PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Report on the experience with dealing with the IPCC Protocol for addressing possible errors in IPCC Assessment Reports, Synthesis Report, Special Reports or Methodology Reports and proposal for amendment

(Submitted by the Chair of the IPCC)

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1. Preamble

At its 33rd Session (Abu Dhabi, UAE, 10-13 May 2011), the Panel decided to adopt the IPCC Protocol for Addressing Possible Errors in IPCC Assessment Reports, Synthesis Reports, Special Reports or Methodology Reports, as Annex 3 to Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work (further referred to as the Protocol):
(http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc_p33_decisions_taken_procedures.pdf).

The Panel tasked the Executive Committee of the IPCC (ExCom) to oversee the response to possible errors in completed assessments and other IPCC products, in accordance with the Error Protocol:
(http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc_p33_decisions_taken_governance_management.pdf).

At the Thirteenth Meeting of the ExCom (5 September 2012, teleconference), the ExCom agreed that it is in its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Protocol. It also agreed with the need to revise the Protocol deadlines under special circumstances and to submit a proposed revision to the Plenary for approval at its 37th Session (Batumi, Georgia, 10-14 October 2013).

2. Experience with dealing with the Protocol

The overall evaluation of the implementation of the Protocol since its adoption by the Panel is positive. There have been 26 applications of the Protocol and it is working very well. However the ExCom would like to highlight one feature that needs adjustment, which is the technical difficulty of meeting in some cases the deadlines set by the Protocol. The Protocol sets ambitious deadlines for the actions it defines and the ExCom notes that in the application of the Protocol to date, these deadlines have been very difficult to meet. This challenge originates either in the fact that the relevant people may be difficult to reach, or in arranging conference calls, or in finding people who agree to be on review groups to review the alleged errors. The ExCom agrees that while it is important to operate in a timely manner, it is undesirable to be in a position of frequently missing the deadline. In view of being in a position to scrupulously execute the Protocol, the ExCom suggests reviewing the deadlines and replacing them with ones which are more realistic.

At its Twenty First Meeting (16 August 2013, teleconference), the ExCom suggested that a uniform period (two months) could be suggested for the indicative deadlines of the various steps described in the Protocol. The Panel is invited to consider this proposal and take a decision.

Irrespective of the deadlines, the ExCom agrees that timely communications with the claimants remain very important and should not be delayed. This has been complied with in each case. The ExCom has also discussed the type of response that needs to be sent to the claimants of possible errors once the process defined by the Protocol has run its course. At the Sixteenth Meeting of the ExCom (4 January 2013, teleconference) the ExCom concluded that the type of response depends on the nature of the claim, on a case-by-case basis. This is in line with the Protocol which states that the Chair and the relevant Co-Chairs "decide on a communications strategy if needed".

3. Posting of errata

The ExCom has also given some thought to how the outcomes resulting from the use of the Protocol should be presented, in order to ensure that it is clear which text is original and what the corrections are. Concerning the corrections to electronic documents, the ExCom at its Eighteenths Meeting (3 April 2013, teleconference) endorsed that the electronic document of record of IPCC reports should be clearly marked as such on the websites. The IPCC websites should clearly indicate that this version is not modified and that any corrections can be found in separate files. In a separate downloadable "working version" clearly identified as such on the websites, the text is not modified but flags are inserted in the text containing or linking to the corrections authorized. The ExCom proposed that this system be implemented starting with the AR5 cycle and the two Special Reports on "Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation (SRREN) and Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX).

4. Handling of translation mistakes

At the Eighteenth Meeting of the ExCom (3 April 2013, teleconference), the ExCom agreed to develop a separate process/protocol for handling translation errors in United Nations (UN) language versions of IPCC reports which are not accepted, adopted or approved documents and therefore the Protocol does not apply. The process is still under development, and the ExCom agreed at its Twenty First Meeting (16 August 2013, teleconference) that the result of the process must be a definitive translation endorsed by the official UN translators.