i.e., is there enough information available to provide an authoritative scientific/technical assessment on the topic or development of methodologies, and would it be different from that presented elsewhere (e.g., in an earlier IPCC Assessment Report)?***

If no, it is likely that consideration of a report should be deferred.

If yes, consideration should be given to the goals, impacts and practicalities, and how the issue could be addressed best in the IPCC work programme.

### **Goals and Impact.**

***S.2 Is the primary audience UNFCCC?***

If yes, higher priority.

***S.3 If the primary audience is not UNFCCC, is the request is directly relevant for the understanding of climate change and its implications and is the climate change aspect strong enough that it may warrant an IPCC Special Report/ Methodology Report or any special treatment in the IPCC workprogramme?***

If no, low priority.

***S.4 Are there specific, internationally relevant policy considerations to which this Special Report/Methodology Report could serve as policy-relevant input?***

If yes, higher priority.

If no, then lower priority at this time given. Consideration may be given whether the identification of the topic in the context of a theme, or similar focus, in the current comprehensive assessment report (currently AR4) could be an alternative approach to a Special Report/Methodology Report.

***S.5 Is the particular scientific community who would write this report also being asked to do other reports for other organisations?***

If yes, low priority or explore feasibility of a joint report, taking into consideration other questions in this decision tree.

### **Practicalities and Alternatives.**

***S.6 Would the preparation of an additional report limit the availability of experts for the current comprehensive assessment report and so jeopardise its preparation?***

If yes, report should be deferred, and the demands IPCC wishes to place on the community for the current comprehensive assessment report should be carefully defined.

***S.7 Can the Special Report/Methodology Report be completed early in the comprehensive assessment report cycle (say three years before completion of the comprehensive report)? Is it very specific in scope and restricted in lead author community?***

If yes to one of the questions, higher priority.

If no to both questions, lower priority due to overlap with the current comprehensive assessment report.

***S.8 Does IPCC have the financial and personnel resources to carry out this Special Report/Methodology Report along with other work, in particular the current comprehensive assessment report?***

If yes, higher priority.

If no, consider whether additional resources can be provided in particular by those who requested the Special Report/Methodology Report.

***S.9 Considering the costs, demands on expert communities, etc., could the IPCC be equally well or perhaps even better served by targeting a given issue for emphasis in the comprehensive assessment report as a theme?***

If yes, consider formulation of a theme in the comprehensive assessment report rather than a Special Report/Methodology Report.

### **3. Guidance for Decisions relating to Technical Papers**

3.1 Taking into consideration that Technical Papers are based on material already in IPCC Assessment Reports or Special Reports, decisions on Technical Papers can be governed by a more limited set of questions, although some of them are common to both Special Report and Technical Paper. The IPCC Bureau developed, and proposes to the Panel, the following guidelines for the decision process relating to Technical Papers:

***T.1 Is an objective, international scientific/technical perspective essential for the topic in question?***

If no, then preparation of a Technical Paper is probably not appropriate

***T.2 Has a formal request been received from the UNFCCC?***

If yes, higher priority

***T.3 Is there sufficient information in published IPCC reports to address a given topic through possible repackaging? Is the information in published reports still up to date?***

If yes, higher priority.

If no, it is probably not appropriate to prepare a Technical Paper. Consideration should be given to a Special Report or special treatment in the comprehensive assessment report.

***T.4 Is there a clear-cut technical/scientific basis for such repackaging or is the issue too complex to be treated in a Technical Paper?***

If the repackaging is clear-cut, then it should be given a higher priority.

If the effort would involve more than a repackaging then it is probably not appropriate for a Technical Paper.

***T.5 Are there specific policy considerations to which this Technical Paper could serve as policy-relevant input? Is there a community whose efforts would benefit from the Technical Paper repackaging?***

If yes, higher priority.

***T.6 Can this work be accommodated within the IPCC budget, human resources, and work plan?***

If yes, higher priority.

In case of budgetary constraints but strong arguments in favour of a Technical Paper, it would be appropriate to consider whether additional resources can be provided in particular by those who requested the Technical Paper.

***T.7 Could this topic be better/more efficiently accommodated as part of a scientific/technical theme for the current comprehensive assessment report?***

If yes, consider formulation of a theme rather than a Technical Paper.