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MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC) AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Follow-up to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP-21)

(Submitted by the Acting Secretary of the IPCC)

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Follow-up to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP-21)

Introduction

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-21) was held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 11 December 2015. A major outcome of this conference was the adoption of the Paris Agreement that charts global climate action for decades to come. Several decisions of COP-21 and CMP-11 and conclusions of SBSTA-43 mention the IPCC explicitly. In addition, several other decisions of COP-21 may have implicit relevance and potential consequences to the work of the IPCC and the time frame of its products. The provisions of these are listed below, grouped by the programme of work and products under the sixth assessment cycle.

Preparation of Special Reports

The COP, in the section on nationally determined contributions of the decision on the adoption of the Paris Agreement, explicitly invited “the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to provide a Special Report in 2018 on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways”¹. In relation to this report, the COP:

1. Encouraged “the scientific community to address information and research gaps identified during the structured expert dialogue, including scenarios that limit warming to below 1.5 °C relative to pre-industrial levels by 2100 and the range of impacts at the regional and local scales associated with those scenarios.”²
2. Noted “with concern that the estimated aggregate greenhouse gas emission levels in 2025 and 2030 resulting from the intended nationally determined contributions do not fall within least-cost 2 °C scenarios but rather lead to a projected level of 55 gigatonnes in 2030, and also notes that much greater emission reduction efforts will be required than those associated with the intended nationally determined contributions in order to hold the increase in the global average temperature to below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels by reducing emissions to 40 gigatonnes or to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels by reducing to a level to be identified in the special report referred to” above.³
3. Decided “to convene a facilitative dialogue among Parties in 2018 to take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Agreement and to inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 8, of the Agreement”.

Given that the special report is expected to provide the emissions levels in 2030 consistent with holding the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, and that report should be completed in the year when the facilitative dialogue will be held, it could be concluded that the report was invited with a view to inform the facilitative dialogue.

Preparation of the Sixth Assessment Report

General purpose and direction of efforts by all actors

The Paris Agreement gave purpose and long-term direction to guide individual and collective efforts of all, while recognizing “the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of

¹ 1/CP.21, paragraph 21 [(FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1)],

² 10/CP.21, paragraph 8.

³ 1/CP.21, paragraph 17.

climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge”⁴. Article 2 of the Agreement, further elaborates and interprets the objective of the Convention:

1. This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:
 - (a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
 - (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;
 - (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilient development.
2. This Agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.

The Agreement also includes specific goals for mitigation and adaptation:

1. Long term goal on mitigation: “In order to achieve the long-term temperature goal set out in Article 2, Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”⁵.
2. Global goal on adaptation: “Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2”.⁶

Aggregation of efforts and stocktake of progress

Aggregation and assessment of Parties’ efforts and the continuous increase in ambition are a core feature of the Paris Agreement, which connects its bottom-up components to the long-term objectives. The global stocktake, referred to in Article 14 of the Agreement will perform this function: “The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement shall periodically take stock of the implementation of this Agreement to assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this Agreement and its long-term goals (referred to as the “global stocktake”). It shall do so in a comprehensive and facilitative manner, considering mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation and support, and in the light of equity and the best available science”.⁷

Furthermore, the “Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement shall undertake its first global stocktake in 2023 and every five years thereafter unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement”.⁸

⁴ Decision 1/CP.21, fourth preambular paragraph.

⁵ Article 4.1 of the Paris Agreement.

⁶ Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement.

⁷ Article 14.1.

⁸ Article 14.2.

The COP also requested “the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement to identify the sources of input for the global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Agreement and to report to the Conference of the Parties, with a view to the Conference of the Parties making a recommendation to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement for consideration and adoption at its first session, including but not limited to: (b) The latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;”

In this context, issues relating to the IPCC input into the global stocktake and sequencing and timeframes of the IPCC assessment cycles and the global stocktake may need to be addressed. As a first step into this direction the COP requested “the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to provide advice on how the assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change can inform the global stocktake of the implementation of the Agreement pursuant to its Article 14 of the Agreement and to report on this matter to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement at its second session”.⁹

