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FUTURE WORK OF THE IPCC

**Options paper prepared by the Task Group Co-Chairs for the second meeting
of the Task Group on Future Work of the IPCC (Geneva, 16-17 September 2014)**

(Submitted by the Secretariat in support of the process of the Task Group
on the Future Work of the IPCC)

FUTURE WORK OF THE IPCC
Draft Options Paper

Prepared for the second meeting of the Task Group on the future work of the IPCC

16 and 17 September 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

Background

Rule 7 of Appendix C to the Principles Governing IPCC Work requires that the *size, structure and composition of the IPCC Bureau and any Task Force Bureau will be reviewed and amended, as necessary, by the Panel at least one Session prior to the Session at which the IPCC Bureau and/or any Task Force Bureau are elected.*

In the past the IPCC has carried out a discussion about the future of the IPCC at the end of every assessment process, addressing questions such as mandate of the IPCC Working Groups, structure and scope of future products and scheduling of IPCC products. In undertaking this kind of review the IPCC has invited comments and input from inter alia governments and the scientific community.

At its 37th session, 14-18 October 2013, in Batumi, Georgia, the Panel decided to set up a Task Group on the future work of the IPCC. The mandate of this Task Group is to develop options and recommendations for consideration of the Panel on:

- the future products of IPCC,
- the appropriate structure and modus operandi for the production of these IPCC products, and
- ways to ensure enhancement of the participation and contribution of developing countries in the future work of the IPCC.

In undertaking this work the Task Group seeks to ensure the inclusion of the perspectives of developing countries. The Task Group is to prepare a second progress report providing different options for discussion at the 40th session of the IPCC (Copenhagen, Denmark, 27 October 2014).

The work of the Task Group will be completed by the 41st Session of the IPCC (first half of 2015) when, according to IPCC procedures, the Panel will have to agree on size, structure and composition of the next IPCC Bureau.

In their first progress report (IPCC-XXXIX/Doc.15) the Co-Chairs committed to draft an Options Paper for discussion at the second meeting of the Task Group. This Options paper has drawn from submissions from governments (IPCC-XXXVII/INF. 1; IPCC-XXXIX/INF. 1; IPCC-XXXIX/INF. 1, Add.1), [scientists involved in the preparation of IPCC reports, IPCC Observer Organizations and other relevant stakeholders including IPCC Secretariat]¹.

This draft Options Paper has been prepared by the Co-Chairs and made available for the consideration of the members of the Task Group on the future work of the IPCC, as an input to the second meeting of the Task Group, 16 and 17 September 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland.

¹Input from all these groups was not available at the time this paper was drafted.

The Co-Chairs have prepared this options paper building on the areas of convergence highlighted in the first progress report (IPCC-XXXIX/Doc. 15 refers) presented to the 39th session of the IPCC in Berlin (April, 2014):

"The synthesis of submissions shows that there are areas of convergence with respect to:

Products of the IPCC: Most countries commented that the mandate of the IPCC to produce high quality, policy relevant and policy neutral scientific assessments on climate change remains important and appropriate. The unique value of the IPCC as a scientific assessment body is its comprehensiveness, thoroughness and credibility when delivering assessment reports.

Appropriate structure and modus operandi: Many governments thought that the current IPCC structure and modus operandi are adequate. A range of views were provided on how to improve the structure and functioning of the Technical Support Units (TSUs).

Enhancement of the participation of developing countries: The submissions provided a range of ideas on how to enhance such participation, many of which would be mutually supportive."

Content of this Options Paper

This Options Paper organizes the options suggested by governments, IPCC Observer Organizations and other relevant stakeholders into consistent options for the future work of IPCC (see footnote 1). Following the terms of reference for the Task Group, the focus of this paper is on three main elements, namely:

- IPCC products, their timing and their usability,
- the appropriate structure for the production of these products, and
- ways to ensure enhancement of the participation and contribution of developing countries in the future work of the IPCC.

The aim of this paper is to facilitate the discussion of different options for the IPCC. Different options reflect different views on the implementation of the role of the IPCC as described in the Principles governing IPCC Work, article 2. *'The role of the IPCC is to assess the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be relevant to the application of particular policies'* Future work of the IPCC should continue to realize this role. The different options might represent different ways of implementing the role of the IPCC.

Furthermore, the given options address issues in different ways and they are not mutually exclusive. Some options have a bigger impact than others on the current procedures of the IPCC but might offer more structural solutions too. All options should be considered in relation to their impact on the IPCC structure, the IPCC budget, and on the scientific community.

The Options paper discusses the three elements successively. It summarizes the current practice and lists improvement options.

