

# ipcc

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

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## **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND OUTREACH**

### **Approval of the new IPCC Communications Strategy**

(Submitted by the IPCC Secretariat)

#### **IPCC Secretariat**

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## **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND OUTREACH**

### Approval of the new IPCC Communications Strategy

#### **Note by the Secretariat**

The Panel at its 33<sup>rd</sup> Session (Abu Dhabi, 10-13 May 2011) approved the *Guidance on IPCC Communications Strategy*. Following the conclusion of the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the IPCC (Kampala, 18-19 November 2011) a sub-committee of the Executive Committee was established, comprising one IPCC Vice-Chair, one representative of each Working Group and Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (TFI), the AR5 Synthesis Report TSU Head, the IPCC Secretary and the Senior Communication Manager, in order to further develop an IPCC Communications Strategy. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, IPCC Vice-Chair, acts as Chair of the Executive Committee Sub-Committee on Communications Strategy (ExCom-CS).

The ExCom-CS drafted the Communications Strategy, taking into consideration comments from governments received in writing or made in Kampala, and submitted a preliminary version of it to the Executive Committee. The draft was then submitted to the Bureau in March 2012 and revised in light of comments from members of the Bureau.

The attached document is submitted to the Panel for its consideration and decision.

## **IPCC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

Following the recommendations of the InterAcademy Council (IAC) in August 2010 to develop a communications strategy, the IPCC at its 33<sup>rd</sup> Session in Abu Dhabi in May 2011 approved the *Guidance on IPCC Communications Strategy* (referred to below as the Guidance)<sup>1</sup>. The following strategy was drawn up by the IPCC Secretariat, working closely with the sub-committee established by the Executive Committee for that purpose. It is grounded in the Guidance and was reviewed by the Bureau. [The strategy is presented to the 35<sup>th</sup> Session of the Panel in June 2012 in Geneva for its consideration.]

### **Communications goals and principles**

1. IPCC communications are based on the IPCC Principles<sup>2</sup>. IPCC communications have two main goals:

- 1.1. to communicate assessment findings, providing clear and balanced information on climate change, including risks and scientific uncertainties, without compromising accuracy;
- 1.2. to explain the way the IPCC works, selects its authors and reviewers and produces its reports. This will inform understanding of the reports and support and reaffirm its reputation as a credible, transparent, balanced and authoritative scientific body.

2. All communications are based on the principle that the IPCC is policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive, as laid out in the Guidance. The IPCC does not engage in advocacy and does not provide policy recommendations.

### **Communications activities**

3. IPCC communications address three main groups of activities: day-to-day communications, both pro-active and reactive; the launch of reports (and participation in major conferences); and rapid response. Rapid responses require particular procedures to ensure they are handled in a timely and representative manner.

### **Communications audiences**

4. IPCC communications serve to improve public understanding and awareness of the contents of IPCC assessment reports, special reports, methodology reports, and other material produced by the IPCC, and hence of climate science. It does this by communicating with governments, international and other inter-governmental organizations and other decision-makers, scientists, the media, and hence a broader public, and other stakeholders.

5. IPCC communications are global. Where practical, communications material should also be provided in languages other than English. In its communications and outreach activities the IPCC will pay attention to the specific context of different countries. This reflects an understanding that the needs of developing countries may be different to those of developed countries and may require tailor-made outreach activities.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc\\_p33\\_decisions\\_taken\\_comm\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc_p33_decisions_taken_comm_strategy.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis 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 neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies." (Principles Governing IPCC Work, paragraph 2)  
( <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles.pdf> )

## **Communications methods and tools**

6. IPCC communications will be carried out professionally and pro-actively to ensure the IPCC communicates effectively, in a timely and appropriate fashion, with all its stakeholders.

7. Effective external communications depend on disciplined internal communications, coordination and decision-making. It is essential that the IPCC delivers a consistent message; that entails a coordinated approach to communications. To ensure this happens, the Senior Communications Manager works with all parts of the IPCC – the Chair, IPCC Vice-Chairs, Secretariat, Working Groups/Task Force Co-Chairs, Bureau and Focal Points.