Methodological work

With the adoption of the Paris Agreement, climate change mitigation is now firmly founded on national action. In this context, the Paris conference further recognized the role of IPCC on providing guidelines for Parties account for anthropogenic emissions and removals and provided further information of relevance for such guidelines:

1. The COP requested “ the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement to elaborate, drawing from approaches established under the Convention and its related legal instruments as appropriate, guidance for accounting for Parties` nationally determined contributions, as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 13, of the Agreement, for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its first session, which ensures that (a) Parties account for anthropogenic emissions and removals in accordance with methodologies and common metrics assessed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement”.¹⁰
2. “Parties shall account for their nationally determined contributions. In accounting for anthropogenic emissions and removals corresponding to their nationally determined contributions, Parties shall promote environmental integrity, transparency, accuracy, completeness, comparability and consistency, and ensure the avoidance of double counting, in accordance with guidance adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.”¹¹
3. “In the context of their nationally determined contributions, when recognizing and implementing mitigation actions with respect to anthropogenic emissions and removals, Parties should take into account, as appropriate, existing methods and guidance under the Convention, in the light of the provisions of paragraph 13 of this Article.”¹²
4. “Each party to such agreement shall be responsible for its emission level as set out in the agreement referred to in paragraph 16 above in accordance with paragraphs 13 and 14 of this Article and Articles 13 and 15.”¹³
5. “If Parties acting jointly do so in the framework of, and together with, a regional economic integration organization which is itself a Party to this Agreement, each member State of that regional economic integration organization individually, and together with the regional economic integration organization, shall be responsible for its emission level as set out in the agreement communicated under paragraph 16 of this Article in accordance with paragraphs 13 and 14 of this Article and Articles 13 and 15.”

⁹ Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 101.

¹⁰ Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 31(a).

¹¹ Article 4.13.

¹² Article 4.14.

¹³ Article 4.17.

The Paris agreement established an enhanced transparency framework that aims to: provide clear understanding of the mitigation and adaptation action and on support provided; and to inform the global stocktake. The Paris Agreement provides that:

1. “The transparency framework shall provide flexibility in the implementation of the provisions of this Article to those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities. The modalities, procedures and guidelines referred to in paragraph 13 of this Article shall reflect such flexibility.”¹⁴
2. “Each Party shall regularly provide the following information: (a) A national inventory report of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases, prepared using good practice methodologies accepted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and agreed upon by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement;”¹⁵

Communication

The COP, in the context of the work of the Adaption Committee, invited “the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to enhance outreach activities that would facilitate policymakers’ understanding of the impact of different levels of warming on adaptation planning and actions;”¹⁶

Other references to IPCC in the outcomes of COP-21

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) “noted with appreciation the statements delivered by representatives of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and Australia on behalf of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites (CGMS)”.¹⁷

Decision 3/CMP.11

In paragraph 5 of Decision 3/CMP.11 regarding the implications of the implementation of decisions 2/CMP.7 to 4/CMP.7 and 1/CMP.8 on the previous decisions on methodological issues related to the Kyoto Protocol, including those relating to Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Kyoto Protocol, part I: implications related to accounting and reporting and other related issues, the Conference of the Parties “ *Decides* that, for the purpose of the second commitment period, the following changes shall apply to decisions 13/CMP.1 and 15/CMP.1: (e) All references to the *Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* or to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change *Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management in National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* in decision 15/CMP.1 shall be read as references to the *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* (hereinafter referred to as the 2006 IPCC Guidelines), as implemented through the “Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories” and the *2013 Revised Supplementary Methods and Good Practice Guidance Arising from the Kyoto Protocol*. References to chapter 7 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change *Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management in National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* shall be read as references to chapter 4 of volume 1 of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines;”

In document FCCC/KP/CMP/2015/8/Add.1 reference is made to IPCC in footnotes in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6.

¹⁴ Article 13, paragraph 2.

¹⁵ Article 13, paragraph 7(a).

¹⁶ 3/CP.21, paragraph 4.

¹⁷ FCCC/SBSTA/2015/5, paragraph 23.

Recommendation

The IPCC Bureau, after having considered this topic at its 51st Session (Geneva, Switzerland, 16-17 February 2016), recommends to the Panel to take the outcomes of UNFCCC COP-21 into account when determining the IPCC programme of work and products for the sixth assessment cycle.