

Belgian Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD)¹

Opinion on the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

Assessment Report

- **at the request of Ms Sabine Laruelle, Minister for SMEs, Self-Employed, Agriculture and Science Policy**
 - **Approved by the CFSD General Meeting on 27 March 2009**
 - **Original language: French**
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- [1] The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)² was established in 1988 with a mandate to:
- assess the progress of knowledge about climate change, in particular the physical science basis and observed changes, human responsibility for these changes, and projections of future climate change;
 - assess the risks of climate change for human society and natural systems, and
 - propose strategies both for limiting emissions (mitigation) and managing the effects of the consequences of climate change (adaptation).
- [2] The IPCC comprises three Working Groups and a Task Force on methodologies for preparing national greenhouse gas inventories:
- Working Group I assesses the physical aspects of the climate system and climate change;
 - Working Group II assesses the vulnerability of socio-economic and natural systems to climate change, negative and positive consequences of climate change, and options for adapting to it;
 - Working Group III assesses options for mitigating climate change through limiting or preventing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Each Working Group's output is published in a single volume. These three volumes and their syntheses make up the *IPCC Assessment Report*, the fourth of which was published in 2007.
- [3] The FCSD brings together potential users of the IPCC reports. Its Opinion focuses primarily on this Assessment Report. It is intended to inform the preparation of the Belgian position for the IPCC plenary being held from 21 to 23 April 2009 which will discuss the future of the IPCC and preparations for the fifth report to be published in 2013 (volume I) and 2014 (volumes II and III).
- [4] Above all other things, the FCSD wishes to emphasize the great value of the IPCC's work. It believes that the IPCC must continue to point up the urgent need for concerted action against climate change and its impacts.
- [5] The IPCC has a decisive role as an enabler in getting policymakers, the business community and the public at large to appreciate the serious threats posed by climate change.
- [6] But that can no longer be enough. The FCSD sees a need to move from observation to action. And it is here that the IPCC must assume its role in showing how our societies can engage a transition that addresses not only the environmental challenge of climate change, but also the resulting political, social and economic challenges in supporting a "*sustainable new deal*".
- [7] Rapid advances in the science of climate change call for the IPCC to provide regular updates on the state of knowledge. The FCSD is particularly concerned to highlight the *tipping points* past which the climate system may shift into potentially dangerous irreversible states with serious consequences for economic and social systems.
- [8] As to mitigation measures, the FCSD calls for the different instruments (market mechanisms, taxation, investment incentives, etc.) to be assessed in close co-operation with the Permanent Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Bank and/or any other relevant specialized agency. The possibility now exists to show which tools are most relevant and effective to support a transition.

¹ www.sustainable.be

² More about the IPCC, its work and publications can be found at <http://www.ipcc.ch>

- [9] The IPCC reports put little focus on political institutions and processes, or financial mechanisms, even though these are key to coordinating and implementing the actions needed. This prompts various questions, such as:
- How to speed within the framework of sustainable development climate concerns up the agendas of international agencies like the WTO, World Bank and IMF?
 - How to ensure and coordinate funding of the shift to a more sustainable economy?
 - How to get the stalled international negotiations moving again?
- [10] The FCSO believes that the IPCC should assess means of improving the process of international negotiations on climate change. A range of theoretical tools which analyse co-operation and coordination in collective action could be put to work here:
- Negotiation, co-operation, and network theory, as well as game theory which analyses co-operation and competition behaviour in multi-player situations
 - Theories that analyze and explain (aspects and the implementation of) transition management and societal system innovations.
- [11] The proposed mitigation scenarios should factor in the following imperatives:
- The practical consequences of scenario implementation for daily life should be more clearly explained.
 - The economic impacts should be assessed. Transitional measures must also be included to give those affected reasonable time to adapt.
 - The social ramifications of the transition to a low carbon society, especially in terms of jobs and training policy, need to be studied.
 - The scenarios should help to deliver the Millennium Development Goals.
 - The social acceptability of the technological options on offer should be analyzed.
 - The backlash effect of the proposed measures should be taken into account.
- [12] To enable the potentials and limits of the proposed scenarios to be tested out by the actors that will have to implement them, the FCSO believes that the societal stakeholders (in particular from developing countries) should be consulted in the process, without calling into question the IPCC's independence.
- [13] There should be an annual meeting of stakeholders with the Belgian delegation to the IPCC to enable them to put their views and agenda. A response should be given to their demands.
- [14] Specifically, the FCSO sees a useful point in the IPCC helping to develop a booklet explaining to the public the tangible ways in which climate change can already be seen to be happening and highlighting what can be done in daily practice.
- [15] Finally, as the IPCC's work entails large amounts of air travel, the FCSO calls on the IPCC to lead by example, showing that the greenhouse gas emissions linked to its activities can be reduced, such as by greater use of teleconferencing.

Annex 1 Voting members of the General Meeting who voted on this opinion

- president and vice-presidents:
T. Rombouts, I. Callens, A. Panneels.
- NGO environment:
R. de Schaetzen (Natagora), J. Gilissen (IEB), M. O. Herman (IEW), J. Miller (IEW), J. Turf (Bond Beter Leefmilieu).
- NGO development:
A. Heyerick (VODO), B. Gloire (Oxfam-Solidarité), N. Van Nuffel (CNCD)
- NGO consumers:
Catherine Rousseau (CRIOC)
- Trade unions:
D. Van Daele (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique), D. Van Oudenhove (ACLVB- CGSLB)
- Employers' federations:
A. Nachtergaele (Federatie Voedingsindustrie), I. Chaput (Essenscia, M.-L. Semaille (Fédération wallonne de l'agriculture), A. Deplae (Union des Classes Moyennes), P. Vanden Abeele (Unie van Zelfstandige Ondernemers), O. Van der Maren (Fédération des entreprises belges).
- Scientific institutions:
M. Carnol (Université de Liège), R. Ceulemans (Universiteit Antwerpen), L. Helsen (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), D. Lesage (Universiteit Gent), E. Zaccarì (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Annex 2. Preparatory meeting for this opinion

The Scientific Research and Energy and Climate Working Groups met on 6 March 2009 to prepare this opinion.

Annex 3. Contributors to this opinion.

Voting members and their representatives

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- Mr Jehan DECROP (CSC), Vice Chair, Scientific Research Working Group

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- Ms An HEYERICK (VODO)
- Ms Jacqueline MILLER (ULB)
- Mr Julien VANDEBURIE (IEW)
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Scientific advisers and guest experts

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Secretariat

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