

Information on the SBSTA-IPCC special event: Unpacking the new scientific knowledge and key findings in the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate

Note by the Chair of the SBSTA and the Chair of the IPCC

6 November 2019

The Special Event of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on unpacking the new scientific knowledge and key findings in the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate will take place during SBSTA 51 in Madrid, Spain, on **Thursday 5 December 2019 from 15:00 to 18:00** in the Plenary Room.

This note provides the background of, and information on, the Special Report and the organization of the Special Event.

Further information is available on the UNFCCC's dedicated webpage <https://unfccc.int/event/srocc-special-event>.

I. Introduction

1. The IPCC approved and accepted the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) at its 51st Session held on 20–23 September 2019, Principality of Monaco. The Summary for Policymakers was approved at the Second Joint Session of Working Groups I and II of the IPCC and accepted at its 51st Session on the 24th September 2019.¹
2. The decision to prepare the SROCC was taken at the IPCC's 43rd Session (Nairobi, April 2016), as part of the Sixth Assessment cycle. The SROCC was prepared under the joint scientific leadership of Working Group I and Working Group II, with operational support from the Working Group II Technical Support Unit. In line with the approved outline, mitigation options (Working Group III) are not assessed with the exception of the mitigation potential of blue carbon (coastal ecosystems).
3. The SROCC is the result of substantial effort by the IPCC, entailing the collaborative work of 104 authors and review editors from 36 countries, 19 of which are developing countries or economies in transition. The drafts of the report received 31,176 comments from 80 countries and the EU. The final draft of the report references 6,891 publications.
4. The SROCC assesses the latest scientific knowledge about the physical science basis and impacts of climate change on ocean, coastal, polar and mountain ecosystems, and the human communities that depend on them. Their vulnerabilities as well as adaptation capacities are also evaluated. Options for achieving climate-resilient development pathways are presented as well. The structure of the Special Report is as follows:
 - (a) Chapter 1: Framing and Context of the Report;
 - (b) Chapter 2: High Mountain Areas;
 - (c) Chapter 3: Polar Regions;
 - (d) Chapter 4: Sea Level Rise and Implications for Low Lying Islands, Coasts and Communities;
 - (e) Chapter 5: Changing Ocean, Marine Ecosystems, and Dependent Communities;
 - (f) Chapter 6: Extremes, Abrupt Changes and Managing Risks;
 - (g) Integrative Cross-Chapter Box: Low Lying Islands and Coasts.
5. The Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) presents the key findings of SROCC under three sections:
 - (a) Observed changes and impacts;
 - (b) Projected changes and risks;

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/event/second-joint-session-of-ipcc-working-groups-i-and-ii-and-ipcc-51/>.

(c) Implementing responses to ocean and cryosphere change.

6. Following the release of the report, the IPCC continues its work on the sixth assessment cycle and the Sixth Assessment Report² (AR6), with the three IPCC working group reports (I Physical science basis; II Climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; III Mitigation of climate change) due to be approved during 2021, and a synthesis report due to be approved in April 2022.

7. The SROCC as well as the *Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* (SROCC) will each be dedicated a Special Event during SBSTA 51³ in Madrid, Spain, in order to facilitate the understanding of their content and implications.

8. The SROCC follows the other two Special Reports on *Global Warming of 1.5°C* and SRCLL and the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

II. The special event of the SBSTA and the IPCC

9. The Special Event of the SBSTA and the IPCC on the SROCC will take place during SBSTA 51 in Madrid, Spain, on the 5 December 2019 from 15:00 to 18:00 in the Plenary Room. The event will be open to all attendees at COP 25, and webcast.

10. The event will present the scientific knowledge assessed in SROCC and provide a space to discuss the findings of the report.

11. The event will follow the same structure as the SPM as outlined in paragraph 5 above with short presentations by the IPCC (WG Co-Chairs and experts), followed by a question and answer sessions.

12. To ensure that this can be an interactive learning exercise, we invite Parties and observers to keep their interventions succinct and to ask the experts questions that pertain to the findings of the special report. In that regard, we have suggested some guiding questions for consideration by the presenters and participants (see paragraphs 17, 19 and 21 below).

13. We invite Parties to reflect on how the findings presented in the special event can support the UNFCCC process and action under the Paris Agreement.

14. A draft agenda of the event is provided below with a full agenda planned to be available in detail on the event webpage.⁴

15. After the event, we will prepare an informal summary report, with the assistance of the UNFCCC secretariat, that will be made available on the UNFCCC webpage in early 2020.

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>.

³ <https://unfccc.int/event/sbsta-51>.

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/event/srocc-special-event>.

Draft agenda of the SBSTA-IPCC special event: Unpacking the new scientific knowledge and key findings in the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate

Opening and welcome		
15:00–15:15	Opening remarks and objective of the event by the SBSTA and the IPCC Chairs Remarks by the UNFCCC Executive Secretary	Paul Watkinson (SBSTA Chair) and Hoesung Lee (IPCC Chair), Patricia Espinosa (UNFCCC ES)
Unpacking the new scientific knowledge and key findings		
15:15–16:05	Observed changes and impacts - Presentation (15–20 mins) - Q&A followed by an open discussion (30 mins)	Presentation by IPCC representatives
16:05–16:55	Projected changes and risks - Presentation (15–20 mins) - Q&A followed by an open discussion (30 mins)	Presentation by IPCC representatives
16:55–17:45	Implementing responses to ocean and cryosphere change - Presentation (15–20 mins) - Q&A followed by an open discussion (30 mins)	Presentation by IPCC representatives
Closing		
17:45–18:00	Closing remarks by the Chairs of the SBSTA and the IPCC	Paul Watkinson and Hoesung Lee

16. The special event will commence with a presentation on observed changes and impacts, introducing how greenhouse gas emissions and climate change has impacted the ocean and cryosphere, their ecosystems, and communities and ecosystem services.

17. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session and an open discussion. Participants may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

- (a) What are the observed physical impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change on the ocean and cryosphere?
- (b) What are the observed impacts on ecosystems?
- (c) What are the observed impacts on people and ecosystem services?

18. The event will continue with a presentation on projected changes and risks, illustrating that immediate mitigation action can prevent the most damaging changes and risks in regards to the ocean and cryosphere and adaptation options. This presentation will highlight changes in physical hazards and risks under different future climate change scenarios including physical changes, risks for ecosystem, communities and ecosystem services.

19. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session and an open discussion. Participants may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

- (a) What are the projected changes in physical hazards under the assessed range of scenarios?
- (b) What are the projected risks for ecosystems?
- (c) What are the projected risks for people and ecosystem services?

20. The final presentation will focus on implementing responses to ocean and cryosphere change, including, key challenges, response options including co-benefits, and enabling conditions to strengthen responses.

21. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session and an open discussion. Participants may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

- (a) What are the challenges for implementing responses to ocean and cryosphere change?
- (b) How can response options be strengthened, including the role of local community and indigenous peoples' knowledge?
- (c) What are the enabling conditions to implement effective responses?