

Climate Change, IPCC, and Communication

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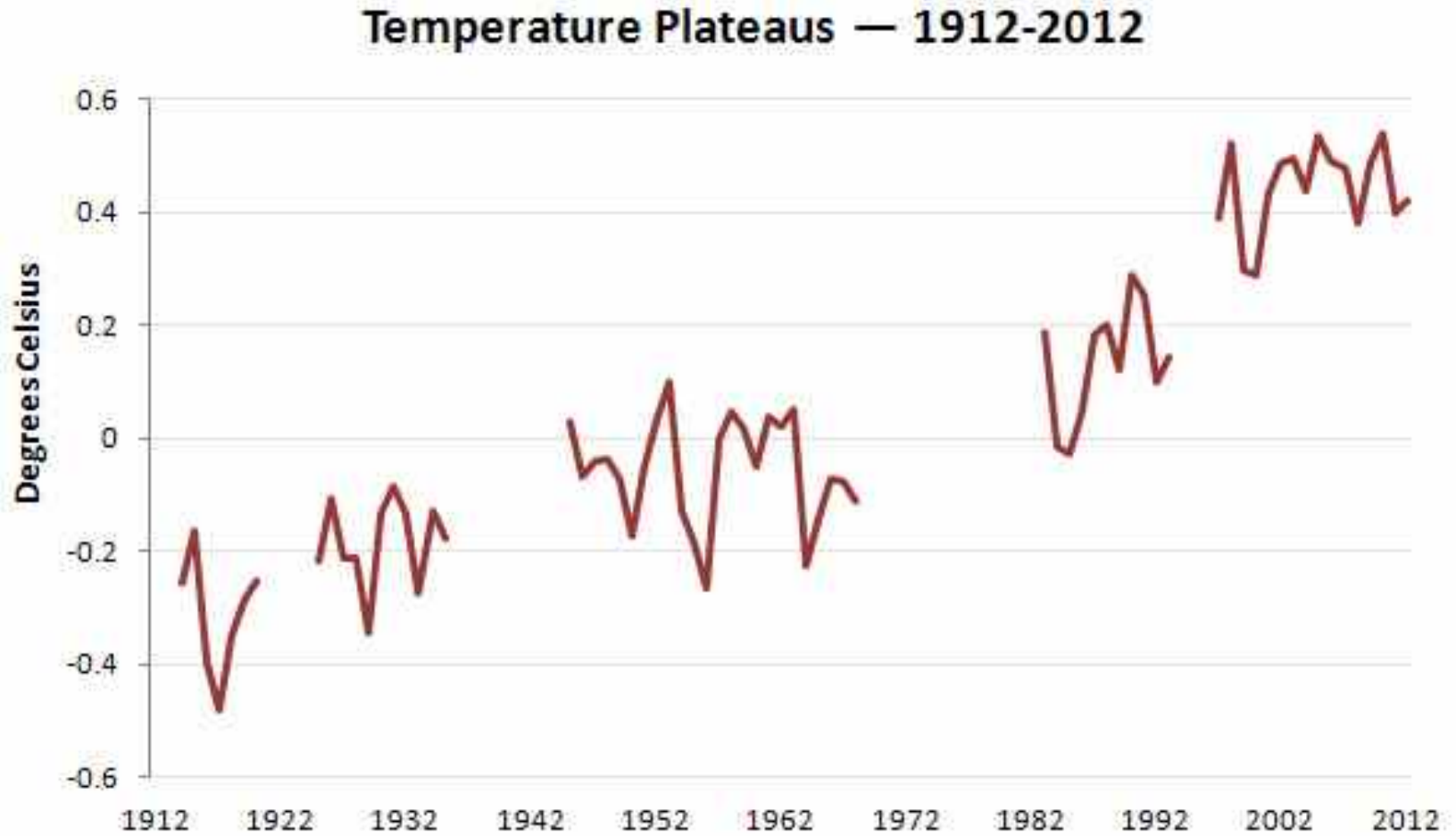
**Copernicus Climate Change Service Workshop, Brussels,
16 June 2015**

