

Summary of the Resumed 53rd Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: 22-26 March 2021

In February 2020, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) held one of the last intergovernmental meetings before governments around the world adopted travel and contact restrictions to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the IPCC Secretariat has adjusted its mode of operation and has gone virtual. With only a month's notice, the IPCC reshuffled plans for the organization of Working Group III's third Lead Author Meeting in April 2020, and 287 participants tuned in over Zoom instead of meeting in Ecuador. Lessons learned from numerous virtual author meetings in 2020 informed the preparation for IPCC-53. The session was split into two parts. The first part, focusing only on the IPCC Trust Fund Programme and Budget and mainly relying on written means of communication, took place in December 2020. The second part, IPCC-53 bis, had a more comprehensive agenda and relied on virtual decision-making.

The focus of IPCC-53 bis was the need for adjustments to the strategic planning schedule for the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle, with regard to the approval plenary for the report from Working Group (WG) I in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the preparations for the election of Bureau members for the Seventh Assessment Report (AR7) cycle, with a view to ensure a smooth transition.

The Panel adopted a decision on the strategic planning schedule, which defines a process for the Secretariat to solicit views from IPCC Focal Points and the Bureau on how to promote transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity in a possible virtual WG I approval session; and for the WG I Co-Chairs and Bureau, within approved rules and procedures, to make appropriate arrangements for holding an approval session starting in July 2021 based on the received guidance and direction, and to report back on these arrangements to the Panel prior to IPCC-54. The decision clarifies that any arrangements taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic will not set a precedent for future IPCC sessions.

In its decision on the strategic planning schedule, the Panel also established an Ad-hoc Group with open-ended membership to provide recommendations to the Panel on the size, structure, and composition of the IPCC Bureau for AR7. The objective is to send

out the Secretary's letter inviting nominations two weeks after the approval of the AR6 synthesis report, scheduled for September 2022, and to hold the elections 6-7months later.

The Panel also discussed and took note of progress reports: on data, communications, publications, gender, Secretariat staffing, and matters related to other international bodies; admitted new observer organizations; and adopted the IPCC-52 report.

IPCC-53 bis convened from 22-26 March 2021 with daily three-hour meetings, except for the last meeting day, which lasted an additional three hours. Daily meeting times were modulated to accommodate a range of time zones, with starting times varying between 5:00 am and 9:00 pm CET (GMT+1). The meeting was open to governments as well as observer organizations, with a maximum of two representatives per delegation. Close to 200 registered participants joined over Zoom each day, with interpretation across all six official UN languages.

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A Brief History of the IPCC

The IPCC was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to assess, in a comprehensive, objective, open, and transparent manner, the scientific, technical, and socio-economic information relevant to understanding human induced climate change, its potential impacts, and adaptation and mitigation options. The IPCC is an intergovernmental and scientific body with 195 member countries. It does not undertake new research or monitor climate-related data; rather, it conducts assessments of the state of climate change knowledge based on published and peer-reviewed scientific and technical literature. IPCC reports are intended to be policy relevant, but not policy prescriptive.

The IPCC has three Working Groups (WGs):

- WG I addresses the physical science basis of climate change.
- WG II addresses climate change impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability.
- WG III addresses options for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigating climate change.

Each WG has two Co-Chairs and seven Vice-Chairs, with the exception of WG II, which has eight Vice-Chairs. The Co-Chairs guide the WGs in fulfilling their mandates with the assistance of Technical Support Units (TSUs). In addition, the IPCC also has a Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (TFI), also supported by a TSU, to oversee the IPCC National GHG Inventories Programme. The Programme's aims are to develop and refine an internationally agreed methodology and software for calculating and reporting national GHG emissions and removals, and to encourage its use by parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Panel elects its Bureau for the duration of a full assessment cycle, which includes the preparation of an IPCC assessment report that takes between five and seven years. The Bureau is composed of climate change experts representing all regions, and includes the IPCC Chair and Vice-Chairs, WG Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and TFI Co-Chairs. The IPCC has a permanent Secretariat, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and is hosted by the WMO.

IPCC Products

Since its inception, the Panel has prepared a series of comprehensive assessment reports, special reports, and technical papers that provide scientific information on climate change to the international community.

The IPCC has produced five assessment reports, which were completed in 1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, and 2014. AR6 is expected to be completed in 2022. The assessment reports are structured in three parts, one for each WG. Each WG's contribution comprises a Summary for Policymakers (SPM), a Technical Summary, and the full underlying assessment report. Each of these reports undergoes an exhaustive and intensive review process by experts and governments, involving three stages: a first review by experts, a second review by experts and governments, and a third review by governments. Each SPM is then approved line-by-line by the respective WG and adopted by the Panel.

A synthesis report (SYR) is produced for the assessment report as a whole, integrating the most relevant aspects of the three WG reports and special reports of that specific cycle. The Panel then

undertakes a line-by-line approval of the SPM of the SYR. The IPCC has also produced a range of special reports on climate change-related issues. The AR6 cycle includes three special reports:

- Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR1.5), which was approved by IPCC-48 in October 2018;
- Climate Change and Land (SRCCL), which was approved by IPCC-50 in August 2019; and
- Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC), which was approved by IPCC-51 in September 2019.

In addition, the IPCC produces methodology reports, which provide guidelines to help countries report on GHGs. Good Practice Guidance reports were approved in 2000 and 2003, while the IPCC Guidelines on National GHG Inventories were approved in 2006. A Refinement to the 2006 Guidelines on National GHG Inventories (2019 Refinement) was adopted at IPCC-49 in May 2019.

In 2007, the Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to the IPCC and former US Vice-President Al Gore for their work and efforts “to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations needed to counteract such change.”

Sixth Assessment Cycle

IPCC-41 to IPCC-43: IPCC-41 (24-27 February 2015, Nairobi, Kenya) adopted decisions relevant to the AR6 cycle. IPCC-42 (5-8 October 2015, Dubrovnik, Croatia) elected Bureau members for the AR6 cycle. IPCC-43 (11-13 April 2016, Nairobi, Kenya) agreed to undertake two special reports (SRCCL and SROCC) and the 2019 Refinement during AR6, and, in response to an invitation from the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 21), to prepare a special report on the impacts of limiting global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Panel also agreed that a special report on cities would be prepared as part of the AR7 cycle.

IPCC-44: During this session (17-21 October 2016, Bangkok, Thailand), the Panel adopted outlines for SR1.5 and the 2019 Refinement, as well as decisions on, *inter alia*, a meeting on climate change and cities.

IPCC Cities and Climate Change Science Conference: This meeting (5-7 March 2018, Edmonton, Canada) produced a research agenda to better understand climate change impacts on cities and the critical role local authorities can play in addressing climate change.

IPCC-45 to IPCC-47: IPCC-45 (28-31 March 2017, Guadalajara, Mexico) approved the SRCCL and SROCC outlines, and discussed, *inter alia*: the strategic planning schedule for the AR6 cycle; a proposal to consider short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs); and resourcing options for the IPCC. IPCC-46 (6-10 September 2017, Montreal, Canada) approved the chapter outlines for the three WG report contributions to AR6. During IPCC-47 (13-16 March 2018, Paris, France), the Panel agreed to, *inter alia*: establish a Task Group on Gender; and draft terms of reference for a task group on the organization of the future work of the IPCC in light of the Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement.

IPCC-48: During this session (1-6 October 2018, Incheon, Republic of Korea), the IPCC accepted SR1.5 and its Technical Summary and approved its SPM, which concludes, *inter alia*, that limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5°C is still possible but will require “unprecedented” transitions in all aspects of society.

IPCC-49: During this session (8-12 May 2019, Kyoto, Japan), the IPCC adopted the Overview Chapter of the 2019 Refinement and accepted the underlying report. IPCC-49 also adopted decisions on the terms of reference for the Task Group on Gender, and on a methodological report on SLCFs to be completed during the AR7 cycle.

IPCC-50: During this session (2-7 August 2019, Geneva, Switzerland), the IPCC accepted the SRCCL and its Technical Summary and approved its SPM. A Joint Session of the WGs, in cooperation with the TFI, considered the SPM line by line to reach agreement.

IPCC-51: This session (20-24 September 2010, Monaco) accepted the SROCC and its Technical Summary, and approval of its SPM, following line-by-line approval by a Joint Session of WGs I and II.

