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## **FUTURE WORK OF THE IPCC**

### **Lessons learnt on how to handle approval Sessions**

(Issues paper and recommendations submitted by the IPCC Secretariat)

## **FUTURE WORK OF THE IPCC**

### Lessons learnt on how to handle approval Sessions

#### **Issues paper and recommendations**

At the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Bureau the IPCC Secretariat was asked to prepare a discussion document on lessons learnt from recent approval Sessions with a view to improve the process in the future. A first discussion paper was presented to and considered by the Bureau at its 48<sup>th</sup> Session and the IPCC Secretariat was asked to prepare an issues paper and recommendations by the Secretariat for consideration by the Panel at its 41<sup>st</sup> Session, taking into consideration comments and suggestions made by the IPCC Bureau.

Issues identified in recent approval Sessions:

- Balanced and representative presence of national delegations throughout the session

Too many parallel meetings, night meetings, duration of the sessions beyond closing date and time and plenary meetings without interpretation could make it difficult for small delegations and delegations relying on interpretation to efficiently contribute to the considerations at the session.

- Length and clarity of draft documents submitted for consideration

The length of draft documents have been constantly increasing and e.g. Summary for Policymakers contained lots of detail and textbook information which may be better reflected in a technical summary. The highly technical language makes the text sometimes difficult to comprehend. Briefings on complex technical matters of figures would be helpful.

- Timely access to pre-session documents

Authors normally revise the draft text in response to final government comments just before the Session. As this revised text is used as a basis for the consideration and there is a need for delegates to reflect on the revisions in advance of the session. Revisions which go beyond response to comments were not considered helpful.

- Timely access to approved text and overview of progress made

During the approval session it often happens that text is kept pending or sent off to a contact group. This makes it difficult to keep an overview of progress made. Further, text which has already been approved may have implications for sections under consideration and should therefore be made available to all delegates as soon as approved.

- Interaction between presiding officers and delegates and efficiency in managing the session

The IPCC Secretariat prepared the following recommendations to improve preparations for and management of approval Sessions with a view to ensure credibility, full transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

Terminology used is consistent with the definitions used in Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work. The term approval Session is used for any Session of a Working Group or the Panel which approves/adopts/accepts a report. The term presiding officer is used to refer to Co-chairs or Chair, depending on the type of the Session.

The Panel is invited to consider these recommendations by the IPCC Secretariat, including budgetary implications.

## 1. Planning of Sessions

The duration of approval Sessions is very closely linked to the length, quality and clarity of text submitted. To a much smaller extent it is dependent on the complexity of the matter under consideration. It is therefore important to consider that fact when writing the draft Summary for Policymakers (SPM) and planning the length of a Session.

- Working Groups (WG) are encouraged to aim for approximately the same number of draft SPM pages which in turn would allow for equal length of approval Sessions. The Panel may also wish to identify page limits for the SPM in the context of the approval of the scope of a report.
- Approval Sessions should be scheduled for 4-6 days depending on the length of the draft document. For the Synthesis Report (SYR) seven days may be considered, as foreseen in the IPCC procedures. Extending Sessions beyond one week is not recommended.
- Providing for a contingency beyond the scheduled duration of a Session is not recommended as it results in numerous logistical and financial complications for the host country, participants and Secretariat. It may also result in complications regarding the status of decisions made.
- It is recommended that the draft SPM text is shared with “semi-specialists” before it is sent for final review by governments to test whether the technical language used by the authors is easily understood. These test readers could be staff from the Secretariat or Technical Support Units (TSU) from other WGs and communications experts.
- Scientific briefings shall be standard agenda items of every approval Session.

Experience and skills of the presiding officers in managing a meeting are further important elements, as is sufficient and coordinated support through qualified staff and a well planned interaction with authors present at the Session. Presiding officers should be sensitive and attentive to comments by governments and try to get an understanding of the view of all delegates.

- It is recommended that at the beginning of an assessment cycle all presiding officers would undergo training on how to chair sessions through persons with experience in running UN meetings. In addition persons with specific experience in IPCC approval Sessions could share their thoughts, experience and guidance.
- In the context of writing the SPM and before each approval Session the authors present shall be briefed in detail about who is the audience of the SPM, how are approval sessions conducted, what is their role during the Session and how to communicate with the presiding officers and delegates.
- Sufficient TSU staff needs to be assigned to secure services for all formal and informal settings, including contact groups and to allow for rotation in order to prevent exhaustion. The TSU has to have a clear protocol for file management. Staff should receive training for approval Sessions and be familiar with the file management protocol.
- Briefing for new government delegates could be offered in advance of Sessions to explain the IPCC process and in particular the relevance and process of approval Sessions.

