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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPCC ERROR PROTOCOL

Note by the IPCC Secretariat

(Submitted by the IPCC Secretariat)

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In the context of the implementation of the error protocol some lack of clarity with regards to how errata are reflected in published reports, electronic versions and translations has been identified. The matter has been brought to the attention of members of the Executive Committee who expressed initial views in an informal meeting. Some of the issues identified in the context of handling errata are explained below, along with options for clarification and improvement.

1. Document of reference and errata corrected before publication

Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work does not provide clarity on what is considered the "document of reference" of a report. Normally this would be the document approved/adopted/accepted by the Working Group and Panel after reflection of changes made for consistency, as listed in the document available when a report and it's Summary for Policymakers is finally accepted by the Panel, and copyedit. The document accepted by the Panel indicates that it is "subject to copyedit". Appendix A allows also "grammatical or minor editorial changes" after acceptance.

However, certain substantive errors have been identified during the time period between acceptance of a report by the Panel and publication and were corrected, consistent with the error protocol. To provide full transparency these errata should be easily accessible by the user and the fact that errata discovered and approved before publication are reflected in the published report should be conveyed.

Declaring the accepted version of the report, which only reflects the changes for consistency as identified at the time of acceptance and copyedits, as document of reference would imply that the "document of reference" contains errors and that it is different from the published version.
The following way forward may be considered:

- Declare the published volume of the full report the "document of reference" and provide an explanation in the front matters or colophon that in this printed version errors, which have been discovered after acceptance of the report and which have been handled according to the error protocol, have been corrected.
- Provide also information where the list of pre-print errata and the explanatory statements can be found. Post these errata on the website along with errata discovered and handled after printing. For ease of user access these two types of errata can be listed in different files, put in different boxes or be distinguished by sub-heading and color.
- Put the file containing the published report on the website, clearly labeled as "document of reference", along with the explanation referred to above. This file would be in read only version and would not be changed further.

2. Reflection of post-publication errata in electronic versions

Errata identified and handled according to the IPCC Error Protocol will continue to be compiled in an errata file posted on the website along with the report and will be regularly updated.

To enhance user friendliness, a coherent approach with regards to how to reflect and present errata and subsequent corrections in online and other electronic versions would be desirable. Two options may be considered:

a. Keeping the published file unchanged in its online version but indicating clearly (e.g. with arrows) where there is an error. When the user clicks on the arrow the corrected text along with a short explanatory statement will be shown.
Comment: A user would not be able to print the correct text, tables or figures. Further, a solution for deleted text would need to be found.

b. Regularly correcting the online file (providing the date of update) and indicating clearly (e.g. with arrows) where an error was corrected. When the user clicks on the arrow the old text along with a short explanatory statement would be shown.
Comment: With every erratum the text would change.

3. How to reflect errata in translations

Translations are normally published with further delay. By the time they are to be published (online and in print) errata in addition to those discovered before the publication of the full report in English may be discovered. A transparent way of reflecting these corrections is required.

One option may be an explanation in the front matters or colophon similar to the one in the English publication of the full report, indicating that errata up to {date} have been reflected in the translation. This however, would require that errata would be searchable by date.

A consistent approach is also required with respect to errors appearing in translations but not in any version of the English text.

Conclusion

The general question is also raised about which data and information from the error protocol should be made public. Principle 11 of the error protocol states that errata are to be posted on the IPCC or WG or TF website after conclusion of the process. A short explanatory statement may also be posted. The Panel may wish to consider the matter further.

Further, it should be noted that the Error Protocol does not apply to Technical Papers and provisions for correcting errors in Technical Papers may be clarified.

The Panel may wish to consider the matters and advise how to address issues identified, including through an amendment of the Error Protocol.