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Best available science and the work of the WIM

At COP 22 in Marrakech, Parties reviewed the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage (WIM) and made recommendations for the future operation of the WIM and its Executive Committee (Excom).

The Conference of the Parties (COP) recommended that the Excom improve access to, and interaction with, relevant scientific technical panels, bodies and expertise, including by inviting relevant organizations at all levels and scientific research organizations with expertise in science relevant to loss and damage to ensure that the best available science is highlighted in the work of the WIM.¹

Previous decisions related to loss and damage have also highlighted the need for scientific input into the work of the WIM and loss and damage. Decision 3/CP.18, paragraph 7 acknowledges the need for further work to advance the understanding of and expertise on loss and damage, which includes scientific understanding and expertise in areas such as slow onset events, non-economic loss and how the impacts of climate change are affecting patterns of migration, displacement and human mobility. Each of the three functions of the WIM provides scope for introducing scientific analysis and information into the work of the WIM, whether it be through:

- Enhancing knowledge and understanding;
- Strengthening dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies; or
- Enhancing action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, to address loss and damage.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading intergovernmental body for the assessment of climate change. The IPCC assesses the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic information produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change. Thousands of scientists from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC. Because of its scientific and

¹ Decision 4/CP.22, paragraph 4(c).

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intergovernmental nature, and because of its multi-step review process, the IPCC embodies a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision makers.

IPCC-Working Group II (WG II) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)

The IPCC WGII is tasked to carry out assessments on the current state of knowledge about the observed and potential impacts of climate change, about the vulnerability of socio-economic and natural systems, and about options for adaptation, through assessments of the most recent information published in scientific, technical, and socio-economic literature worldwide.

The WG II's contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), for the first time, employed a pervasive focus on risk, where risk captures the combination of uncertain outcomes and something of value at stake. This framing based on risk provides a framework for utilizing information on the full range of possible outcomes, including not only most likely outcomes, but also low probability, but high consequence events.

While the WG II's contribution to the AR5 does not refer to the UNFCCC-concept of loss and damage, *per se*, Chapter 16 of the contribution does address adaptation constraints and the limits to adaptation. The contribution states that constraints to adaptation can mean that adaptation responses will be limited and distinguishes between "hard" limits, those that will not change, and "soft" limits, which could change over time.

Outcomes of the 46th session of the IPCC

At the 46th session of the IPCC, held in Montreal in early September 2017, the members of the IPCC agreed to the chapter outline of the WG II's contribution to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), scheduled for release in October 2021. As in AR5, the outline does not refer specifically to the UNFCCC-concept of loss and damage, but the issue of residual risk will be considered throughout the chapter outline², including as follows:

Technical summary

• **Chapter 1: Point of departure and key concepts**

- Information on the scientific, technical and socioeconomic aspects of current and future residual impacts of climate change, including residual damage, irreversible loss, and economic and non-economic losses caused by slow onset and extreme events; and
- Limits to adaptation.

² http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session46/AR6_WGII_outlines_P46.pdf. Highlighted version also attached.

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Section 1: Risks, adaptation and sustainability for systems impacted by climate change

- **Chapter 7: Health, wellbeing and the changing structure of communities**
 - Limits to adaptation.
- **Chapter 8: Poverty, livelihoods and sustainable development**
 - Addresses human security, coping with loss and residual risk.

Section 2: Regions

- **Common elements across all *regional* chapters**
 - Residual risks

Section 3

- **Chapter 17: Decision-making options for managing risk**
 - Section on decision-making and governance for managing risk considering residual risk and limits to risk management across multiple scales, institutions, and systems
 - Section on costs and non-monetized loss.

Way forward

An initial brainstorming session at Excom 6, with the aim of identifying options for integrating science into the implementation of the functions of the WIM, including future collaboration between the Excom and the Co-Chairs of IPCC WG II or other members of the IPCC Bureau, as appropriate, would be a useful starting point. The Excom may also wish to consider inviting the appropriate individuals entitled to speak for the IPCC in line with the IPCC Communication Strategy³ and who are responsible for the implementation of the scientific work programme of the IPCC to future meetings to gather updates on their work, discuss opportunities and challenges and receive inputs for future research and collaboration. The Excom may wish to consider inviting appropriate IPCC representatives as early as Excom 7, or the SB 48 sessional meetings in 2018.

