ipcc
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

FIFTY-THIRD (bis) SESSION OF THE IPCC
Electronic Session, 22 – 26 March 2021

PROGRESS REPORTS

Communication and Outreach Activities

Review of the IPCC Communications Strategy

(Submitted by the Secretary of the IPCC)

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Table of Contents

I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This note summarizes the development of the IPCC Communications Strategy and its Implementation Plan, and subsequent updates. It was submitted to the 91st Meeting of the Executive Committee (ExCom) on 3 March 2021, and updated slightly afterwards to reflect comments made at that discussion, where the Executive Committee took note of the document.

It reports on the reviews of communications strategy in recent years, including the stand-back and fundamental approach taken by the Communications Action Team (CAT) in the latest review presented here.

The detailed discussion in this review is summarized in an annex. It concludes with a list of recommendations from the CAT that can be considered and implemented by the ExCom, as well as proposals for updating the Communications Strategy to be submitted to the next Session of the Panel, and some further proposals with financial implications that could be submitted to a future Session of the Panel considering budgetary matters.

These recommendations, which are also presented in section III, propose several updates to the Panel for the Communications Strategy to bring it in line with current practice and changing circumstances; make two proposals to the Panel for consideration at a future session dealing with the budget for spending on product development and materials; and set a range of changes to communications practice for the ExCom to adopt, including on mapping and focusing on various audiences, prioritizing outreach, and measuring the impact of communications activities.

II.   BACKGROUND

Introduction

The IPCC adopted a Communications Strategy at its 35th Session in Geneva in June 2012, drawing on the Guidance on IPCC Communications Strategy approved at the 33rd Session in Abu Dhabi in May 2011. As requested by the Panel, a detailed Implementation Plan for the Communications Strategy was elaborated by the Executive Committee (ExCom) and notified to the Bureau and Focal Points in September 2012.

The IPCC held an Expert Meeting on Communication in Oslo in February 2016, bringing together members of the former Bureau for the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) and of the new Bureau for the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), and some staff of the Technical Support Units, to discuss with communications experts the lessons learned from communications around AR5. The Expert Meeting made a large number of recommendations (in Section 5, page 45 of the meeting report).

Subsequently the Panel amended the Communications Strategy at its 44th Session in Bangkok in October 2016 to bring it in line with actual practice and reflect some of the recommendations of the Oslo Expert Meeting, and requested the ExCom to update the Implementation Plan accordingly.

The Implementation Plan was updated in January 2017 and February 2018 to reflect current practice.

At its 63rd Meeting in July 2018, the ExCom discussed communications governance, and asked the Senior Communications Manager to prepare a note on the various issues for discussion at a future ExCom meeting, including lessons learned from communications around the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5ºC (SR15) and the recommendations of the Expert Meeting on Communication in Oslo in 2016.

The Communications Action Team (CAT) subsequently conducted a review of communications, whose conclusions are summarized in the next section (2019 Communications Review: Conclusions) and whose recommendations are listed in more detail in the section Recommendations from the 2019 Review, p. 5).

At its 68th Meeting on 3 July 2019, the ExCom considered this review and its recommendations, and requested the CAT to develop a list of actions for implementation and a vision, including budgetary implications, to improve the effectiveness of outreach and communications activities.

This more fundamental review (the "2021 review") of the IPCC communications strategy would be undertaken mainly in the CAT but could also involve consultations with the Co-Chairs and other ExCom members outside the structure of regular ExCom meetings, and could eventually lead to proposals for consideration by the Panel.

2019 Communications Review: Conclusions

The communications review undertaken in 2019 found that IPCC communications are limited by capacity constraints. Growing public interest in climate change and the work of the IPCC in particular, and the success of IPCC communications activities have fuelled demand for more. But the IPCC has an incredibly small communications team compared with other organizations, particularly organizations of similar stature. Even with the recent addition of communications specialists in the Working Group Technical Support Units (TSUs) during the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle, there are capacity bottlenecks. While some additional funding for communications activities is available thanks to voluntary contributions, it does not compensate for the capacity gaps.

Updating the Communications Strategy

For the review of Communications Strategy requested by the ExCom at its 68th Meeting ("the 2021 review"), the CAT decided to take a more fundamental, stand-back and strategic look at communications than in the previous exercise ("the 2019 review").

Given the current capacity and resource limitations, a more strategic approach was required to meet internal and external communications demands. While there was no need for a wholesale revision of the current communications strategy updated in 2016 (at the 44th Session of the IPCC), in order to refine the communications approach, the CAT decided it was necessary to ask: who we are communicating to; what we are communicating; how do we do this work; what is its impact; and how do we prioritize our limited resources, to verify whether the goals, activities and audiences laid out in the Communications Strategy remain appropriate.

What are we communicating and who is our audience?

