

25TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE: 26-28 APRIL 2006

The twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-25) begins today in Port Louis, Mauritius. Delegates will consider a range of matters concerning the work, budget and organization of the IPCC, including: acceptance and adoption of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (2006 Guidelines); further work on emissions scenarios; election procedures for the IPCC Bureau and any Task Force Bureau; the IPCC communications strategy and outreach activities; a process and policy for admitting observer organizations; and the future work programme of the IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. Delegates will also hear progress reports, including on the activities of the three IPCC Working Groups and the Task Group on Data and Scenario Support for Impact and Climate Analysis.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IPCC

The IPCC was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The purpose of the IPCC is to assess the scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant to understanding the risks associated with human-induced climate change. The IPCC does not undertake new research, nor does it monitor climate-related data, but bases its assessments on published and peer-reviewed scientific and technical literature. Its Secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is staffed by the WMO and UNEP.

Since its inception, the IPCC has prepared a series of comprehensive assessments, special reports and technical papers, which provide scientific information on climate change to the international community, including policy makers and the public. This information has played an important role in the negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The IPCC currently has three working groups: Working Group I addresses the scientific aspects of the climate system and climate change; Working Group II addresses the vulnerability of socioeconomic and natural systems to climate change, negative and positive consequences of climate change and adaptation options; and Working Group III addresses options for limiting greenhouse gas emissions and otherwise mitigating climate change.

The IPCC also has a Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. This Task Force oversees the IPCC National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Programme (NGGIP), which aims to develop and refine an internationally-agreed methodology and software for the calculation and reporting of national greenhouse gas emissions and removals, and to encourage the use of this methodology by countries participating in the IPCC and by UNFCCC signatories. The IPCC Bureau, composed of 30 members elected by the Panel, assists the IPCC Chair in planning, coordinating and monitoring progress in the work of the IPCC.

KEY IPCC PRODUCTS: The IPCC completed its initial comprehensive assessments of climate change in the First Assessment Report in 1990 and the Second Assessment Report in 1995. The IPCC's Third Assessment Report (TAR) was completed in 2001. It addresses policy-relevant scientific, technical, and socioeconomic dimensions of climate change, and concentrates on findings since 1995 at both regional and global levels. The TAR, which was subject to extensive review from experts and governments, is composed of a comprehensive assessment from the three IPCC Working Groups, a Summary for Policy Makers (SPM), a Technical Summary of each Working Group report, and a Synthesis Report. The TAR Synthesis Report is written in a non-technical style aimed at policy makers and discusses nine policy-relevant questions identified by the IPCC based on submissions by governments. The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) is due to be released in 2007.

The IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, which are used for calculating and reporting national greenhouse gas emissions and removals, were first released in 1994, and a revised set was released in 1996. In 2000 and 2003, the Panel approved additional good practice guidance reports that complement the Revised 1996 Guidelines and, in 2003, approved a process for a further revision of the Guidelines by early 2006.

NINETEENTH SESSION: At IPCC-19, held from 17-20 April 2002, in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPCC began work on the AR4. The Panel took a number of decisions, including those in relation to a draft workplan for developing definitions for forest degradation and devegetation, methodological options for recording and reporting on emissions from these activities, and aspects of the procedures for agreeing on NGGIP products.

Delegates also decided: on the timing of the AR4; to hold a workshop on geological and oceanic carbon dioxide separation, capture and storage; to draft a scoping paper on climate change and water; and to hold an expert meeting on climate change and development.

TWENTIETH SESSION: IPCC-20 was held from 19-21 February 2003, in Paris, France. Delegates agreed on a workplan for two expert “scoping meetings” on how to structure the AR4. They discussed a framework and a set of criteria for establishing priorities for special reports, methodology reports and technical papers for the period of the fourth assessment. The Panel also decided to hold a high-level scientific meeting to survey the processes affecting terrestrial carbon stocks and human influences upon them, and to produce two special reports: one on safeguarding the ozone layer and the global climate system; and the other on carbon dioxide capture and storage.