**Thanks to the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO)
and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to my team at the
Université catholique de Louvain for their support**

Temperature Change From 1961-1990 Average

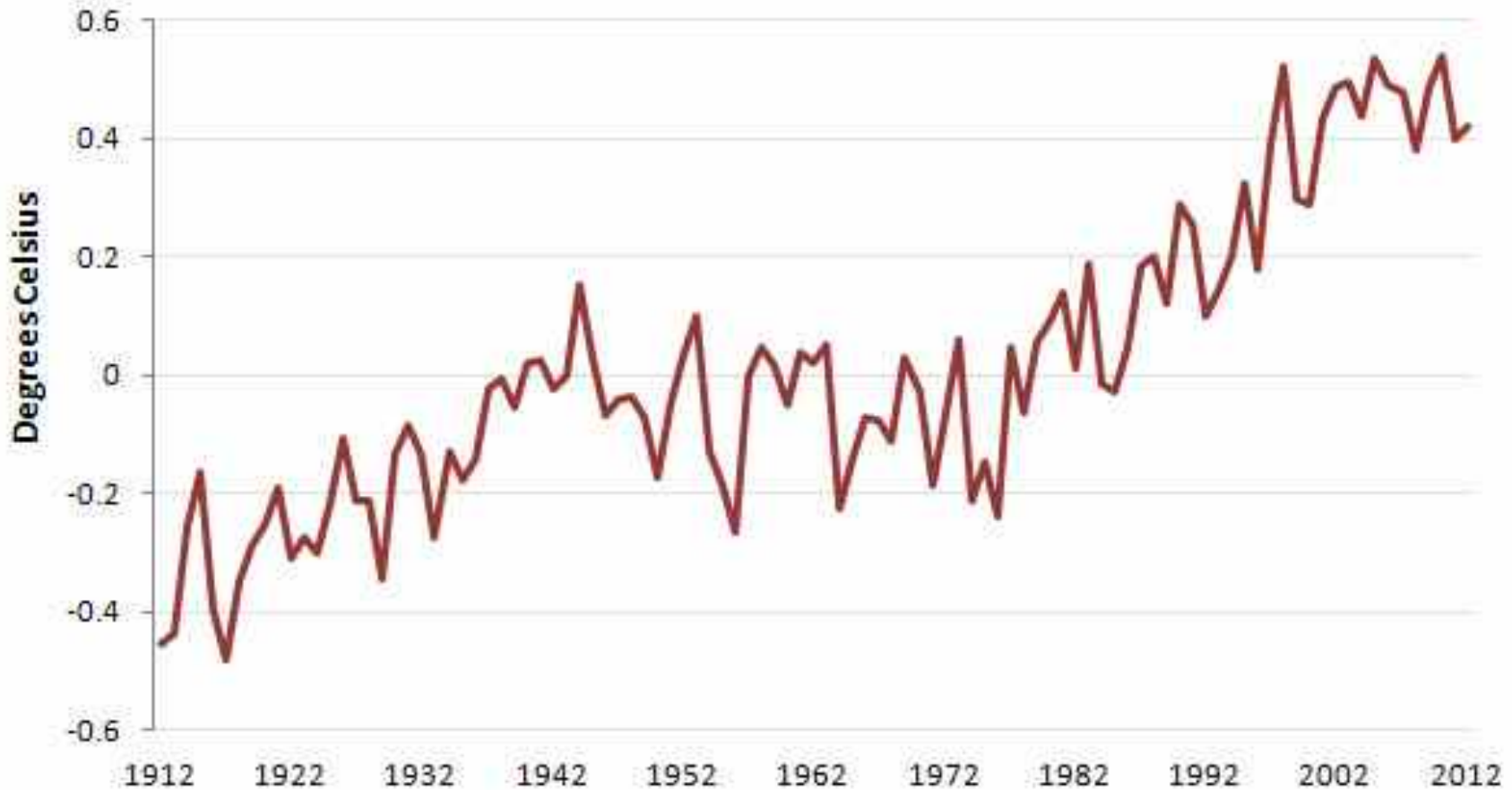


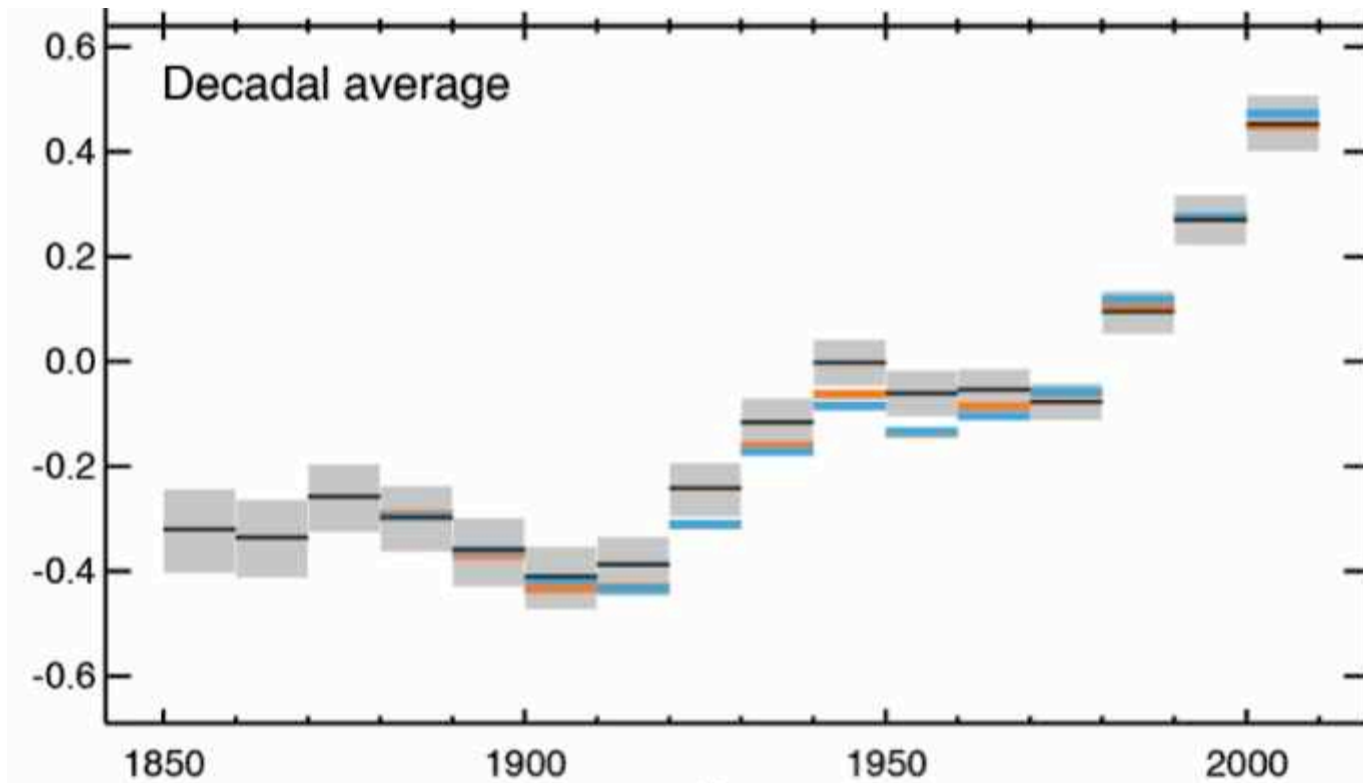
Lying With Statistics, Global Warming Edition



Lying With Statistics, Global Warming Edition

Temperature Change From 1961-1990 Average





(IPCC 2013, Fig. SPM.1a)

Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850.

In the Northern Hemisphere, 1983–2012 was *likely* the warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years (*medium confidence*).

Why the IPCC ?

Established by WMO and UNEP in 1988

to provide **policy-makers** with an **objective source of information** about

- causes of climate change,
- potential environmental and socio-economic impacts,
- possible response options (adaptation & mitigation).