A more strategic approach to IPCC communications needs to consider the following questions:

- What are the core activities that require communications and is the necessary infrastructure in place?
- Who are the audiences for IPCC products and communications activities? Do those audiences vary by region, and does that require additional expertise?
- What are the deliverables for these different audiences from the various IPCC products and activities? We must define core deliverables and nice to have.
- What are the most appropriate channels and platforms for these deliverables? Do they vary for each audience?
- Where should the IPCC set limits to demands on its communication activities and where should it leave additional requirements to other bodies?
- How can we develop a strategy to communicate with schools and young people, with appropriate partners, consistent with the IPCC mandate? (This may be an area where third parties or partners may take the leading role.)

What resources do we have?

To answer these questions, we need to consider the communications resources available in the Secretariat and TSUs, and how to make the best use of the communications specialists in the TSUs; determine what further resources are available from third parties; define and clarify the respective communications contributions from the Secretariat and TSUs; and identify further resources required, to be submitted to the Panel.

What is the organizational structure?

It will be useful to consider how other UN or intergovernmental organizations manage their main communications functions, and consider the brand recognition achieved, including:
- Engagement
    o Media relations
    o Digital communications (multimedia, social media, social media monitoring)
    o Outreach: Stakeholder relations, network building, strategic partnerships, events
    o Branding: coordination of design elements to promote an IPCC corporate identity (also on the Content side consistency of messaging)
    o Analytics: Assessment of impact of traditional and social media activities and outreach activities
    o Internal communications (in the IPCC's case: Bureau members, authors, government focal points, observers, and TSU and Secretariat staff)

- Content
    o Content development ([communications aspects of] the reports and the supporting communications materials)
    o Publications (including graphics)

Beyond staff functions, we need the capacity to keep abreast of trends in media, including new tools for monitoring media and distributing content, such as artificial intelligence and social media platforms. We also need to understand advances in climate communications specifically, such as behavioural science.

It is also necessary to review whether the IPCC has the correct tools and organizational structure for communications:

- Does the CAT need to be structured differently, or meet more often? What topics should it focus on?
- What other interactions are needed, e.g. contacts between communications specialists, internally and with external experts, or direct briefings and discussions for Co-Chairs?
- How can the impact of communications be measured, and other KPIs determined and measured?
- What are the best ways (and tools) to plan for key deliverables such as report releases and major events like the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC?
- Major communications activities such as report releases and COPs should be reviewed routinely for lessons learned (e.g. learn from the success of SR15 in mobilizing young people and the public for climate action.) How can previous success be built on systematically?
- Among specific points, a shared forward-planning calendar for communications deliverables from report releases, outreach activities, and participation in major meetings, as well as project planning across and within the TSUs, is needed. For the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL) and the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) the Secretariat subscribed to Trello. Another option, AirTable, is under consideration for AR6. It is important not to overwhelm users with too many different platforms and channels.

Recommendations from the 2019 Review

- Preparation of assessment and special reports:
  - o The TSUs and Secretariat should take into account the time pressures on communications specialists when planning workflow, including sign-offs, particularly around the release of reports and other time-sensitive outputs.
  - o Communications should be mainstreamed into the work and workflow of the TSUs.
  - o Lead Authors Meetings (LAMs) and similar meetings can be used to prepare video and other digital content for use at (and in advance of) report launches, including documentation by authors of their activities. (At this stage in AR6, and given the impact of COVID-19, self-documentation by authors will be the main option, with some scope for filming at author meetings immediately ahead of approval sessions.
  - o Communications experts should be involved drafting the SPM (and other elements intended for a wider readership such as the Technical Summary) early on to build trust with authors and identify sensitivities.
  - o Communications capacity should continue to be reinforced at peak points like report releases.
  - o The planning of press conferences for report releases and the immediate outreach should start early on including familiarizing external communications experts with the core materials.

- CAT and Communications Strategy
  - o The IPCC Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan should be updated to include a reference to the role of communications specialists in the TSUs.
  - o The planning calendar would be routinely reviewed at the CAT to avoid clashes between the TSUs and Secretariat etc and to foster a more strategic approach.

- o Internal communications need to be developed to inform Co-Chairs, TSUs and authors (and others e.g. national focal points, observers). Besides substantive information, this will explain the role of communications and what is available to manage expectations and clarify what specialists can contribute.

- Other
  - o Consideration should be given to hiring a consultant conference manager to manage the COP programme.

Work Plan for the Review of the IPCC Communications Strategy

Based on the 2019 review and subsequent discussion in the ExCom, the CAT agreed at its 58th meeting on 22 July 2019 to develop three workstreams:

Strategic review of audiences, tools, platforms and measurement

Take a quantitative approach to assessing the impact of activities and materials on different audiences (to be defined);

Assess the impact of different tools such as social media, or press releases, reflecting regional differences and preferences;

Consider how audiences are changing, where they get their information, and the implications of this for outreach activities;

Develop a social media strategic plan (GSCC provided example for SR15);

Incremental improvements to the website.

