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IPCC agrees special reports, AR6 workplan

NAIROBI, April 14 – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has decided the strategy and timeline for its next series of reports, the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), and the special reports that will be prepared in the next few years.

The Panel responded positively to the invitation from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide a special report in 2018 on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways.

It also agreed to prepare two other special reports: on climate change and oceans and the cryosphere; and on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. These will be produced as early as possible in the AR6 cycle.

“These issues are not only highly relevant to policymakers and our broader audiences; they are areas where the IPCC can bring clarity to the growing volumes of scientific research through its assessments,” said IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee after the 43rd Session of the Panel in Nairobi, Kenya.

“We now have a clear roadmap for the production and delivery of AR6,” said IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee.

The IPCC also decided to pay special attention, when the outlines of AR6 are drawn up, to the impacts of climate change on cities and their unique adaptation and mitigation challenges and opportunities.

Preparations for the main AR6 report, which is expected to be released in three working group contributions in 2020/2021 and a Synthesis Report in 2022, will start later this year.

Work on drawing up the outlines of the special report on 1.5 °C will now start with a call for experts to scope the report.

The Panel was also informed that Mr Abdalah Mokssit had accepted an offer to become Secretary of the IPCC. Mr Mokssit is currently Director of the National Meteorological Service of Morocco and Third Vice-President of the WMO. He is a former Vice-Chair of IPCC Working Group I, which deals with the physical science basis of climate change.

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What is the IPCC?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the world body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

The IPCC does not do its own research, conduct climate measurements or produce its own climate models; it assesses the thousands of scientific papers published each year to tell policymakers what we know and don't know about the risks related to climate change. The IPCC identifies where there is agreement in the scientific community, where there are differences of opinion, and where further research is needed.

Thus the IPCC offers policymakers a snapshot of what the scientific community understands about climate change rather than promoting a particular view. IPCC reports are policy-relevant without being policy-prescriptive. The IPCC may set out options for policymakers to choose from in pursuit of goals decided by policymakers, but it does not tell governments what to do.

To produce its reports, the IPCC mobilizes hundreds of scientists who – like the Chair and other elected officials – work as volunteers. These scientists and officials are drawn from diverse backgrounds. They are not paid for their work at the IPCC. Only a dozen permanent staff work in the IPCC's Secretariat.

The members of the IPCC, comprising the Panel, are its 195 member governments. They work by consensus to endorse the reports of the IPCC and set its procedures and budget in plenary meetings of the Panel. The word "Intergovernmental" in the organization's name reflects this. It is not a United Nations agency, but is sponsored by two UN organizations – WMO and UNEP.

IPCC reports are requested by the member governments and developed by authors drawn from the scientific community in an extensive process of repeated drafting and review. Scientists and other experts participate in this review process through a self-declaration of expertise. The Panel endorses these reports in a dialogue between the governments that request the reports and will work with them and the scientists that write them. In this discussion the scientists have the last word on any additions or changes, although the Panel may agree by consensus to delete something.

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee exists to strengthen and facilitate timely and effective implementation of the IPCC work programme, strengthen coordination between IPCC Working Groups and the Task Force and address issues that require prompt attention by the Panel in between its Sessions. Its members are the IPCC Chair, IPCC Vice-Chairs, Working Group Co-Chairs and the Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Greenhouse Gas Inventories. The Secretary of the IPCC and the Heads of the Technical Support Units are advisory members to the Executive Committee.

For more information go to: http://ipcc.ch/pdf/tor/TOR_ExComm.pdf.

Sixth Assessment Report

The Panel during its meeting in Nairobi in February 2015 decided to produce a Sixth Assessment Report. In October 2015 the Panel elected a new Bureau that would oversee the work on this report and Special Reports to be produced in the assessment cycle. The 43rd Session of the IPCC on 11-13 April 2016 is when the Panel will set out the work programme for the Sixth Assessment Cycle.

For more information, including links to the IPCC go to: www.ipcc.ch