

IPCC Expert Meeting on Communications – Statement of Intent

The IPCC Expert Meeting on Communications, to be held in Oslo on 9-10 February 2016, will share experiences, best practices and lessons learned from communication and outreach around the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) and report on these to the Panel as it starts work on the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6).

The Expert Meeting will consider calls by policymakers and in the academic literature to make IPCC reports and related communications materials more accessible and readable while balancing this with the need to maintain scientific rigour and accuracy and avoid slipping into advocacy. The aim of the meeting is to strengthen the communications capacity and effectiveness of the IPCC and its authors, make communications materials more relevant to users so that they can work more effectively with IPCC products, and to consider how the IPCC can work more effectively with external agents such as research institutions, NGOs and media to strengthen their communications on the IPCC and climate science.

The key outputs of the Meeting are:

- a report to the Panel at its next Session in April 2016 with actionable and practical recommendations for AR6, including lessons learned from the AR5 authors and co-chairs on the development and communication of AR5, from the communications team, and from governments, NGOs, communications experts and other third parties on lessons learned from outreach;
- a published report of the Meeting; and
- recommendations for updating the IPCC Communications Strategy

The emphasis is on what can be learned from the experience of communicating AR5 as we look forward to AR6. The Meeting will address the desire of policymakers for the IPCC to put a greater focus on communicating solutions. However, the structure and procedures of the IPCC are outside the scope of the Meeting.

It is taken as read that the underlying reports are suitable for the scientific and research communities and other specialists. In considering accessibility and usability, we are thinking of non-specialists including policymakers – their own understanding and how they may use materials in turn for their own stakeholders; civil society and other third parties undertaking outreach based on IPCC products; business; faith groups; media; and the general public coming to the products directly. This could involve e.g. looking at proposals for a Summary for Citizens developed by the Chair/Co-Chairs/authors but not formally endorsed by the Panel.

One consideration is how to embed considerations of communication into the development of the report from the start rather than attempting to bolt it on once the report has been finalized. How can this be done without making the drafting and approval of the report overly cumbersome?

It is understood that accessibility and usability are not just questions of simpler language and stronger graphics – important though these are. For the IPCC to address the requirements of different stakeholders it is important that these are understood at the outset.

The meeting will consist of plenary discussions on introductory topics and substantial break-out sessions on specific questions that will bring recommendations back to the plenary for the report of the meeting. It is intended to structure the plenary and break-out sessions in an interactive manner that fosters energetic discussion with all participants, and seek advance papers to allow maximum time for discussion.