

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Opening statement to CitiesIPCC conference

Edmonton, 5 March 2018

IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee

We honour the history, language and culture that have shaped this land for thousands of years.

It's a great honour to be here in Edmonton.

I'd like to thank the Canadian authorities for welcoming us once again.

The last session of the IPCC, only last September, was in Montreal, so this is beginning to feel like coming home.

And I'd like to thank Mayor Iveson for making this splendid conference centre available to us.

This conference is an important date in the IPCC calendar in a year when we mark three decades as the voice of climate science to policymakers and practitioners, and release one of the most important reports in our history.

We are about to complete the selection of authors for our Sixth Assessment Report. This will allow work to start this year on the three working group contributions to AR6, which will be completed in 2022 with a Synthesis Report that will be the major scientific input into the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement.

Something that will differentiate AR6 from our previous assessments is a particular focus on the problems that cities face from climate change, and their unique opportunities for mitigation and adaptation.

We will also make our consideration of cities more robust in our treatment of regional issues and the chapters focusing on human settlements.

One way we intend to do that is through the enhanced engagement of urban practitioners.

Looking ahead, we will prepare a special report on cities and climate change in the next assessment cycle, starting in 2024.

In the last assessment, the IPCC started to pay attention to cities as important centres of climate impact and response.

However, that work turned out to be challenging.

We realised there were major gaps in the scientific literature at the urban scale.

This is why we are here with you today.

The knowledge needs to be co-generated so that the IPCC can provide a robust assessment of the opportunities for actions that cities can take to tackle the challenges of climate change and contribute to the realization of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

Cities are home to more than half the world's population.

They are often where the impacts of climate change are felt most acutely.

And innovative municipalities can serve as laboratories to develop and test the solutions to climate change.

Cities feature all too often in the drumbeat of headlines about how the changing climate is affecting our lives.

For instance officials in Cape Town in South Africa have warned that they may have to turn off the taps as soon as next month as three years of drought have left the city almost dry.

And yet in tackling these problems, we suffer from a considerable lack of knowledge in how cities suffer from, contribute to and can help solve climate change.

This conference, bringing together scientists, urban policymakers, and practitioners aims to enhance our understanding of these problems and to stimulate the search for solutions – including encouraging new scientific research that can be brought into future IPCC assessments.

For the IPCC, this is one of the key goals of the conference.

When we look at how smart urban planning can contribute to climate solutions, we must improve our understanding of informality and its role in 21st century urbanization. We must consider how nature-based solutions can help mitigate and adapt to climate change as well as creating a more pleasant environment for us to live in.

We must also understand the opportunity to avoid lock in in cities through new and innovative approaches to infrastructure provision.

Our work here will thus stimulate research into cities and climate change, and will also contribute to our vision of cities in the 21st century.

Later this year, in October, we will release our special report *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, which will be the key scientific input the so-called Talanoa Dialogue at COP24 in Poland in December.

The report on 1.5° is one of the most keenly anticipated IPCC assessments that I can recall.

Besides exploring the impacts of warming of 1.5° and the pathways that would enable us to meet that aspirational goal set by the Paris Agreement, it will also lay out the differences between warming of 1.5 and 2°.

This report, requested by governments at the end of 2015 when they reached the Paris Agreement, is highly relevant to cities, especially those that are vulnerable to sea level rise.

And I believe it is reasonable to argue that what happens in cities may be decisive in whether the global community succeeds in hitting the 1.5° warming goal.

Work is also advancing on the three other products we are preparing in this assessment cycle:

- The *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*;
- The *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*; and
- The *2019 Refinement to our 2006 IPCC Guidelines on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*

These three products will all be released next year.

So we are releasing eight reports over the next few years – one or more almost every year between now and 2022.

As you can see, the reports we are preparing are highly integrated with, and support, the Sustainable Development Agenda.

We achieve this ambitious work programme thanks to the time and expertise contributed by hundreds of scientists – our bureau members, our authors and our expert reviewers.

And we rely on the generous voluntary financial support of member governments – including Canada – to deliver our reports.

We urge all our member governments to support the IPCC financially – and we encourage them to support the execution of the research agenda that will emerge from this conference and contribute so vitally to the future work of the IPCC.

I wish you a stimulating conference and look forward to seeing the new science that it will encourage.

Thank you for your attention.

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