Internal communications

Much already exists at the Working Group level e.g. guidance for authors; in this area it may be sufficient to review for consistency. Some new material will be needed.

The CAT could have a dedicated meeting to review internal communications practice across the TSUs and Secretariat.

Is there a need for a temporary external contractor to help with this?

Organization structure for communications

Does the CAT work effectively and appropriately? Are further structures needed, e.g. to inform Co-Chairs of communications work?

The detailed discussion of these questions in the CAT (and for item 3. Organization structure for communications, directly with the Co-Chairs) is contained in Annex I. Recommendations from that discussion are highlighted there, and summarized below in Section III Recommendations.

Implementation

Given the broad scope of this work, it is important to consider how decisions will be implemented and to prioritize actions for the ExCom, Panel, etc.

Proposals for additional staffing within the Secretariat will need to be considered by the Panel at a Session where the Budget is on the agenda, and any updates to the Communications Strategy will need to be approved by the Panel.

The 2021 review was launched before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic means that many outreach events and other communications activities must be held online while restrictions are in place. This affects the design and organization of events but has few implications for the communications strategy as such.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2021 REVIEW

This section summarizes recommendations highlighted in the Discussion of Strategic Communications Questions in Annex I.

Recommendations are divided into three categories:

1) Recommendations for changes to the Communications Strategy for consideration by the Panel at IPCC-53 (bis);
2) Recommendations with financial implications for consideration by the Panel at a future date; and
3) Recommendations for approval by the ExCom and immediate implementation.

Even where recommendations do not have direct financial implications for consideration by the Panel, it is understood that he extent to which they can be delivered would depend on the extent to which resources are available.

Recommendations for changes to the Communications Strategy for consideration by the Panel at IPCC-53(bis)

1. Update Communications Strategy to include broader range of planned or proactive activities within the IPCC mandate
2. Include young people as a broad audience for the IPCC in the Communications Strategy, and develop a strategy to interact with them
3. Update Communications Strategy to reflect role and importance of communications specialists in the TSUs
4. Update Communications Strategy to reflect importance and role of social media and digital communications in general
5. Update Communications Strategy to highlight the importance of the website as a communications platform and the need to budget for both incremental and substantive upgrades
6. Update Communications Strategy to reflect the new Gender Policy and Implementation Plan
7. Highlight broadcast media in the Communications Strategy as an important vehicle for communicating climate change to broad audience, and step up efforts to work with broadcast media in all regions.

Recommendations with financial implications for consideration by the Panel at a future date

8. Ensure resources for external contractors or staff are available for new product development and development of networks for outreach
9. Develop tailored materials including translated slide decks for outreach in different regions

Recommendations for approval by the ExCom and immediate implementation

10. Broaden scope of report communications strategies beyond 3 months before and after approval
11. Step up communications and outreach efforts in developing countries, in particular with developing country media
12. Develop a system to prioritize requests for outreach activities, and a crowd-sourced page for reflecting the impact of IPCC outreach activities
13. Develop and implement a social media strategy, including analysis of social media impacts
14. Review and rationalize internal communications across the Working Groups and Secretariat
15. Develop a system for measuring and analysing impacts including through Key Performance Indicators to measure the performance of communications and outreach activities and inform future strategic reviews
16. Review the functioning of the CAT, including membership and meeting structure, to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose, generates ideas, and seeks strategic direction in a timely manner from the ExCom
17. Target, track and report both core audience as defined by ExCom on proposal of the CAT, and broader audiences globally and regionally and by sector
18. Track progress in acquiring decision-makers and influencers defined by the IPCC as social media followers
19. Consider the needs of users who wish to operate with IPCC data: typically in the scientific community and some technical areas, but also other sectors
20. Address the needs of audiences whose first language is not English – working both with the other official U.N. languages and other languages with large numbers of speakers
21. Develop a systematic approach to using platforms and resources such as YouTube and Wikipedia which are often the first destination (by choice or via a search engine) for people looking for scientific information, including through partnerships
22. Develop an FAQ and/or video to help students and other newcomers navigate their way around IPCC reports, as it is often difficult for those unfamiliar with their structure to find the information they need.

DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS QUESTIONS

For ease of reference, the recommendations included in this section are summarized as numbered bullet points in Section II (Recommendations). The numbers are included in brackets here (NB the recommendations are not in numerical order in this annex).

Strategic review of audiences, tools, platforms and measurement

Audiences

The key decision in a communications strategy is on which audiences are being targeted. In the IPCC, as in many other organizations, there is a tension between wanting to reach a core audience (in the case of the IPCC this is policymakers, but also the scientific community and some others) and wanting to reach as many people as possible given the widespread and growing interest of the non-specialist public in our work. In terms of the policy relevance the core audience is the one that counts. But the broader audience matters for overall impact and visibility.