WMO=World Meteorological Organization

UNEP= United Nations Environment Programme



Key messages from the IPCC WG1 Report (1)



■ **Certain:**

- Emissions resulting from **human activities are substantially increasing** the atmospheric concentrations of the **greenhouse gases**: CO₂, CH₄, CFC, and N₂O

■ **Calculated with confidence:**

- Under the business as usual scenario, **temperature will increase by about 3°C by 2100** (uncertainty range: **2 to 5°C**), and **sea level will increase by 60 cm** (uncertainty range: **30 to 100 cm**)

Key messages from the IPCC WG1 Report (2)

- With an increase in the mean temperature, **episodes of high temperature** will most likely become **more frequent**
- Rapid changes in climate will change the composition of ecosystems; **some species** will be unable to adapt fast enough and **will become extinct**.
- Long-lived gases (**CO₂**, N₂O and CFCs) **would require immediate reduction** in emissions from human activities **of over 60% to stabilise their concentration at today's levels.**

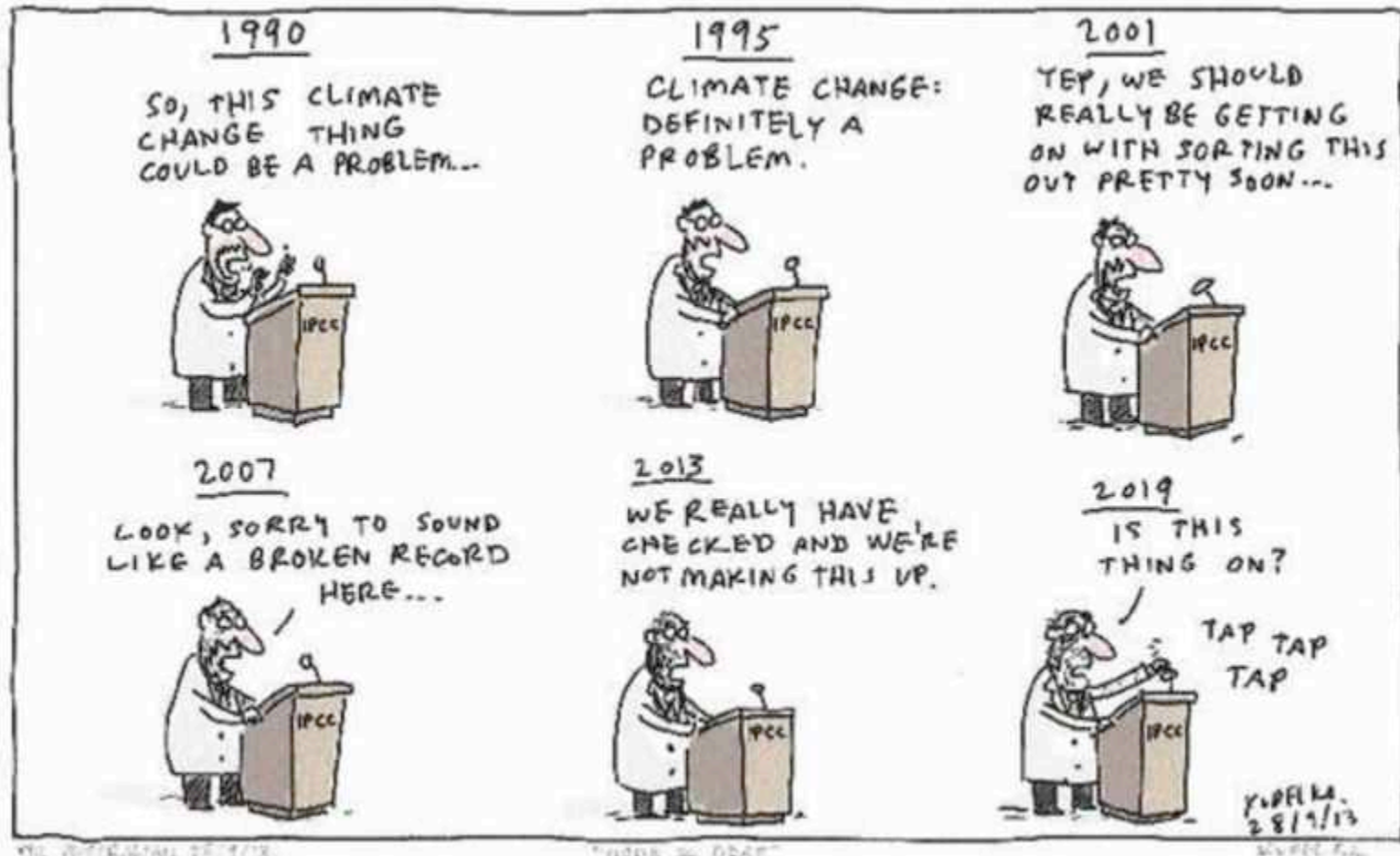
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Oops...



