IPCC 35th SESSION, 6-9 June 2012, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

**DECISIONS TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO THE REVIEW
OF IPCC PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Decision

Recalling the recommendation of the InterAcademy Council on IPCC communications that the IPCC "should complete and implement a communications strategy that emphasizes transparency, rapid and thoughtful responses, and relevance to stakeholders, and which includes guidelines about who can speak on behalf of IPCC an how to represent the organization appropriately";

Recalling its decision taken at the 33rd Session to accept the "*Guidance on IPCC Communications Strategy*" and to request the Secretariat to elaborate an IPCC Communication Strategy in line with this Guidance;

Recalling its decision taken at the 34th Session to request the IPCC Secretariat to submit a revised draft strategy to the Executive Committee, as well as the Bureau, for consideration before a further revised strategy is submitted to IPCC-35 for approval;

The Panel at its 35th session decided:

> *To adopt* the "*IPCC Communications Strategy*" as provided in Appendix 1 to this decision;

> *To request* the Executive Committee to elaborate an Implementation Plan for the Strategy and to report upon its completion to the Bureau and Focal Points by 1st October 2012;

> *To request* the Executive Committee to include in the Implementation Plan a set of procedures, including the role, tasks and responsibilities of the involved individuals, to allow the IPCC to make effective rapid responses to urgent enquiries. These procedures should include a contingency plan for managing rapidly escalating communications needs;

> *To request* the Executive Committee to present an evaluation report on the Strategy and its implementation to the Panel at its 37th Session, and

> *To request* the Executive Committee to update and develop the Implementation Plan as circumstances require, and to report to the Panel on any updates.

IPCC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The IPCC at its 33rd Session in Abu Dhabi in May 2011 approved the *Guidance on IPCC Communications Strategy* (referred to below as the Guidance)[1], following the recommendations of the InterAcademy Council (IAC) in August 2010 to develop a communications strategy. This Guidance continues to serve as a framework for IPCC communications and relevant parts of it have been taken up in this document.

<u>**Goals**</u>

1)   The IPCC has two main communications goals:

- to communicate its assessment findings and methodologies, by providing clear and balanced information on climate change[2], including scientific uncertainties, without compromising accuracy;
- to explain the way the IPCC works, selects its authors and reviewers and produces its reports and other products. This will promote the understanding of the reports and underpin its reputation as a credible, transparent, balanced and authoritative scientific body.

<u>**Principles**</u>

2)   IPCC communications are based on the Principles Governing IPCC Work[2].

Communications are an important aspect of the work of the IPCC, essential to its mission of providing decision-makers with rigorous and balanced scientific information on climate change[2] and its impacts. The following set of principles, largely drawn from the Guidance, should guide the IPCC's approach:

- **Objective and transparent**. The Panel's communications approach and activities should, at all times, be consistent with the IPCC's overarching principles of objectivity, openness and transparency.

- **Policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive**. It is an essential quality of the IPCC's work that it is policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. The presentation of its assessments and reports should remain policy-neutral and maintain scientific balance. The IPCC's communications approach and activities should be consistent with these qualities.

- **Drawn from IPCC Reports**. While the IPCC's work and process of preparing reports aim to reflect a range of views and expertise, its communications should reflect the language that has been subject to the IPCC's review process and has been accepted, adopted or approved by the members of the Panel.

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[1] http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc_p33_decisions_taken_comm_strategy.pdf

[2] "The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies." (Principles Governing IPCC Work, paragraph 2). (http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles.pdf)

- **Recognizing IPCC as a unique organization**. The IPCC's unique process of international assessment by scientists and review by the scientific community, governments and stakeholders, is central to the authority and quality of IPCC reports. The IPCC should always seek to be clear in its communications about what the organization is and what it does – providing up to date assessments of the latest authoritative science. The objective is to ensure that the IPCC provides a context to guide the interpretation of its reports and to ensure that the public has unbiased information about the IPCC.

- **Timely and audience-appropriate**. In order to be effective, the IPCC communications approach and activities should be aimed at ensuring that timely and appropriate information enters the public domain – both proactively to communicate reports, and reactively in response to questions or criticism.

- **Consistent messages.** To ensure that the IPCC delivers consistent messages externally, it is essential that internal communications and decision-making are disciplined and well coordinated.

Activities

3) IPCC communications address four main groups of activities:
- day-to-day communications, both proactive and reactive;
- planned activities including:
   - the launch of reports, and
   - participation in major international conferences:
- rapid responses[3], which require particular procedures to ensure they are handled in a timely manner that is representative of the whole Panel, and
- provision of scientific and technical advice and guidelines to relevant UN bodies, such as the UNFCCC.

Audiences

4) The primary target audiences of the communications efforts of the IPCC are governments and policy-makers at all levels (including the UNFCCC).

5) Broader audiences, such as the UN, IPCC observer organizations, the scientific community, the education sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the business sector and the wider public, also have an interest in the work and assessments of the IPCC. While these are not primary audiences of the IPCC communications efforts, the IPCC should look for ways to ensure that information is available and accessible for these audiences.

