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INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE



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FUTURE IPCC ACTIVITIES

Report by the Task Group set up by IPCC-28

Report by the Task Group about the future of IPCC

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Background

At the 27th session of the IPCC, 12-17 November 2007 in Valencia, Spain, the IPCC Chair had circulated a discussion paper about the future of the IPCC to IPCC Members, authors involved in reports prepared during the 4th assessment cycle and observer organisations. Comments received were compiled in an information document (IPCC-XXVIII/INF.1 and INF.1 add.1) and summarized by the Secretariat in a synthesis paper (IPCC-XXVIII/Doc.7). At the 28th session of the IPCC, 9-10 April 2008 in Budapest, Hungary, the Panel discussed the Chair's paper and the comments received. Additional comments were provided in document IPCC-XXVIII/INF.1.

Decisions already taken

A number of vital and urgent decisions were made by the Panel in Budapest, such as retaining the existing three Working Groups, Task Force on Emission Inventories and TGICA. It was decided that the IPCC would prepare a Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) including a Synthesis Report the planning of which should start earlier in the assessment process than was the case for AR4. A staggering of the Working Group reports was decided: AR5 is to be finalized in 2014, with a target date of early 2013 for the release of the Working Group I report. It was also agreed to organize the new assessment work around a revised set of scenarios of socio-economic, climate and environmental conditions. These scenarios will be based on a range of possible evolution patterns for the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases ("representative concentration pathways"), which will serve simultaneously as benchmarks for the development of new climate model simulations and targets for the development of emissions and socio-economic scenarios.

The Panel further decided to extend the Framework and Criteria for Special Reports, Methodology Reports and Technical Papers beyond the period of the Fourth Assessment Report, and to be continue to be responsive to requests from UNFCCC and other relevant UN-bodies.

However many suggestions could still not be properly discussed.

Further work needed

It was agreed that a number of issues would have to be addressed by the next Bureau with respect to the mandate and functioning of the Working Groups, in order to take into account recent scientific and policy developments, and improve the relevance of the assessments in response to the suggestions and needs of Members and of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To facilitate this process, and discuss the many suggestions made in the written submissions about the future of IPCC that were not addressed by the decisions taken in Budapest (see above), the small group agreed to work over the coming months along three axes, and to address the following issues (this list is indicative and does not pretend to be exhaustive):

A) The future challenges (internal and external) for IPCC

1. To be even more policy-relevant without being policy-prescriptive and while remaining scientific rigorous;
2. Types of products needed to address the evolving needs of the users;
3. Interaction with the scientific communities and users of the IPCC products;
4. Role of IPCC in relation to gaps in research and observation;
5. Outreach;

¹ In addition to the Chair of IPCC, China, Morocco, The Netherlands, Uganda and the United States are also members of this group.

B) The potential improvements in methods and procedures needed to address these challenges

6. Lessons emerging from the AR4 process;
7. Process leading to AR5;
8. Early consideration of the Synthesis Report;
9. Strengthening of the drafting and reviewing of reports;
10. Improving participation of developing countries scientists;
11. Better integration of gray and non-English language literature, and treatment of regional aspects;
12. Improving the collaboration across Working Groups so that the IPCC products integrate their contribution in the best manner;
13. Role and responsibilities of IPCC Bureau;
14. Potential new IPCC products;
15. Continuous review of IPCC's organisation, procedures and methods, including timely consideration of the potential structural changes that might be appropriate after AR5 has been completed

C) The subjects that need to be emphasized in AR5 and its Synthesis Report

16. Issues to be addressed in scoping AR5;
17. Handling of cross-cutting issues;
18. The topics for possible Special Reports during the AR5 cycle, and the priorities to give, taking into consideration the proposals already made, and the human and financial resources available;
19. The topics for possible other documents than the Assessment Report and Special Reports (such as Technical Papers and potential new products mentioned under 14) during the AR5 cycle.

An intermediate report will be prepared by this small group, with input, as appropriate, from the outgoing and the new Bureau for the first meeting of the new Bureau, and a final report for the next IPCC Plenary.