



INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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REVIEW OF THE IPCC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Summary of relevant resolutions and decisions

(Submitted by the Secretariat)

Review of IPCC Terms of Reference Summary of relevant resolutions and decisions

1st Assessment Period:

The IPCC was established by the 40th Session of the WMO Executive Council (EC-XL), Resolution 4 in 1988. The operational sections read as follows:

“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 modifications of the Earth's radiation balance resulting there from, 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.”

In 1989 the 15th Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in decision 15.3 and WMO EC-XLI noted this decision by the Panel. EC-XLI requested in resolution 4:

“(1) The IPCC to undertake the tasks outlined in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 43/53 paragraph 10 and to provide an interim report to the governing bodies of WMO and UNEP, through the Secretary-General and the Executive Director, not later than September 1990, ready for its first presentation at the Second World Climate Conference in November 1990;”

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 43./53 “Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind” referred to above, requested in paragraph 10 the Secretary General of WMO and the Executive Director of UNEP, through the IPCC,

“immediately to initiate action leading, as soon as possible, to a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to:

- (a) The state of knowledge of the science of climate change;
- (b) Programmes and studies on the social and economic impact of climate change, including global warming;
- (c) Possible response strategies to delay, limit or mitigate the impact of adverse climate change;
- (d) The identification and possible strengthening of relevant existing international legal instruments having a bearing on climate;
- (e) Elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate”

2nd Assessment Period:

The Second Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council (1990) called in decision SS.II/3 for a continuation of the IPCC as follows:

“1. Requests the Executive Director to arrange, jointly with the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, for the continuation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a joint panel of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization, ensuring that its future work is supportive of and responds to the

needs and requests of the climate convention negotiating group and that it is so structured as to facilitate and ensure more active participation of developing countries, particularly by avoiding proliferation of meeting locations and co-incidence of meeting dates. The Panel should, inter alia:

- (a) Undertake scientific and technical work in support of the negotiations of a framework convention on climate change;
- (b) Periodically update the assessments of the available scientific information on climate change and the resulting environmental and socio-economic impacts;
- (c) Undertake further environmental and socio-economic analyses of the various policy options from near-term and long-term perspectives posed as response strategies;
- (d) Evaluate the special problems of the developing countries and small island States in their efforts to address the issue of climate change and assess possible options to deal with these problems;
- (e) Further pursue studies on the incremental costs to developing countries and small island States of combating climate change, as well as on the sources from which such costs may be met and on mechanisms for the channelling of these resources, and present these studies for consideration at the negotiating sessions as soon as possible;
- (f) Take all appropriate steps to ensure the effective participation of developing countries and small island States and the broad dissemination of its work and urges Governments to continue to make financial contributions for these purposes;

The request for continuation of the IPCC was endorsed by WMO EC-XLII (1990) and 11th WMO Congress (1991) and formally confirmed by the 16th Session of the UNEP GC (1991). The 11th WMO congress reconfirmed the topics mentions in decision UNEP GC SS.II/3 in its Resolution 11:

“ENDORSES action by the Executive Council for the continuation and support of IPCC with, inter alia, the following terms of reference for the panel:

- (a) Undertake scientific and technical work in support of the negotiations of a framework convention on climate change;
- (b) Periodically update the assessments of the available scientific information on climate change and the resulting environmental and socio-economic impacts;
- (c) Undertake further environmental and socio-economic analyses for the various policy options from near- and long-term perspectives posed as response strategies;
- (d) Evaluate the special problems of the developing countries and small island States in their efforts to address the issue of climate change and assess possible options to deal with these problems;
- (e) Further pursue studies on the incremental costs to developing countries and small island States of combating climate change, as well as on the sources from which such costs may be met and on mechanisms for the channelling of these resources, and present these studies for consideration at the negotiating sessions as soon as possible;
- (f) Take all appropriate steps to ensure the effective participation of developing countries and small island States and the broad dissemination of its work;
- (g) Such other terms of reference as the Executive Council may deem fit to assign to the Panel, this to be done after careful consideration of related decisions of the UN General Assembly.”

In 1992 the WMO EC-XLIV requested in resolution 1 the Panel, under provisions of subparagraph (g) above, inter alia to:

- “(a) Provide scientific and technical assessments in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular:

- (i) Such assessments related to the objective of the Convention of "stabilization of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (article 2 of the Convention);
 - (ii) Ways and means to strengthen developing country capacities and capabilities in terms of research, systematic observation/detection of climate change and its impacts;
 - (iii) Innovative and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how;
- (b) Participate in the development and assessment of methodologies, working in concert with other relevant international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular:
- (i) Comparable methodologies for national inventories of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removal by sinks (article 4.1 of the Convention);
 - (ii) Methodologies for the calculation of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removal by sinks, including effective capacity of sinks and respective contributions of gases (article 4.2 (c) of the Convention);
- (c) Continue to undertake periodic and timely updates assessing the available information on climate change and the resulting environmental and socio-economic impacts with the goal of furthering the understanding and reducing or eliminating the remaining uncertainties regarding the causes, effects, magnitude and timing of climate change and the economic and social consequences of various response options, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable regions of the world;
- (d) Take appropriate measures to further strengthen the scientific and technical character of the Panel in all its work, to co-ordinate its work within scientific and other bodies, and to provide for the effective participation of scientific and technical experts from developing countries in its activities.
- (e) Make recommendations on, and take appropriate measures to raise public awareness and facilitate education with respect to climate change including through the broad and timely dissemination of the Panel's work and its information exchange seminars effort.”