It therefore makes sense to target both categories: a specific list of a few hundred decision-makers and influencers (for example environment ministries of member Countries and key research institutions, to be defined by the ExCom on a proposal by the CAT), and broader audiences, globally and segmented by country and sector, as laid out in the audience matrix (17). For a discussion of how this targeting would be measured, see the section *Measurement of impact* below.

Discussions in the CAT and among the communications specialists, and the development of an audience matrix suggested by the Secretary indicate varying coverage of potential IPCC audiences.

In general, there is a continuing need to increase coverage of all audiences in developing countries, building on the outreach activities that have reached all continents and directly or indirectly almost all countries.

Similarly, IPCC activities (partly reflecting the resources available) are biased towards serving Anglophone audiences. **More can be done to address audiences whose first language is not English – working both with the other official U.N. languages and other languages with large numbers of speakers (20).**

Several other potentially important audiences stand out.

Students and children, not listed as a secondary audience in the Communications Strategy[1], are increasingly identified by Bureau members as a key target, and there is wide agreement in the Bureau that the IPCC should develop a strategy for addressing this audience, working as appropriate with partners (2).

The nine constituencies grouping non-governmental organization observers at the UNFCCC can also provide pointers to important audiences among stakeholders, as well as possible contacts.

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[1] IPCC Communications Strategy §5

There is a need to improve links with developing country media beyond the existing contacts in China, India and to an extent Brazil and South Africa (11).

Among all media, **the IPCC could aim for better impacts with television broadcasters (7)**, who are the biggest (35% of all sources) single vehicle for delivering news on climate change to the public, according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism 2020 Digital News Report[2].

The IPCC does not have dedicated materials or activities for some audiences generally viewed as important in the UN system, such as rural women or indigenous people. The question is whether the IPCC should address such audiences and if so whether it has the capacity to do so, including developing the necessary understanding of their needs and circumstances.

The IPCC community, from authors to Focal Points, also constitutes an important set of audiences which needs to be informed directly about the work of the IPCC. Focal Points or their institution could be one of the core audiences discussed at the start of this section. (See section 2 below on Internal Communications.)

The IPCC should consider the needs of users who wish to operate with IPCC data: typically in the scientific community and some technical areas, but also other sectors (19). Some of these are or work with policymakers or practitioners. For instance, they may wish to work with the Interactive Atlas to develop tailored information.

Core communications activities

The core IPCC communications activities set out in the IPCC Communications Strategy (2012, amended 2016)[3] are the presentation of IPCC reports after approval, outreach to a range of audiences to present the work of the IPCC and its findings. The Implementation Plan of the Communications Strategy (2012, revised 2017 and 2018)[4] highlights the importance of disseminating the work and findings of the IPCC through social media.

The IPCC Communications Strategy does not recognize other planned or proactive activities, such as the preparation of op-eds or initiatives to increase engagement with different audiences beyond the outreach programme. While there is limited capacity to undertake such activities**, the Communications Strategy should be updated to include this possibility (1). The Communications Strategy also needs to reflect the increasingly important role of social media across the range of communications activities (4) (13)**, as provided for in section 3.1.1 of the Implementation Plan.

Communications Strategies for individual report releases should cover more than the three months before and after approval (10).

Two other important types of communications activities stated in the Communications Strategy are rapid responses, and day-to-day communications both proactive and reactive, i.e. responding to queries from the media and to a lesser extent from students, civil society organizations and the broader public. It is notable that almost all such queries come from developed countries, further **indicating the need to intensify outreach efforts to stimulate interest in developing countries in the IPCC (8)** that might lead to such queries.

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[2] How People Access News about Climate Change, Reuters Institute DNR 2020
[3] IPCC Communications Strategy §3
[4] Implementation Plan of the IPCC Communications Strategy Section 3.1.3

The new IPCC Gender Policy and Implementation Plan needs to be reflected in the Communications Strategy (6).

IPCC reports are *sui generis* and it is often difficult for those unfamiliar with their structure to find the information they need. An FAQ and/or video helping students and other newcomers navigate their way around reports would be useful (22).

Core deliverables and limits

The core deliverables are those listed above under *Core communications activities.*

- In general the IPCC is able to deliver the planned events and rapid responses, and respond to media queries. The IPCC is generally able to respond positively to requests for media interviews or contributions to specialized publications. But note the relatively low share of media queries from developing countries mentioned. **To address this deficit a systematic campaign of reaching out to media and, importantly, media networks and associations, in developing countries would help (8).**

Rising awareness of the IPCC and its work around the world have fuelled demand for outreach activities, and there are practical limits here as to how much can be delivered, particularly if specific materials need to be developed. **There is potential to develop a system for prioritizing requests for outreach in a balanced way (12),** setting limits that reflect available capacity**.**

Partnering with other organizations can help the IPCC reach more audiences, and where connectivity issues do not pose a constraint, remote formats and webinars allow the IPCC to deliver a larger number of outreach activities than would otherwise be possible.

