INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

WMO UNEP

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FUTURE OF THE IPCC
Comments received after the 28th Session of the IPCC

(Submitted by the Secretariat)

IPCC Secretariat, c/o WMO, 7bis, Avenue de la Paix, C.P. N° 2300, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND
Phone: +41 22 730 8208/8254/8284 Fax: +41 22 730 8025/8013
E-mail: IPCC-Sec@wmo.int Website: http://www.ipcc.ch

GOVERNMENTS COMMENTS

QATAR

The following are Qatar's comments:

A review of the past:

We share your statement that with the completion of AR4, the IPCC has reached, over its two decades of existence, an international status that clearly distinguishes this organization as a unique scientific enterprise spanning the universe of scientific excellence and influence of knowledge on public policy.

Qatar makes also the same assessment on the lessons learnt from IPCC long experience namely:

Its worldwide capacity building in the assessment of all aspects of climate (policy, and comprehensive scientific assessments, technological challenges);

Growing and intensive efforts by Policymakers, Governments, NGO's, the media and public to support IPCC undertakings

Possible changes

We also concur with you that while the IPCC has been so far successful, one should also account for any other perceptions on the impact of climate change which, if not addressed, would create more challenge to further contain the threat of climate change. In addition, new technological developments should be pursued to minimize the costs of mitigation. Such issues would have to be addressed at the 28th Session of the IPCC to be held at Budapest (9-10April2008).

We recommend that in addition to its current methodology of carrying out its assessment of climate change through the organization of three Working Groups namely (1) Working Group I to assess the physical science aspects of the climate system and climate change; (2) Working Group II to assess the scientific, technical, environmental, economic and social aspects of the impacts of climate change, the vulnerability of various natural and human systems to these impacts and adaptation to climate change; and (3) Working Group III to assess all aspects of mitigation of climate change, an additional Working Group to review and assess technological developments including renewable energy sources.

While our proposal to add this 4th Working Group is in line with future possible scenarios to safeguard against the impact of climate change, we believe that other additional improvements as those highlighted in your letter should also pursued.

***** End Governments Comments *****

ORGANIZATIONS COMMENTS

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Thank you for providing World Meteorological Organization with an opportunity to comment on your paper: "Some Issues Related to the Future of the IPCC". I trust you are well aware of our high level of interest in the future directions of the IPCC and I would hope that the views of WMO, a co-founder and co-sponsor of the IPCC, as expressed in this letter, are shared with the IPCC Bureau and national focal points.

Firstly, again we congratulate you and all those involved in the IPCC's work on the recent well-deserved award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

As you are aware, within the UN system the WMO has unique responsibility for coordinating activities related to climate prediction, monitoring, scientific research and assessment and is able to draw on the collective resources of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of its 188 Members in carrying out these, and its other responsibilities. While the NMHSs are not always directly involved in the policy aspects of climate change they make huge contributions to global monitoring and have a under tapped capability to contribute to regional climate change impact assessment and adaptation strategy preparation. As the IPCC plans for future assessment work I encourage IPCC to involve more the NMHSs in this work.

In your paper you raise the issue of a fifth assessment (presumably the AR5). We are convinced of the need for an AR5 and would anticipate that it would be delivered around 2013, that is, consistent with the assessment cycle so far adopted by the IPCC.
Furthermore we note that the rate of scientific research into aspects of climate change is accelerating and expect that in every cycle of the IPCC's assessment process a scientific assessment would be prepared. We see this as essential.

In Paragraph 3.1.3 you appear to be flagging an increased focus by the IPCC on economic issues. WMO recognises the importance of assessing economic issues as in preparation of policy relevant assessments. This said, the IPCC has established its reputation and credibility on the strength of its scientific assessment and we believe that this aspect should be preserved.

Consistent with Paragraph 3.2 of your paper we agree that there are regions of the world where climate change research require particular strengthening. In general these regions are in the developing world where resources for monitoring and research are inadequate. We would note that research into climate change, including into adaptation strategies that would be consistent with sustainable development, require adequate data, and that often the fundamentals of a climate monitoring system do not exist in these areas. We hope that the IPCC can support WMO in working to establish improved monitoring in these regions as a precursor to filling the research gaps you have identified in the AR4.

WMO has a special interest and key role in strengthening the capacity of countries in early warning and responding to extreme events and mitigating natural disasters and note the relationship between global warming and changes in the frequencies of a range of natural disasters. We would strongly support a special report addressing these issues and WMO offers to play a lead coordinating role to assist in its preparation.

A prominent product of the IPCC's assessment cycle is the Synthesis Report. From a scientific perspective we would like to see the Synthesis Report highlight those areas of the science assessment that have the greatest impact on policy formulation and to the extent possible identify not only the uncertainties of the science but also the scientific conclusions that can be drawn with great confidence.

