

Advance paper submitted to the

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By the World Meteorological Organization Language, Conferencing and Publishing Services  
Department

## **For information:**

### **1) Problems of translating IPCC materials from a linguistic or communications perspective :**

→ There are no specific "IPCC translation problems", neither from a linguistic nor from a communications perspective. The text can be highly technical, but this is what the WMO translators and editors have been trained for. One problem could be when two scientific translation editors (from different WGs) disagree about a term and the WMO translators and editors have to decide on which term to use or to justify their choice of the term. The quality of the English text is more of a problem than the content.

### **2) Difficulties faced by translators in rendering particular IPCC language from English into other languages:**

→ Same as above. Once the IPCC terminology is fixed in the IPCC WG Glossaries ("virtually certain", "about as likely as not", etc.), translators just have to follow this terminology.

### **3) Problems in agreeing technical terms in different languages where there is no agreed standard:**

Sometimes, experts in one language disagree about a term. WMO translators and editors have to consult with experts to be able to make the necessary decision.

### **4) Whether the diplomatic formulations that can arise in the SPM can pose particular difficulties in terms of ambiguity and how translators deal with that:**

→ Translations are usually clearer than the English version. Inviting an English editor to participate at meetings when text is approved could contribute to having no ambiguous formulations in the original text.

### **5) Problems translators and editors face in handling the material:**

→ Timeframe too short. Fonts too small. Tables too dense. Layout too dense. English not clear. The division of volumes is not clear enough:

1) The report (= exhaustive report);

2) The SPM (= separate publication);

- 3) The Summary, Frequently Asked Question and Cross-chapter boxes;
- 4) The Synthesis report.

It can be hard to know what "as mentioned in the Report" means.

6) **Anything that can be fed back so that it may be done differently in future**: Maybe a system of letters or of numbers could be devised for various volumes, so that it is easier to reference and identify them for the readers ?

7) **Is it necessary to consider translation questions when we do the line-by-line approval of the summary for policymakers ? :**

→ No, but the presence of an English editor/writer would be useful as it would allow the final English version to be clear. An English speaking editor could attend the meetings and intervene whenever the language proposed is ambiguous.

8) **WMO translators use different terms to the working group translation editors**

→ The IPCC Secretariat should establish through the WMO LCP a direct link between the WMO translators and the IPCC WG translation editors so that the former could consult the latter on any translation problem dealing with the original English text. In this way, WMO translators could intervene upstream and have their say early in the process.

9) **One scientist complains that the translation isn't right in their native tongue**

→ In such cases the scientist should be asked to provide an example of what, in his/her opinion, is wrong and, possibly, to propose his/her own translation. But it doesn't mean that the scientist version is necessarily the one that will be used, as experts can disagree about the translation.

# One pager – Translation/Edition

## Long version with explanations

(the short version can be found at the end of this document)

### Time allowance:

- Because of the complexity of IPCC material, translators need time to do proper terminology research and consult specialists in their mother tongue. This process may be long, but it is necessary to ensure the quality of the translated text and the accurate delivery of IPCC messages in all languages.

→ Take into account the time needed to translate from the very start of the project.

### Space and font size:

- When the space between paragraphs, graphs and images is reduced, it makes reading difficult. This is exacerbated in other languages.

→ Make sure the English version is not compact. Allow for extra space, as other languages will need it.

- Text size in “body”, frequently used in tables and legends is too small for other languages (e.g. French, Spanish and Russian have about 20 % or more text in comparison with the English).

→ Use only "reasonable" font size in English (no less than 9).

### Tables: unpalatable because too dense

Ex: WGII (*Summaries, FAQ, Cross-Chapter Boxes*), Table KR-1, page 116-123 (see [http://ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/WGIIAR5-IntegrationBrochure\\_FINAL.pdf#page=133](http://ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/WGIIAR5-IntegrationBrochure_FINAL.pdf#page=133))

If it is tiresome and tedious for a translator to translate an 8-page table, it will be equally tiresome and tedious for the reader to go through the table.

→ Tables should be short and not crammed with content. Text should be concise.

### Harmonization of terminology:

- When drafting the English version, writers should make sure they consult the glossaries from the previous reports to avoid differences in interpretation of specific terms. Sometimes the term have different meaning in different glossaries or definitions.

→ When drafting the English, glossaries of previous reports should be taken into account in order to avoid inconsistencies.

- In some cases, terms have acquired another meaning. For example, the term "impact" in AR1 and AR2 has a totally different meaning in AR5; same for "adaptation") In this case, it should be explained that the interpretation has changed.

→ When the meaning of a term or an expression has evolved since previous reports, writers should cite the old definition or at least mention the fact that there has been a shift in meaning.

→ Translators and editors should be able to consult the scientific translation editors nominated by TSUs at any time.

#### **Adequate editing of the English version:**

A lot of definitions are obscure and text can be unclear. Even if it would look like time-consuming and costly, it would save time and money to have any text written in English checked by an English editor before approval.

→ To avoid obscure definitions and unclear text, any text in English should be checked by an English editor, in close collaboration with scientific experts.

# One Pager – Translation/Edition (short version)

## **Time allowance:**

→ Factor in the time needed to translate from the very start of the project.

## **Adequate editing of the English version:**

→ To avoid obscure definitions and unclear text, any text in English should be checked by an English editor, in close collaboration with scientific experts.

## **Space and font size:**

→ Make sure the English version is not compact. Allow for extra space, as other languages, less concise than English, will need it.

→ Use only "reasonable" font size in English for text, legends and footnotes (no less than 9).

## **Tables:**

→ Tables should be short and not crammed with content. Text should be concise.

## **Harmonization of terminology:**

→ When drafting the English, glossaries of previous reports should be taken into account in order to avoid inconsistencies.

→ When the meaning of a term or an expression has evolved since previous reports, writers should cite the old definition or at least mention the fact that there has been a shift in meaning.

→ Translators and editors should be able to consult the scientific translation editors nominated by TSUs at any time.