During the second IPCC assessment period the overall situation changed due to the adoption of the UNFCCC in 1992 and its entry into Force in 1994. The IPCC was no longer asked to support the negotiation process but to support the UNFCCC. Until the First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) the relationship between the IPCC and the UNFCCC was laid down in Article 21 Interim Arrangements, paragraph 2. COP-1 clarified the role of SBSTA and its relationship with the IPCC in decision 6/CP-1 as follows:

“Functions of SBSTA include:

1. Provide assessments of the state of scientific knowledge relating to climate change and its effects (Article 9.2(a)). In this context:
 - (a) Summarize and, where necessary, convert the latest international scientific, technical, socio-economic and other information provided by competent bodies including, inter alia, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), into forms appropriate to the needs of the Conference of the Parties, including in support of the review of the adequacy of commitments;
 - (b) Compile and synthesize scientific, technical and socio-economic information on the global situation on climate change, provided by, inter alia, the IPCC, as well as on the latest developments in science, to the extent possible, and assess the implications thereof for the implementation of the Convention; and formulate requests to competent international scientific and technical bodies.

5. Respond to scientific, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to the body (Article 9.2(e)). In this context: Seek, in particular from the IPCC, and provide advice on, the development, improvement and refinement of comparable methodologies for:
- (i) National inventories of emissions and removals of greenhouse gases;
 - (ii) Projecting national emissions and removals of greenhouse gases and comparison of respective contributions of different gases to climate change;
 - (iii) Evaluating the individual and aggregated effects of measures undertaken pursuant to the provisions of the Convention;
 - (iv) Conducting impact/sensitivity analyses;
 - (v) Assessing adaptation responses;”

Since then SBSTA and/or COP have invited or requested to IPCC to provide in regular intervals assessment reports, identified issues where IPCC could provide relevant input and invited or requested the IPCC to provide specific information on certain topics through Special Reports, Technical Papers, Methodology Reports.

These efforts of the IPCC were commended by the 12th WMO Congress (May 1995) and the 18th Session of the UNEP GC. The general scope of activities of the IPCC were endorsed through Cg resolution 8 and GC decision 18/20 which

“REQUESTS the Panel to continue to update the assessments of available information on the science, impacts, response options, and the technical aspects of the socio-economics of climate change and related methodologies for use and application by nations, Parties to the UN/FCCC, and other interested entities, taking into account in its assessments the needs arising from the special circumstances of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

FURTHER REQUESTS the Panel to report, through its Chairman, to the Executive Council and to the Thirteenth Congress on the progress of its activities and the evolving relationship between SBSTA, SBI and the IPCC.”

3rd Assessment Period

Following completion of the IPCC Second Assessment Report WMO EC-XLVIII (June 1996) congratulated the Panel on the completion of the report including the examination of issues related to the objective of the UNFCCC and

“ENDORSES the continuing work programme of the Panel”

EC-L (June 1998) in resolution 3 reaffirmed that an independent IPCC is indispensable for providing scientific-technical assessments of various issues related to climate change and

“ENDORSES, in the light of the request of the 12th World Meteorological Congress to the Panel the continuing IPCC work contained in the IPCC Decision Paper and as may be decided by the Panel from time to time including its work on methodologies;
REQUESTS the Panel to convey, as appropriate, its conclusions and findings to the bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and to other interested entities;

4th Assessment Period

After the completion of the three Working Group contributions of the TAR in 2001 EC-LIII commend the IPCC for completing the TAR, recognized the importance of the IPCC for national and international policy formulation on climate change issues and requested:

"(b) the Panel to continue to update assessments, globally and regionally, of factual information on various issues related to climate change and to continue to assess and, as appropriate, develop methodologies for use and applications".

The 21st Session of the UNEP GC (2001) in decision 21/9 reaffirmed this request and requested the Executive director to actively disseminate the findings for the TAR. The 22nd UNEP GC (2003) referred with appreciation to ongoing IPCC work and 23rd UNEP GC (2005) encouraged the IPCC to take emerging issues of climate change impacts into account in the AR4.

The 14th WMO Congress (2003) encouraged the planning for a Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) and review of the IPCC terms of reference.

In the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 the WMO EC noted progress in preparing the AR4 and requested the Panel to continue to work closely with the UNFCCC and provide scientific, technical and socio-economic advice through the development of Special Reports, Technical Papers and Methodology Reports.