

# The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate

Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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# Contents

## Front Matter

Foreword .....	vii
Preface .....	ix

## SPM

Summary for Policymakers .....	3
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## TS

Technical Summary .....	39
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## Chapters

<b>Chapter 1</b> Framing and Context of the Report .....	73
<b>Chapter 2</b> High Mountain Areas .....	131
<b>Chapter 3</b> Polar Regions .....	203
<b>Chapter 4</b> Sea Level Rise and Implications for Low-Lying Islands, Coasts and Communities .....	321
<b>Chapter 5</b> Changing Ocean, Marine Ecosystems, and Dependent Communities .....	447
<b>Chapter 6</b> Extremes, Abrupt Changes and Managing Risks .....	589

## Cross-Chapter Box

<b>Cross-Chapter Box 9</b> Integrative Cross-Chapter Box on Low-lying Islands and Coasts .....	657
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## Annexes

<b>Annex I</b> Glossary .....	677
<b>Annex II</b> Acronyms .....	703
<b>Annex III</b> Contributors to the IPCC Special Report on the Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate .....	707
<b>Annex IV</b> Expert Reviewers of the IPCC Special Report on the Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate .....	717
<b>Index</b> .....	739



# **Foreword and Preface**



## Foreword

This *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (SROCC), is the third Special Report to be produced in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle. SROCC is unique because – for the first time – the IPCC has produced an in-depth report examining the farthest corners of the Earth – from the highest mountains and remote polar regions to the deepest oceans. The report finds that even and especially in these places, human-caused climate change is evident. These changes show that the world's ocean and cryosphere have been 'taking the heat' for climate change for decades. The consequences for nature and humanity are sweeping and severe. This report highlights the urgency of timely, ambitious, coordinated, and enduring action.

SROCC was jointly prepared by Working Groups I and II, and provides the latest state of knowledge on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate. It focuses on changes to mountain cryosphere, polar regions and ecosystems, sea level rise and coastal extremes, ocean and marine life, as well as providing key information to enable action at all scales and to manage risks and build resilience through adaptation for the benefit of ecosystems and human societies. The report highlights the observed and projected changes in the ocean and cryosphere, the associated impacts and risks for human societies and ecosystems, as well as assessing a range of response options and adaptation measures. SROCC clearly presents the level of risks and the limits of adaptation for high emission scenarios and thereby the benefits of ambitious and effective adaptation for sustainable development. It highlights the importance of irreversible and committed changes on timescales of decades to centuries. It stresses the urgency of near-term action to reduce risks also by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, strengthening findings from the SR15 and SRCL reports.

The IPCC provides policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, its impacts and risks, as well as adaptation and mitigation options. Since it was established jointly in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme, the IPCC has produced a series of Assessment Reports,

Special Reports, Technical Papers and Methodological Reports and other products that have become the gold standard scientific resource on climate change issues for policymakers.

SROCC was made possible thanks to the commitment and dedication of hundreds of experts worldwide, representing a wide range of disciplines. We express our deep gratitude to all Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors, Contributing Authors, Review Editors, Chapter Scientists and Expert and Government Reviewers who devoted their time and effort to make the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate possible. We would like to thank the staff of the Working Group Technical Support Units and the IPCC Secretariat for their dedication and professionalism.

We are also grateful to the governments that supported their scientists' participation in developing this report and that contributed to the IPCC Trust Fund to provide for the essential participation of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. We would like to express our appreciation to the Principality of Monaco for hosting the SROCC Scoping Meeting, to the Governments of Fiji, Ecuador, China, and the Russian Federation for hosting Lead Author Meetings, and to the Principality of Monaco for hosting the Second Joint Session of Working Group I and Working Group II. Our thanks also to the Government of France for funding the Technical Support Unit of Working Group I, and to the Government of Germany and the Governments of Norway and New Zealand, for funding the Technical Support Unit of Working Group II. We also acknowledge the Government of Norway's generous contribution in support of the development of the graphics for SROCC Summary for Policymakers, and the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the Fondation de France for an additional post in the Working Group II Technical Support Unit.

We especially wish to thank the IPCC Chair, Hoesung Lee, the IPCC Vice-Chairs Ko Barrett, Thelma Krug, and Youba Sokona for their guidance, and the Co-Chairs of Working Groups II and I Hans-Otto Pörtner, Debra Roberts, Valérie Masson-Delmotte and Panmao Zhai for their inspired leadership throughout the process.



Petteri Taalas  
Secretary-General  
World Meteorological Organisation



Inger Andersen  
Executive Director  
United Nations Environment Programme





# Preface

This IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC), is the third Special Report to be produced in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle. Its findings reinforce those of the two earlier Special Reports, the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C and the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land. The report was jointly prepared by Working Groups I and II, with the Working Group II Technical Support Unit leading the operational production. It was prepared following IPCC principles and procedures. This Special Report builds upon the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) in 2013–2014 and on relevant research published in the scientific, technical and socio-economic literature. The report sits alongside other related reports from other UN Bodies, including Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

## Scope of the Report

The IPCC SROCC responds to proposals for Special Reports from governments and observer organisations provided at the start of the IPCC AR6 cycle. It assesses the observed and projected changes to the ocean and cryosphere and their associated impacts and risks, with a focus on resilience, risk management response options, and adaptation measures, considering both their potential and limitations. SROCC brings together knowledge on physical and biogeochemical changes, the interplay with ecosystem changes, and the implications for human communities. The report was produced with careful attention to other assessments, with the aim of achieving coherence and complementarity, as well as providing an updated assessment of the current state of knowledge. The Special Report considered literature accepted for publication up to 15 May 2019.