Let me conclude by saying that we see a bright future for the IPCC. As a co-founder, co-sponsor and provider of the scientific and technical information we look forward to working closely with IPCC in the future and hope and expect that experts from WMO community - National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and academic institutions - can be drawn further into the work IPCC.

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

On chapter 1

Reviewing past achievements is an important part of considering future tasks and ways of working. It is our view that a more thorough review should be undertaken and not only the cursory few comments contained within this chapter.

It is very disappointing that the steps taken in the process of generating AR4 to create increased involvement of the Business community, particularly within the work of Working Group III, have not been discussed or recognised either as an achievement or a model that can be further used within future assessments.

Credibility and validity emerge from the acceptance of the work by experts and the manner in which it is assimilated by policymakers. In that regard individual chapters on various sectors and technologies in WG III have not been taken up by business and industry as guides to future research direction or policy. Information on technology opportunities and barriers as discussed in AR4 remains far too superficial to provide a basis for R&D to identify issues that must be overcome to develop viable commercial technology. As well policy frameworks that focus primarily on costs and emissions do a poor job of addressing the barriers to investment that must be overcome to deploy currently non-commercial technology. Important progress could be achieved by using a more careful assessment of investment criteria that inform project decisions in various settings. These would focus on questions of risk management, access to markets, availability of infrastructure etc.

Overall IPCC AR4 made an important advance in seeking to quantify uncertainty of conclusions; still there is a a long way to go. In particular, IPCC could do far better in explaining the basis for uncertainty estimates. For instance, it makes a large difference whether or not uncertainty is based on objective science-based statistical methods, e.g. in radiative forcing or well-to-wheels emissions from existing technologies, and when uncertainty is based on expert judgement, e.g. in estimates of radiative forcing from indirect aerosol effects, or in an economic model of mitigation costs based on assumptions about the availability, performance and future costs of currently non-commercial technology. Where conclusions are based on “expert” judgment, it would be valuable and more transparent to describe the method used to obtain the estimates. In many cases it appears that they are simply the views of a very small number of chapter lead authors. In such cases conclusions might change dramatically based on the selection of authors.

IPCC should carefully consider complaints that important scientific leaders are unwilling or no longer willing to contribute to the IPCC process, and see if there are ways to engage a broader range of credible views. Perhaps tailored workshops on key topics or at key points in the preparation of Assessments Reports would be a means to involve input from a wider range of scientists not directly involved as lead authors. Certainly that is true for expertise from the business and industry community.

On chapter 2

There has been considerable change in the working practices of IPCC during the previous 20 years. Quite possibly the major change has been the introduction of Special Reports. It is vital that targeted Special Reports are seen as important vehicles tailored to investigate specific topics in a depth not possible within a full assessment report. By their nature, they involve a much broader range of experts within a topic area. In that sense Special Reports provide a far more focussed platform to obtain meaningful input from business and industry in a way that can better inform assessments. Given the high-profile nature of the subjects chosen, it is vital that considerable effort is put into the process to conduct special reports and communication of the results. From the perspective of the Business community, one method of working that has been undertaken during AR4 has particular merits. That has been the organisation of business input through a series of short meetings or workshops between business experts and the Lead Authors of relevant chapters. This approach either during fact gathering or review stages has enabled a wide range of well-informed views from business to be included. This has proven to be optimum use of time for individuals who do have not have the time or resources to take part as authors. It is vital that Business continues to be involved, where possible, as authors within the report, however, expert meetings provide an excellent source of further involvement.

The business community values IPCC for its ability to provide credible assessments to policy makers that have the support of experts in their fields. This is a specialized task requiring focussed expertise. It is not clear that IPCC is well-suited to provide outreach or information to the general public, or that the simplifications involved in doing so might not conflict with its primary purpose.

On chapter 3.1.1

IPCC must be policy relevant; the question is how to achieve that goal together with preserving integrity and independence of the process. At the end of the day it is the policy makers who decide, not the scientists/economists. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful, that asking IPCC to be policy relevant does not undermine the first goal of IPCC which is to assess the status of knowledge. We think it is possible to have a better interaction between "oriented policy relevant questions" and the existing material, that could help the policy makers to capture at the best the information they need, but it has to be carefully put in place; sometimes such a process could require additional work and up to now, at least in my perception, IPCC has always said that it was not there for creating new material.

