

UK response to the recommendations of the Inter-Academy Council review of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

1. Introduction

We welcome the careful consideration that the Inter-Academy Council (IAC) has given to their assessment of the procedures and management of the IPCC, and particularly thank the panel for working so quickly to provide recommendations in good time for IPCC Governments to consider in advance of discussions in October's Session of the Panel. Overall we consider that the IAC has provided a range of helpful recommendations which will help strengthen the IPCC and enable it to build on its impressive record.

2. How the IAC recommendations are handled

a) Timing

We look forward to discussing these recommendations in detail with the IPCC Panel in Plenary. The IAC's recommendations are substantial and wide ranging, and considering them fully will require significant discussion. Once Governments have agreed on the recommendations, implementing the proposals properly will also require time.

Nonetheless, we recognise and value the message within the IAC's recommendations – that embracing change in a timely fashion will be of great benefit to the IPCC, helping it to strengthen its effectiveness and global reputation. We consider that IPCC should seek to reap these benefits as quickly as is practicable – in particular ensuring that the upcoming Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) is taken forward in a way that is enlightened by the IAC recommendations.

b) Arrangements at the 32nd Session of the Panel

To this end, we look forward to the IPCC Leadership making arrangements to ensure that Governments have time to consider and discuss the review findings fully in the during the IPCC Session in October 2010. We welcome the suggestion that the IPCC would invite a member of the IAC panel to present the key findings to IPCC's Governments within this Session and answer any questions.

As the importance and relevance of the IPCC's work has grown, so has the level of public interest and scrutiny in how the IPCC functions. Members of IPCC's leadership have commented publically on the importance that the IPCC places on considering and taking forward the IAC recommendations openly and promptly. It will be important for the IPCC Leadership to demonstrate this commitment to openness. To avoid any apparent conflict of interest we suggest that whether detailed

consideration of review is undertaken in Plenary or in a Plenary contact group (or both) it is led by co-chairs drawn from IPCC's government representatives. Whilst we have full confidence in the Chair of IPCC to handle these discussions, we consider it essential for the response to the review to be handled by those who do not have personal interest in the outcome.

The contact group should also aim to address issues which can be agreed at the coming (October) session, including those which have practical implications for the preparation of the AR5 and issues that are most important for the IPCC's reputation, including a process to handle potential conflicts of interest. It should propose clear decisions to be made at the same Session. This might also include decisions in principle on issues that may need further elaboration, such as the role of an executive team, the appointment of an Executive Director, and the issue of terms of appointment to the Bureau.

c) Developments following Plenary: establishment of a Task Group

To consider those recommendations that can't be finally agreed on at the October Session, we propose that the IPCC should set up a Task Group to review written comments and those voiced at the Session. Made up of a geographically-diverse selection of IPCC's Member Governments, this Task Group would have responsibility for exploring the practicalities of implementing the review recommendations, and could return a set of proposals to IPCC's Plenary in early 2011 for approval. This Task Group would likely evolve from the contact group.

3. Specific comments on recommendations relating to IPCC's management

a) The IPCC's management structure

The IAC's recommendations make a number of proposals relating to how the IPCC is managed.

We consider that the IPCC's unique structure – based around three working groups of high scientific credibility – has been its strongest asset in the past 20 years. This structure has allowed IPCC to remain closely linked with the diverse academic communities that its scope spans, and has been the driving factor in producing four high-quality assessment reports and numerous special reports.

The activities of these working groups has always required some central coordination by the IPCC's Secretariat and Leadership – coordinating general IPCC business and better uniting the activities of the three working groups. In recent years, the profile of this 'centralised' IPCC has grown – as evidenced by IPCC jointly receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. More recently, IPCC received intense media pressure over a number of errors in its Fourth Assessment Report. It is clear

from these events that IPCC is increasingly perceived, and held accountable, as a single coordinated body and it is vital that IPCC is able to function effectively in this way. When working optimally, these core functions should act not to restrict IPCC's working groups, but to facilitate their effective and efficient working, maximise the transfer of best practice, and communicate IPCC's messages effectively to the outside world.

We consider the IAC recommendations to be a good set of proposals for how these core IPCC functions can be strengthened to this end.

In implementing these recommendations, Governments will need to consider how IPCC's management can be strengthened without duplicating posts or weighing the IPCC down with unnecessary bureaucracy. We note that the IAC has recommended that terms of reference be written for IPCC's existing management posts and the new executive committee posts (including the Executive Director), as well as recommending that the tasks of the Secretariat are reviewed. We consider that this provides a good opportunity for the responsibilities of all of IPCC's core posts to be considered alongside each other, to ensure a 'joined up' picture of responsibilities and accountabilities at this level.

We would therefore propose that the Task Group take forward this recommendation and draft terms of reference and/or job descriptions for all of IPCC's centralised posts, ensuring clear accountability, and minimisation of overlaps. In combination, these posts should act, inter alia, to:

- Coordinate IPCC's activities, finances and communications to ensure IPCC's working groups are supported in their activities, and held accountable for producing reports of the highest quality.
- Keep IPCC member governments informed of IPCC's activities and reports.
- Represent the IPCC successfully to external stakeholders and an interested public – including through effective handling of media enquiries.
- Manage IPCC's business efficiently and effectively to the high standards of a multi-national organisation.

b) Executive Director and Executive Committee

We support the IAC's recommendations that an Executive Director and executive committee (effectively a management board) be introduced. We would welcome bringing individuals external to climate science into this board, recognising that many multinational organisations benefit from wider perspectives through such arrangements.