IPCC-52: During this session (24-28 February 2020, Paris, France), the IPCC adopted the outline for the AR6 SYR, containing a stage-setting introduction and three sections: current status and trends; long-term climate and development futures; and near-term responses in a changing climate. The Panel also adopted the IPCC Gender Policy and Implementation Plan, which, among other things, establishes a Gender Action Team. It further discussed the organization of the IPCC's future work in light of the GST, and the Principles Governing IPCC work, but could not come to an agreement.

IPCC-53: This session (7-11 December), which took place virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, addressed the IPCC Trust Fund Programme and budget. Using the silence procedure, the Panel approved the revised budget for 2020 and the revised proposed budget for 2021.

IPCC-53 bis Report

IPCC Secretary Abdalah Mokssit opened the meeting, providing an overview of the proposed structure and organization of work for the session. He emphasized the Secretariat's efforts in modulating meeting times to accommodate various time zones and noted that, for the first time in a virtual IPCC meeting, interpretation across all six UN languages would be provided.

Petteri Taalas, WMO Secretary-General, underscored that the world as a whole has already reached 1.2°C of warming and breached 410 parts per million of atmospheric CO₂. While the "atmospheric situation" is not encouraging, he welcomed political momentum on carbon neutrality ahead of UNFCCC COP 26. He urged avoiding delay in publishing IPCC reports, noting these are of critical importance to UNFCCC negotiations.

Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, underscored the importance of both solidarity and science to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure long-term sustainability. She pointed to interlinkages between the climate, nature, and pollution crises, adding the work of the IPCC provides critical impetus to address these. She called for translating net-zero targets into action on the ground and for ensuring pandemic recovery packages pave the way to a climate safe and just future for all.

IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee thanked the Panel for its flexibility and open-mindedness to conduct this resumed plenary session, acknowledged the contribution of the IPCC Bureau and Secretariat,

and expressed gratitude to the authors and scientific community as the backbone of the IPCC.

Adoption of the Agenda

On Monday, IPCC Secretary Mokssit introduced the provisional agenda (IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc. 1) and proposal for the organization of work (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.15), highlighting these documents build on the Secretariat's consultations with IPCC Focal Points. He outlined the suggested organization of work:

- Adoption of the draft IPCC-52 report;
- Review of the principles governing IPCC work;
- Progress reports from the three WGs, the AR6 SYR, the Task Force on Inventories, the Task Group on Data, as well as various other IPCC activities; and
- AR6 strategic planning schedule.

Saudi Arabia, reiterating his standing opposition to conducting decision making in virtual sessions, requested removing the review of procedures from the agenda, and to add the admission of observer organizations.

The Republic of Korea noted that virtual discussions do not ensure simultaneous participation of all countries, pointing to technical difficulties and time zone challenges. WG III Co-Chair Jim Skea called for a balanced view of the advantages and disadvantages of in-person and virtual meetings. He noted in-person meetings also have challenges, including visa issues, delegation size, and overtime participation. Ramón Pichs-Madruga, IPCC Vice-Chair, underscored technical difficulties limiting the full participation of many developing countries and said that virtual meetings, which should be considered a "last ditch solution," are not a conducive context for addressing delicate issues.

South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, and Namibia stressed the need to respect the Principles Governing IPCC Work, specifically paragraph 13 that calls for making documents available at least four weeks prior to a meeting, underscoring their delegations did not have sufficient time for national coordination. Mokssit pointed to challenges in optimizing the scheduling of meetings, noting the 60th meeting of the IPCC Bureau only took place the week prior to the plenary meeting, but indicated the Secretariat will enhance efforts to comply with the four-week rule. Delegations recognized the difficult circumstances brought about by the pandemic and expressed appreciation for the Secretariat's work.

Several delegations inquired why the number of agenda items was increased from an initial indication of only three items. Mokssit explained that consultations with the Focal Points showed a mixed picture, with equal interest in the strategic planning schedule and the review of principles, and many requests for addressing progress reports.

The Republic of Korea, supported by India, cautioned that discussions on the review of the principles governing IPCC work are unlikely to reach a clear conclusion at this meeting, calling for discussions to focus on planning the AR6 approval session. Sweden called for clarifying how the review of principles will be carried forward, if not considered at this session. South Africa highlighted some progress reports contain elements that warrant more than written communications, notably pointing to staffing considerations outlined in the progress report on communications and outreach activities.

Delegations converged on underscoring the importance of the strategic planning schedule for AR6.

Final Decision: In its decision (IPCC-LIII(bis)-1), the Panel adopted the agenda contained in IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc.1, Rev.1:

- Draft IPCC-52 report;
- AR6 strategic planning schedule;
- Progress Reports on: WG I, WG II, WG III, SYR, TFI, Task Group on Data, communication activities, Informal Group on Publications, Gender Action Team, Secretariat staffing, and matters related to UNFCCC and other international bodies;
- Admission of observer organizations; and
- Place and date for IPCC-54.

Approval of the Draft Report of the 52nd Session of the IPCC

On Monday, Secretary Mokssit introduced the draft report of IPCC-52 (IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc. 2, Corr. 1), noting the Secretariat received and addressed one written comment from Iran. India lamented that two members of the Indian delegation are missing from the participants list. He also stressed that once a final consensus is reached, it seems unnecessary to list convergent or divergent views in the report, and asked to edit several such instances in sections 5 (on the AR6 SYR outline) and 6 (on the organization of the future work of the IPCC in light of the UNFCCC's Global Stocktake) out of the final meeting report. Brazil said the report did not capture its concerns raised on joint activities between the IPCC and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Switzerland supported the notion that the report should record a collection of consensus decisions rather than reflect discussions, and suggested not to name countries in future reporting. Secretary Mokssit asked delegates to submit their points in writing to assist the revision process.

On Saturday, IPCC Chair Lee presented a revised version of the draft IPCC-52 report. India, expressing appreciation for changes made, asked for clarification on the different treatment of text in sections 5 and 6, containing lists of country positions, and stressed his concern with incomplete, unbalanced representation of views in section 6. Secretary Mokssit explained that suggested changes were made to ensure coherence. Chair Lee proposed to record India's concerns in the report of IPCC-53 bis.

Final Decision: In its decision IPCC-LIII(bis)-3, the Panel approved the IPCC-52 report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc.2, Corr. 1), with amendments under Agenda Items 5, 6, 11, and a correction in the list of participants contained in Annex 2.

Progress Reports

Working Group I: On Monday, Valérie Masson-Delmotte, WG I Co-Chair, presented the progress report from WG I (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.1). She announced the draft for final government distribution had just been finalized and invited governments to participate in the review starting on 3 May 2021, noting WG I will run informal question and answer sessions during the review period. She said the WG is now preparing the draft Technical Summary and SPM.

She outlined steps taken to shift to a purely virtual work mode and ensure broad participation and inclusivity. She pointed to the successful completion of the second order draft (SOD) review with over 50,000 comments from more than 1,200 reviewers, noting this

represents a 60% increase compared to the fifth assessment report (AR5). She said decision-making in a virtual context takes more time, but highlighted it also enables increased participation of WG II and WG III colleagues and joint work on cross-cutting issues, such as emission metrics, emulators, risk frameworks and scenarios or the glossary.

WG I Co-Chair Panmao Zhai underscored the excellent spirit of cooperation, and expressed his gratitude to authors, Bureau Members, and the TSU staff for their efforts.

In ensuing discussions, several delegates expressed their gratitude to the authors for their tremendous efforts and flexibility in adjusting their mode of operation to minimize pandemic-related delays. Venezuela, supported by Nicaragua, expressed concern about sanctions taken against her country, noting these impact Venezuela's capacity to contribute to AR6. India and Saudi Arabia urged: greater attention to the traceability between summary products and the findings of the underlying report; and consideration of lessons learned from previous approval sessions, including better representation of governmental outputs in the assessments, avoiding selection bias, and not equating number of studies with insights, especially when summarizing qualitative results. They also called for WG I to focus on physical science, avoiding policy and socio-economic issues. India lamented that selected scenarios are based on a narrow range of parameters and do not adequately capture the solution space.

Co-Chair Masson-Delmotte highlighted synthesis work done in the WG I Technical Summary to integrate multiple lines of evidence, and confirmed that WG I focuses on the physical response to a broad range of emissions scenarios, while the characteristics of underlying scenarios are addressed in WG III and the SYR. She emphasized that geographical diversity of WG authors is a strong asset for the quality of the report and pointed to broad participation on developing scenario projections. She underscored the treatment of regional information and the new, interactive version of the Atlas of Global and Regional Climate Projections as major steps forward compared to AR5.

