

Proposal for an IPCC Meeting on Communications

Submitted by the Senior Communications Manager, IPCC Secretariat

Background:

The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) was released in four stages in 2013-2014 (Working Group I: September 2013, Working Group II: March 2014, Working Group III: April 2014; Synthesis Report: November 2014).

Webcast press conferences were held within two days of approval, and these were followed by outreach events around the world with various partners organized by the respective working groups or coordinated by the Secretariat. Besides the Summary for Policymakers and the report itself (final drafts of the working group full reports were made available on the day or within a few days), each release was accompanied by a press release and supported by a generic presentation. The generic presentations by the WGs and Synthesis Report team have been developed further for the various outreach activities. Videos were also produced for each part of the report and released at the time of the initial release or a few months later.

The outreach activities have continued in 2014 and 2015 with a view to keeping the report before policymakers and the public in the run-up to COP 21. These activities have been supported by funds from several donor governments, and included elements of capacity-building for the local research communities and for media.

The reports attracted considerable media attention, with the most coverage seen for Working Group I, but high levels for the other parts, too.

Many other organizations have conducted their own activities to communicate the findings of IPCC AR5, often drawing on authors from the various IPCC AR5 reports. Several organizations have developed “derivative products”¹, not directly linked to or approved by the IPCC, to target findings at specific geographic or sectoral audiences in an accessible manner.

Media coverage of the AR5 reports was on the whole objective, with the IPCC generally presented as an authoritative voice on the subject. This indicated that the credibility of the IPCC was strong. However some criticism was voiced that the format of the report and IPCC processes in general raise barriers to non-specialists’ understanding of the material.

The release of AR5 and media reporting of climate change in general have already been the subject of several studies² in the new and growing discipline of ‘climate communications’.

At the 41st Session of the IPCC, the Norwegian Environment Agency (Miljødirektoratet) offered to host a meeting³ in early 2016 to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned from communication and outreach around AR5.

¹ See for example: <http://cdkn.org/ar5-toolkit/> , <http://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/business-action/low-carbon-transformation/ipcc-briefings>

² See for example: Nature Climate Change Vol 5 Issue 4 (25 March 2015): <http://www.nature.com/nclimate/focus/ipcc-media/index.html> , <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/tv-reporting-ipcc-201314-reports> , https://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-policy/policy_commissions/Communication-climate-science/Communication-climate-science-report/TIME_FOR_CHANGE_Final_Proof.pdf ,

³ To all intents and purposes this is an Expert Meeting, but in the recorded decision from the Session (IPCC/XLI-7) it is described as a meeting.

Objective:

The main objective of the meeting is to increase the efficiency and impact of communications of IPCC findings across the world. In particular, the meeting should provide practice-orientated and actionable guidance to the IPCC for AR6, including:

- Strengthening the communications capacity and effectiveness of the IPCC and its authors with a focus on making IPCC materials accessible to a range of stakeholders including non-specialists and the general public ;
- Working with external agents (such as research institutions, NGOs, IGOs, media) to strengthen their IPCC and climate science communications;
- Paying particular attention to how these two points can be managed in developing countries.

Expected Outcomes:

The meeting will examine the experience of communicating AR5 to help improve communications for AR6, including developing a set of recommendations for AR6. The experience of the IPCC secretariat, authors, focal points and external communications experts will be examined.

These will be included in an Expert Meeting report and report to the 43rd Session of the Panel, which is expected to start the process of scoping AR6, with a view to allowing questions of communications to be considered from the start of that process. These reports would be made available to governments, experts and the public as part of the scoping process.

In addition the experience of those who worked on communicating AR5 for the IPCC will be gathered in a good practice guidance document for the benefit of the incoming AR6 teams.

The outcome of the meeting will also inform the review of the IPCC Communications Strategy that will be undertaken following the election of a new Bureau.

Preparatory committee:

A preparatory committee consisting of the former IPCC Communications Action Team (CAT) plus external representatives has been formed. Its members are:

Former CAT:

- Ismail El Gizouli (former IPCC Acting Chair)
- Jean-Pascal van Ypersele (former IPCC Vice-Chair)
- Melinda Tignor (former Director of Operations, IPCC Working Group I TSU)
- Katie Mach (former Science Director, IPCC Working Group II TSU)
- Patrick Eickemeier (former Head of Communications, IPCC Working Group III TSU)*
- Taka Hiraishi (former Co-Chair, Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories)*
- Kiyoto Tanabe (Co-Chair, Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories)**
- Leo Meyer (former Head, IPCC Synthesis Report TSU)
- Bruce Stewart (Secretary, IPCC Secretariat)

* until October 2015

** from October 2015

External members:

- Øyvind Christophersen (Norwegian focal point for the IPCC)
- Rabelani Tshikalanke (South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs)
- Enrique Maurtua Konstantinidis (Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales)
- Sussan Hassol (Climate Communication)
- Monica Araya (Nivela)

Observers:

- Carlos Martin-Novella (Deputy Secretary, IPCC)
- Espen Larsen (Norwegian Environment Agency)

Timing: Early 2016, allowing sufficient time to report to the 43rd Session of the Panel

Duration: Two days

Location: Oslo: Norway's Environment Agency has offered to host the meeting

Participants:

About 50 participants in total, with broad international representation. The 41st Session allocated 20 journeys for this meeting for experts from developing countries and economies in transition. If a greater number of participants is sought, further journeys may be requested from the 42nd Session, or funded from the IPCC outreach budget.

Expertise:

Climate communications; communications; communications practitioners from the IPCC AR5 across WGs representatives from IPCC member governments, research institutes, NGOs