IPCC outreach would benefit from tailored materials addressing different regions and audiences, including translations of slide decks (9).

A map of outreach activities shows very broad coverage.

Social media is increasingly important for reaching a variety of audiences, but the Secretariat is not currently resourced in the long term to provide this to the extent needed.

Internal communications (in the case of the IPCC: communications to internal stakeholders) has no dedicated resources. See section 2 below.

The mandate and principles and procedures of the IPCC, under which advocacy and prescriptiveness are eschewed, and scientific conclusions arise from a formal process, determine a conservative approach to communications. This also imposes limits on what can be done in the face of growing demands to hear from the organization.

The IPCC must accept that it cannot undertake every communications activity for which there is demand, and in some cases such activities can be delivered more efficiently or appropriately by other organizations.

One example is the request for sub-products or reports based on IPCC reports   targeting particular geographical or sectoral audiences, known as derivative products. While the Co-Chairs may authorize the preparation of individual materials communicating the reports, the development of entire derivative products outside the approval process raises procedural questions as well as imposing a heavy burden of work. Nevertheless, the IPCC

may have an interest in ensuring that such products prepared by third parties are accurate, and provide some support, e.g. identifying authors who can help quality-check them, without formally endorsing them. Such support is provided for in the Communications Strategy (§6) and section 3.3 of its Implementation Plan.

Derivative products developed internally, e.g. by the TSUs to enhance understanding of an IPCC product, should be signed off by the relevant co-chairs following screening by the relevant competent scientists if they are to carry the IPCC logo and be presented on the IPCC website.

While the Communications Strategy requires the IPCC to remain abreast of developments in communications, it may not be practical to exploit every innovation in technology. For instance, rather than developing a labour-intensive capacity to produce its own podcasts, it may be more effective to engage with other producers of podcasts interested in climate change by providing speakers.

Resources

The IPCC Secretariat, with a dozen staff[5], includes the Senior Communications Manager and two full-time communications specialists responsible for media relations and the website, and for the outreach programme respectively. A further communications specialist on a short-term contract handles the increasingly important related areas of social media and video. Members of the Secretariat communications team back each other up to ensure continuity of skills. Other Secretariat staff contribute to communications work, in particular the IT manager and the web and publications assistant.

(The Senior Communications Manager directs and manages the media and outreach work of the IPCC; contributes to the formulation of the IPCC communications strategies; advises the Chair, other Excom and Bureau members and the Secretary on communications; acts as IPCC spokesperson on IPCC processes; advises and coaches IPCC expert on interactions with the media and public; oversees information activities of the Working Groups/TFIs and works with their communications experts; oversees consistency in IPCC communications; strengthens IPCC relations with governmental and intergovernmental communications partners; etc[6])

IPCC communications would benefit from a dedicated and more sophisticated social media capacity, as well from putting in-house video skills on a sustainable basis (4) (13); the two are complementary. **Capacity for internal communications** serving Focal Points, Bureau members, observer organizations, Secretariat and TSU staff, and authors (complementing TSU activities) is also needed. Without such resources it will not be possible to enhance these activities or even maintain them at the current level. **The development of new products and of networks for outreach especially in developing countries may also benefit from resources for external contractors or staff (8).**

Since the start of the Sixth Assessment Report cycle, each of the Working Group Technical Support Units has taken on communications managers, as well as other communications specialists in graphics and outreach, as employees or contractors. **The Communications Strategy should be updated to reflect their role and importance (3).**

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[5] The entire Secretariat is significantly smaller than the communications teams of many international organizations, and in some cases smaller than their media relations teams.
[6] Taken from the current Job Description. This says "guides" not "works with". It may need further updating

The broad division of labour between the communications specialists is (very roughly) that the TSU communications teams contribute to the preparation of the SPM, work on media training for their authors and the resulting messaging, work on graphics and the website for the Working Group/TFI, and handle specialized outreach for their Working Group's communities. The Secretariat handles general media relation including issuing press materials (both in consultation with the TSUs), organizes the press conferences and interviews around report launches, organizes the general outreach programme, and manages the main IPCC website.

Report launches, including preparations in the months ahead and the subsequent outreach, are extremely labour-intensive, and timing is critical. The IPCC is able to leverage the relatively small communications teams in the Secretariat and TSUs by drawing on support from third parties as provided for in §24 of the Communications Strategy.

Other members of the IPCC community could be drawn on more than at present to support IPCC communications:
- o How can IPCC Focal Points, Authors and Bureau members be empowered to act as to act as the main communicators and ambassadors of IPCC work within their countries and regions?
- o How can the IPCC engage in a more constructive and systematic manner with observer organizations and stimulate them to communicate IPCC work and findings?

