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INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE



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IPCC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND OUTREACH
Compilation of Government Submissions on Information Activities

Additional comments

(Submitted by the Secretariat)

**United States Department of State***Bureau of Oceans and International
Environmental and Scientific Affairs**Washington, D.C. 20520*

April 3, 2006

Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair
IPCC Secretariat
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Dear Dr. Pachauri,

At the last session of the IPCC, you offered governments the opportunity to provide comments on the "Framework Communications Strategy for Release and Dissemination of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report." We, along with U.S. experts, put a great deal of effort into developing high-quality IPCC reports, and we support making them available to a wide audience. That said, we believe that it would be wise if the IPCC erred on the side of caution in developing a communications strategy. The central purpose of the IPCC is to produce authoritative reports on the state of knowledge relating to climate science that are ultimately approved by governments that are members of the Panel. Any outreach activity should support and not undermine the authority of the Panel.

We generally support efforts to make IPCC reports more broadly available. We believe that it is important to make sure that electronic copies are easy to access via the website. We strongly support efforts to improve the website. For example, for a number of older assessments and reports, only summaries are currently available online, though the content of the full reports remain relevant in a number of cases.

With respect to outreach activities by IPCC chairs, we believe it is important that these stick to the facts of IPCC reports and in general be demand driven. We support efforts to ensure that IPCC chairs and others in the process have tools to communicate IPCC products in a way that accurately reflect products that have been approved and accepted according to IPCC rules. Side events in relevant conferences have been a useful outreach tool in the UNFCCC and elsewhere, but we have questions about the whether it is appropriate for the IPCC to actively seek out opportunities at specific meetings where they have not been requested to do so. Dedicated workshops and conferences involving

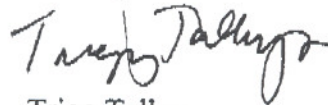
chairs and secretariats of the IPCC, beyond presentations of the work of the Panel itself, have a strong potential to confuse IPCC outputs with the views of specific participants.

With respect to proposed new types of outreach documents, we believe that that a strength of IPCC documents has been the transparency of the approval process. We believe it is important not to deviate from these procedures for the purpose of substantive outreach materials. We can support generating one page fact sheets that explain the drafting process for each working group in order to increase transparency for AR4 products. However, we do not support the development of fact sheets that attempt to further summarize or excerpt from Summaries for Policy Makers that have been carefully considered by the full membership of the relevant IPCC Working Groups.

The consultant's report refers to a number of outreach activities involving the media. We note that the consultant proposes that IPCC "position itself" as the consensus of global scientific opinion based on the highest quality scientific literature. We have significant concerns about the IPCC undertaking such self-marketing, and we believe a number of the activities identified are inappropriate for the IPCC. In the case of agreeing on "umbrella key messages," generating a media-appropriate message requires the IPCC to condense detailed, carefully constructed findings and place judgment on their relative value and/or importance. Such a process is bound to lead to criticism of the Panel and its documents. In addition, using the media for outreach can be construed as advertising IPCC products and findings, an activity that has at times had negative connotations to scientists and policymakers. IPCC reports should stand on their own, and not be subject to interpretation or simplification for a media audience.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our views on outreach activities. We hope that they will assist in generating a communications strategy that properly reflects the IPCC's character and that will allow as many users as possible to value and utilize the AR4 and future IPCC documents.

Sincerely,



Trigg Talley
Acting Director
Office of Global Change