The Panel took note of the progress report.

Working Group II: On Tuesday, Debra Roberts, WG II Co-Chair, provided the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.4), pointing to a series of virtual meetings during preparation of the WG II SOD. She delineated key activities, including a joint IPCC-IPBES workshop on biodiversity and climate change, held in December 2020, and preparations for a meeting on cultural heritage and climate change, to be organized jointly with the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). She elaborated on activities to engage early career scientists in the IPCC, and on virtual media events. WG II Co-Chair Hans-Otto Pörtner highlighted the toll taken on authors, the Bureau, and the TSU by the pandemic, and discussed shifts in the schedule and preliminary timeline.

En ensuing discussions pertained to the IPCC-IPBES workshop, with Brazil, supported by India and China, requesting clarification on the agenda and list of participants, planned outreach activities, and the nature of the workshop report. He stressed that a scientific report was not the expected outcome, and asked for greater transparency and enhanced government involvement in issues spanning different multilateral fora. The Co-Chairs clarified

that IPCC procedures were followed in the organization of the workshop and more detailed information will be made available to governments.

Indonesia called for enhanced clarity in the SPM, focusing on one idea per paragraph and avoiding technical terms. He noted the need for better engaging with literature produced by researchers from the Southern hemisphere, and for better explaining low confidence segments.

Other points of discussion pertained to: a balanced representation of literature; correct designation of jurisdictions in text and graphics; and the consistency, traceability, and framing of summary products.

IPCC Chair Lee and the WG II Co-Chairs assured governments of adherence to UN norms in all geographical specifications, and that all comments made by governments will be taken up diligently during the upcoming revision of the SOD.

The Panel took note of the report.

Working Group III: On Tuesday, WG III Co-Chair Jim Skea provided the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.2). He highlighted the value of stakeholder sessions conducted with governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses during the second order draft review. Noting that the WG had to conduct both its third and fourth lead author meetings online, he noted that the schedule for completing WG III outputs might need to be adjusted to cope with pandemic-related delays, which will also affect the scheduling for WG II and the SYR to avoid overlapping review periods. WG III Co-Chair Priyadarshi Shukla indicated the Co-Chairs will further liaise with authors and submit a proposal to the Executive Committee (ExCom) by the first week of April.

Several African delegations urged disaggregating grouped data from African and Middle Eastern countries, underscoring the need to provide an accurate representation of the continent's emissions.

China called for differentiation between developed and developing countries, as per the UNFCCC; and for more balance in calculations on carbon leakage and carbon budgets.

Saudi Arabia questioned the focus on certain policy measures, underscoring the IPCC should not be policy prescriptive. India interrogated the importance attributed to shared socio-economic pathways in recent years, and noted countries' views diverge on issues such as development pathways, carbon markets, or the dietary and cultural role of meat and dairy.

Other concerns included: references to a link between corruption and climate policies; the prominence of nature-based solutions, with several delegations pointing to the lack of an agreed definition; and a prevalence of author self-citations in some chapters.

Highlighting that the IPCC relies on data provided by others and thus depends on their in-built regional classifications, Co-Chair Skea said efforts will be made to identify disaggregated data that allows for considering Africa as a unit in terms of emissions. He took note of all comments, emphasizing the Co-Chairs will relay these back to the authors and all comments will get detailed attention.

The Panel took note of the report.

Synthesis Report: IPCC Chair Lee provided a report on progress regarding the preparation of the AR6 SYR (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.3). He introduced Noëmi Leprince-Ringuet as the Head of the SYR Technical Support Unit, noting she took office in July 2020, and highlighted that both the SYR core writing team (CWT) and

scientific steering committee (SSC) have been established and are running well.

Leprince-Ringuet elaborated on the progress of the CWT and SYR-SSC. She pointed to informal preliminary activities in 2020 aimed at enhancing CWT-members' general understanding of the role of the SYR and exploring options for maximizing the policy relevance of the report. She noted a first CWT meeting took place in January 2021, which, among others, addressed the narrative structure for the SYR sections and identified cross section topics, including COVID-19, and equity and just transitions. She said section teams and facilitators have been appointed, the SYR-SSC held a total of eight meetings, and shared plans for a SYR pre-draft to be ready for internal review by 21 May 2021.

In discussions, the Republic of Korea highlighted the importance of the SYR for the political process and called for its timely adoption, but urged avoiding overlapping review periods, as per IPCC procedures. Several delegations mentioned scheduling issues, noting they will take this up again in discussions on the AR6 strategic planning schedule.

The United Kingdom welcomed progress and steps taken to integrate work across the SYR and WGs, and inquired about the status of TSU support staff hiring. Switzerland recalled his invitation to host the SYR adoption plenary as an in-person event in Geneva.

Responding to a clarification request from India, Leprince-Ringuet explained the purpose of identifying cross section topics is to ensure consistency throughout the report. IPCC Chair Lee noted the hiring of additional technical staff was under way.

The Panel took note of the progress report.

Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: On Tuesday, Kiyoto Tanabe, TFI Co-Chair, presented the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.5). He pointed to ongoing work on SLCFs, noting initial work on compiling source categories and preliminary analysis of available research methodologies. He said expert meetings on SLCFs planned for 2020 had to be delayed due to the pandemic and are now scheduled for September and October 2021. He delineated activities related to upgrading the inventory software, including data collection on agriculture, forestry, and other land uses, and highlighted the release of an updated version of the emission factor database in November 2020, noting efforts to enhance user-friendliness.

The Panel took note of the report.

Task Group on Data Support for Climate Change Assessments (TG-Data): On Friday, Sebastian Vicuña, TG-Data Co-Chair, provided the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.6, Rev.3), highlighting activities continued in a virtual mode with considerable progress. He pointed to a roadmap prepared by the outreach and webpage subgroup; noted data storage in long-term archives is underway; and highlighted agreement on detailed protocols with data distribution centers in the UK, Germany, and the US. He pointed to issues related to current licensing practice, notably with regard to reuse, and recommended licensing data under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license, wherever it does not infringe the interests of relevant license holders. This license, he noted, allows unrestricted use, but requires proper attribution and provides clear information about any modifications made.

The Panel took note of the report.

Communications and Outreach Activities: On Saturday, Jonathan Lynn, Head of IPCC Communications and Media Relations, presented the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.11, /INF.12, and /INF.13), noting the communications group reviewed the communication strategy at the request of the ExCom. As changes that could be adopted without much further discussion he pointed to: broadening communication goals to cover other aspects of IPCC work, such as on gender; supporting proactive activities, such as writing op-eds; adding youth as a target audience; recognizing the value of communication specialists in the TSUs; noting the importance of the IPCC website and social media; and enhancing outreach to television broadcasting.

He welcomed written comments received from Sweden on enhancing the role of Focal Points for targeting communication to different national contexts, as well as on evaluating the impact of communication activities. Responding to a written comment from France, he highlighted adjustments with financial implications will be submitted to the Panel for consideration at a future session where the budget is on the agenda.

Kenya, supported by South Africa, emphasized staffing decisions should be taken by the Panel. She requested clarification on the rationale for extending the Head of Communications' contract beyond the mandatory retirement age, while not extending the contract of the officer in charge of supporting developing countries' travel arrangements. South Africa underscored the role of Focal Points for communication in local languages. Germany called for considering the changes to the communication strategy at a physical meeting, with no formal decision taken at this session.

Noting increased communication demands, Lynn assured detailed information on staffing implications will be submitted for consideration by a future Panel session. He underscored the division of labor between the TSU communication specialists dealing with authors, and the Secretariat team dealing with the broader UN system and media at large.

The Panel took note of the report.

Informal Group on Publications: On Saturday, Jim Skea, Chair of the Informal Group on Publications, presented the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.8), recalling the Group was established in 2019 to develop advice on processes for managing the publication of IPCC reports, including the preparation and conduct of procurement processes and the management of citation data. He highlighted challenges arising from the lack of agreed procedures, noting lack of clarity on the operation of the error protocol and on whether the digital or printed report copy is the document of record, underscoring the three AR6 Special Reports have yet to be printed. He highlighted the lack of digital object identifiers (DOI) and inclusion of IPCC reports in citation databases are major concerns for scientists, as this impedes proper crediting and recognition of their work.

As key recommendations for developing written guidance to be agreed upon by the Bureau, he highlighted, among others: a digital version of IPCC reports be made publicly available within two working days of the respective SPM approval; a fully formatted text should be sent to printers/publisher within six months of approval; published digital versions should not be altered, but the operation of the error protocol should be recorded on the website; and a

Publication Committee should be established for each assessment cycle to advise on the procurement of printing and publishing services.

