Enhancing the effectiveness of the research dialogue, and how existing challenges could be overcome

SBSTA 34 Workshop on research
Klaus Radunsky, Austria
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Overview

- Objective of the research dialogue
- Development of the dialogue
- Communication challenges
- Good practices
- Suggestions to further improve communication

Objective

Identification of priority research areas and questions to the scientific community relevant to the Convention
(FCCC/SBSTA/2002/INF.17)

- Scientific basis of CC
  - observed climate and monitoring of the climate system;
  - processes, driving forces and feedbacks in and sensitivity of the climate system;
  - climate change modelling)
- Impacts, vulnerability and adaptation
- Mitigation
- Cross-cutting issues
  - effects of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol,
  - dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system,
  - integrated approaches to adaptation and mitigation, in the framework of strategies for sustainable development,
  - frameworks for comprehensive risk assessment and risk management approaches for climate-change policy-making under general scientific uncertainty)

Development of communication (1)

- 2002: Communicate research needs and priorities to the scientific community
- 2004: side event at SBSTA 20;
- 2005: another Synthesis Report
- 2006:
  - special side event on research needs at SBSTA 24;
  - recognition of the important role of regional climate research networks and of the need to enhance two-way communication and cooperation between Parties and regional and international research programmes;
- 2007: specification of the six basic needs of the Convention in relation to research activities;

Development of communication (2)

Needs of the Convention related to research activities:

(a) Emerging scientific findings;

(b) Research planning activities, including those undertaken 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.

Development of communication (3)

- 2008:
  - broadening the participation of relevant regional research organizations;
  - additional informal discussions with Parties and planned meetings outside the UNFCCC process;
- 2009:
  - use of UNFCCC website to reach out to a wider audience;
  - confirmation of “needs of the Convention related to research activities”;
- 2010:
  - better identification and communication of research themes and topics of interest to policymakers;
  - organize a workshop in conjunction with SBSTA 34;
  - provide information from research programmes and organizations on the UNFCCC website;
  - challenges of communicating research results effectively to end-users and to a wider audience (including the media and the public) were noted; linkage to Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS)?

Communication challenges (1)

- Renate Christ (presentation 2 June 2011): Did not manage properly to communicate
- IPCC adopted in May 2011 a guidance for a communications strategy that will ensure objectivity and transparency, following an IAC recommendation

Communication challenges (2)

- Communicating the results of IPCC assessments is challenging because of the range and complexity of climate science as well as of the need to speak to audiences beyond scientists and governments.
- Vested interests of private sector have a significant impact
  - book “Climate Cover-Up” explains how the propaganda generated by self-interest groups has purposely created confusion about climate change http://www.desmogblog.com/climate-cover-up

Communication challenges (3)

- **At continental, regional and ocean basin scales,** numerous long-term changes in climate have been observed. These include changes in arctic temperatures and ice, widespread changes in precipitation amounts, ocean salinity, wind patterns and aspects of extreme weather including droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves and the intensity of tropical cyclones (AR4).
- Most of the observed increase in **global average temperatures** since the mid-20th century is *very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic* greenhouse gas concentrations. Discernible human influences now extend to other aspects of climate, including ocean warming, **continental-average temperatures, temperature extremes and wind patterns (AR4).**
- **The main communication problem: for people not the global scale is relevant but the very local scale, and: for most parameters the local variability of the climate is much more significant compared to the impact of climate change.**

How to further improve communication? (1)

- Enhance policy relevance
  - Broaden the dialogue to other stakeholders (NGOs), address frequently asked questions?
  - Address more up-to-date topics (e.g. in supporting the implementation of the Cancun agreement)
- Explain better the added value of more research efforts and the envisaged outcome
- Increase the focus of the dialogue (lessons learned: Nairobi work programme?)
- Be pro-active in offering research topics/areas and explain how the results could help move the process forward
- Improve the organization of the dialogue (e.g. World Café - parallel dialogue in small groups, rotation of participants)
- Recommendations should be targeted to different communities (e.g. Research community, policy makers, Parties) and linkages (e.g. to Article 6, NWP) should be better addressed;

How to further improve communication? (2)

Communicate reasons for limited progress in closing gaps in knowledge

- Lack of funding (Have the consequences of inadequate funding been clear enough?)
- Lack of time (Can we expect more progress in the near future?)
- Question too complex or not appropriate? (Unlikely to be answered even with significant more resources and much more time)
- Relevance of gaps?

Additional thoughts

- Relevance of the remaining gaps – added value of more knowledge (from the perspective of decision making)?
  - What are the real barriers in addressing the risks of climate change properly?
  - How can science contribute in the near future to increase the speed of addressing climate change risks? E.g. by workshops? Technical papers for the UNFCCC secretariat?
- More Parties engaged in submissions in 2002 compared to 2010!

THANK YOU!!!