In view of the horrific loss and damage inflicted by hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, last year's cyclone Winston and the recent flooding incidents in Asia, the proposed exchange between the IPCC and the ExCom could help both bodies deliver on their respective mandates.

³ http://ipcc.ch/meeting_documentation/pdf/Communication/IPCC_Communications_Strategy.pdf, in particular paragraphs 20-23.

Annex – Principles governing IPCC work⁴

INTRODUCTION

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as the IPCC or, synonymously, the Panel) shall concentrate its activities on the tasks allotted to it by the relevant WMO Executive Council and UNEP Governing Council resolutions and decisions as well as on actions in support of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process.

ROLE

2. The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies.

3. Review is an essential part of the IPCC process. Since the IPCC is an intergovernmental body, review of IPCC documents should involve both peer review by experts and review by governments.

ORGANIZATION

4. Major decisions of the IPCC will be taken by the Panel in plenary meetings.

5. The IPCC Bureau, the IPCC Working Group Bureaux and the Bureaux of any Task Forces of the IPCC shall reflect balanced geographic representation with due consideration for scientific and technical requirements.

6. IPCC Working Groups and any Task Forces constituted by the IPCC shall have clearly defined and approved mandates and work plans as established by the Panel, and shall be open-ended.

PARTICIPATION

7. Participation in the work of the IPCC is open to all WMO and UN Member countries.

⁴ <http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles.pdf>

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8. Invitations to participate in the sessions of the Panel and its Working Groups, Task Forces and IPCC workshops shall be extended to Governments and other bodies by the Chairman of the IPCC.

9. Experts from WMO and UN Member countries or international, intergovernmental or nongovernmental organisations may be invited in their own right to contribute to the work of the IPCC Working Groups and Task Forces. Governments should be informed in advance of invitations extended to experts from their countries and they may nominate additional experts.

PROCEDURES

10. In taking decisions, and approving, adopting and accepting reports, the Panel, its Working Groups and any Task Forces shall use all best endeavours to reach consensus. If consensus is judged by the relevant body not possible: (a) for decisions on procedural issues, these shall be decided according to the General Regulations of the WMO; (b) for approval, adoption and acceptance of reports, differing views shall be explained and, upon request, recorded. Differing views on matters of a scientific, technical or socio-economic nature shall, as appropriate in the context, be represented in the scientific, technical or socio-economic document concerned. Differences of views on matters of policy or procedure shall, as appropriate in the context, be recorded in the Report of the Session.

11. Conclusions drawn by IPCC Working Groups and any Task Forces are not official IPCC views until they have been accepted by the Panel in a plenary meeting.

12. Invitations to participate in the sessions of the Panel and its Working Groups, Task Forces and IPCC workshops should be extended at least six weeks in advance of the opening of the session.

13. Major reports, including Assessment Reports, Special Reports and Methodology Reports, basic documentation and other available reports for consideration at the sessions of the Panel and its Working Groups shall normally be made available by the IPCC Secretariat at least four weeks in advance of the session and, to the extent possible, in all official UN languages.

14. Interpretation into all official UN languages shall be provided for all sessions of the IPCC meeting in plenary, of its Bureau and its Working Groups. Should members of the IPCC Bureau or government representatives participate in a session of the Bureau via video conferencing or other electronic means the interaction with these members of the Bureau and government representatives may be in English only. Such arrangements will be subject to agreement by the Bureau, in advance of the meeting, and availability of technical facilities.

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15. The scheduling of the sessions of the Panel and its Working Groups and Task Forces shall be co-ordinated, to the extent possible, with other related international meetings.

16. These Principles shall be reviewed at least every five years and amended as appropriate.

17. Procedures for the preparation, review, acceptance, approval, adoption and publication of IPCC reports are given in Appendix A⁵.

18. Financial procedures for the IPCC are given in Appendix B⁶.

19. Procedures for the Election of the IPCC Bureau and Any Task Force Bureau are given in Appendix C⁷.

⁵ <http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles-appendix-a-final.pdf>

⁶ <http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles-appendix-b.pdf>

⁷ <http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles-elections-rules.pdf>