In addition, what strategic partnerships can be developed to promote the IPCC's work in line with protecting the IPCC's integrity?

Tools

The IPCC communicates with the media through press releases, media advisories and other statements, prepared as the situation requires. It communicates with the broader public including the media and other stakeholders through daily posts in social media. IPCC positions may be communicated through op-eds by the Chair or Co-Chairs, singly or jointly with the leadership of other institutions. The IPCC prepares information materials including brochures, slides and videos about the work of the IPCC. The TSUs prepare slides to communicate reports, and other communications materials such as newsletters, blogs and research posters for their authors and communities.

The Secretariat has recently launched a newsletter for Focal Points.

Reports are presented at streamed press conferences; briefings are often held at the start or end of other IPCC Sessions, and during other meetings, including the COP.

Outreach events drawing on many of these materials are held in-person or virtually.

The printed versions of IPCC reports are also an important communications tool. The Secretariat should work with the Working Groups and Technical Support Units, or any other appropriate IPCC body, on the Technical Specifications and Terms of Reference for the procurement of printing and publishing services for IPCC products, including the provision of digital instruments to manage metadata associated with IPCC products and their components.

Platforms

The IPCC website is the most important platform for presenting the work of the IPCC and its findings. Besides providing a home for all official documentation, the website displays all communications materials.

The website was upgraded and refreshed for the AR6 cycle (while preserving access to the former website for users who prefer that), and it is now being reviewed to ensure it has the necessary pages and functionality to display the AR6 reports.

Given the importance of the website for almost all audiences, it is important to ensure that funding is always available for incremental improvements on a continuous basis, as well as regular refreshes every one or two assessment cycles (5).

Press materials, as well as being displayed in the news section of the website, are distributed to a media mailing list via email.

The website also includes portals for Focal Points and Bureau members which serve as communications channels as well as infrastructure for Sessions of the Panel and Bureau.

The IPCC uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn as social media channels, and puts video on YouTube and Vimeo. In the past it has used Flickr to store photos. On the two main channels, Twitter and Facebook, the IPCC has more than 230,000 and 130,000 followers respectively[7]. Facebook targets the general public, Twitter a more specialized audience including policymakers, the scientific community and media, and LinkedIn would be most relevant to those in the scientific community looking at the career aspects of working with climate change. YouTube is not only a video platform but the second most widely used search engine after Google.

While analysis commissioned by the IPCC indicates that IPCC social media activities, which are planned on a weekly basis, are on the right track, **it would benefit from a dedicated digital strategy setting out goals and practice (13).** Support from outside experts may be helpful in developing this.

Publications such as the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, and networking with communications experts in other international or intergovernmental bodies, enable the IPCC to stay abreast of developments in the media landscape including changing audience preferences.

The Secretariat communications team uses free and paid-for training to develop digital skills.

Platforms and resources such as YouTube and Wikipedia are often the first destination (by choice of via a search engine) for people looking for scientific information, and there should be a systematic approach to increasing our presence there, including through partnerships (21).

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[7] As of January 2021

Measurement of impact

Measuring the impact of communications activities is challenging, and there is no simple solution. It is relatively straightforward to measure outputs such as the number of communications materials issued, or outcomes such as the number of media stories on the release of a report, the number of social media followers, the number of people viewing a social media post, the number of people visiting the website, or the number of people attending an outreach event. It is much harder to measure impact, e.g. tracking legislation that arises from an IPCC report. This is a qualitative and subjective process, and in practice must be done manually.

Proxies for impact that could be tracked could include mentions of the IPCC in influential media, and mentions of the IPCC in parliaments or by political leaders. Anecdotes and stories about IPCC impact and influence can complement the qualitative data.

A crowd-sourced impact page for outreach, similar to that created by IPBES (https://ipbes.net/impact-tracking-view) is under development (15).

The quantitative data may be misleading. For instance, the IPCC has 230,000 followers on Twitter, up from 100,000 in March 2018. By comparison the UN Twitter account has over 13 million followers and the World Health Organization nearly 9 million[8]. We do not aim for those sorts of figures: what is important for us is that the people we want are looking at our social media material. **The IPCC should define decision-makers and influencers who we would want to follow us on social media, undertake efforts to reach them, and track progress over time in acquiring them as follows (18).**

One important proxy for influence is the number of other institutions and media linking into the institution's website (known as "backlinks"). Monitoring of around 120 international non-profit organizations (UN and others) by audience strategy consultancy AKAS showed that in December 2020 **the IPCC ranked 17th** with 62,000 links. (The European Commission ranked first with 1.3 million, the WHO second with 541,000 and the UN third with 311,000. The IPCC is ahead of the UNFCCC, which had 52,000[9].)

