

IPCC-25 HIGHLIGHTS:

WEDNESDAY, 26 APRIL 2006

The twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-25) opened on Wednesday, 26 April, in Port Louis, Mauritius. In the morning, delegates heard opening addresses and adopted the IPCC-24 draft report. They also commenced discussions on the IPCC programme and budget for 2006-09, and on the 2006 Guidelines. In the afternoon, discussions continued on the 2006 Guidelines and the Panel began consideration of further work on emissions scenarios. Delegates also discussed some aspects of the 2006 Guidelines in a lunchtime question and answer session with the Coordinating Lead Authors and in a contact group discussion later in the day. Contact group discussions on further work on emissions scenarios also took place and the Financial Task Team (FTT) met during the lunch break to consider the IPCC programme and budget for 2006-09.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

S.N. Sok Appadu, Mauritius Meteorological Service, opened the session and welcomed delegates. In thanking Mauritius for hosting the meeting, IPCC Chair Rajendra Pachauri (India) noted the importance to Mauritius of assessing climate change because of potential sea level rise and the role of agriculture in its economy. He highlighted the benefits of holding IPCC meetings in different locations, including the opportunity for IPCC members to interact with local scientific and governmental experts. IPCC Chair Pachauri suggested that delegates, in starting to think about the future work of the IPCC, allow new ideas to stimulate discussions.

Hong Yan, Deputy Secretary-General, WMO, noted the commitment of Mauritius to meeting the challenge of climate change. He said the IPCC has become an authoritative voice on the science of climate change and added that several decisions taken at COP/MOP 1 and COP 11 were based on IPCC findings. He also indicated the readiness of WMO bodies to cooperate with the IPCC.

Alexander Alusa, Division for Environmental Conventions, UNEP, highlighted the IPCC's experience in informing the climate change debate and in triggering cooperative action. He underscored UNEP's intention to support the IPCC in disseminating the results of the AR4 as widely as possible and

noted that UNEP's Information Unit for Conventions is already disseminating a simplified version of the Special Report on Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage.

Halldor Thorgeirsson, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, noted the development of the carbon market under the Kyoto Protocol and the impacts of the IPCC's work on the UNFCCC agenda. On important areas for the interplay of science and policy, he referred to the five year programme of work on adaptation and to the proposal under the UNFCCC to address emissions from deforestation. Thorgeirsson drew attention to the reference to the IPCC in the COP's decision on long-term cooperative action on climate change under the UNFCCC and stressed the IPCC's role in directly influencing national positions.

Anil Bachoo, Minister of Environment and National Development Unit, Mauritius, urged the IPCC to provide regionally relevant information to developing countries and cautioned that the full impacts of climate change on the ecosystems of small island developing states may not be appreciated due to lack of information and scientific research.

APPROVAL OF THE IPCC-24 DRAFT REPORT

Delegates approved the draft report as presented (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 2), noting that the Panel can consider decisions taken at IPCC-24 again at this meeting under the relevant agenda items.

IPCC PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2006-09

Renate Christ, IPCC Executive Secretary, introduced the IPCC Programme and Budget for 2006-09 (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 3, Add. 1) and emphasized that any decisions taken at this meeting will need to be reflected in the budgets for future years. With IPCC Chair Pachauri, she stressed the need for governments to make their financial contributions for 2006.

During the lunch break, the FTT, co-chaired by Marc Gillet (France) and Zhenlin Chen (China), held its first meeting. The FTT will prepare a draft decision for approval by the plenary. Discussion centered on the reasons for consistent budgetary carryovers, including the possibility that such carryovers might be a disincentive to future government contributions to the IPCC. The FTT will reconvene on Thursday morning, at which time the Secretariat will present a summary of expected expenses until the end of this assessment period (2008), while the Technical Support Units (TSUs) will provide additional information on their own activities.

2006 GUIDELINES

Co-Chair of the Bureau of the Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (TFB) Thelma Krug (Brazil) introduced the draft 2006 Guidelines (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 4b). She explained that more than 100 comments from 17 governments were received and addressed, and that the resulting revisions were contained in a new document (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 4b, Add. 1).

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION requested clarification on whether all government comments had been taken into account and on the timing for use of the new methodologies. BRAZIL expressed concern that its submission on estimating emissions from flooded lands had not been taken into account and expressed reservations about acceptance of the 2006 Guidelines as drafted. GERMANY, supported by NORWAY, requested more time to consider the revisions contained in IPCC-XXV/Doc. 4b, Add. 1. AUSTRIA and NORWAY supported BRAZIL's reservation on estimates from flooded lands and cautioned against possible inconsistencies in the methodologies when used at the project level. FINLAND requested clarification on the role and classification of peat. Noting that the section on flooded lands represented a prudent compromise, CANADA supported acceptance of the 2006 Guidelines as drafted. CHINA proposed deletion of the reference to spontaneous combustion, stating that this represents a natural phenomenon and not an anthropogenic source. EGYPT called for the inclusion of the global warming potential of aerosols, particularly from industry. The US cautioned against further changes to the document, stating that the 2006 Guidelines were designed as a comprehensive package and underscoring the danger of deleting sections or relegating them to appendices.