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION: At IPCC-21, held from 3-7 November 2003, in Vienna, Austria, delegates reviewed the outlines of the proposed Working Group contributions to the AR4 and the Chair’s proposal for an AR4 Synthesis Report. The Panel agreed that a technical paper on climate change and water should be completed in 2007, discussed terms of reference for a document on the AR4 product set, and reviewed the report of the IPCC expert meeting on processes affecting terrestrial carbon stocks and human influences on them. Delegates also approved the terms of reference for reviewing the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, and agreed on a revised mandate and changed the name of the Task Group on Scenarios for Climate and Impacts Assessment to the Task Group on Data and Scenario Support for Impact and Climate Analysis (TGICA).

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION: IPCC-22 convened from 9-11 November 2004, in New Delhi, India. Delegates discussed the scope, content and process for an AR4 Synthesis Report, AR4 products, outreach, the IPCC programme and budget for 2005-08, and election procedures. The Panel adopted a decision on the IPCC programme and budget for 2005-08 and agreed to work towards a 30-page AR4 Synthesis Report with a five-page SPM to be approved by the IPCC in late October 2007.

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION: At IPCC-23, which convened on 8 April 2005, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, delegates considered the joint activities of Working Groups I and II on the Special Report on Safeguarding the Ozone Layer and the Global Climate System. The Panel accepted this Special Report along with an SPM. In adopting the draft report of IPCC-22, delegates also agreed that the IPCC Bureau would further consider arrangements for management of the AR4 Synthesis Report and report back on its progress.

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION: IPCC-24 was held from 26-28 September 2005, in Montreal, Canada. Delegates approved the Special Report on Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage and the SPM. Delegates discussed further work on aerosols and on emissions scenarios, outreach activities, and admittance of observer organizations, but did not reach agreement on revised election procedures for the IPCC Bureau and any Task Force Bureau. Delegates also decided to establish a Task Group on New Emissions Scenarios (TGNES), with a lifetime up to IPCC-25, to further define the emissions scenarios development process.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC AND FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: The eleventh Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 11) and the first Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 1) took place in Montreal, Canada, from 28 November to 10 December 2005. Parties also met for the twenty-third sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB 23).

At COP/MOP 1, parties adopted decisions on the operational details of the Kyoto Protocol, including the package of decisions known as the “Marrakesh Accords,” and on a process for considering post-2012 commitments. Parties also adopted the IPCC’s Good Practice Guidance on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) for reporting during the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012). COP 11 addressed issues such as capacity building, technology development and transfer, the adverse effects of climate change on developing and least developed countries, and a process for considering future action beyond 2012 under the UNFCCC. In its decision on long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the UNFCCC, the COP resolved to engage in a non-binding dialogue that would be informed by the IPCC. Parties also agreed to a five-year work programme for the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, and requested that SBSTA, at its twenty-eighth session, consider additional activities based on new information, including that presented in the AR4.

SBSTA 23 considered the IPCC’s Special Report on Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage and, *inter alia*, requested the UNFCCC Secretariat to organize an in-session workshop at SB 24 on carbon dioxide capture and storage, and encouraged parties and the private sector to support research and deployment of such technologies. In relation to harvested wood products, SBSTA noted with appreciation the IPCC report on progress made in estimating and reporting harvested wood products in the context of preparing its 2006 Guidelines, and decided to continue consideration of this issue at SBSTA 24.

ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE TGICA: At the eleventh meeting of the TGICA, held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 7-9 February 2006, participants discussed matters that included management of the Data Distribution Center and the status of a TGICA initiative to build capacity and develop appropriate data products for use in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. They also prepared a comment on the draft recommendations of the TGNES, to be considered at IPCC-25.

IPCC EXPERT MEETING ON NEW EMISSIONS SCENARIOS: At this meeting, held from 20-22 March 2006, in Seville, Spain, participants discussed proposals of the TGNES for developing emissions scenarios, including: possible IPCC coordination and facilitation with the scientific community; the process, timeline and deliverables of new emissions scenarios development; the organizational arrangements for the IPCC’s own activities on scenarios; and the possibility of encouraging a wider family of non-climate scenarios that might include emissions scenarios.