Skea highlighted the Group did not have sufficient time to consider the issue of translating reports in other UN languages, inviting the Bureau to extend the Group's mandate.

France, with Spain and Ireland, supported extending the Group's mandate to address translation issues and said recommendations should be delivered before the WG I approval session. The Netherlands underscored the importance of assigning DOI to ensure author credit and urged printing the Special Reports as soon as possible. Responding to a question from Switzerland, Chair Skea underscored the unambiguous recommendation that reports be published online within two days of approval, with Bureau Member Andreas Frischlin clarifying that assigning DOIs is not an obstacle to swift publication.

The Panel took note of the report.

Gender Action Team: On Saturday, Ko Barrett, Chair of the Gender Action Team (GAT), provided the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.7). She recalled that IPCC-47 established a Task Group to develop a framework of goals and actions to improve gender balance and address gender-related issues within the IPCC, and established a second Task Group, on Gender Policy and Gender Implementation Plan (TG-Gender), at IPCC-49. She noted the GAT, established at IPCC-52, is tasked with the implementation of the Gender Policy and Implementation Plan adopted at the same session. She highlighted the GAT's work was delayed by the onset of the pandemic, but at the ExCom meeting in November 2020, the Secretariat presented the necessary steps to operationalize the GAT and issued invitations to UNEP and WMO to nominate members to the GAT. She highlighted a first GAT meeting was convened in early 2021, and a second meeting will be convened soon. She noted, with appreciation, the comments supporting gender equality.

France, Sweden, and the UK expressed their appreciation for the Secretariat and the GAT for steps taken to develop this important work, and indicated their support moving forward.

The Panel took note of the report.

Secretariat staffing, roles, and requirements: IPCC Secretary Mokssit provided the progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.9, Rev.1) on staffing, roles and requirements, and highlighted travel, procurement, and continuity within and between cycles. He said the report summarizes the oral presentation made to the 59th Bureau session, and sets out options to enhance staffing in the light of current and future needs. He outlined short-term options to address acute gaps, and the ongoing efforts to fill vacancies and strengthen the IT role and capacity.

He pointed to a proposed draft decision contained in the progress report, inviting the Panel to explore the possibility of using the WMO Common Services Platform to manage IPCC travel; inviting donors to provide support through the Junior Professional Officers programme, as a short- to mid-term solution; and considering the use of consultants at the next plenary session addressing budgetary matters.

Mokssit highlighted AR6 is the most ambitious cycle in the IPCC's history, with pressures intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, noting this increased the workload of the IPCC Secretariat, while staff numbers remained unchanged.

Norway, France, Germany, Hungary, and Sweden expressed their gratitude to the Secretariat for its hard work in difficult times and supported the proposal, suggesting an update be provided at the next plenary session. They emphasized the outstanding work on virtual meetings and communications and asked that appropriate resources be provided to the IT group, including a promotion of the IT officer, and that vacant positions be filled. Supporting this notion, WG III Vice-Chair Diana Ürge-Vorsatz asked whether human resources for the IT group were sufficient and urged expediting last year's decision to upgrade the IT group.

Germany clarified that the Panel taking note of a report does not equate to adopting a decision, even if the noted report contains proposed decisions for the Panel to take, and asked for her remark to be recorded in the meeting report.

Responding to Kenya and Ghana's request for clarification on the process of extending the contract of the current Head of Communication and when the vacant position on travel support would be filled, Secretary Mokssit responded that the contract for the Head of Communications was extended to ensure continuity and avoid a gap during the pandemic.

Mokssit pointed to the WMO's acceptance, this week, of the creation of a P1 post and the upgrading of an existing one to P4, as decided by IPCC-52. He underscored staffing decisions are based on careful consideration of identified needs and budgetary implications, noting the Secretariat will seek plenary approval for any plans with budgetary implications.

The Panel took note of the report.

Matters related to UNFCCC and Other International Bodies:

Florin Vladu, UNFCCC Secretariat, presented a progress report (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.14) providing overview on collaborative activities between the IPCC and UNFCCC since IPCC-52, and a short outlook on plans for 2021. He mentioned the June Momentum for Climate Change, where WG Co-Chairs Masson-Delmotte and Skea, with IPCC Vice-Chair Youba Sokona, outlined the impacts of COVID-19 on the work of scientists on AR6 products and on climate change. He referred to a joint online meeting that took place in September, noting it addressed how to synchronize processes, and various implications of delay in the completion of IPCC reports for the periodic review and the Global Stocktake (GST). He also pointed to, among others, the Climate Change Dialogues that took place in November 2020, noting: 17 IPCC experts presented findings from the three AR6 Special Reports to the Structured Expert Dialogue (SED); and IPCC presence in the research dialogue, mainly related to reaching net zero emissions, as well as in the ocean and land dialogues. He announced his intention to work closely with the IPCC on forthcoming events, such as the 2nd meeting of SED, and expressed his appreciation to the IPCC for its contribution.

The Panel took note of the report.

Admission of Observer Organizations

On Saturday, IPCC Legal Officer Jennifer Lew Schneider presented the eight organizations seeking observer status (IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc. 3), noting the Bureau's positive consideration of these requests.

Final Decision: In its decision (IPCC-LIII(bis)-4), the Panel grants the following organizations IPCC observer status: European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists; Integrated

Carbon Observation System European Research Infrastructure Consortium; Inuit Circumpolar Council; Environmental Investigation Agency; African Academy of Sciences; International Actuarial Association; Office for Climate Education; and King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center.

AR6 Strategic Planning Schedule

WG I approval session: On Tuesday, IPCC Deputy Secretary Ermira Fida provided an overview of possible implications resulting from COVID-19 on the IPCC plenary sessions and the proposed response (IPCC-LIII(bis)/Doc.4, Rev.1 and IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.10, Rev.1). She noted approved milestones for the WG contributions to AR6 have been adjusted by 4-5 months from what was originally decided and that further adjustments might be needed in light of possible WG III delays and the volatile pandemic situation. She presented options for the WG I approval session in July or August 2021, referring to options 1, 2, and 1+2 in the background note. In comparing the options, she highlighted the need to consider: the extended time needed for conducting discussions virtually; avoiding overlaps between reviews; and holiday breaks, which limit authors' and delegates' availability. She presented the possibility of hybrid arrangements, combining written input, virtual discussions, and decentralized physical meetings at the regional level. Looking at the AR6 process as a whole, she noted flexibility in WG II's schedule, with the possibility to advance approval by three weeks if necessary. She underscored schedule changes are tentative and may require further revision, and invited the Panel to provide guidance on the provisional timelines.

On Thursday, discussions on the AR6 strategic planning schedule (SPS) continued. IPCC Chair Lee pointed to ongoing efforts between the Secretariat, WG Co-Chairs, and TSUs to revise the SPS.

Saudi Arabia, supported by China, lamented that the presentation by the Secretariat did not expand on the background note's proposed option 3 to delay the approval until a physical meeting is possible, and asked for the plenary to be provided with the Secretariat's analysis on the legality of virtual meetings, as presented to the Bureau.

Deputy Secretary Fida emphasized that her presentation had focused on showing how the proposal by the Secretariat builds on options 1 and 2, incorporating benefits from both. She also noted significant concerns with option 3 and highlighted that the background document also reflects views shared during the Bureau meeting. She clarified that a summary of the statement on legal aspects of virtual meetings made to the Bureau had been included in the amendment to IPCC-LIII/INF.10, Rev. 1, specifically in section 2.3 on additional considerations.

As requested, IPCC Legal Officer Lew Schneider read the statement on legal considerations dealing with virtual plenary and approval sessions that highlights the need to ensure that principles of IPCC, in particular concerning equal representation, be upheld given the possibility of a digital divide, and for electronic meetings to provide for fair, inclusive, and transparent processes.

Germany, with Luxembourg and the US, stressed the importance of having the WG I Plenary session as planned in July-August this year. They underscored: postponement would be a disastrous signal to authors and the world; effects on the rest of the AR6 schedule; and future availability of authors and Co-Chairs.

Germany suggested the Secretariat should identify countries and delegates that need support and address such difficulties, using Trust Fund resources that are not needed for travel and physical meetings at the moment. He called for considering an extension of approval sessions from the usual one week, and urged WG I to keep the SPM as concise as possible.

