

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems (SR2)

Statement at Opening Session by Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC

Dublin, Monday 13 February 2017

Ms Laura Burke, Director-General of the Environmental Protection Agency;

Mr Bill Callanan, Chief Inspector, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;

Mr Youba Sokona, IPCC Vice-Chair and Chair of the Scientific Steering Committee;

Mr Abdalah Mokssit, Secretary of the IPCC;

Distinguished participants and members of the IPCC Bureau;

Friends and Colleagues

Welcome to this scoping meeting for the IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.

I'd like to thank the Government of Ireland for their generous support. It is particularly fitting that we are holding this meeting in Ireland, because in few other countries is the love of the land, and working the soil, so closely entwined with national identity as in Ireland.

I'm reminded of the poem "Digging" by Seamus Heaney, where the Nobel Laureate gives expression to the sound and feel of working the land:

*The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.*

With this meeting we are starting work on the third of the three special reports we are preparing in the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Cycle, part of a packed and ambitious work programme to provide policymakers with the information they need to respond to the risks of climate change.

To recap, besides this special report, to be delivered in 2019, we are preparing the special report *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, which will be completed next year, and the special report on climate change and oceans and the cryosphere, for 2019. All three are on highly policy-relevant topics identified by our member governments.

Also for 2019 we will refine the 2006 Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, providing an update to the IPCC methodologies and a sound scientific basis for future international climate action, especially under the Paris Agreement.

And in 2021 we will deliver the three working group contributions to the Sixth Assessment Report, completing it in 2022 with the Synthesis Report.

Together with the conference on climate change and cities that we will co-sponsor in 2018, all this represents the regular provision of assessments of the latest scientific findings every one or two years. This will give decision-makers the information they need for an evidence-based response to climate change. It is also closely aligned with the policy timetable set under the Paris Agreement, including the facilitative dialogue in 2018 and the first global stocktake in 2023.

This reflects the IPCC's mandate as a scientific assessment body to provide policy-relevant, but not policy-prescriptive information.

I notice that many of you present here are familiar with the IPCC mandate and procedures. And I also note that some of you are new to the IPCC.

I extend my warm welcome to all of you to this scoping meeting of the special report.

Let me remind you very briefly what differentiates a special report from our regular Assessment Report.

The IPCC principles governing our work defines the Assessment Report as being a full scientific and technical assessment of climate change, in three volumes, one for each of the working group of the IPCC.

The special report is defined as an assessment of a specific issue.

The member government of the IPCC decided in April last year to prepare this special report on issues related to land, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. The decision was based upon four major considerations among others.

1. The Fifth Assessment Report identified significant gaps in knowledge in these topics.
2. There are sufficient new scientific findings since the Fifth Assessment Report that merit a specific focus on these topics.
3. Addressing these issues would require inputs from more than one Working Group of the IPCC.
4. Uniqueness in contributing to the Sixth Assessment Report.

The special report is not intended to replicate the regular Assessment Report. It should be focused on the matter at hand. In developing the outline of the Special Report, consider what questions should be included now, and which should be left to the full Sixth Assessment Report.

Let me point out that the IPCC offers a unique opportunity for the scientific community to engage with policymakers and contribute to their decision making. I hope your work over the next few days will enable us to do that effectively and rigorously, so that this special report will be a powerful contribution to the world's effort to tackle climate change.

Whatever your recommendation of how this will be best done, your aim should be a special report of practical value in informing governments how to prioritize their response options utilizing the latest scientific findings underpinning the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with us. I hope you have productive and fruitful discussions over next four days.

I now have great pleasure in declaring the scoping meeting open.

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