It would be useful to track the evolution of this measure, although there may be costs involved.
Looking at more conventional outputs and outcomes, the number of stories arising from an event is one measure of interest, so the number of media stories and interviews at the launch of a report on the day and subsequent immediate period are already tracked and reported.

The numbers of people following the IPCC Twitter and Facebook accounts are reported in the monthly reports on communications to the ExCom, as is the number of visits to the IPCC website. It is also possible to report the social media posts attracting the most engagement by viewers.

There is potential to produce more sophisticated analysis, for instance tracking which type of social media post attracts most interest or engagement, to serve as a pointer to future efforts. Tracking impact anecdotally and monitoring proxies for impact, as mentioned above, would also support a more sophisticated analysis. Such work could be part of the remit of a dedicated staffer for social media (13) (15).

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[8] As of January 2021, UNEP has 1 million Twitter followers, UNFCCC 774,000 and WMO 109,000.
[9] Neither UNEP nor WMO appear on the list of the top 25 by this measure.

In principle it would be possible to segment this analysis to provide insights into impacts in different regions or with various audiences. In any case it is important to understand that some platforms are more important for different regions or audiences (e.g. radio in Africa).

A starting point for this ongoing analysis was provided by a report from communications firm Glover Park Group ("Understanding IPCC's Online Presence", or GPG Report, completed in [October] 2020, see Annex 1) looking at social media and news coverage of the IPCC between October 2017 and August 2020, covering the release of the three AR6 Special Reports and the periods before and after. The support of the UN Foundation is gratefully acknowledged for this report.

During 2020 the IPCC aimed to increase interest in its work by tapping into other conversations on social media about events such as Earth Day or World Ocean Day, and by making greater use of video.

The GPG Report shows that such strategies have succeeded in driving up engagement with the IPCC on social media.

The IPCC takes a more qualitative approach with outreach activities, where the IPCC surveys organizing partners after events to get not just audience numbers and media report numbers, but also a sense of how the event and media coverage may have influenced public discussions and policymaking.

Internal communications

Audiences

The Working Groups maintain contact with their authors through the TSUs, and the Secretariat manages official correspondence with National Focal Points.

The IPCC has a relatively small number of staff (the main target of internal communications in most organizations), but a wide range of internal stakeholders who would benefit from targeted communications:
- Authors
- Members of the Bureau and Task Force Bureau
- National Focal Points
- Other government delegates to meetings of the Panel etc
- Experts participating in scoping meetings, workshops etc
- Focal points and delegates of observer organizations
- Staff of the Technical Support Units
- Staff of the Secretariat

Moves to strengthen the communications team in the Secretariat should take account of the need to address internal communications for these groups (14).

Possible scope of internal communications

- Basic information about the IPCC and its procedures
- Updates on the IPCC work programme and other developments
- General guidance for authors, elected officers and staff on interacting with the media
- General guidance for authors, elected officers and staff on using social media

- Specific guidance to authors (and others) on interacting with the media and using social media during a review period
- Specific guidance to authors (and others) on how a leak of a draft is being handled
- Specific guidance to authors and delegates on media and social media interactions during an approval plenary
- Specific guidance to authors (in attendance and remotely) on the launch of reports, including the press conference and interviews
- Specific guidance to delegates on media and social media interactions at a business plenary
- Specific guidance to delegates on media and social media interactions at an election plenary
- Guidance to delegates on procedures for a session of the Panel and their role
- Information to Bureau members and authors (and possibly other users) on the role of the communications team and what communications resources are available
- Updates/briefing to ExCom on communications matters in addition to reports of CAT meetings
- Guidance to delegates on the process for virtual meetings
- Onboarding materials for authors, TSU staff, Secretariat staff
- Guidance (segmented by user?) on navigating the website

Material covering some of the above topics has already been made available to authors by individual Working Groups. **This should be checked for consistency and could be issued in future on behalf of all Working Groups/TFI by the Secretariat (14)**, subject to agreement by the Working Groups on their inclusion.

They can be grouped into different categories such as general guidance on communications, guidance on social media, handling leaks of drafts, guidance on interviews, preparing for report releases, style guides for preparing drafts, codes of conduct etc for attending meetings. The list below may not be exhaustive. Some, such as style guides, may be seen more properly as Working Group documents for their authors, rather than IPCC-wide internal communications materials.

e.g. from Working Group I there is:
- Essential guide for authors (SR15 release) (+ presentation)
- IPCC Code of Conduct for meetings
- Escott Hunt quick guide to interviews
- Guidance onSR15 review and leaks (Aug 2017)
- Guidance on SR15 review and leaks (Jan 2018)
- Letter to authors on SR15 FGD SPM leak (June 2018)
- WGII AR6 Handbook F2 Social media
- Social media guidelines
- Digital strategy suggestions (from Friends of IPCC)
- WGI AR6 style guide (SOD)
- (document on public engagement by scientists under preparation)

from Working Group II there is:
- General Guidance on Communicating with the Media and Public
- Confidentiality: Guidance Note for Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors and Review Editors if IPCC Reports during the AR6 Assessment Cycle
- SROCC FOD IPCC internal leak strategy