On chapter 3.1.2 and 3.1.3

These two paragraphs are puzzling:

The first paragraph identifies the need for a more focused view on relationship between IPCC assessments and sustainable development concept and related topics. As a general statement, there is no specific objection to such a suggestion but it is necessary to ask: why and for what purpose? Before launching such an enterprise, it is needed to raise these questions in order to articulate the precise goals; what are we looking for and what are the outcomes of the analysis: a better formulation of public policies and institutional framework adapted to the new context of mitigation and adaptation or manipulating these concepts together to make another report on the issue that will tackle well-known generalities and that will not help policy makers? In particular, it seem to those of us in business, especially in multi-national companies that operate in many parts of the world, that views and priorities on key issues relevant to sustainable development vary greatly depending on national circumstances and priorities. Broad global generalities have little generic relevance to particular decisions being taken, e.g. in Denmark, Indonesia and South Africa. The second paragraph is devoted to "economics of climate change." It is surprising to see an IPCC document single out the Stern Review as a driver for information on the economics of climate change. Economic analyses have been part of the academic landscape for decades. The Stern Review differed only in using very different assumptions leading to significantly different conclusions than had been found by the mainstream community. We do not think that it is necessary to establish a group to produce a new report, on the grounds that IPCC would have done similarly to Stern if it had the mandate to do it. IPCC is not in competition with Stern and has produced very relevant information within AR4 (and has won the Nobel Prize). Another point: how this small group would be constituted: a selected few or a more democratic process along the IPCC guidelines? Economics is, of course, one of the pillars of policy analysis in general and sustainable development. However, results, especially for long-term analyses simply do not have the fundamental scientific underpinning characteristic, say, of ocean models. Results depend on assumptions, e.g. for the discount rate, that are highly value-laden, or for technology costs and performance that must be based on expert judgment, or for economic valuation of non-market impacts. Consequently, economic analyses will always remain more controversial. To include them in IPCC assessments will require a very thoughtful selection of lead authors with a range of views and a willingness to describe transparently the assumptions embedded in models.

There has, for many, been perhaps a lack of consideration on this issue of "integrated assessment analysis" in AR4 and things should be improved moving forward. Linking discussions within WG II and WG III on economic damages/benefit could be very beneficial.

A better integration of economic impacts and avoided impacts is needed to better judge the different trajectories that will guide the policy makers. In that sense IPCC has to make progress, and looking forward how to put integrated assessment in perspective and motivating groups to engage in that activity is surely worthwhile.

We think it could be more productive to set up a Special Report on a review of integrated assessment analysis to take stock of the different serious attempts to put in articulation complex models in the science and economics fields. This would help establish the current state of knowledge and try to understand to what extent these complex modelling exercises could help the policy process (the computing capabilities will be strongly enhanced in the years to come and could give a new scope to this field).

Another critically important point regards integrated assessment models. It is time to abandon the past IPCC practice of assessing mitigation potentials on a sector by sector basis and then seeking to roll them up into a global potential analytically. The only way to create a meaningful roll-up is to evaluate economy-wide interactions in an integrated assessment model. Sectors interact within the economy; they also draw on a common pool of input factors and often supply goods and services into a common market. Thus changes in one sector may support or inhibit changes in another sector. As well, changes may often be path dependent. Certain advances may rule out other changes once they occur. In the year 2008 there are now a variety of integrated assessment models capable of describing these interactions. They should be used to identify potential global pathways and potentials.

On Chapter 3.2

This seems consistent with the need for information.

On Chapter 4

At this stage, we think that the questions raised are good questions, and that all the options discussed are defendable. The balance and time frame has to be decided appropriately with the expectations to be made: what do we need, why and when? What are our expectations of new results that could assist the international process (although that might appear subjective)?

How much danger is there that the next IPCC Assessment Report could be just a re-iteration of the messages from AR4?

A right balance will be necessary between the main assessment reports and special and technical reports. We think that, being pragmatic, this would require the following analysis: IPCC looks carefully with SBSTA, for instance, at the issues that need a special focus and that are essential to inform the political process, at least in view new issues arising from the Bali Action Plan. If the work needed requires the mobilisation of scientists and economists to such a level that could endanger the AR process in the 5 years time frame, we would recommend then to act appropriately on the specific reports to have them in time for informing the international negotiation, and then delay, as a consequence the AR process (number of years of delay to be decided for the AR 5). The work loads of the persons producing the various reports must be carefully considered prior to any decisions. After all, in the majority of cases, they have "other" jobs to do.

On Chapter 5

As a final point, having identified the issues and impacts relating to climate change, Chapter 5 reviews the working practices of IPCC from an operational perspective. In this chapter, we believe, there should be a review of practices and procedures of holding large meetings with large numbers of participants. Good practice guidelines should be developed to assist in reducing the number of face-to-face conferences through better use of electronic communication techniques. Furthermore, the use of video-conferencing as a technique, particularly for presentations that are regularly given at large conferences should be seriously considered.

- Due to the short period for comment, it has not been possible to obtain views from the whole ICC constituency, however, the views attached have been expressed by a number of ICC members who have been involved in the AR4 process, Special Reports and previous IPCC assessments as Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors, review Editors and Reviewers.

***** End Organizations Comments*****