Saudi Arabia called delegates' attention to developing country challenges beyond connectivity issues and highlighted the need to have a balanced and agreed upon report that is legally valid. He pointed to the risk of reports being challenged if not approved in accordance with IPCC principles, and argued to postpone decision making until physical meetings were possible.

Luxembourg noted that many UN bodies—including WMO and UNEP—are in virtual decision-making mode, and pointed to the recent virtual WMO meeting with record-breaking participation and balanced floor time. He encouraged WG I Co-Chairs to engage with stakeholders in formats similar to the question and answer (Q&A) sessions organized by WG III, and suggested allowing written comments on PaperSmart during approval sessions.

Saint Kitts and Nevis underscored the need to honor the exceptional work of authors and identify a way to conduct a virtual approval session, noting that, although SIDS face significant connectivity challenges, among others, they stand ready to advance the critical work of the IPCC. She called for thinking “outside the box” and building on lessons learned by WMO and UNEP.

WG I Co-Chair Masson-Delmotte reminded delegates of an ongoing survey on enhancing the clarity of WG I figures for the SPM and confirmed WG I intends to host informal sessions towards mid-June, noting these would be conducted several times to accommodate different time zones and that recordings of the WG I presentation would be posted online. She noted only written comments will be formally considered for the preparation of the report, as per IPCC procedure.

She said that after having dedicated all her time to the IPCC since 2015 with the gracious support of her home institution, she has future obligations as a researcher impeding her availability for an extension of the AR6 cycle. She underscored that scientists pursued their work on advancing IPCC reports, even at risk of burnout, and called on governments to find a way to do the same, noting the risk of author disengagement from future assessment reports. She invited suggestions on options to enhance participation and inclusivity in a hybrid process.

Japan called for allowing more delegates to be nominated per country, to better adjust to time zone challenges of virtual meetings.

India underscored that the pandemic situation is not his main source of concern, but rather the way in which authors address government concerns.

Canada stressed that Q&A sessions with the WG should be informal, and, with Norway, called for defining a “firm end” to the virtual approval session, which he underscored, needs to remain inclusive.

Venezuela underscored the need to advance IPCC work despite the pandemic, noting the uncertain vaccination timeline in many countries. She underscored the need for support to developing countries with internet connectivity issues.

Many delegations echoed support for the 1+2 option and emphasized the need to ensure inclusivity.

The UK underscored delegations' shared aim to deliver quality reports. She cautioned against losing the goodwill of the scientists who volunteer their time, and, with Switzerland, noted that the Secretariat should collect views from Focal Points on opportunities to enhance inclusiveness. Australia expressed her trust to task the WGI Co-Chairs and Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, with the organization of the approval meeting in an inclusive manner.

IPCC Vice-Chair Sergei Semenov echoed a statement made by the Russian Federation the previous day, noting the focus should lie on determining the format for WG I approval, but deferring decisions on the other approval sessions to better adjust to the pandemic.

Trinidad and Tobago joined the call for a hybrid WG I approval session in July, but cautioned that these innovative solutions during the pandemic should not be a precedent for IPCC to move to virtual meetings.

On Friday, and into early Saturday, delegates continued exchanging views on modalities for the WG I report approval session, with many delegations supporting the approval session, as scheduled, in July-August 2021, using virtual arrangements.

To support developing country participation, Belgium proposed the Secretariat could: explore ways UN organizations may help with enabling access; reach out to the World Health Organization concerning preferential vaccination for IPCC authors and delegates; and consider paying daily allowances during virtual meetings to free developing country delegates from competing duties at home.

Mexico proposed a way forward, providing a list of items to be contained in a decision, noting these would specify concrete tasks to the Secretariat to ensure inclusiveness. She asked the Secretariat to provide a draft decision as soon as possible.

Germany, the US, Jamaica, Japan, Norway, and others supported Mexico's point, noting their expectation to adopt a decision at this session, and calling upon the IPCC leadership to develop concrete arrangements for a virtual approval session and envisage an extended approval period of two weeks, as per option 1+2 of the Secretariat's background note. They called for intersessionally collecting views to inform the development of concrete meeting modalities, for example on structuring the submission of comments during Q&A sessions, and, as noted by Switzerland, define a step-by-step scenario of the session.

Saudi Arabia and India expressed concerns over virtual arrangements, underscoring the need for conformity with IPCC rules and procedures, especially the line-by-line approval of the SPM. Underscoring that “the SPM is the property of the Panel,” they called for ensuring that governments' comments are properly addressed. They also called for considering option 3 (delaying approval until a physical meeting is possible), noting that the quality of the report is more important than its speedy publication.

Supporting a virtual approval, the Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Norway, and the US called for emphasizing the exceptional pandemic circumstances and clarifying that modalities agreed to for the WG I approval would not be unconditionally replicated in subsequent sessions, noting that meetings should be conducted physically whenever possible.

After taking stock of the views expressed by delegates, the Secretariat presented a draft decision and outlined its strategy. Discussions on the draft decision mostly pertained to clarifying the allocation of responsibilities between the Secretariat, the IPCC Bureau, and the WG I Co-Chairs and Bureau for collecting views, developing guidance, and making arrangements for how to promote transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity at a possible virtual WG I approval session. Many delegates underscored the need to replicate as much as possible the conditions of a physical meeting. India underscored his concern regarding a leading role of the WG I Co-Chairs and Bureau in developing virtual meeting arrangement, noting these will mean substantial deviation from standard IPCC procedure, and asked that the responsibility remain with the entire Bureau. The US, supported by Luxembourg, suggested clarifying the role of the WG I Co-Chairs and Bureau should be carried out within their existing mandate, with India expressing gratitude for the suggestion.

A significant portion of the discussions pertained to fine tuning the sequence of tasks to develop arrangements for a virtual meeting, the responsibilities therein, and to avoid redundancy and enhance the clarity of the decision, notably in relation to the term IPCC “members” and IPCC “Focal Points.”

Responding to a request for clarification from TFI Co-Chair Kiyoto Tanabe, IPCC Chair Lee explained that, based on the views expressed by the Panel, scoping of the Special Report on SLCF will take place during the AR7 cycle.

Final Decision: In its decision on the strategic planning schedule (IPCC-LIII(bis)-2.2, Rev.3), the Panel:

- invites the Secretariat to solicit views from IPCC Focal Points and the Bureau on how to promote transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity in a possible virtual WG I approval session;
- requests the WG I Co-Chairs and WG I Bureau, within approved rules and procedures, to make appropriate arrangements for holding an approval session starting in July 2021;
- requests the WG Co-Chairs and WG I Bureau to consider all options contained in the Secretariat’s background note on the possible format of an approval session in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the received guidance and direction from the solicitation of views, and to report back on arrangements to the Panel by intersessional correspondence prior to IPCC-54; and
- clarifies that any arrangements taken in light of the COVID-19 pandemic will not set a precedent for future IPCC sessions.

AR7 Bureau Elections

On Wednesday, IPCC Legal Officer Jennifer Lew Schneider provided a presentation on procedures for the election of the IPCC AR7 Bureau (IPCC-LIII(bis)/INF.16, Rev.1), noting this is a key matter for ensuring a smooth transition between the AR6 and AR7 cycles. She underscored the importance of Rules 7 (Composition of IPCC Bureau and any Task Force Bureau), 8 (Terms of Appointment), and 21 (Nominations) of Appendix C to the principles governing IPCC work. She provided an overview of the time elapsed between the approval of SYRs in previous cycles and the elections of subsequent Bureaus, noting these varied between 6 and 14 months since the creation of the IPCC. She outlined a timeline for transition following the AR5 to AR6 process:

- establishing a Task Group (TG) and approve its terms of reference at one of the next plenary sessions (IPCC-54 or IPCC-55);
- first TG progress report along the approval of the WG II report (IPCC-56);
- second TG progress report at the SYR approval (IPCC-57);
- final submission and decision at IPCC-58;
- Secretary sending out an invitation for nominations by governments after IPCC-58.

Saudi Arabia expressed concerns, stressing the importance of completing approval sessions for AR6 before turning to the election process.

The US underscored the need to ensure a good transition between the current and next cycle and to avoid a loss of information between TSUs. With the UK and Germany, he noted a limited need for discussions on AR7 products, pointing to the standing agreement on the triple WG structure as well as on producing reports on cities and on SLCF. He proposed to hold a limited discussion on the size and composition of the Bureau in early 2022, possibly the day prior to the WG II approval session. He said the Secretariat’s letter could then be issued in the second quarter of 2022, highlighting this opens a window for holding elections four to five months after SYR approval, in January 2023.