Products, their timing and their usability

Current situation and limitations

Over the last decades the IPCC has produced five comprehensive assessments (ARs), containing a large amount of knowledge, which, in varying combinations, represent valuable assets for different countries, sectors, private enterprises, research communities, the media and the public. In total the AR5 consists of approved Summary for Policy Makers (SPMs), Technical Summary (TS) and Reports from each of the three IPCC Working Groups (WGs) and a Synthesis Report (SYR). Each Working Group report represents several years work, with the final products approved/accepted by the Panel over a period of about twelve months. In addition to the assessments, the IPCC produces Special Reports (SRs) on emerging issues, Methodology Reports (MRs) and Technical Papers (TPs).

Most governments suggested that there is great value in IPCC Reports, including Special Reports (SRs) and Methodology Reports (MRs). In addition, most governments commented that the mandate of the IPCC to produce high quality, policy relevant and policy neutral scientific assessments on climate change remains important and appropriate. The unique value of the IPCC scientific assessment is its comprehensiveness, thoroughness and credibility.

Options for product types and their timing

Policymakers are interested in policy-relevant documents based on up-to-date information. Various ideas have been provided on how the IPCC could change its products and their timing to create reports that contain the more recent information.

The following options address product types and their timing:

- 1) Maintain the current cycle of comprehensive Assessment Reports (ARs) together with the three-tier review process, supplemented by Special Reports (SRs) and Methodology Reports (MRs)
- 2) A 3-7 years assessment cycle as this will ensure three-tier independent reviews in order to be verified for being reliable and comprehensive; with emphasis on the comprehensive AR supplemented with occasional SRs.
- 3) Fast track the entire AR cycle to take place within a shorter period e.g. 4 years.
- 4) Maintain the current AR cycle for the scientific base (Working Group I), but deliver reports on mitigation and adaptation more frequently.
- 5) Place more emphasis on fast-track products like SRs on emerging issues or regular science update reports and less emphasis on the full AR.

Most of the options mentioned above would have consequences for the demand the IPCC puts on the scientific community. How the IPCC can create more recent reports without putting an unsustainable strain on the scientific community is a point for discussion. Furthermore, changes to products or timing should not affect rigor, balance or quality of the reports. Some options would require changes to IPCC drafting procedures and to the IPCC expert and government review processes. Most governments saw the alignment with the UNFCCC time schedule (for example as related to reviewing the UNFCCC global goal or to the length of “commitment periods”) as an important precondition for change.

Options for cross-working group collaboration

Governments showed broad support for more effective cross-working group cooperation. Several options were proposed to improve the cohesion and collaboration between the working groups.

- 1) Produce more SRs on cross-cutting issues.
- 2) Produce Technical Papers (TPs) on cross-cutting themes and as such, TPs might also be a suitable method to deliver updates of the WG contributions with the crucial modification that they include new material.
- 3) Scoping the SYR in a very early stage in order to create an outline by which cross-cutting issues are examined.
- 4) To set up an ad-hoc cross WG to enhance coordination and cooperation among WGs or to have ways for authors to cross the WGs.
- 5) Changing the timing of the working group reports, to allow a gap between Working Group I and the other Working Groups to provide the other Working Groups with the time to incorporate the newest Working Group I findings into their reports.
- 6) Merging the three working groups into two thematic groups: Group I – climate change and its impacts and Group II – mitigation, adaptation and vulnerabilities.

The options above address cross-working group collaboration in different ways and address different aspects; they are not mutually exclusive. Before deciding on any particular option or options, it is important to understand what the underlying issues are.

Options to increase the readability and usability of assessment reports

Most governments felt that the Summaries for Policymakers (SPMs) in future ARs should be more readable than the current SPMs. The following options have been proposed to improve the readability and the usability of the reports/SPMs.

- 1) Editing of the SPM text by communication or writing specialists.
- 2) Interaction with users early in the development of SPMs.
- 3) Focus groups on certain subjects, like figures.
- 4) User consultation to gain more insight into how the IPCC might better tailor its products to user needs.
- 5) Creating new products like interactive graphics, animations, and simple models.

Again these options are not mutually exclusive. The options raise a question about how far the IPCC needs to go to present their findings. Is it enough to present a report that is readable, or is it within the mandate of the IPCC to create extra material to help communicate findings? In relation options one and three above it is important to discuss who should have the final say on the content of the report, a communications expert or the authors.

Options for digitalization

The digital era allows new ways of sharing information and could make IPCC reports and the underlying data more readily accessible and user friendly. The following options address how new digital techniques could be used.

- 1) Publish the reports as a document with hyperlinks to both internal and external references.
- 2) Make all referenced material available in an online database.

- 3) Publish the underlying datasets online to allow flexible use of the data².
- 4) Publish the reports online as a dynamic document. This would allow authors to update a topic when the balance of evidence shifts. Producing a SYR and SPMs at regular intervals would provide governments and experts with the opportunity to conduct a thorough review of the material.

