United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change

How does the UN climate change regime promote science and policy interaction?

Effective interaction between climate science and policy is important for moving climate negotiations forwards. Scientific research continues to inform the international climate regime, as well as national and regional climate policies. The UN climate change process, under the supreme (COP, CMP, CMA) and subsidiary bodies (SBSTA and SBI), uses scientific information on climate change through a number of work streams.

Periodic review of the long-term global goal

In 2010, the COP agreed on a long-term global goal (LTGG) to reduce GHG emissions so as to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. The COP also decided to periodically review the adequacy of this LTGG in the light of the ultimate objective of the Convention and to periodically review the overall progress towards achieving the LTGG, including a consideration of the implementation of the commitments under the Convention. This review – carried out for the first time in 2013–2015 – was also to consider strengthening the LTGG, including in relation to temperature rises of 1.5 °C.

The COP established a structured expert dialogue to support the 2013–2015 review and ensure its scientific integrity. The results of the dialogue between experts and Parties is summarized in the report on the structured expert dialogue (FCCC/SB/2015/INF.1).

The outcome of the 2013-2015 review and in particular its conclusion regarding the long-term global goal (captured in Decision 10/CP.21 paragraph 4) were contributing factors to Parties' strengthening that goal as reflected and Article 2.1 of the Paris Agreement.

Research

The Convention calls on Parties to promote and cooperate in research and systematic observation of the climate system, including through exchange of information and supporting international programmes, networks and organizations. Parties are also called upon to cooperate in improving the capacities of developing countries so that they can participate in research and systematic observation activities.

Consideration of matters related to research takes place regularly under the SBSTA agenda item on research and systematic observation. Annual research dialogues are organized to inform Parties about ongoing and planned activities of regional and international research programmes and organizations active in climate change research, and to communicate Parties' views on research needs and priorities to the scientific community, in particular, to relevant research programmes and organizations and the IPCC.

Systematic observation

Worldwide systematic observation of the climate system is a key prerequisite for advancing scientific knowledge on climate change and advising for informed policymaking. The Convention calls on Parties to promote and cooperate in systematic observation of the climate system, including through support to existing international programmes and networks. Implementation is supported through cooperation with the Global Climate Observing System, the World Meteorological Organization and other agencies. Parties provide detailed technical reports on systematic observation via their National Communiations (NCs) and in line with the revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on global climate change observing systems.

Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The IPCC assesses the scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant for understanding the risk of human-induced climate change. The IPCC is best known for its comprehensive assessment reports, incorporating summaries for policymakers from a synthesis report and from all three working groups, which are widely recognized as the most credible sources of information on climate change. Cooperation with the IPCC has been further defined and strengthened by several COP decisions.

In addition to its assessment reports, the IPCC also produces shorter special reports and technical papers on specific issues, with a number of them being at the request of the COP or the SBSTA. Special reports are produced under the guidance of one or more working groups following the procedures that are used for writing and reviewing the assessment reports. For example, in 2000, the IPCC issued a special report on land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF), which served as an input into negotiations on the rules for the LULUCF sector under the Kyoto Protocol; in 2011, the IPCC produced a special report on renewable energy sources and climate change mitigation; and in 2012, the IPCC issued a special report on managing the risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation. Technical papers are based on material that is already in the IPCC assessment reports and special reports.

Through its Task Force on Inventories, the IPCC carries out important work on developing methodologies for estimating and reporting GHG emissions. The 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, for example, are used by all Parties to prepare their annual emissions inventories. In addition, the IPCC has developed guidance to help Parties deal with data uncertainties and support the use of good practice in managing emissions inventories. The IPCC frequently organizes workshops and expert meetings to support the assessment process. It may also co-sponsor workshops if they are considered to be a useful contribution to its own activities.