The UK highlighted that AR6 is a long cycle, underscoring the burden posed on authors and Bureau members. She suggested streamlining the work of the TG, providing less reports and focusing only on Bureau size and composition.

Germany called for elections to take place as soon as possible after SYR approval. To facilitate this, she proposed establishing a TG, at this session, to work intersessionally with a mandate limited to composition and size of the Bureau. She noted this might be helpful to cope with challenges arising from pandemic.

France, Trinidad and Tobago, Norway, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Japan, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand echoed the call for holding elections as soon as possible, and expressed support for the US and UK proposals, as well as Germany’s proposal on initiating an intersessional TG at this session. Trinidad and Tobago objected to seeing these processes delayed in any way that will compromise IPCC principles, and his confidence in the Panel’s ability to do preparatory work in parallel with the approval process, emphasizing that “We can walk and chew gum at the same time.”

India and China reiterated that finalizing AR6 products should take precedence, and spoke in favor of clearly sequencing approval and election processes, pointing to a risk of overburdening developing countries. The Republic of Korea warned against risks of conflict of interest arising from conducting approval processes and election campaigns simultaneously. Venezuela underscored the challenges met by developing countries in the current working environment, and pending issues of regional representation in the Bureau.

The US clarified that their proposal does not envisage election activities during finalization of AR6 products, but rather serves to foster common understanding about Bureau composition; and reiterated that a loss of information due to delay in voting in new Co-Chairs was a drawback identified at the transition from 5th to 6th assessment cycle.

The Co-Chairs of all three WGs strongly echoed the concern raised by the US, underscoring challenges for setting up their work due to lack of handover from AR5, and emphasized it would be difficult to complete their duties towards the end of the AR6 cycle without a budget or TSU to support that work.

WG I Co-Chair Masson-Delmotte, supported by Norway, Denmark, and Luxembourg, urged improving gender balance in IPCC leadership in the next cycle. WG II Co-Chair Debra Roberts, supported by South Africa and Norway, called attention to the importance of in-country TSU-support to developing country Co-Chairs. WG I Co-Chair Zhai stressed the need for time to absorb and use AR6 products.

India, with Trinidad and Tobago, cautioned against upholding continuity at the expense of inclusivity and diversity. He said that suitable, incumbent members will receive support in the election process to continue their work.

IPCC Chair Lee expressed that the election and SYR processes cannot take place simultaneously, noting the Secretariat's letter signals the start of the nomination procedure. He cautioned against holding elections in January 2023, highlighting that this would result in a shortened campaign period of three months following SYR approval. This, he said, would create an uneven playing field between current Bureau members and other nominees as well as between developed and developing countries, and lead to "underground" campaigning that would affect the approval process. He called for ensuring a "safe distance" of at least six months between SYR approval and elections.

The US noted incumbent Bureau members will have the advantage of their notoriety, regardless of when elections are held. He highlighted that countries do typically not wait for the Secretariat's letter of invitation to scout possible nominees, in particular those who can host a TSU. He also noted COVID-19 does not lend itself to travel-intensive campaigning, as has been done in the past.

The UK underscored seizing the opportunity to streamline the campaign process, making it more efficient and less travel intensive. Norway considered a shorter campaign time to be feasible.

As an opportunity to support a smooth transition between cycles, Chair Lee suggested adopting the outlines for the cities and the SLCF reports during the AR6 cycle, noting this had been the case for the special report on renewable energy completed during the AR5 cycle. He pointed to the Bureau's experience related to the IPCC Cities and Climate Change Science Conference held in 2018.

The US and the UK highlighted the incoming leadership will be critical for ensuring the success of the cities and SLCF reports, and should be able to provide input from the outset. The UK underscored early work on scoping outlines would put an additional burden on already stretched Bureau members.

WG III Vice-Chair Andy Reisinger, pointing to his experience as a WG II Coordinating Lead Author and Head of a TSU, elaborated on the broad technical, processual, and logistical expertise that is being developed within TSUs without being visible to governments. A lack of proper handover, he cautioned, would leave incoming TSUs to reinvent the wheel, and risk losing vital information on key issues such as ensuring consistency and coherency, facilitating equitable participation, and effectively engaging stakeholders. WG

I Co-Chair Masson-Delmotte supported Reisinger's statement, and argued against AR7 outline scoping to be added to the AR6 Co-Chairs' high workload late in the cycle.

Saint Kitts and Nevis reminded the Panel of the urgency of the climate crisis and, with France, underscored the need to deliver inputs to UNFCCC processes such as the GST and the periodic review. France also inquired whether the Executive Committee considered early scoping for the cities and the SLCF to be feasible. Chair Lee, supported by India, underscored that the Task Group on the Organization of the Future Work of the IPCC in Light of the GST did not come to an agreement. The Netherlands cautioned that longer cycles conflict with the mandate for the IPCC to be policy relevant.

Saudi Arabia and India reiterated their position that a strict separation between report approval and the election process is needed to protect the credibility of the IPCC.

Denmark noted the early consideration of the size and composition of the Bureau does not mean the beginning of the elections. The UK underscored this will not interfere with the finalization of reports. Several delegations stressed that the TG was about supporting elections, not starting them.

After a point raised by IPCC Chair Lee, the US specified that IPCC procedure dictates that the invitation letter should be sent six months before the election, but not that it should be sent after the adoption of the SYR. He reiterated a proposal to complement the work of the TG by allowing governments to share their views either per submission or during an extra meeting day prior to an approval session.

The Russian Federation suggested concentrating on how to wrap up the AR6 cycle, rather than on how to carry out elections, and supported the analysis presented by Chair Lee. Saudi Arabia reiterated that the process was established for good reasons and, with the Russian Federation and Venezuela, underscored that discussions pertinent to the next Bureau need to be held in Plenary, not in a TG.

The Republic of Korea highlighted that integrity and completeness is key for inputs to the GST, and noted any procedural change should only take effect in the next cycle, not AR6.

India underscored that ensuring the quality of the reports should be the highest priority, noting that raising election issues now is both detrimental to their finalization and may undermine confidence in the reports.

As a pragmatic way forward, Switzerland suggested formally including in the revised AR6 schedule, that the Secretariat's letter inviting nominations, to be sent out after the SYR approval session, is the official starting point for the election period, noting this provides security to governments for their planning.

On Thursday, Algeria underscored avoiding overlaps between approval periods and called for putting off discussions on the elections. Malaysia expressed concerns over possible conflicts of interest related to Bureau members' campaigns, noting this could undermine the credibility of the IPCC. The Republic of Korea, China, and Saudi Arabia reiterated their position to keep election processes and approval sessions separate, and called for conformity with existing procedures.

Mexico called for thinking about new formats for election campaigning, pointing to COVID-19 related travel restrictions and the need to reduce travel-related emissions.

New Zealand recalled she co-chaired the Task Force on election matters between the AR5 and AR6 cycles, which advanced discussions in parallel to the finalization of AR5 products and reached a decision at a meeting organized back-to-back with an SPM approval. She echoed Trinidad and Tobago's metaphor on the Panel's capacity to "walk and chew gum at the same time," underscoring the need to reach a decision on Bureau size and composition sufficiently in advance to support a complex election process. Chair Lee confirmed this precedent.

Saint Lucia, Belize, the UK, the US, and France thanked New Zealand for helpful clarifications, with the US underscoring that establishing a TG is in conformity and not in contradiction with past procedures. In their statements, several delegations echoed the notion that the Panel is capable of "walking and chewing gum at the same time," and able to complete assessment reports, while preparing for elections.

The US noted that copying the AR6 timeline would lead to a delivery of AR7 in 2027/2028, thus failing to provide input for the second GST. IPCC Legal Officer Lew Schneider noted there is no legal obstacle to intersessional preparatory work.

Building on these discussions, IPCC Secretary Mokssit proposed establishing, at this session, an Ad-hoc Group composed of three representatives each from developing and developed countries to develop a platform for the election for the next cycle, with a view to initiate the election process with the Secretariat's letter inviting nominations to be sent out one week after SYR approval, and have an election plenary no later than six months after the letter has been sent. He noted the mandate of the Group would be "slim" and limited to addressing the structure, composition, and size of the next Bureau, and that the Group could report on progress in the margins of the approval plenaries for the three WG reports.

