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**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

**Progress Report and Draft Strategy**

(Submitted by the IPCC Secretariat)

## **Communications Strategy Progress Report and Draft Strategy**

### **Introduction**

IPCC outreach activities have evolved, particularly since 1997, when a Vice-Chair of the IPCC assumed responsibility for outreach activities. An informal task group on communications was established and its outcomes were reported at every plenary session, in Progress Reports on Outreach, submitted by the Secretariat. This has been the basis for the IPCC's planned communications and outreach activities since.

In 2005, the IPCC commissioned a consulting firm (CNC) to develop a communication strategy for the release and dissemination of the Fourth Assessment Report. That strategy made some recommendations that are still relevant. The most visible result was the establishment of an Information Officer post. For the full document, see: Framework Communications Strategy for Release and Dissemination of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, by Communications & Network Consulting (CNC), [IPCC-XXIV/Inf.3](#).

### **A - Building on past achievements**

Since the progress reports on outreach submitted to the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Sessions, in Antalya, Turkey, and Bali, Indonesia, the IPCC has continued to co-organize seminars and workshops for experts and policymakers, in partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thanks to an exchange of information involving Bureau members, the Secretariat and Technical Support Units, the IPCC Outreach Calendar of potential and planned activities is constantly updated and speakers identified. The IPCC Secretariat is continuously coping with a large number of permission requests to reproduce IPCC material, in particular graphics for educational material, articles and books. IPCC also contributes to various events, organizing the participation of the most appropriate IPCC experts in such events, including UN events, international conferences and national meetings.

The IPCC participates in regular meetings convened by the UN Communication Group on Climate Change, which includes the UN Secretary-General Team on Climate Change as well as the directors of Communication of main UN agencies. Partnerships with other UN organizations with regard to communications are now further developed. In the World Expo Shanghai 2010, the IPCC joined forces with other UN agencies in presenting climate change issues to a global audience.

In all publications and leaflets, the IPCC has also continued to apply its visual identity as agreed in 2008 (see progress reports on outreach at the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> sessions, in Antalya and Bali). The harmonized visual identity serves to better position the Panel as the neutral authoritative voice on climate change.

### **B - Current needs**

Since the IPCC received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 together with Al Gore, the visibility and celebrity of the Panel generated a very high interest and as a consequence a lot of pressure on the Secretariat, Bureau members and others involved in the IPCC. It also generated a huge demand for further outreach activities. Especially the Chairman, Co-Chairs and Lead Authors of the IPCC dedicated part of their time to numerous requests for interviews, key-note statements, speeches and presentations. As a result of the high visibility and public interest, the level of expectations for a timely flow of information and for clear explanations seemed to grow exponentially.

The IPCC website has been continuously updated to become IPCC's major communication and multilingual information tool. An in-depth analysis has been conducted in order to update the website, a process that is currently on-going, in order to make the IPCC website even more user friendly and comprehensive. Today, the average number of visits per month is 300,816.

With the rapid development of communication tools, new technologies and social networks, the IPCC has to adapt its outreach policy to the present and future demands. It also has to be attentive to changing expectations and develop a stream-lined process for dealing with outside criticisms.

#### *Needs related to peak information periods*

Having learned from the last period of peak attention, it has become obvious that we need more guidance on who can speak on behalf of the IPCC. The plenary could consider having a discussion about the requirements necessary to ensure a timely response to the public, in particular during peak-periods of interest. It may also wish to discuss and guide IPCC Bureau members on their roles with regard to publicly providing information and their views about IPCC reports. It could address who has the authority to provide remarks on the scientific assessment managed by previous IPCC leadership. Guidance from the Plenary on these issues would help support an effective and timely IPCC response in the future, especially during high solicitation periods and/or public debate. During the intense first half of the year 2010, outside expertise was requested, in particular for media relations. Some of the external advisors continue to advise the IPCC on communication matters.

#### *Needs related to continuing current outreach activities*

The IPCC organized dozens of events following the AR4 release. These events targeted a variety of individuals and groups, including heads of state, chief executives of private companies, journalists, non-governmental organizations, academic societies, civic organizations, legislators, cabinet ministers and others. In this context, it may be good to consider the IAC's recommendations. One important area addressed by its review is on how to engage stakeholders more in the IPCC's future outreach activities.