Options one and two are complementary. Using hyperlinks to material that is then not available due to copyrights would not yield the desired results. To deal with copyright issues, the Bureau could open a discussion with the main publishers. Publishing more underlying documents and data online facilitates the use of this data in other assessments, like regional assessments. It would also make the reports searchable in search engines like Google, making it a resource for a broader audience. Before deciding on any particular option or options, it is important to understand what the underlying issues and /or barriers are, for example, regarding publishing reports online as dynamic documents.

Organization of the IPCC

Current situation and limitations

The IPCC is currently organized in three Working Groups (WGs) and a Task Force (TF). They are assisted by Technical Support Units (TSUs), which are hosted and financially supported by the government of the developed country Co-Chair of that Working Group/Task Force. The IPCC as a whole is supported by a Secretariat, and is primarily funded by member governments, the European Commission, WMO, UNEP, and the UNFCCC. The Secretariat prepares documentation and organizes Sessions of the IPCC and its institutions (e.g. Bureau, ExCom). It manages the IPCC Trust Fund, and provides information management, outreach, and communication with IPCC members. The TSUs provide scientific, technical and organizational support to their respective IPCC Working Groups (WGs) and support their Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors for IPCC reports are selected by the relevant Working Group or Task Force Bureau, under general guidance provided by the Session of the Working Group from among experts listed by governments and participating organizations, and other experts known through their publications. None of the authors receive payment from the IPCC.

Depending on the outcome of the discussions on the future products of the IPCC, most governments understand that the assessment cycle, structure, and organization of the IPCC will need to be aligned with that and may need to be adapted accordingly. While many governments felt such structural issues could be looked at after considering future products, several governments mentioned that the current Bureau structure, size and modus operandi were generally suitable overall.

No specific options were given to change the Bureau structure, other than changes that might lead to increased representation from developing countries. This issue is discussed later in the paper. Some suggestions were made regarding better defining the terms of reference (ToR) for the Bureaux, and ensuring that the selection procedure of the Bureaux is transparent.

²An example of digitalised AR data can be found in the [KNMI Climate Change Atlas](#). This page gives the possibility to plot climate model output for a variety of regions, seasons and variables. It presents the data in an easy to use and flexible way.

Preliminary options for IPCC Structure:

These preliminary options will need to be revisited after there is more clarity on the future work of the IPCC.

- 1) Retain the current IPCC structure of the three WGs and inventory Task Force.
- 2) Clarify roles of the IPCC secretariat, TSUs, and the ExCom, regarding, for example, administrative, operational and general coordination matters.
- 3) Continue cooperation with other UN bodies through the IPCC Secretariat, and enhance as feasible and as required.
- 4) Enhance operational capacity of the IPCC, preserve WGs function as the best 'encyclopedia' of current knowledge on climate change and retain the expertise that exists within TSUs.
- 5) Enhance cooperation between WGs such as joint meetings, joint workshops, cross WGs collaboration at various levels of engagement i.e. between Authors, and between Co-Chairs on various topics.
- 6) Establish a special intergovernmental Task Group responsible for analyzing, assessing and evaluating the impact of data gaps in the assessment reports.

Options for TSUs:

These options should be read in conjunction with the section on involvement of developing countries.

- 1) Introduce a more continuous or permanent organisation structure including international recruitment of TSU staff and decouple the TSUs from the election of Co-chairs. In order to divide workload special reports could have a designated TSU working in collaboration with the WGs TSUs.
- 2) A TSU could be comprised of both developing and developed country institutes and be managed by the Secretariat and under the IPCC Chair. The direct management would be through the two Co-Chairs. Financing could be sourced from several countries and be managed and coordinated by the IPCC Secretariat.
- 3) Grouping the TSUs with or close to the IPCC Secretariat to achieve higher coordination of administrative and operations activities, and avoid duplication of work.
- 4) A Memorandum of Understanding between the TSUs or their host organizations and the IPCC Secretariat could clarify respective roles and responsibilities and facilitate operations throughout the cycle.

Options for support for CLAs and LAs

It is widely acknowledged that IPCC assessments are quite demanding on CLAs and LAs.

Options concerning the support of CLAs and LA's include:

- 1) Assisting the LAs in their tasks with information technology, for instance with reference management.
- 2) Appointing full time research assistants to support the work of the TSUs and/or the CLAs.
- 3) Expanding the list of contributing authors.
- 4) Initiate an open (online) expression of interest (in addition to the official government-led current practice of nominations by IPCC) to increase inclusiveness in the selection of experts.

