



INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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REVIEW OF THE IPCC TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Submitted by the Secretariat)

REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE IPCC

BACKGROUND

Following the invitation by the 14th WMO Congress to the IPCC to review its terms of reference, the Panel at its 25th Session considered the matter and decided to set up a task group, chaired by the IPCC Chair, which would review the IPCC TOR and report to the 26th Session.

The task group has prepared a proposal which was circulated on 1 February 2007 to Governments for review and comments. The proposal and a compilation of the comments received is contained in document IPCC-XXVI/INF.1. The proposal and comments received from Governments were then discussed by the IPCC Bureau at its 36th Session in Geneva, 14-15 March 2007. The current proposal reflects comments received from Governments and the IPCC Bureau.

ANALYSIS OF WMO AND UNEP DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

The IPCC does not operate under a single, consolidated set of terms of reference. Following a request by the UN General Assembly to the Executive Heads of WMO and UNEP, the IPCC was established by the 40th Session of the WMO Executive Council in 1988, where it was given its initial mandate and terms of reference (see Box 1). Since that time, through resolutions of the governing bodies of its parent organizations UNEP and WMO, its terms of reference have been updated to reflect the needs of the time. An overview of major resolutions and decisions is contained in document IPCC-XXVI/INF. 2, which has been prepared by the Secretary of the IPCC.

The Decisions of UNEP's Governing Council (GC) and the Resolutions of the WMO Congress (Cg) and Executive Council (EC) that apply to the IPCC effectively comprise the Terms of Reference of the IPCC. A study of these Decisions and Resolutions reveals some "constants" in the requirements placed upon the IPCC, some additions over time, which have been incorporated as "constants" elements into the IPCC work programme and some more transient requests. It needs to be noted also that, based on the broad terms of reference given by the governing bodies of the parent organizations, the Panel has taken corresponding decisions on its structure, its Principles and on its work programme. These decisions by the Panel have been endorsed or noted by the governing bodies of the parent organizations.

Constant requirements, which have been reiterated in various decisions and resolutions include actions to:

1. Undertake and periodically update the assessments of the available scientific information on climate change, the resulting environmental and socio-economic impacts, and various response options from near and long-term perspectives. (e.g. WMO EC-XL, Res. 4; UNEP GC, decision SS II/3; WMO Cg 11, Res. 11; WMO EC-XLIV, Res.1; UNEP/GC, decision 21/9)
2. Evaluate the special problems of developing countries and small island states and ensure their effective participation in IPCC work (e.g. UNEP GC decision SSII/3; WMO 11th Cg, Res. 11)
3. Provide scientific and socio-economic information and advise, initially for the development and negotiations of a UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and after

entry into force of the Convention to continue to work closely with the UNFCCC and to provide scientific, technical and socio-economic information and advice (e.g. UNEP GC decision 15.3; WMO EC-XLI, Res. 4; UNEP GC decision SSII/3; WMO EC-XLIV, Res. 1; WMO Cg 12, Res. 8; UNEP GC decision 18/20; WMO EC-L, Res. 3; WMO EC-LVI, Res. 1; WMO EC-LVII, Res.1; WMO Cg-XIV, Res. 8)

4. Report to the governing bodies of the parent organizations and communicate the results of the assessments broadly (e.g. UNEP GC SSII/3; WMO 11th Cg Res. 11; WMO EC-XLIV Res. 1; WMO 12th Cg Res. 8; UNEP GC 18/20)

Further, the governing bodies regularly urged Governments to make financial contributions to the IPCC for the activities of the Panel.

Certain specific requests were made over time, which have been reflected in the IPCC structure and work programme. In summary form these requests and requirements include:

1. Innovative state of the art technology and know how (WMO-EC-XLIV)
2. Identify ways of strengthening the scientific capability of developing countries, including with respect to research, systematic observation/detection of climate change and its impacts (WMO-EC-XLIV)
3. Scientific technical assessment related to the objective of the UNFCCC (Art.2) (WMO-EC-XLIV)
4. Develop and assess methods for national inventories of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks. (WMO-EC-XLIV)
5. Make recommendations for raising public awareness and education with respect to climate change. (WMO-EC-XLIV)
6. Provide climate change relevant information to UNFCCC and other interested entities (EC-L, Res. 3)

Some more “transient” requirements were placed on the IPCC in particular during the negotiations of the UNFCCC, such as development of elements for inclusion of a possible future convention, pursue studies on incremental costs, as well as on sources from which such costs may be met, methodologies for calculating the effective capacity of sinks etc.

The respective resolutions and decisions of the governing bodies, both the more constant and transient requests, as well as specific requests received from the UNFCCC and other relevant bodies were considered by the Panel and reflected in its work programme, taking into consideration the “Principles governing IPCC work” which state that “IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies and available resources” and the available resources and knowledge basis in the scientific technical literature.

SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS

The task group and most Governments which spoke at IPCC-25 or submitted written submissions expressed the general view that the current terms of reference served the IPCC well and that there is no need for major revisions. Comments received on the summary of the current terms of

reference, prepared by the task group mainly referred to the methodology work which in the view of some Government should not be limited to national greenhouse gas inventories. Other submissions suggested to add emphasis to certain items, or contained specific proposals for the future workprogramme of the IPCC. The summary prepared by the task group and a compilation of submissions received are contained in document INF. 1.

The IPCC Bureau at its 36th Session expressed the view that presenting a summary of the current terms of reference to the WMO Congress and UNEP Governing Council at this point in time would not be advisable. The view was expressed that after the completion of the AR4 and consideration of the future workprogramme of the IPCC, revised or additional terms of reference may be considered if the need arises.

PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE PANEL

It is suggested that the IPCC Chair in his oral presentation to the WMO Congress reports that, consistent with resolution 8 by the 14th WMO Congress, the IPCC has reviewed its terms of reference and came to the conclusion that the current terms of reference serve the IPCC well and that currently there is no need for refinement, change or revision of what has been provided by UNEP and WMO to date.

The IPCC Chair would also advise the Congress that the climate change issue is a rapidly evolving one, and that if the IPCC is to respond in such a way as to provide the best assessment advice to Governments, it is considered necessary that its Terms of Reference be able to continue to evolve to meet current community needs. He would also inform the Congress that the IPCC intends to consider its future programme of work and any related changes of its Terms of Reference after completion of the AR4 and report to the Congress. If WMO and UNEP wish to provide further guidance it would be seen as the next step in the continuing evolution of the Terms of Reference. Such specific requests by the governing bodies of WMO and UNEP could also be of a transient nature to address specific emerging issues.

The oral report by the IPCC Chair to the WMO Congress will also be communicated to UNEP for information.

Res. 4 (EC-XL) - INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE**THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,****NOTING:**

- (1) Resolution 42/184 (UN General Assembly) – International co-operation in the field of the environment,
- (2) Resolution 9 (Cg-X) - Global Climate Change,
- (3) Paragraphs 3.2.0.4 and 3.2.0.5 of the general summary of the abridged report of Tenth Congress,
- (4) Paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the general summary of the abridged report of EC-XXXIX,
- (5) The decision of the XIVth Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme,

BEING AWARE OF:

- (1) The results of recent international meetings that produced an updated assessment of possible climate change and suggested actions towards developing policies for responding to climatic change,
- (2) A need to:
 - (a) Maintain and develop further an efficient long-term monitoring system, making it possible to diagnose accurately the current state of the climate system, the trends, and the factors having an influence on climate,
 - (b) Improve our knowledge of the sources and sinks of the major radiatively important trace gases ("greenhouse gases"), and develop more reliable methods for predicting their future atmospheric concentrations,
 - (c) Promote research aimed at closing gaps in our ability to understand and predict the climate system, including reliable projections of the regional distribution of the expected climatic change,

CONSIDERING:

- (1) That there is a growing international concern about the possible socio-economic consequences of the increasing atmospheric concentrations of radiatively active trace substances (greenhouse gases and particulates),
- (2) That several nations have undertaken scientific assessments of this issue during the last few years,
- (3) The current and potential involvement of national meteorological and hydrological agencies in comprehensive integrated national and regional studies of the consequences of a climatic change on natural and human eco-systems taking into account sociological and economic factors, and in developing strategies for adjustment to a climatic change, especially regarding agriculture and water resources,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that there is an urgent need to evaluate to what extent a climatic change can be delayed by appropriate national/international actions,

AGREES that an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change should be established,

AGREES FURTHER:

- (1) That the activities of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) should be aimed at (i) assessing the scientific information that is related to the various components of the climate change issue such as emissions of major greenhouse gases and modification of the Earth's radiation balance resulting therefrom, and that needed to enable the environmental and socio-economic consequences of climate change to be evaluated; and (ii) formulating realistic response strategies for the management of the climate change issue,
- (2) That the panel should report on its activities to the governing bodies of WMO and UNEP,

RECOMMENDS:

- (1) That, while the choice of the nominated representative to the IPCC is the sole prerogative of sovereign governments, they take into consideration the importance of such representation being at as high a level as possible and include persons knowledgeable of science, environment and related policy issues;
- (2) That, for example, should the nominee be from the meteorological/hydrological service, he/she should preferably be at the level of the Permanent Representative of the country with WMO;
- (3) That to ensure adequate expert advice to the nominated representative, the governments consider appointing advisor(s) to the representative as needed, who should also be at as high a level as possible.