Saudi Arabia called for entrusting the Bureau with this preparatory work, pointing to its regional balance. WG III Co-Chair Skea, supported by several delegations, cautioned against overburdening Bureau members, noting their focus should be on ensuring the quality and finalization of AR6 reports and that scientific experts are not well suited to address political considerations.

Venezuela, with Trinidad and Tobago, requested clarification on the envisaged composition of the TG, asking for a guarantee that regional country groupings that were disadvantaged during the last election cycle are given priority. Cuba underscored the need for all regions to be represented, and noted the proposals of the TG must be discussed in plenary.

The UK, Germany, France, the US, and others emphasized that election preparation is a matter better suited to governments than the Bureau, and asked for the proposal to be put into writing. They supported the notion of reporting back from the TG at plenary meetings and to solicit written submissions of views, and, with Trinidad and Tobago and Japan, suggested the TG be open to participation from interested governments.

Switzerland asked for clarity on the scheduling of the election plenary.

Based on the discussions, IPCC Secretary Mokssit amended his original proposal for the Group's composition towards establishing an open-ended Ad-hoc Group, noting it would be composed of at least three representatives each from developing and developed

countries. He proposed defining that the election process would be initiated with the Secretariat's letter inviting governmental nominations, to be sent one week after the approval of the AR6 SYR, and the election plenary would take place no later than six months after the letter has been sent. The Chair tasked the Secretariat with preparing a decision.

On Friday and into early Saturday morning, delegates discussed a draft decision. The key point raised in the discussions was the need to avoid overlaps between discussing the work of the proposed Ad-hoc Open-ended Group and report approvals. New Zealand underscored the difference between meeting overlaps and back-to-back sessions, reiterating past practice on holding back-to-back meetings on report approval and discussion on election preparations.

Other points related to, among others: the proposed formulation for the timing of the election plenary to take place "not earlier and not later than six months" being too narrow and imposing difficulties for potential host countries; noting the importance of including the perspectives of all countries, with explicit reference to regional groups under the WMO; specifying that the mandate of the Group is to provide recommendations to the Panel, not to make decisions; and the understanding that Bureau Members could provide input to the Group.

The notion of an IPCC-57 bis plenary to take place the week following SYR approval at IPCC-57 emerged to specify when a decision on the Group's work would be taken, with some delegations calling for flexibility rather than defining this timing so far in advance. France and the Republic of Korea highlighted the need to adjust references to when the Secretariat's letter inviting nominations would be sent to accurately reflect the timing of the decision. Responding to China's call for more time between the work-intensive IPCC-57 and IPCC-57 bis, Secretary Mokssit underscored this is the most efficient way forward.

Final Decision: In its decision on the strategic planning schedule (IPCC-LIII(bis)-2.1, Rev.3), the Panel establishes an Ad-hoc Group with open-ended membership to provide recommendations to the Panel on the size, structure, and composition of the IPCC Bureau for AR7; and adopts terms of reference for the Group, as annexed to the decision. The decision also stipulates for:

- the Secretary's letter inviting nominations to be sent out two weeks after an IPCC-57 bis, which would take place following the approval of the AR6 SYR at IPCC-57, scheduled for September 2022;
- the election plenary to take place 6-7 months following the issuance of the Secretary's letter.

The terms of reference define:

- the objective for the Ad-hoc Group to seek to ensure transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity for participation of all its members, noting the importance of the inclusion of the perspectives of developing countries;
- the Group shall present progress to the Panel at its future sessions, with the final outcome to be presented for decision at IPCC-57 bis, avoiding any overlap between the work of the Group and the SYR approval plenary; and
- the Ad-hoc Group should consist of: two Co-Chairs and two Rapporteurs, with balanced representation from developed and developing countries, taking into account gender balance; a

minimum of two representatives from each WMO Region; and open-ended membership as to participation of all IPCC Member States.

The Panel agreed to launch the Group with the US and Saudi Arabia serving as Co-Chairs, and Germany and Venezuela as Rapporteurs.

Place and Date for the 54th Session of the IPCC

On Saturday, Secretary Mokssit explained that IPCC-54 was scheduled to begin on 26 July 2021 with a duration extended to two weeks, but noting that format and length will be adjusted in accordance with procedures established in decision IPCC-LIII(bis)-2.2, Rev.3. China requested that the length of the plenary be limited to two weeks.

Closure of the Session

In his closing remarks, IPCC Chair Lee showed a comparison of government participation in the AR5 and AR6 reviews, welcoming the increased engagement during the AR6 cycle so far and encouraging governments to contribute to the upcoming reviews, stressing government participation is key to ensure IPCC is policy relevant and scientifically robust.

WG I Co-Chair Masson-Delmotte echoed the importance of government review for a high-quality summary; informed that WG I aimed for a 10-page SPM text with seven figures, built on the 60-page Technical Summary that was just completed and underpins enhanced traceability. She reiterated her invitation for governments to respond to the user survey for SPM figures, noting the survey had been extended until Sunday; and expressed appreciation for government support in the drafting process.

Thanking delegates for their flexibility to allow the meeting to go overtime by an additional three hours, Chair Lee closed the meeting at 3:21 am CET (GMT+1).

A Brief Analysis of IPCC-53 bis

Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, 2020 was supposed to be a super year for multilateral environmental governance. The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Kunming, China, was expected to deliver a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP-26 in Glasgow, UK, was supposed to set the stage for revised nationally determined contributions ratcheting up collective ambition towards the Paris Agreement's climate goals.

As the pandemic grinded multilateral processes to a halt, the authors and Working Group (WG) leadership of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) did an impressive job advancing the scientific assessment despite the difficult circumstances. With a swift adjustment to virtual working arrangements, they managed to limit the pandemic-related delay in their planned schedule to 4-5 months. The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle is a long one, the longest in the IPCC's history, as many delegates mentioned, but it is now nearing the finish line. The contribution from WG I (on the physical science basis of climate change) is on track for government approval in July-August 2021.

IPCC-53 bis was tasked with finding a way for the intergovernmental process to move forward despite the pandemic, honoring the hard work of the scientific community and the urgency of the climate crisis. This brief analysis explores how the session fared in living up to this expectation and how it laid the grounds for innovative approaches to intergovernmental decision-making.

A Challenging Start

In their opening remarks on Monday, Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), underscored the critical role of IPCC reports as input to UNFCCC negotiations and guidance to the world at large.

Many delegations shared this feeling, stressing the need to deliver the AR6 report and design the AR7 cycle in a way that it can have timely input into the UNFCCC's global stocktake (GST), which is the mechanism that assesses collective progress towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. For all this enthusiasm about the role of the IPCC, India did not fail to point out that countries are not collectively on track to meet the Paris Agreement's objective, despite the many reports the IPCC has already issued. At IPCC-53 bis, discussions on seemingly technical and procedural issues on the agenda—such as the review of the principles governing the IPCC's work and the AR6 strategic planning schedule—displayed tensions witnessed during previous IPCC plenaries, for example on regional balance.

The discussion on what to include on the agenda was particularly long. One reason for this surely related to the virtual nature of the session: it is not easy to fit everything into a weeklong meeting with daily three-hour sessions, persistent challenges to equal participation, and time zone differences. Delegates also had to balance between focusing on the near-term to deliver AR6 and the need to plan for AR7. As one delegate put it: "If there is one thing we have learned during this pandemic, it is that everything takes longer. So, let's act now, plan carefully, and be innovative and creative."

Towards the Finish Line – AR6 Schedule and Progress

The discussions on the progress reports from the three WGs for AR6 illustrated two main issues: the incredible workload and intensity of the assessment process in a virtual work mode, and the concern by some delegations about the outcome being policy prescriptive.

All WG Co-Chairs pointed to the immense challenges to authors, WG Bureaus, and Technical Support Units (TSUs) posed by the pandemic. Expressing concern about increasing COVID-fatigue, they highlighted the opportunities and achievements of the virtual work mode. WG III is still considering the need for further deviation from the delayed schedule, which raises questions for production and delivery of the WG II report and the Synthesis Report (SYR). Delegations showed unanimous appreciation and support for the hard work and dedication of all, including the IPCC Secretariat, under difficult conditions.