In a lunchtime question and answer session with the Coordinating Lead Authors, delegates discussed carbon stock versus flux methods to calculate emissions from flooded lands and the potential for overestimating and double counting. They agreed to continue, in a contact group, discussions on how to incorporate into the section of the 2006 Guidelines on flooded lands pertinent sections of the IPCC Good Practice Guidance for LULUCF. Delegates also agreed to keep in an appendix a reference to methane from wetlands and discussed spontaneous combustion and a range of other comments submitted previously by governments.

In the afternoon plenary session, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by SAUDI ARABIA and SWITZERLAND, requested that the compilation of governments' comments on the 2006 Guidelines be made available to the plenary. TFB Co-Chair Taka Hiraishi (Japan) stated that it was not the practice of the IPCC to distribute these to everyone, and the IPCC Secretariat explained that all written comments are available upon request. BRAZIL stressed the need to resolve pending matters in the 2006 Guidelines before proceeding to the Overview Chapter.

The UK, supported by MAURITIUS, NORWAY, CANADA, MOROCCO and others, underscored the importance of accepting the 2006 Guidelines and adopting the Overview Chapter at this session. Urging parties to be practical, he called for focusing on specific aspects of the 2006 Guidelines in a contact group and for discussing the Overview Chapter in the plenary.

Chair Pachauri said the Secretariat would make electronic copies and a limited number of paper copies of governments' comments available by Thursday morning, but cautioned against delaying acceptance of the 2006 Guidelines at this session given the amount of work ahead in relation to the AR4. He announced

that contact group discussions would convene in the evening and possibly on Thursday morning to address particular issues in the 2006 Guidelines raised during the day.

FURTHER WORK ON EMISSIONS SCENARIOS

Following a brief introduction by IPCC Secretary Christ, IPCC Chair Pachauri summarized his proposal for a decision on further work on emissions scenarios (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 17). Discussion on how to proceed was based on this proposal, the recommendations of the TGNES (IPCC-XXV/Doc. 11), and a letter from John Mitchell, Chief Scientist of the Met Office, UK, regarding new IPCC emissions scenarios (IPCC-XXV/INF. 6).

Several delegates, including SUDAN, KENYA, INDIA, SPAIN, VENEZUELA, GERMANY, and FRANCE, supported moving forward with new scenarios. FRANCE added that integrated scenarios might be beyond the scope of the IPCC, and, with the NETHERLANDS and others, noted the need to focus on a small number of scenarios. CHINA expressed concern that moving forward on new scenarios at present could draw resources away from the AR4 and suggested delaying work on scenarios. The UK indicated that there is a requirement beyond pure assessment that needs to be recognized. AUSTRALIA said it is important to ensure that any new process is clearly differentiated from previous processes. Many delegates stressed the need for developing country participation. The US explained the importance of taking a fundamental decision on the IPCC's role in new emissions scenarios and, with SAUDI ARABIA, noted that the IPCC should not go beyond a facilitation role by commissioning or directing scenario development as this could compromise its assessment role.

IPCC Chair Pachauri closed by noting the importance of alerting the scientific community to a modeling framework and of quickly embarking upon a course of action. He also underscored the involvement of experts from developing countries.

In an evening contact group, delegates continued discussions on emissions scenarios, discussing topics such as the definition of the term "coordination" and the importance of ensuring broad support for the role of the IPCC. The US stressed the function of assessment over coordination and discussed the importance of continued involvement from the US climate modeling community.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates at IPCC-25 were in good spirits on Wednesday, despite having an ambitious agenda to get through and a number of potential pitfalls in the way. Newcomers to the process may have felt that progress in plenary was slow going, but veteran observers were more sanguine. One observer's prediction that the meeting would include the "usual mischief making" seemed well placed, as discussions on the 2006 Guidelines were held up on a couple of technical and procedural issues. Progress was also protracted, as several participants expected, on flooded lands.

With only one day of the meeting gone, the mood at the close of the session remained upbeat, even though many delegates had to forgo the evening reception to continue contact group discussions, and many were scheduled to return early on Thursday morning for more of the same. Several delegates were optimistic that momentum would increase over the next two days.