6) While the IPCC itself does not produce derivative products aimed at specific audiences, it may engage with organizations that take elements of IPCC assessments and communicate them in more audience-specific formats. However, such products must not be considered joint productions or in any way products of the IPCC.

7) Engaging and building relationships with the media is an important way in which the IPCC can communicate the information contained in its reports, as well as its processes and procedures.

8) IPCC audiences are truly global in extent and are therefore very diverse. In its communications and outreach activities, the IPCC will take the specific context of different countries into account, which may require tailor-made outreach activities. For instance, this

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[3] Rapid response is discussed in more detail in the Guidance p6.

reflects an understanding that the communications needs of developing countries may be different to those of developed countries.

Governance and management

9) The Plenary is ultimately responsible for ensuring that IPCC communications are appropriate and that the Strategy meets the requirements of the Panel and is being delivered suitably. Between Plenary sessions, the Bureau and the Executive Committee will act on the Panel's behalf. Decisions regarding fundamental communications issues, according to their importance, should be debated and approved within the framework of the Bureau and/or the Plenary.

10) The Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs are responsible for communications ctivities around reports in their areas, while the IPCC Chair is responsible for communications on the Synthesis Report. The Executive Committee is responsible for communications about the organization as a whole.

11) The IPCC Chair, IPCC Vice-Chairs, Secretariat, Working Groups/Task Force Co-Chairs, Bureau and Focal Points will rely on a Senior Communications Manager, who reports to the Secretary, for expert advice as necessary. The Senior Communications Manager is responsible for the coordination and coherence of IPCC communications and to this end will work with all parts of the IPCC.

12) The Executive Committee will maintain an Implementation Plan that gives effect to this strategy. This Plan will identify, in accordance with the Guidance, those groups or individuals that can approve different types of communications materials and activities in different situations, including rapid response. The Executive Committee will update and develop this Plan as circumstances require and report to the Panel on any updates.

13) The Secretariat will evaluate IPCC communications and report to the Panel, including the type and extent of outreach and media coverage. Evaluation reports should also be made to the Bureau and Executive Committee at regular intervals. The Senior Communications Manager will investigate the use of metrics to support evaluation.

14) The Executive Committee should consider how to ensure continuity of outreach and websites between assessment cycles, and elaborate this in the Implementation Plan.

Methods and tools

15) Consistent with its status as a UN institution, the IPCC's reports should be made available in the six UN languages to the extent possible according to IPCC Principles. IPCC communication practices should follow this model, and communications products, including brochures and press releases, should be translated and made available.

16) The Secretariat will support Focal Points in communications activities in their countries, including the translation of texts into local languages, by providing IPCC materials, where practical. The Focal Points will receive communications materials and information about events in a timely manner, and may seek advice from the Senior Communications Manager on IPCC communications-related matters.

17) Approved IPCC reports and other products form the basis for communications materials. These materials should be developed to facilitate greater understanding of the IPCC's work among governments, media and other non-specialists unfamiliar with scientific terminology. When preparing the final draft of the Summary for Policymakers, Overview Chapters of Methodology Reports and the Synthesis Report, Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs, the IPCC Chair and authors should be aware of the need to produce clear, comprehensible texts and graphics that support the key findings in the report.

18) The IPCC website serves its target audiences (see 'Audiences') while providing a single entry point to access all IPCC material in a user-friendly manner. The Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the IPCC website is reviewed regularly to ensure content is up to date, to improve user-friendliness and navigability and to benefit where useful from the latest technology and practices. The Working Groups, Task Force and Synthesis Report Technical Support Units will ensure that their websites are as consistent as possible with the IPCC website. The Secretariat will keep the appropriate use of social media under review.

IPCC spokespeople

19) To ensure objectivity and scientific accuracy, as well as efficiency and timeliness, authorized spokespeople must be designated for various situations. The Chair and IPCC Vice-Chairs are the lead spokespeople for the organization as a whole; the Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs are the lead spokespeople for the activities of their Working Group/Task Force; the Secretary and Senior Communications Manager may speak on activities and procedures of the IPCC, as well as on institutional matters.

20) Besides these designated spokespeople, authors or Working Group Vice-Chairs will often be the most appropriate people to speak on their area of science and may be requested by the Working Group/Task Force Co-Chairs or the IPCC Chair to talk to the media or represent the IPCC at conferences.

21) People speaking on behalf of the IPCC in an official capacity must focus on communicating a factual, objective presentation of information from the approved IPCC reports and refrain from public statements that could be interpreted as advocacy and compromise the IPCC's reputation for neutrality. This is particularly important for those holding the most senior positions, as they are most closely associated with the IPCC in the view of stakeholders.

22) Those who represent the IPCC in an official capacity are strongly encouraged to undergo media training. Such training should include specific guidance on how to approach speaking on behalf of the IPCC versus speaking in other capacities. The Senior Communications Manager will hold this training as opportunities allow, subject to available resources, and will provide guidelines on communicating with the media and public.

Resources

23) Communications activities must operate with the resources available in the IPCC budget. These may be augmented by additional funding or support from external communications experts, in coordination with the Senior Communications Manager, including for specific communications activities at times of heightened media activity, such as around the release of a report or in rapid response. This must not compromise the independence of the IPCC or cause a conflict of interest.