Some delegations used this discussion to voice strongly worded concerns about some content of the second order drafts, especially of WG II and WG III. Highlighting that there was no way for governments to impinge on the content of the final draft report, they urged the WG Co-Chairs to pay close attention to

governments' comments, particularly those related to regional balance and comprehensiveness of the assessment, introduction of new concepts that were not universally supported, and being policy-relevant yet not policy prescriptive. India and Saudi Arabia repeatedly underscored "the Summary for Policymakers is owned by the Panel," and that WG Co-Chairs need to ensure governments' comments are properly addressed in the preparation of reports. Assuring they would relay that message clearly to authors, the Co-Chairs also pointed to the limits of their mandate and the independence of the scientific assessment, noting it is more accurate to describe their function as "herding tigers rather than cats."

The Secretariat's proposal for hybrid arrangements (written, virtual, and decentralized physical meetings in the regions) for the WG I approval session resulted in intense debate. Many governments highlighted the need to move forward and find creative solutions to a difficult and highly volatile situation, noting that other UN bodies, including the IPCC's parent organizations UNEP and WMO, are moving to virtual decision-making mode and report benefits in terms of enhanced participation levels. However, some remained firm in their opposition to virtual decision-making, calling for approval plenaries to be delayed until physical meetings are feasible. All delegations agreed that a virtual approval session for the WG I report, with line-by-line discussions on the Summary for Policymakers, will be an awe-inspiring and unprecedented exercise with intersessional exchanges being essential for success. However, many iterations of decision text were needed to arrive at a consensus between those underscoring sub-par conditions of virtual arrangements, including Saudi Arabia, India, and China, on the one hand, and a large coalition of European, North American, and Australasian countries and small island developing states (SIDS), supported by the WG Co-Chairs, on the other hand, emphasizing the urgency to fulfil the IPCC's mandate and adjust to circumstances in the best possible way.

The Panel agreed to task the Secretariat to solicit views from IPCC Focal Points and the Bureau on how to promote transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity in a possible virtual WG I approval session, and request the WG I Co-Chairs and WG I Bureau to make appropriate arrangements for holding an approval session starting in July 2021 based on the received guidance and direction. The decision clearly accommodates concerns about following rules and procedures, ensuring inclusiveness and equal participation, and not setting precedents for future IPCC sessions, of which SIDS, among others, were wary. However, given the short timeframe and remaining challenges, the long debate needed to agree on this process raises concerns about substantive, line-by-line discussions at IPCC-54.

The Transition Between Cycles

A substantial amount of time was spent on discussing election procedures for the AR7 Bureau and ways to ensure a smooth transition between the AR6 and AR7 cycles. At the heart of this discussion was the concern that carrying over the delays from the pandemic and replicating the lengthy transition between AR5 and AR6 would risk disrupting the process and pre-empting the IPCC's capacity to inform the political process, in particular the UNFCCC's GST. On the other hand, the Bureau is essential for IPCC governance and its composition has many political sensitivities.

The WG Co-Chairs and Bureau members pleaded for a shorter transition period, completing the work in the already long AR6 cycle, and ensuring a handover between TSUs and incoming and outgoing WG Co-Chairs to avoid loss of critical logistical and procedural knowledge, as was experienced during the last transition. However, concerns were raised by several delegations and the IPCC Chair that starting the election process before the completion of the SYR would endanger the integrity of the scientific process and the quality of the report. Many European countries, Mexico, the US, Australia, New Zealand, and several SIDS, as well as the Co-Chairs, supported speeding up the election process in line with the IPCC rules and procedures, pointing to similar procedures within the 5th assessment cycle.

Early on, Trinidad and Tobago used the phrase "we can walk and chew gum at the same time," that was repeated over and over to indicate that the Panel does have the capacity to address two processes at the same time. However, concern about the separation of approval and election remained strong, with Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation, India, China, and the Republic of Korea highlighting the importance of established procedures to preserve the integrity of the IPCC, and underscoring the risk entailed by political campaigns encroaching on the scientific process. Some governments highlighted that, while continuity was important, it should not trump all other principles, in particular those relating to inclusiveness and equal representation. Even though many decisions for AR7 have already been taken, for example with regard to the preparation of special reports on cities and short-lived climate forcers, some developing countries highlighted the complexity of the issues at hand during Bureau elections, and the need to correct for regional imbalances that occurred during the last cycle.

The Panel nevertheless managed to agree on the establishment of an Ad-hoc Group with open-ended membership and a limited mandate to provide recommendations to the Panel on the size, structure, and composition of the IPCC Bureau for AR7. The decision also defines a process to enable elections to take place six months after the SYR approval scheduled for September 2022. Delegates decided to appoint the US and Saudi Arabia as Co-Chairs and Germany and Venezuela as Rapporteurs of the Ad-hoc Group—vocal proponents of diverging positions.

Looking Ahead

IPCC-53 bis broke new ground for facilitating virtual decision-making. Governments followed the example of IPCC authors, who, by all accounts, swiftly adjusted to virtual working arrangements and succeeded to progress towards the completion of AR6 despite the pandemic. The scope of decision making, however, was relatively limited. A virtual approval session for the WG I report, with line-by-line discussions on the Summary for Policymakers, will be an exercise of much broader magnitude and intersessional work, along with transparent and efficient management of the virtual sessions, will be essential for its success.

Apart from the challenges due to the pandemic, the broader question remains whether the IPCC is equipped to live up to high expectations. While decisions taken at this session hold that door open, the stark contrast in views and priorities expressed by Member States, as well as the complexity and requirements of the scientific assessment suggest that this question has yet to be answered.

Upcoming Meetings

Climate and Development Ministerial: This ministerial meeting will consider the challenges and priorities for implementing the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in countries most vulnerable to climate change, focusing on: access to climate finance; responding to the impacts of climate change; quantity, quality, and composition of climate finance; and fiscal space and debt sustainability. **date:** 31 March 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://ukcop26.org/uk-presidency/climate-development-ministerial/>

Sixtieth (bis) Session of the IPCC Bureau: The IPCC Bureau provides guidance to the Panel on the scientific and technical aspects of IPCC assessments and gives advice on management and strategic issues. This meeting builds on the first part of the sixtieth session that took place 16-18 March 2021. **date:** 6-7 April 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://www.ipcc.ch/calendar/>

Leaders' Climate Summit: The United States will convene a Leaders' Climate Summit on Earth Day to bring together leaders of major economies. The summit will be held on the fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Paris Agreement. **date:** 22 April 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/26/president-biden-invites-40-world-leaders-to-leaders-summit-on-climate>

Petersberg Climate Dialogue XII: The 12th Petersberg Climate Dialogue will bring together ministers from many countries to discuss climate action, facilitating open discussions on key issues in international climate policy. The Petersberg Climate Dialogue series was launched in 2010 and is held annually. **dates:** 6-7 May 2021 **location:** TBA **www:** <https://unfccc.int/event/12th-petersberg-climate-dialogue>

Regional Climate Weeks 2021 for Latin America and the Caribbean: These virtual thematic sessions will focus on partnering for whole society engagement in implementation, managing climate risks, and seizing transformation opportunities, and will include workshops, virtual exhibitions, and side events. **dates:** 11-14 May 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** <https://www.regionalclimateweeks.org/>

Innovate4Climate: Innovate4Climate is a platform that promotes dialogue among the public and private sector on innovative ways to mobilize finance towards climate action. It is a global conference where leaders from government, industry, business, finance, and technology gather to envision the next generation of climate-smart solutions with the potential to transform the global economy. **dates:** 25-27 May 2021 **location:** Barcelona, Spain **www:** <https://www.innovate4climate.com/>

52nd Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies: Postponed since June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 52nd Session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies are tentatively scheduled to prepare for COP 26. **dates:** 31 May – 10 June 2021 (TBC) **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** <https://unfccc.int/calendar> <https://unfccc.int/event/1st-sessional-period-2021>

Fifty-fourth Session of the IPCC (IPCC-54) and WG I AR6 Approval Plenary: This session will focus on the approval of the WG I report. Concrete arrangements for the meeting are still pending. **dates:** late July 2021 (TBC) **location:** virtual **www:** <https://www.ipcc.ch/calendar/>

For additional meetings, see <https://sdg.iisd.org/>

Glossary

AR5	Fifth Assessment Report
AR6	Sixth Assessment Report
AR7	Seventh Assessment Report
COP	Conference of the Parties
CWT	Core Writing Team
ExCom	Executive Committee
GAT	Gender Action Team
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GST	Global Stocktake
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
SED	Structured Expert Dialogue
SLCFs	Short-lived climate forcers
SOD	Second order draft
SPM	Summary for Policymakers
SYR	Synthesis Report
SSC	Scientific Steering Committee
TFI	Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories
TG	Task Group
TSU	Technical Support Unit
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WG	Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization