

SYNTHESIS OF COMMENTS FROM GOVERNMENTS

(1st round in response to the letter by the Secretary of the IPCC of 13 March 2013)

This synthesis has been prepared by the IPCC Secretariat in response to a request by governments at the 37th Session of the IPCC (Batumi, Georgia, 14 - 18 October 2013) and is intended to assist governments in their further considerations. The full text of the submissions was collated and presented to the 37th Session of the IPCC in document IPCC-XXXVII/INF.1 and is also made available on this website for easy reference.

General comments

Many submissions emphasized the need for IPCC to be policy relevant and respond in an efficient manner to the information needs of governments and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. It was also suggested that the IPCC adjusts its focus and organization to policy and societal needs. Governments asked for a strengthened role of the IPCC within the United Nations (UN) and better collaboration with other UN organizations. More collaboration and coordination with other assessment processes were proposed, in order to present comprehensive information to policymakers on a range of subject while putting less pressure on the scientific community and experts involved in different assessments. An enhanced interaction with the wider user community, including concerned citizens, was generally supported.

Many governments noted that currently the linkage between the IPCC Working Groups is too weak and called for a better integration and cooperation between Working Groups and more interdisciplinarity including social sciences. To strengthen the integration the view was expressed that the IPCC Chair and the central organizations should have the mandate and resources to coordinate the overall IPCC assessment process.

The need for strengthening and facilitating the participation of developing country experts in the IPCC process was raised in many submissions.

Future products of the IPCC and timing of IPCC Reports

Many submissions addressed the challenge of striking the right balance between comprehensiveness and regular update to meet information needs of policymakers, in particular the UNFCCC. However, the need for careful consideration of the timing of reports was deemed essential.

In general early planning of the full range of products prepared during an assessment cycle was recommended to avoid overburdening scientists and to allow sufficient time for governments to review the reports. Consultations with the scientific community and the involvement of the wider user community, range of stakeholders and science networks, in particular in Developing Countries, in the planning and scoping process was supported in many submissions.

Regarding duration of an assessment cycle and timing of reports some governments considered 7 years excessive and suggested a shortening of the assessment cycle. Others suggested even longer intervals for certain reports or different frequency for different reports, e.g. longer intervals between assessments of the physical science basis, combined with more frequent updates on response measures. In a number of submissions an interval of 5 and 6 years between comprehensive reports was considered appropriate. In many submissions the

option of more frequent updates between comprehensive assessments was raised to enable prompt response to emerging issues and needs of policymakers. Others cautioned against too much emphasis on updates and urged to carefully consider a balance between rapid updates or Special Reports and the authority of comprehensive assessments. The role of expert meetings and workshops was noted. A few suggestions were made concerning staggering reports to allow consideration of Working Group I findings in Working Groups II and III reports versus releasing them more or less simultaneously. Some considered the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) staggering not adequate.

A variety of comments were made regarding the most appropriate range of products including whether to continue to prepare comprehensive reports or whether to focus more on specific topics. As a means to retain the comprehensive nature, a combination of well planned special reports and a synthesis report was proposed. In general there was support for the preparation of Special Reports, but topics should be well considered, keeping in mind a wider audience. In some submissions specific topics for special reports were proposed.

Many governments raised the question how to respond more rapidly to emerging issues and requests, in particular from the UNFCCC. Suggestions included consideration of new products for fast track assessments or a new type of Technical Paper to enable IPCC to respond to needs for rapid update while maintaining IPCC quality standards. Caution was also raised about too much focus on fast track assessments, which carry less weight while the comprehensive and authoritative nature of IPCC reports may get lost. A suggestion was made to analyse the impact of IPCC reports and then consider potential alternative products. In general a close interaction with the UNFCCC was considered important to understand challenges and questions of negotiations. The Doha decisions were noted in this context.

Governments called for strengthened cooperation between Working Groups and better consideration of cross cutting matters. The preparation of Special Reports on cross cutting issues and consideration of other means to promote cooperation and mutual understanding were proposed. Early planning of the Synthesis Report topics was mentioned as a way to enhance treatment of cross cutting matters.

The need for a better coverage of regional information was raised in many submissions, as well as the need to evaluate the feasibility of assessing more regional information. A range of suggestions was offered, such as cross working group reports on regions, or cooperation with partner organizations, regional programmes and programmes such as the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS).

The challenge arising from the rapidly increasing amount of literature was raised in several submissions. The question how to address increasing literature without compromising quality requires attention in the context of planning future products and the future IPCC work programme. More attention should also be paid to literature in other languages and to facilitating developing country experts' access to literature.

There was strong support for the continuation of Methodology Reports on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. The suggestion was also made to consider Methodology Reports on other issues such as good practice in adaptation and mitigation or assessment of the impact of policies.

The role of IPCC in scenario development was addressed in some submissions with a range of observations and proposals made.

IPCC structure and mandate of IPCC Working Groups

A range of views was expressed with respect to possible changes in the Working Group structure. Proposals aimed to further enhance connectivity and interdisciplinarity and enable the IPCC to respond better to user needs in a timely and targeted manner. Suggestions included the formation of only two Working Groups, one about the problem and one about solutions as well as various modifications of the mandates of the existing Working Groups. Further consideration should be given to coordination and integration among Working Groups to avoid redundancies and possible contradiction. Joint reports were proposed as one way to foster cooperation.

Broad support was expressed for a continuation of the Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (TFI).

Governance, management and finance

Many governments addressed the need to facilitate enhanced active participation of developing countries and countries with economy in transition in IPCC work and to better address developing country issues in the reports. Balanced regional representation and coverage were also mentioned.

The adequacy of role and composition of Technical Support Units (TSU) was addressed in several submissions. A general reconsideration of the overall organizational structure was called for. Alternative schemes proposed include TSUs lead by developing countries. The view was expressed that the central organization should have sufficient resources and a clear mandate to coordinate the assessment process.

How to maintain motivation and wide participation of scientists was raised along with suggestions such as funding for Lead Authors or support through full time paid scientists.

Financial implications of above mentioned options were noted.

Regarding IPCC Bureau a better definition of respective roles and mandate of Bureau positions was suggested. In the context of composition of the Bureau and author teams the appropriate balance between continuity and renewal was addressed in some submissions, along with consideration of the length of the term of office.

In some submissions a further evaluation of the IPCC governance structure and the IPCC writing and review process was suggested to evaluate change introduced after the IAC review and to consider further improvements with the aim to further enhance transparency, a smoother functioning of IPCC work, and to better respond to changing needs and an increasing user group.

Wider stakeholder involvement and communication

Better interaction with the user community and cooperation with relevant UN and international programmes and assessment processes was generally supported. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Energy Agency (IEA) and Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES) were repeatedly highlighted in this context, including suggestions for formal partnership agreements. A wider, more inclusive and transparent scoping process was proposed to better identify and respond to policy and societal needs, as well as involvement of civil society throughout the process.

The use of up to date technology in communication was repeatedly emphasized and the exploration of new approaches, including use of social media was encouraged. Internet platforms may be used to engage wider user groups. The need for multilingual communication was stressed as well as timely release of accepted reports. The role of summaries and high quality graphics as important communications tools were emphasized.

Process and timing of consideration of future IPCC work

There was broad agreement that the process should be government driven and transparent. User survey and consultation with stakeholders as well as authors and contributors to the AR5 constitute important elements for the consideration of future IPCC work. The process for consideration of future IPCC work as well as format and timing should be agreed at the 37th Session of the IPCC and be communicated by the Secretariat in a transparent manner.