

Our ref.: 5406-20/IPCC/P53

To Delegates from Member Countries
and IPCC Observer Organizations

Seoul, 7 December 2020

Subject: Fifty-third Session of the IPCC, 7-14 December 2020
Opening of the Session

Distinguished Delegates,

Welcome to this 53rd Session of the IPCC.

In the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which make it impossible to meet in person, we are making IPCC history: this is the first time that we have convened a virtual meeting of the Panel.

I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to you, our Members, for showing the necessary flexibility to enable us to convene the Panel in this way in order to transact urgent business.

In doing so, we have had to surmount several challenges, to ensure that our meeting has a sound legal foundation, and to make sure that our technology solutions do not disadvantage any delegates because of problems with connectivity, or because we are participating in different time zones.

We have found a way of meeting that is consistent with the Principles and Procedures of the IPCC. I would like to thank the Secretary and his staff for putting this meeting on a robust legal basis, consulting extensively on best practice with other intergovernmental bodies and agencies in the UN system, including our sponsoring organizations, determining the most appropriate technology solutions and processes, and working with delegates to make you familiar and comfortable with the online platforms through a series of pre-Session briefings

Their determination to keep the business of the IPCC flowing smoothly parallels the huge efforts and creativity of the Working Groups and their authors and Technical Support Units to advance work on the Sixth Assessment Report despite the pandemic.

As you know, we are holding our meeting in a hybrid format blending written and virtual means. Our Plenary Session will be conducted in writing: this letter to you, formally opening the Session, is part of that process.

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But we will also hold some discussions – in this case the meetings of the Financial Task Team, or FiTT – by virtual means.

This meeting will have one single substantive agenda item: consideration of the IPCC Trust Fund Programme and Budget; we have found a consensus to proceed on that basis.

There are many other urgent items of business that merit consideration by the Panel. This Session will therefore reconvene, with a tentative date in March next year, to consider such items, and we will consult further with you on the dates. And that Session will benefit from the lessons we learn from running this hybrid meeting.

At the 59th Session of the Bureau held in October, members made suggestions for agenda items for the Panel. Preparation of the agenda for IPCC-53-bis will start after this meeting: we will not discuss possible agenda items for 53-bis during this meeting, in order to focus on the budget.

This letter serves to open the Session and to submit the provisional agenda for adoption. We will be using all the legal tools afforded by this hybrid format, with use of a silence procedure applying a 72-hour window for adoption of all decisions of the Panel. During this window we will proceed to operate on the basis of the provisional agenda. Further details on the silence procedure may be found in the [Explanatory Note](#).

With this letter opening the Session, I am also inviting the Co-Chairs of the FiTT, Amjad Abdulla (Maldives) and Helen Plume (New Zealand), to convene the FiTT and to report back to Plenary when their deliberations are complete. The FiTT will operate according to its Terms of Reference, which are paragraphs 6 and 7 of [Appendix B](#) to the Principles Governing IPCC Work.

The FiTT will meet in an online format, deliberating in three sessions of two hours each, with a fourth optional session if needed. These FiTT sessions will not be extended.

As you also know, participation in the FiTT is open to all delegations.

I strongly urge all of you to take part in the FiTT discussions this week. In order to facilitate broad participation in the discussion, we have scheduled the three meetings of the FiTT taking into account different time zones.

We are planning for final comments on the draft decision document to be submitted by Thursday, 10 December.

The Plenary Session will reconvene in writing to consider the draft decision of the FiTT. The draft decision will be shared with you as a letter by email, and also posted in the Paper Smart system, for your approval by silence procedure of 72 hours.

I believe we have found a good way to continue implementing the IPCC Work Programme in these challenging conditions, and to provide the institutional preconditions for bringing the assessment to completion.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank those Members that have contributed to the Trust Fund, in some cases with significant increases in contribution. This too is an essential way of putting the work of the IPCC on a sound footing.

I thank you again for your flexibility and collegial spirit, and wish you positive and fruitful deliberations at this Session of the IPCC.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hoesung Lee', written in a cursive style.

Hoesung Lee
Chair of the IPCC