



## AUSTRALIA

### Submission under the Cancun Agreements | September 2011

#### Views on the research dialogue, including ongoing activities, associated modalities and ways to enhance the dialogue | SBSTA

##### I. Overview

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This submission contains the views of the Australian Government on the research dialogue, including ongoing activities, associated modalities and ways to enhance the dialogue, as requested under FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.4, paragraph 13.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to submit its views under the Cancun agreements on this matter. In summary, Australia considers:

- the objectives of the research dialogue to be important and valuable;
- that the research dialogue meeting held in conjunction with every second SBSTA session should be continued and enhanced as a primary vehicle for the dialogue;
- that other cost effective modalities should be explored, including the greater use of the UNFCCC website and webcasts, vodcasts and other new media channels.

##### II. Views on the research dialogue, including ongoing activities, associated modalities and ways to enhance the dialogue

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Australia supports the underlying objectives of the research dialogue. It is important that the discussions and deliberations of the Parties to the UNFCCC be informed by the best available and most current science in relation to climate change, and also that the research agenda of the climate change science community is informed by the information needs of policy makers.

Australia therefore supports the continuation and enhancement of the research dialogue. Australia would, however, add the following caveats:

Any particular modality adopted for the research dialogue should:

- be cost effective and in particular should not impose significant additional cost burdens on developing countries;
- maximize opportunity for involvement by developing countries, especially those who otherwise have limited access to advice on climate change science;
- be periodically reviewed as to its effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the dialogue.

The research dialogue should inform, but should not seek to prescribe, policy responses.



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Likewise, the research dialogue should inform, but should not seek to prescribe, the research agenda.

In relation to enhancing the research dialogue, particularly in relation to specific modalities, Australia offers the comments below:

## **1. Research Dialogue Meetings**

A Research Dialogue meeting (in various forms) has been held in association with every second SBSTA session since SBSTA 24 and has been a primary vehicle for the research dialogue. Australia supports the continuance of these meetings and that they be held within the SBSTA session and be scheduled to allow the maximum opportunity for participation by Parties.

To ensure relevance to the Parties, the dialogue should continue to focus on those research activities relevant to the needs of the Convention, such as those listed in FCCC/SBSTA/2007/4, paragraphs 47 (a-f):

- a) Emerging scientific findings;
- b) Research planning activities (including in response to key uncertainties and research needs identified by the IPCC or raised by Parties);
- c) Research priorities, and gaps in the implementation of these priorities;
- d) Research capacity-building activities, particularly in developing countries;
- e) Regional climate change research networks;
- f) Relevant communication issues.

In addition, a presentation by the IPCC, giving an update on its plans and activities, should continue to be routinely provided as part of the research dialogue meeting.

Presentations from Parties in relation to their identified information needs, including gaps and key areas of uncertainty, should be a stronger feature of the research dialogue, including at least one presentation representing the needs of developing country Parties. These should also, where appropriate, provide feedback to research programmes and organisations on the benefits realised from their research.

To assess the effectiveness of the research dialogue meetings it would be useful to occasionally canvass opinion on this from attending delegates by survey or other appropriate means.

## **2. Submissions from Research Programmes and Organisations**

At SBSTA 32 research programmes and organisations were invited to provide written submissions to SBSTA 33 in relation to research outcomes and emerging scientific findings. Australia would welcome a routine invitation for such submissions and/or bulletins to be regularly provided by research programmes and organisations outlining scientific advances and made available to Parties at SBSTA and through the UNFCCC website.



### **3. Side events and stands**

Research programmes and organisations should continue to be encouraged to hold side events and information stands in association with SBSTA sessions. They should, however, be encouraged to particularly address those research activities relevant to the needs of the Convention as listed above.

### **4. Research Dialogue Workshops**

Australia views the Research Dialogue Workshop, which was organized by the Secretariat and held directly preceding SBSTA 34, as a useful innovation in the research dialogue. It provided an opportunity for greater in-depth consideration of issues and provided a strong basis for the research dialogue meeting which followed it in the SBSTA session itself. It also provided increased opportunity for presentations concerning capacity building and other issues relevant to developing country Parties.

Holding the Workshop directly preceding the SBSTA session meant that additional costs in attendance were minimized. Despite this, however, attendance is still a significant extra cost, particularly for developing country Parties. So while positively assessing the Workshop held in relation to SBSTA 34 and endorsing the concept in general, Australia would caution about this becoming an annual practice due to the significant extra costs entailed. Once every few years, perhaps around the approximate midpoint between IPCC Assessment Reports, might be a reasonable frequency.

### **5. Use of internet and other channels**

Australia supports the exploration and identification of additional ways to accomplish the communication and information sharing objectives of the research dialogue involving the internet and various new media channels. Particularly, greater and more effective use of the UNFCCC site as a channel to make information and research outcomes from research programmes and organisations readily and easily available to Parties at low cost. This could not only include links to copies of formal submissions, as currently, but also links to relevant bulletins from research programmes and organisations outlining scientific advances and/or links to their respective websites.

Other options that could be explored or expanded include:

- webcast (live) and/or vodcast (recorded) presentations from research programmes and organisations, including the research dialogue meeting and any workshops;
- webinars or other interactive web-based sessions;
- use of new media channels for alerting in relation to research results.

Any use of new media would need to be contingent on an analysis of whether use of such channels would disadvantage developing country Parties.