Experience has shown that despite all efforts to deal with most of the text in plenary and during regular working hours, work is often carried out in parallel groups and during breaks, evenings and nights, which causes difficulties for small delegations.

- It is recommended to provide for approval Sessions financial resources for two developing country/EIT delegates (see also below recommendations about management of Sessions).

## 2. Management of Sessions

To ensure credibility, transparency and inclusiveness, the following rules and guiding principles should be applied and considered in the management of approval Sessions:

### a) Working hours and duration of a Session

- Regular working hours of the plenary are 10.00 to 13.00 and 15.00 to 18.00. Maximum working hours per day should not exceed 09.00 to 23.00.
- During all plenary meetings interpretation in all UN languages has to be provided. Working in plenary without interpretation is an informal arrangement that requires explicit acceptance by participants in the meeting.
- The Session is to be closed on the day and hour scheduled. Any extension beyond this hour has to be explicitly agreed by participants as an informal arrangement (“stopping the watch”). Extension into the next working day has to be avoided.
- The presiding officers should aim to treat all text to the extent feasible in plenary and within regular working hours.
- At any time of the Session the presiding officers have to be sensitive to a balanced and representative presence of country delegations from all regions. In case this is no longer the case e.g. due to numerous night meetings or extension of the Session beyond the scheduled time the meeting/Session should be suspended.
- To encourage focused and short interventions by delegates the Panel may wish to use a timer or “traffic light” that indicates speaking time.

### b) Contact groups or other informal settings

- All documents and agenda items should be first discussed in plenary. Should the establishment of a contact group, or other informal setting, be deemed necessary it should be announced after the text is introduced in plenary. Contact groups, or other informal settings, may be established on difficult, complex or controversial issues or if time management requires speeding up of the process.
- Agreement reached in contact groups or other informal settings is not final. All documents need to be approved/adopted/accepted in plenary.
- A contact group has to have a clear mandate and deadline, dedicated co-chairs and TSU/Secretariat staff assigned for note taking and on screen typing. The contact group co-chairs have to report back to the plenary at agreed times and submit the interim draft text to the paper smart system, to provide for full transparency.

- Other informal settings such as drafting groups or informal consultations may be established for specific topics and for a very limited time period. The presiding officers have to ensure that number and duration of such informal settings do not jeopardize transparency and inclusiveness.
- Should a contact group, or other informal setting, not make sufficient progress the presiding officers of the Session may terminate the group or identify other arrangements to enhance progress. Any text agreed (or not agreed) by a contact group, or other informal setting, has to be submitted for approval/ adoption/acceptance by the plenary.
- At no time more than two negotiating groups shall meet (either two contact groups or one contact group and the plenary). Other informal settings shall only meet during breaks or for a very short time period.

### **3. Documents management**

A consistent documents management in all approval Sessions is essential to facilitate and speed up the process. The IPCC paper smart system is designed to facilitate easy and quick access to pre-session and in-session documents, consistent with confidentiality requirements laid down in the IPCC procedures or agreed by the Panel.

- The revised drafts SPM prepared by authors in advance of the Session in response to comments received from governments, should be available to all delegates to the extent feasible before the session, but by the latest at the beginning of the Session. This allows delegates to familiarize themselves with the changes suggested by the authors.
- By default, post after every meeting, or in case of slow progress, at least every day after 18.00, the full draft document on the paper smart system, with clear indication which text elements have been approved, which are currently under consideration, in plenary, a contact group or other informal setting, and which have not been addressed yet. Color-coding for the status of text should be used consistently in all approval Sessions.
- All text posted on the paper smart system and submitted to the plenary for approval/adoption/acceptance should also be provided in track change mode, showing changes as compared to the final draft text submitted as formal document in advance of the session.
- The IPCC Secretariat is responsible for posting of documents (after they have been verified by the presiding officer or his/her designated representative) and for documents numbering which would be consistent for all approval Sessions.