



2016-IP30: IPCC outlines its Plans for new Reports

The IPCC has just released its plans for its new series of reports¹. The Sixth Assessment report (AR6) will be published in 2022, just before the global stocktake on emission commitments in 2023 as agreed at COP21.

The AR6 report, as before, will again have three working groups, on the physical science, adaptation, and mitigation. These reports will be published in 2020 and 2021. The synthesis report will be published in 2022.

Note the last report in the series AR5 was published as 4 volumes in 2013 and 2014².

In the future i.e. after SAR, , the IPCC will also consider publishing its big reports every five years, rather than every six or seven, to better align them with the UNFCCC's timeline for global stocktaking of NDC's, which is a welcome development. After the publication of AR5 there was discussion in the academic press on the IPCC reporting process timescales suggesting that shorter more timely reports might be more effective, this development goes some way to answering that criticism³. Aligning the IPCC AR reporting process with the UNFCCC stocktaking process for NDC's will provide Governments with a valuable reference update on climate impacts at a point in time that they can then consider taking additional actions to upgrade their national actions to achieve the below 1.5C goal set in the Paris Agreement

With regard to Special Reports, the IPCC has considered some 30 topics suggested by countries and has chosen three.

The first is of particular interest as it will be on the **impacts of 1.5C warming**, which the new target set at COP21. However whilst announcing the title of the report, the IPCC are vague on its contents, which they say will be fleshed out in the coming months. The intent is to publish the report as early as possible, the aim being before 2018.

Note: IEAGHG will follow the developments of the contents for this report and keep members updated as appropriate

Separately it has been noted that, an international conference at Oxford University in September 2016 is already planned⁴. The event is entitled "1.5 degrees: Meeting the challenges of the Paris climate agreement". The organisers of the event say it will see scientists, policymakers, businesses and civil society gather to discuss the challenge of meeting the 1.5C goal, a level of ambition which the organisers say "has caught the world by surprise".

Note: IEAGHG will attend this event and present a poster on the work it has been doing on BloCCS and "negative emissions".

The second special report will cover the **Oceans and cryosphere**

For reference the cryosphere is defined as: *The cryosphere is the frozen water part of the Earth system. Beaufort Sea, north of Alaska. One part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes*

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eU3_jdo3dZs

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

³ IEAGHG Information Paper 2014-21: NGO and Media response to IPCC AR5 Summary Report, http://www.ieaghg.org/docs/General_Docs/Publications/Information_Papers/2014-IP21.pdf

⁴ <http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/events/2016/1point5degrees/>



frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. There are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid.

For further details go to: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/cryosphere.html>

In considering the topic the IPCC acknowledged that the individual topics of: oceans, the cryosphere and sea level rise were covered in detail as separate issues in AR5. However it was also concluded that linking them more explicitly would help policymakers better understand extreme events and consequences of climate change for ecosystems. It was also considered that the contributions of the oceans to mitigation were also “poorly addressed” in AR5, concluding that the contributions of the oceans to mitigation were also “poorly addressed” in AR5, noted the co-chairs of working group two, adding that the “magnitude of the issue and overarching implications” should make the topic a priority for a special report.

The third topic chosen for a special report was **Food Security**. The special report will cover; desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.

Note: the term greenhouse gas “fluxes” refers to the cycling of carbon between land, plants and the atmosphere. If an element takes up more carbon than it emits, it is known as a “carbon sink” and it acts to slow the pace of warming. The reverse is called a “carbon source”.

The IPCC highlighted **Cities** as another priority topic. But rather than being the focus of a whole special report, climate impacts on cities and their “unique adaptation and mitigation challenges and opportunities” should be a common thread throughout AR6. Note: the IEA in its Energy Technology Perspectives 2016 report showed that decarbonising urban buildings and transport is key to attain Paris climate goals.

The IPCC will hold a special conference on cities to “better get to grips with the issue” at an undefined point in the future. Cities will be a special report for the AR7 cycle.

On Greenhouse Gas Inventories. The IPCC have also indicated that will be updating the methodology for how countries report their greenhouse gas inventories, to be published in 2019. Note the last report in this series was the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, which itself updated the earlier 1996 guidelines report⁵. So an update is certainly due, if not overdue.

On the topic of **Better Communications**, the IPCC acknowledges that how to better communicate its findings to the outside world is a “very important” element of its work. The IPCC has undertaken that from now on, it will involve communications specialists from the start in a bid to improve the readability of the reports, especially the summary for policymakers.

This is a welcome development because after the publication of the AR5 summary for policy makers that was public criticism of the IPCC’s style of reporting and that the IPCC should do more to communicate at a public level in ways that non lay people can grasp the issues being presented and that the language in the reports could be more readable⁶.

⁵ <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/>

⁶ IEAGHG Information Paper 2014-20: Communicating Climate Science, http://www.ieaghg.org/docs/General_Docs/Publications/Information_Papers/2014-IP20.pdf



The IPCC seems to have recognised these issues and held a two-day IPCC Expert Meeting on Communication on meeting in Oslo in February 2016⁷. A 40 page report followed on how the IPCC could make its findings clearer and more engaging for policymakers, the public and the media⁸. It seems that it was this meeting that has led to IPCC's stated intent to include communications experts into the AR6 reporting process from the outset. That should add an interesting new dynamic to the IPCC AR report production process.

Other interesting outcomes from the meeting included the recommendation to publish the early drafts of the assessment reports when they are in review. There was also the suggestion for a page limit on the Summary for Policymaker's and a gentle reminder that they need only focus on policy-relevant bits, not be a comprehensive summary of each chapter.

The report from the meeting also recognised that "the media landscape is changing rapidly" and contained a recommendation that the IPCC should "be nimble and responsive so that it uses the best technology when future reports appear".

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7

http://www.ipcc.ch/meeting_documentation/meeting_documentation_ipcc_workshops_and_expert_meetings.shtml

⁸ http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/supporting-material/EMR_COM_full_report.pdf