8. Preparation and decision-making procedures for communication materials must be timely, efficient and representative of all groups within the IPCC organization. The groups or individuals that can approve different types of material and communications activities in different situations must be clearly identified in advance, in accordance with the Guidance, and the process should be documented.

9. Focal Points can play a role in disseminating IPCC materials in their countries, including translating texts into local languages. They need to receive communications materials and information about events in a timely manner, and may seek advice from the Senior Communications Manager on IPCC communications-related matters.

10. When preparing the final draft of the Summary for Policymakers, Overview Chapters of Methodology Reports and the Synthesis Report, Co-Chairs, the IPCC Chair and authors should aim to produce clear, comprehensible texts and graphics that support the key findings in the report. They should be aware of how approved language in the report can be used in communications materials to facilitate greater understanding of the IPCC's work among governments, media and other non-specialists unfamiliar with scientific terminology.

11. The IPCC website must be reviewed regularly to ensure content is up to date, to improve user-friendliness and navigability and to benefit where useful from the latest technology and practices. The IPCC website should serve all stakeholders, including governments, the scientific community, the media and the public, while providing a single entry point to access all IPCC material in a user-friendly manner. Websites hosted by the Working Groups/Task Force should be as consistent as possible with the IPCC website. The appropriate use of social media should be kept under review.

## **IPCC spokespeople**

12. To ensure objectivity and scientific accuracy, as well as efficiency and timeliness, authorized spokespersons must be designated for various situations. The Chair and IPCC Vice-Chairs are the lead spokespersons for the organization as a whole; the Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs are the lead spokespersons for the activities of their Working Group/Task Force; the Secretary and Communications Manager may speak on activities and procedures of the IPCC, as well as institutional matters.

13. Besides these designated spokespersons, authors will often be the most appropriate people to speak on their area of science and may be requested by the Co-Chairs or the Chair to talk to the media or represent the IPCC at conferences.

14. Those who represent the IPCC when speaking at major conferences or interacting with the media are strongly encouraged to undergo media training. Such training should include the question of speaking on behalf of the IPCC versus speaking in other capacities.

15. IPCC spokespeople, especially those holding the most senior positions, must refrain from public statements that could be interpreted as advocacy and compromise the IPCC's reputation for neutrality.

## Resources

16. Communications activities must operate with the resources available in the IPCC budget. These may be supplemented through additional funds that the Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs or IPCC Chair or their TSUs are able to secure from other sources for specific communications activities. At times of heightened media activity, such as around the release of a report or in crisis communications, IPCC communications may be able to draw on support from external communications experts, provided IPCC independence is not compromised. Such external experts can also be drawn on for advice in other cases.

## NOTES ON IMPLEMENTATION

While the ultimate responsibility for communications activities lies with the Panel, and fundamental communications issues should be discussed within the Bureau and/or Panel, the Bureau and Executive Committee will act on the Panel's behalf between sessions. The Executive Committee will consider detailed implementation arrangements of this strategy.

This communications strategy will require a significant amount of flexibility while adhering to the principles and philosophy of the approved Guidance. The essence of a flexible implementation is that it should deal as effectively as possible with novel situations. Whenever communications work involves novel challenges, it is important to take advantage of the collective vision of the IPCC Communications Manager, the Executive Committee and the Bureau. Pitfalls, especially for communications involving novel issues or the media, can be avoided by expanding the range of those people commenting on tone, balance, complexity, and content.

## Key considerations for implementation

- The timeliness of different communications activities, and the people who draft and authorize them, vary with the type of activity.
- Information about new communications material will be provided to the Executive Committee, Bureau and Focal Points in a timely fashion, and they will also receive regular reports on communications activities.
- All those associated with the IPCC who undertake communications and information activities should be aware of any potential conflict of interest or bias, or the perception of them.
- Effective external communications depend on good internal communications. This strategy aims to foster an open and timely exchange of information among all parts of the organization. The efficiency of internal communications should be kept under review by the Bureau.
- The communications strategy should be reviewed at regular intervals, with an evaluation of activities, and adjusted as needed.