- SROCC: Guidance for media inquiries in reference to a possible leak (CLAs, LAs, REs, Chapter Scientists: SOD)
- Social media guidelines

from Working Group III there is:
- IPCC visual identity
- IPCC communications handbook (WGI)
- AR6 WGIII style guide
- AR6 WGIII FAQ guidelines
- AR6 WGIII FAQ background
- AR6 WGIII criteria for successful FAQs
- Author guidance for IPCC presentations
- Social media guidelines
- Media skills coaching
- Draft SRCCL leak statement from approval plenary (Aug 2019)
- Draft SRCCL FGD leak statement (May 2019)

and from TFI there is:
- Style guide for IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories
- Instructions to experts and authors
- Data documentation form
- Instructions on how to use the templates
- Presentation on Instructions to Authors
- Presentation on Confidentiality
- Presentation on Communication Strategy
- 2019 Refinement Communication Strategy
- 2019 Refinement messaging

Some of these may be broadly the same document shared across Working Groups.

Guidance for authors on developing visual materials, drawing on e.g. the Working Group I Climate Outreach Handbook, may be seen more properly as a core function of the IPCC in preparing reports, handled by the Working Groups, rather an internal communications matter.

Platforms

Long-lasting material can be stored on webpages, portals and instances used by the different stakeholder groups, with links emailed to them at the start of each cycle or following selection of authors.

These pages etc could also be used to retain welcome messages from the Chair to Lead Author Meeting participants etc, and the scope of this material could be increased.

Videos and graphics are particularly useful in guidance documents.

Topical material can be emailed and posted online as needed.

Some TSUs already foster contacts with their authors through newsletters. The Secretariat has recently initiated a newsletter for Focal Points.

Staffing

The extent to which some or all of the internal communications needs described above can be addressed depends on the availability of additional resources in the Secretariat.

Available staff resources could be deployed to develop new material and coordinate the presentation of material already produced by the TSUs.

Communications structures

Current arrangements

The Panel vests responsibility for communications in the ExCom[10].

In practice the main body for handling communications is the Communications Action Team (CAT), a sub-group of the ExCom set up under the Implementation Plan of the Communications Strategy[11].

The CAT is authorized to take decisions on matters requiring rapid responses; otherwise it is a deliberative and coordinating body. It reports to the ExCom, notably by submitting minutes of its meetings, and also takes on specific tasks mandated by the ExCom.

The CAT is chaired by one of the IPCC Vice-Chairs, with the Senior Communications Manager acting as Secretary. There are representatives from each TSU (Working Groups, TFI, SYR) and the Secretariat. Communications specialists from the TSUs, if not already designated as CAT representatives, and the Secretariat also attend. It usually meets monthly by teleconference.

The Senior Communications Manager also reports routinely on communications and outreach to Sessions of the Panel and Bureau.

Communications strategies for the release of reports, prepared jointly by the Secretariat and Working Group/TFI Co-Chairs (or Chair for the SYR) are reported to the Bureau and, where there are budgetary implications, to the Panel.

A number of informal contacts on technical communications work also take place. The Secretariat and TSU communications specialists meet with each other and external communications specialists especially in the run-up to report launches.

In recent years CAT members including all the communications specialists have met with external communications experts to plan the technical aspects of report launches under the respective report communications strategies, and related matters.

Questions for consideration

The question arises whether the CAT is effective as a coordinating body across the different parts of the IPCC, and in particular whether the way it operates provides the Working Group and TFI Co-Chairs with sufficient information on communications matters as they prepare the reports.

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[10] https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/09/TOR_ExComm.pdf §1 second bullet
[11] https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/08/IPCC_Communication_Strategy_Implementation_Plan.pdf

As with any body, the CAT should keep its operations under review, and consider setting up a standardized agenda, putting in place processes for following up on conclusions and ensuring major deadlines or milestones are not overlooked (16).

The Working Group/TFI Co-Chairs are generally satisfied with the information they receive from the CAT. Arrangements are generally in place to ensure they are informed by the Working Group/TFI representatives on the CAT, who typically include TSU heads as well as communications specialists.

The CAT serves as a source of ideas on communications or a forum where such ideas can be discussed among the Working Groups/TFI and Secretariat. Such ideas should be brought to the ExCom for early consideration and strategic direction in a timely manner.

This role could be enhanced to encourage the CAT to brainstorm regularly on communications matters. (The Bureau, with its multicultural perspective, could also brainstorm on communications.)