

2014/29/PR

IPCC PRESS RELEASE

27 October 2014

IPCC opens meeting to finalize Synthesis Report

COPENHAGEN, 27 October – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) opened a meeting in Copenhagen on Monday to finalize the Synthesis Report, the last stage of its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), which provides policymakers with a comprehensive assessment of the risks of climate change.

The week-long meeting will distil and integrate the findings of the three IPCC Working Groups released over the past 13 months and the results of the two Special Reports brought out in 2011, providing fresh insights by drawing together related information from the various underlying reports.

“The Synthesis Report will provide the roadmap by which policymakers will hopefully find their way to a global agreement to finally reverse course on climate change,” said Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair of the IPCC. “It gives us the knowledge to make informed choices, the knowledge to build a brighter, more sustainable future. It enhances our vital understanding of the rationale for action – and the serious implications for inaction,” he told the opening session of the meeting.

During the meeting, delegates from the IPCC’s member governments, in consultation with the scientists forming the author team that drafted the report, will scrutinize the Summary for Policymakers line by line to ensure it is consistent with the longer, underlying Synthesis Report, and examine the longer report section by section. Their work completes the Fifth Assessment Report, the most comprehensive assessment of climate change yet undertaken.

Danish Climate, Environment and Building Minister Rasmus Helveg Petersen and Danish Environment Minister Kirsten Brosbøl were among other speakers at the opening session.

Pachauri, who as IPCC Chair led the writing of the Synthesis Report, urged policymakers negotiating a climate agreement to base their decisions on science.

“May I humbly suggest that policymakers avoid being overcome by the seeming hopelessness of addressing climate change,” he said. “It is not hopeless.”

Pachauri said the report pointed to the solutions and actions required to tackle climate change.

“This is not to say it will be easy. It won’t. A great deal of work and tall hurdles lie ahead. But it can be done. We still have time to build a better, more sustainable world. We still have time to avoid the most serious impacts of climate change,” he said. “But we have precious little of that time.”

The Synthesis Report is due to be released on Sunday 2 November.

For the full text of Dr Pachauri’s statement, click [here](#).

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Notes for editors

What is the IPCC?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the world body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

The IPCC assesses the thousands of scientific papers published each year to inform policymakers about what we know and don't know about the risks related to climate change. The IPCC identifies where there is agreement in the scientific community, where there are differences of opinion, and where further research is needed.

The IPCC offers policymakers a snapshot of what the scientific community understands about climate change. IPCC reports are policy-relevant without being policy-prescriptive. They do not promote particular views or actions. The IPCC evaluates options for policymakers, but it does not tell governments what to do.

IPCC reports draw on the wisdom and dedication of the entire scientific community dealing with climate change, with the involvement of experts from all regions and diverse scientific backgrounds. IPCC authors and reviewers, including the Chair and other elected officials, work as volunteers. They are not paid for their work at the IPCC. Only a dozen permanent staff work in the IPCC's Secretariat in Geneva.

The members of the IPCC, comprising the Panel, are its 195 member governments. They reach consensus in endorsing the reports of the IPCC as comprehensive and balanced assessments of the scientific, technical, and socioeconomic literature. They set its procedures and budget in plenary meetings of the Panel. The word "Intergovernmental" in the organization's name reflects this role. It is not a United Nations agency, but was established by two UN organizations – WMO and UNEP.

IPCC reports are requested by the Panel and developed by authors drawn from the scientific community in an extensive process of repeated drafting, review, and revision. Scientists and other experts are invited to participate in this review process. The Panel endorses these reports in a dialogue with the scientists who write them. In this discussion the scientists have the last word on scientific accuracy.

The Fifth Assessment Report

The IPCC produces comprehensive assessment reports on climate change every six years or so. Among its other products it also issues special reports on particular topics requested by its members, and methodology reports and software to help members report their greenhouse gas inventories (emissions minus removals).

With the release of the Synthesis Report, the IPCC has now finalized the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). The AR5 is the most comprehensive assessment of climate change ever undertaken. Over 830 scientists from over 80 countries were selected to form the author teams producing the report.

They in turn drew on the work of over 1,000 contributing authors and about 2000 expert reviewers. AR5 assessed over 30,000 scientific papers.

The 1535-page contribution of Working Group I (*The Physical Science Basis*) to the AR5 was released in September 2013. The Working Group II contribution (*Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*), consisting of Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects (1132 pages) and Part B: Regional Aspects (688 pages), was released in March 2014. The Working Group III contribution (*Mitigation of Climate Change*) of about 1500 pages was released in April 2014.

Working Group I's Technical Support Unit is hosted by the University of Bern in Switzerland and is supported by the Swiss Government. The Working Group Co-Chairs are Qin Dahe of China and Thomas Stocker of Switzerland. Working Group II's Technical Support Unit is hosted by the Carnegie Institution for Science in Stanford, California, and is supported by the U.S. Government. Its Co-Chairs are Vicente Barros of Argentina and Chris Field of the United States. Working Group III's Technical Support Unit is hosted by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and supported by the Government of Germany. Its Co-Chairs are Ottmar Edenhofer of Germany, Ramón Pichs-Madruga of Cuba and Youba Sokona of Mali.

The Synthesis Report

The Synthesis Report is the capstone of an assessment report. As its name implies, it distills, synthesizes and integrates the findings of the Working Group contributions into a concise document, of about 100 pages.

This integrated approach allows the Synthesis Report to draw on the findings of the three Working Group reports as well as the two Special Reports brought out in 2011. It provides fresh insights by drawing together related information from the various underlying reports. These comparisons provide critically important information for policymakers.

The writing of the Synthesis Report is led by the Chair of the IPCC, R. K. Pachauri. Its Core Writing Team includes authors of the Working Group reports and the members of the IPCC's Executive Committee. The Synthesis Report comprises a Summary for Policymakers and a longer report. At its recent meeting in October 2014, the Panel approved the Summary for Policymakers line by line, and adopted the Longer Report section by section, to ensure consistency with the underlying Working Group reports. The Synthesis Report Technical Support Unit is hosted by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) and supported by the Norwegian Environment Agency.