Bearing in mind that the above process could take a few months, we note that IPCC's structure already includes an informal Executive team ('E-team'). As an interim measure, we would support agreement at the Panel Session for this E-team to be formalised. In this regard we would propose that such meetings should have formal agendas and minutes, which are made more widely available. We would support countries reaching conclusion on such interim measures as an area of immediate agreement.

c) Terms of office of IPCC's management

We note that IAC's recommendation that the terms of office of IPCC's Chair, Co-Chairs and Executive Director should be restricted to the term of a single assessment report. We recognise the value that refreshing leadership provides for organisations, but also note the importance of institutional memory and continuity within organisations. We would have concerns with a situation that resulted with a large proportion of IPCC's leadership leaving the organisation simultaneously. We would therefore propose that the Task Group consider these recommendations alongside the terms of reference of all positions within IPCC's central team – giving particular consideration to how to strike a balance between fresh thinking and continuity. The current arrangements define an appropriate term of office by the time taken to prepare a major assessment report. This has slowly increased in length to effectively 7 years. In future (post AR5) the IPCC may choose to produce reports differently which would have bearing on the term of office. Defining an appropriate term of office by assessments is tied in to the historic way of working which may not be the most appropriate long-term strategy for the IPCC.

d) IPCC's Conflict of Interest Policy

We support the importance that the IAC review places on a conflict of interest policy for all those involved in IPCC's reports. We would recommend that IPCC consider the policies used by other international organisations in this regard. We consider this to be an issue which IPCC Governments should treat as a priority, with a view to reaching an agreement at the forthcoming meeting.

4. Specific comments on the IAC recommendations relating to the preparation of IPCC reports

a) IPCC's guidelines

The IAC makes a number of recommendations about how IPCC's process of producing reports can be strengthened. We note that these recommendations generally recognise the merit of IPCC's existing guidelines– suggesting that there is value in simply renewing attention to properly applying and enforcing these guidelines.

b) Author selection

Some of the IAC's recommendations are intended to improve the transparency of IPCC's reports – including formalising the invitees to scoping meetings, and formalising the process by which IPCC authors are selected. We are supportive of these ideas, whilst recognising the importance that Working Group Co-Chairs place on being able to exert their scientific discretion and expertise. We would propose that guidelines for a formalised process of author selection could draw heavily on the work already initiated on an ad-hoc basis by previous working group Co-Chairs. We also support the IAC's recommendation that local knowledge is supplemented by external expertise in IPCC's regional chapters where this can add value.

c) Grey literature

On the use of non-peer-reviewed ('grey') literature, we note the IAC's finding that IPCC does have existing and adequate guidelines on this subject, and welcome the recommendation that authors could be provided with clearer advice on how to apply these guidelines in practice. We are keen to see such advice produced in time to be considered by the authors currently working on the AR5.

d) Treatment of uncertainty in IPCC's reports

The IAC also makes recommendations on how IPCC authors should document uncertainty. While we welcome the IAC's recommendations in this area, we note that the treatment of uncertainty in IPCC reports is a topic that has received much attention by IPCC's authors, editors and leaders through its history. Most recently, this was reviewed in a cross-working-group workshop on 6-7 July 2010. We would be keen for the IAC's recommendations to be considered alongside the findings of this workshop. We recognise that unifying approaches to uncertainty across working groups could be very difficult in practice, but agree that further efforts should be made to improve the communication of uncertainty through a more unified approach which would provide real value for the users of the IPCC reports.

5. Specific comments on the IAC recommendations relating to IPCC's communication**a) Coordinating IPCC's communication**

Since its inception in 1988, the IPCC's reputation has been based on its ability to produce reports that effectively and clearly capture global consensus on climate change, and which are endorsed by Governments as the basis of international negotiations. In the past decades, this work has grown rapidly in importance and global relevance. As the political and societal implications of climate science has

grown, so has the number of people with an active interest in the conclusions of the IPCC.

We support the recommendation of the IAC that the IPCC could value from pulling together all its communication efforts into a single strategy. It will be useful for IPCC Governments to have clarity on which positions within IPCC's centralised core are responsible for implementing this strategy – and the timeframe on which it will be delivered.

b) Rapid response strategy

When questions are raised about IPCC's reports, it is vital for the credibility of the organisation that it is able to respond quickly and effectively. We support the IAC recommendation that the IPCC Communication Strategy includes a rapid response strategy for these instances, including information about who is, and is not, able to speak on behalf of the IPCC. We consider this to be the highest priority for the IPCC Communications team.

c) User-friendly communication products

The IAC makes a number of recommendations for how IPCC's communication can be strengthened, including recommendations for the IPCC to produce a broad range of more user-friendly communications products. We strongly value the importance of public engagement with science – including climate science – noting that all Parties have a responsibilities in the field of education, training and public awareness under Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We have also strongly valued the addition of 'Frequently Asked Questions' to IPCC's reports, and consider these to be very helpful in engaging non-experts with IPCC's content.

However, we judge that while many of these efforts are valuable, it will be important to retain a sense of what the IPCC uniquely provides. In particular, IPCC's structure is particularly established to provide international consensus – requiring an unusually high level of review and discussion. Other groups and institutions may be better placed to engage the public with IPCC's conclusions in a way that is not weighed down by the time (and resource) constraints that reaching such international consensus requires.

6. Further considerations of the IAC recommendations

The above response identifies the UK's key responses to the IAC's broad findings. However, the IAC's recommendations cover topics and details not fully addressed in this submission. The UK's views on the more detailed recommendations of the IAC will be communicated in the course of the in-depth considerations during the Session and to any Task Group set up to address them.