### **C - Future developments**

In order to renew confidence in the science on climate change and regenerate trust into the expertise of the Panel, confronted with criticism in early 2010, the IPCC mobilized all its efforts to prove that its reports are not contested with regards to the principles of policy neutrality, unbiased objectivity, policy relevance and comprehensiveness. Indeed, the attention that criticism has brought to the IPCC can be turned into an opportunity. Journalists and the general public have taken a more participatory role in the civil society and IPCC topics are increasingly examined.

In May 2010, the Bureau had also a constructive debate on how to improve IPCC communications. It was then proposed that an overall communication and outreach strategy be drafted and discussed at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session in Busan. In the report issued by the InterAcademy Council (IAC) in August 2010, some recommendations were made in the field of communications and information, mainly that "the IPCC should complete and implement a strategy that emphasizes transparency, rapid and thoughtful responses, and relevance to stakeholders and which includes guidelines about who can speak on behalf of the IPCC and how to represent the organization appropriately".

To better respond to the current and future challenges and consider the IAC recommendations, the Chairman of the IPCC suggests the creation of a Task Group on Communications to assist the Secretariat in drafting the future long term strategy.

The main objective of IPCC's Communications and Outreach Strategy should continue to be the dissemination of findings of the Panel's reports to all user groups. The main user group, as always, is the policymaking community. This is why providing IPCC information in different languages on our website is important and our outreach activities at UNFCCC meetings should also be continued. However, as well as this core role, the IPCC Secretariat could coordinate a second focus on "learning about and empowering people to deal with climate change".

Along with this idea, some new features could be developed such as the one suggested by the IAC with regard to outreach sessions intended for various audiences. "Such sessions would be most effective if scientists engage audiences in a two-way conversation rather than simply explaining their findings". In order to facilitate this, we could allow for the distribution of dissemination information in a "learning corner" of the IPCC website. The IAC also commented "having derivative material written for and relevant to these stakeholders would likely facilitate these outreach efforts". This would be scientific information prepared in a clear and easily understandable format for members of the public who wish to learn more about climate change. This page would feature the FAQs from the Working Group reports, but also information that is generated by our key partner organizations in the UN (e.g. UNEP and WMO), national research institutes, and perhaps also by IPCC observer organizations.

In addition, the IPCC could consider providing the scientific community with opportunities to learn more about interaction with the media, and opportunities to share information among themselves (not only scientific information, but also information on media tools that help scientists explain the complexities of climate change to the public as well as to policymakers). In order to improve public understanding of the role of the IPCC and its working procedures, media training for IPCC experts would also be helpful.

All comments and suggestions from the delegations are most welcome as the many challenges facing the IPCC deserve the cooperation and dialogue of all its members in a constructive and inclusive spirit. These are some ideas to be considered:

<b>Activities to be maintained</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seminars on specific subject areas such as the Special Reports.</b></li> <li>• <b>Side events</b> to take advantage of meetings hosted by UN agencies or other organisations.</li> <li>• <b>Special thematic events</b> to coincide with relevant International Days or other global events.</li> <li>• <b>Frequently Asked Questions/Interactive graphics</b> - Some FAQs on topics such as how the IPCC undertakes its assessments and on IPCC processes. FAQs on the science, as well as interactive graphics.</li> <li>• <b>More active regional outreach role</b> in developing countries, in economies in transition and SIDS.</li> <li>• <b>Training IPCC experts</b> and officials in communications and media relations.</li> <li>• <b>Authors and Review Editors</b> could be enabled to comment and respond to the media on their area of expertise without engaging specifically the IPCC.</li> </ul>

<b>Activities to be further developed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guidelines</b> to be developed for spokespeople on communications (best practices, etc.)</li> <li>• <b>Spokespersons defined</b> - The IPCC may consider developing a system by which an agreed number of clearly identified people have the authority to speak on the organisation's behalf.</li> <li>• <b>Processes for quick and authoritative response</b> to fast-developing media stories have to be defined and developed, including the clearance process.</li> <li>• <b>Workshops for journalists</b> from developed and developing countries on climate change.</li> <li>• <b>Regional training sessions</b> for national focal-points and scientists.</li> <li>• <b>Press releases</b> review process</li> <li>• <b>Reinforce cooperation with private sector/ UN/ NGOs</b> on briefings and briefing notes.</li> </ul>