- 5) Exploring ways to collaborate with other relevant international organizations and assessment bodies (UNEP, IPBES, IEA, etc.) in producing SRs or TPs in partnership with those bodies.

These options are not mutually exclusive, but they will all have budgetary implications.

If the IPCC decides to produce more products, the demands on the scientific community will grow. The above mentioned options could help manage the time demands on CLAs and LAs.

Involvement of developing countries

Current situation and its limitations

For a range of reasons there is relatively less input (including involvement of scientists and the use of non-English language literature) from developing countries into the IPCC process. Some measures have already been implemented to address the involvement of developing countries, for example the Co-Chairing arrangements for the Working Groups and Task Force. Additionally the IPCC scholarship programme supports young scientists from developing countries in their doctoral studies.

A range of suggestions have been made to improve the involvement of developing countries in the future work of the IPCC, most of which could be combined with many other suggestions. These options do not exclude the importance of a dialogue with developing countries in order to identify and analyze in depth their key bottlenecks, problems and needs that should be addressed in order to seek attainable solutions for the next IPCC cycle. This paper provides options for the training and support for scientists, accessing non-English language literature and stronger involvement in the Bureaux and TSUs.

Options for support and training of (young) scientists

Balanced author teams are a desirable element for producing a balanced assessment. To improve the participation of authors from developing countries, the following options were mentioned.

- 1) Providing more funding to young scientists in developing countries and economies in transition.
- 2) Increasing the share of young scientists from developing countries in the staff of TSUs.
- 3) Developing a trainee program or summer school for younger skilled researchers from developing countries to participate as junior scientific staff at each TSU.
- 4) Providing support for developing country scientists and experts to enhance and share regional research and knowledge. The support could include holding conferences, workshops and meetings for sharing knowledge and enhance capacity building, and partnering with academic institutions in developing countries to provide training in climate assessment (using WG reports as learning and teaching resources in universities for example).

One of the main questions that should be answered is whether educating young scientists and investing in scientific capacity and infrastructure are within the mandate of the IPCC and whether the IPCC is the appropriate organization for this task. Governments have suggested that there are other organizations who are better suited and more experienced in this area, such as WMO and UNEP, UNESCO, the Future Earth Secretariat, and existing regional cooperation mechanisms such as in the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) and academic

institutions. These organizations would be an essential part of the practical implementation of these options.

Options for accessing non-English language literature

Governments have suggested the following options to enhance the inclusion of non-English language literature in IPCC assessments and other products:

- 1) Establishing (or using existing) regional committees or networks to improve access to non-English language literature.
- 2) Directly approaching authors of such literature to provide expert opinion or specific inputs on particular topics
- 3) Extending the range of methodological reports to support regional assessments and research in developing countries
- 4) In consultation with governments and international agencies, the IPCC could identify relevant government reports and literature published in languages other than English, in particular from developing countries. A UN-based language service could assist in translating such documents and authors of such literature could be approached to provide expert opinion or specific inputs on relevant topics.

For these options, the IPCC would need to discuss what falls within its mandate and with which organizations it could cooperate with to deliver better coverage of literature that is not published in English.

Options to improve participation in the Bureaux and TSUs

Governments have made a number of suggestions that could help improve the involvement of developing countries in the Bureaux and the TSUs.

- 1) Institutionalization of cooperation across and between the TSUs and the IPCC Secretariat to secure professional support of the scientific assessment process, increase efficiency and effectiveness and exploit synergies
- 2) Employing more experts from developing countries in the TSUs. Capacity building for scientists from developing countries could happen by way of secondments at the TSUs.
- 3) Stronger support for Co-Chairs from developing countries including hosting a TSU in more than one country, or where a developed country provides the funding and a developing country hosts the TSU.
- 4) Revise if necessary the terms of reference for the Bureaux to ensure balanced participation of Bureau members from developing countries
- 5) Co-Chairs could be given a definite responsibility to engage developing countries in TSUs, author teams and as reviewers.

The main topic seems to be the connection between funding and participation. Therefore the discussion could focus on this relationship and on ways to be flexible and innovative on this topic.

Options to increase developing country participation in IPCC products:

Governments have made a number of suggestions that could help improve the involvement of experts from developing countries in the production of IPCC reports.

- 1) In writing teams having a mixture of experts with and without previous experience in IPCC would provide more opportunity.

- 2) Locating Authors, expert meetings and workshops in developing countries more than before in order to increase visibility of IPCC.

Conclusion

This Options Paper organizes and presents options based on input by different IPCC stakeholders. It can be seen as a series of menus with options that often are not mutually exclusive, but that are interrelated and can support each other. Some suggestions on support for scientists from developing countries could also help relieve the pressure on CLAs and LAs. Opening up literature and data will make the IPCC products more accessible and usable, and would also support research in developing countries.