

Suggestions to Assist Authors in Dealing with other Scientists and the Media During the Assessment Process

1. Be yourself

Participation in drafting an IPCC report should not alter the nature or breadth of other activities undertaken by lead authors. Lead authors who play an active professional role in climate science should continue to do as they would have if they were not taking part in an IPCC report - i.e. unaffected by their additional responsibilities as an author in the assessment process. Active participation, discussion, and debate enables authors to be aware of the most recent developments in their fields and to take part in the dialogue within the science community that is necessary to develop balanced views. This is fundamental to the progress of any science, including climate science.

2. Be clear on who you are

When speaking on climate science, LAs should make it clear that they are expressing their own personal views and that they are not speaking for the IPCC. Consider making a practice of this even in situations where one would imagine that it should be obvious. This applies when presenting a seminar or lecture, and particularly when dealing with the media, or with material that may be subsequently reported by the media. Like other scientists, LAs may choose to cite material from published IPCC reports, and should identify that as such, while also identifying any material that may come from their own research, or personal perspectives as an expert.

3. Controversies may exist

There will likely be aspects of the science covered in the WG1 assessment that are not clearly resolved either now or at the end of the assessment and some people may portray these as areas of controversy or disagreement between scientists. In this situation, it is helpful to avoid being drawn into rhetorical debates. It can be pointed out that, where a range of views exist on a scientific issue, those can only meaningfully converge through further research, acquisition of new data or approaches, and developments within the science community – not through public debate. The IPCC process exists to describe the state of understanding in science and so describes ranges of views where they exist. The TAR reflected that for 2001; the AR4 will provide an update in January 2007.

4. IPCC products are special

The nature of the IPCC assessment process is not always well understood and it can often be useful to explain how the process works. In particular, it is useful to stress that each chapter in the report is prepared by an international team of authors who are selected to cover a range topics, expertise, and backgrounds on the basis of their published work. IPCC reports are assessments of the published and peer-reviewed literature and authors are required to take careful account of comments from two rounds of peer review open to all interested experts and monitored by independent Review Editors. The breadth of the author teams and the fact that drafts are typically reviewed by hundreds of experts provides a broad and thorough examination of the science that is not achieved by any other process. The final draft report must be approved by governments at an IPCC Session, which for the current WG1 assessment will be in January 2007. Thus assessed findings in a final IPCC report are not the views of any individual scientist and reflect a far broader process.

5. The IPCC process is deliberate – not casual

At scientific meetings there is a very important distinction between talking about the science, sharing differing views and exchanging data as all scientists normally do, and talking about or being asked to represent the content of a chapter that is in preparation to assess that science. The former can be supportive of the assessment process, while the latter can cause grave difficulties for the authors and raise concerns about the IPCC process. For this reason when organizing meetings or participating in meetings that may relate to scientific issues in your chapter please ensure that these focus broadly on the science and not on the content of the chapters nor on your own contribution to the process (see items 1 and 2 above). You may, for example, be asked to talk on draft findings of the report, and that is not appropriate. Similarly it may be proposed that a science meeting prepare material for insertion into a chapter, or to provide 'input' that might be considered a form of review of a draft. Be aware that this is likely to conflict with the need for transparency and to follow established IPCC processes, including appropriate management of our formal written review process.

6. Finally, we will be ready to state our findings in 2007 - and not before

It should be self-evident that IPCC's findings will only be available when the report is completed. Material in interim drafts is subject to revision and hence is not available for citation or presentation. No WG1 results can be released in scientific meetings or any other format before the final plenary in January, 2007.