## Structure of the Report

This report consists of a short Summary for Policymakers, a Technical Summary, six Chapters, an Integrative Cross-Chapter Box, four Annexes, as well as online Supplementary Material.

*Chapter 1: Framing and Context* introduces the reader to the structure of the report and the content presented in more detail in subsequent chapters. It highlights the role of the ocean and cryosphere in the Earth system, assessment of climate impacts and future risks for ecosystems and human societies from the high mountains to the deep ocean, the knowledge systems informing responses to climate change, as well as the capacities of governance and institutions to implement such responses, and it highlights key concepts and terms as well as linkages between chapters.

*Chapter 2: High Mountain Areas* provides a wide-ranging assessment of the observed and projected cryosphere (including snow, glaciers, permafrost, lake and river ice) changes in high mountain areas, as well as associated impacts, risks, and adaptation measures related to natural and human systems.

*Chapter 3: Polar Regions* presents the state of knowledge concerning changes in the Arctic and Antarctic oceans and marine and land cryosphere, how they are affected by climate change, and projections for the future. It assesses impacts of individual and interacting polar system changes, as well as response options to reduce risk and build resilience in the polar regions.

*Chapter 4: Sea Level Rise and Implications for Low-lying Islands, Coasts and Communities* assesses past and future contributions of various processes to global, regional and extreme sea level changes, the associated risks, and response options and pathways to resilience and sustainable development.

*Chapter 5: Changing Ocean, Marine Ecosystems, and Dependent Communities* focuses on observations of climate-related trends, impacts and adaptation, projected changes and associated risks, as well as the response options to enhance resilience.

*Chapter 6: Extremes, Abrupt Changes and Managing Risks* assesses extreme as well as abrupt or irreversible changes in the ocean and cryosphere including recent anomalous extreme events, compound risk, cascading effects, their impacts on human and natural systems, and sustainable and resilient risk management strategies.

Finally, the *Integrative Cross-Chapter Box on Low-Lying Islands and Coasts* highlights the key assessment findings relating to low lying islands and coasts. It includes summary information on the critical climate-related drivers, their observed and projected impacts on related geographies and major sectors, and responses, including adaptation strategies in practice.

## The Process

The IPCC SROCC was prepared in accordance with the principles and procedures established by the IPCC and represents the combined efforts of leading experts in the field of climate change. A scoping meeting for SROCC was held in Monaco in December 2016, and the final outline was agreed by the Panel at its 45th Session in March 2017 in Guadalajara, Mexico. Governments and IPCC observer organisations nominated more than 500 experts for the chapter team. The team of 14 Coordinating Lead Authors, 75 Lead Authors, and 15 Review Editors were selected by Working Groups I and II Bureaux. In addition, 222 Contributing Authors were invited by the chapter teams to provide scientific and technical information in the form of text, graphs or data. The report drafts prepared by the authors were subject to two rounds of formal review and revision followed by a final round of government comments on the Summary for Policymakers. The enthusiastic participation of the scientific community and governments to the review process resulted in over 31,000 written review comments, submitted by 824 expert reviewers and 43 governments. The Review Editors for the chapters monitored the review process to ensure that all substantive review comments received appropriate consideration. The Summary for Policymakers was approved at the Second Joint Session of Working Groups I and II, and the Summary for Policymakers

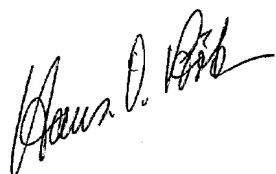
and the underlying chapters were then accepted by the IPCC at its 51st Session in September 2019 in Monaco.

## Acknowledgements

We express our deepest appreciation for the expertise and commitment shown by the Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors throughout the process. They were ably helped by the many Contributing Authors who served on SROCC. The Review Editors were critical in assisting the author teams and ensuring the integrity of the review process. We are grateful to the Chapter Scientists who supported the chapter teams in the delivery of the report. We would also like to thank all the expert and government reviewers who submitted comments on the drafts.

The production of the report was guided by members of the IPCC Bureau. We would like to thank our colleagues who supported and advised us in the development of the report: Working Group I Vice-Chairs Edvin Aldrian, Fatima Driouech, Gregory Flato, Jan Fuglestedt, Muhammad I. Tariq, Carolina Vera, Nouredine Yassaa; Working Group II Vice-Chairs Andreas Fischlin, Mark Howden, Carlos Méndez, Joy Jacqueline Pereira, Roberto A. Sánchez-Rodríguez, Sergey Semenov, Pius Yanda, and Taha M. Zatari; and Working Group III Vice-Chair Amjad Abdulla. Our appreciation also goes to Ko Barrett, Vice Chair of IPCC, who served as champion for the report and ably supported us from scoping through approval.

Our sincere thanks go to the hosts and organizers of the Scoping Meeting, the four Lead Author Meetings, and the Joint Working Group and IPCC Sessions. We gratefully acknowledge the support from the Principality of Monaco and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the Government of Fiji and the University of the South Pacific, the Government of Ecuador, the Government of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Government of the Russian Federation and Kazan Federal University, and the Principality of Monaco and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. The support provided by many governments as well as through the IPCC Trust Fund for the many experts participating in the process is also noted with appreciation.



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IPCC Working Group II Co-Chair



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