- ... this was from the IPCC **first** assessment report, published 20 years ago (1990)
- Was anybody really listening?

None So Deaf



When does this quote date from?




“It may require only a very small percentage of change in the planet’s balance of energy to modify average temperatures by **2°C**. Downward, this is another ice age; upward, a return to an ice-free age. In either case, the effects are global and catastrophic. ”

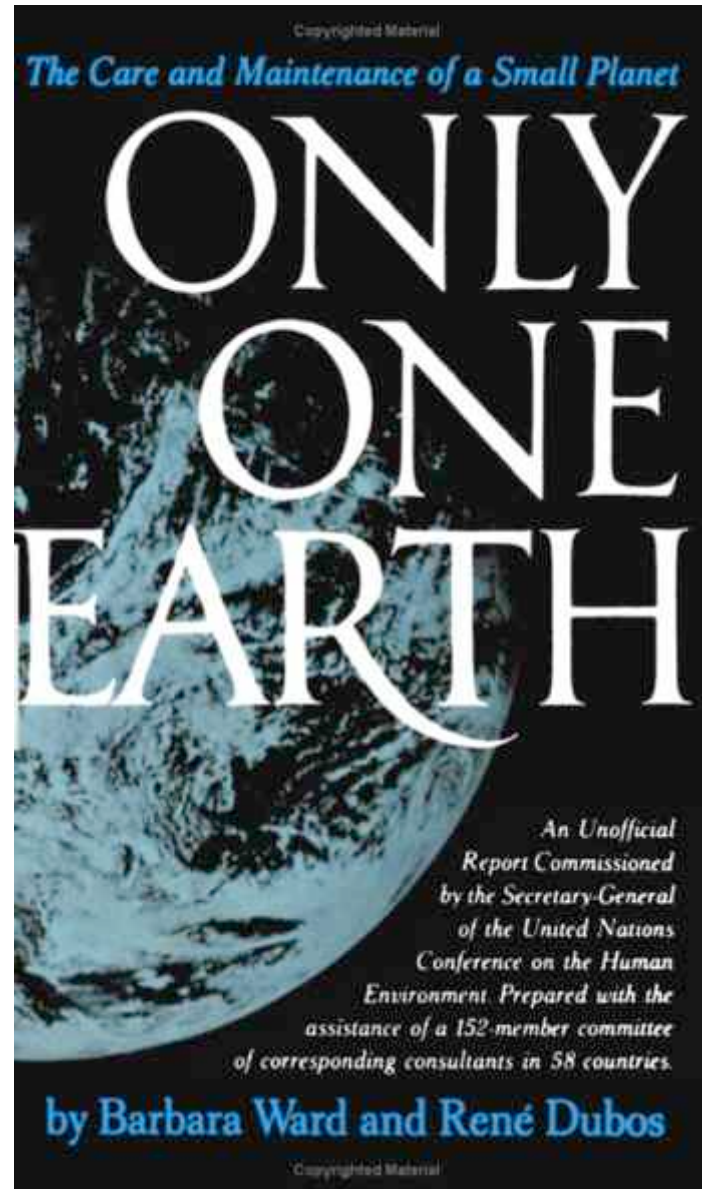
When does this quote date from?




“... The sum of all likely fossil-fuel demands in the early decades of the [21st] century might ... greatly increase the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and by doing so bring up average surface temperature uncomfortably close to that rise of **2°C** which might set in motion the long-term warming up of the planet.”



B. Ward & R. Dubos, 1972

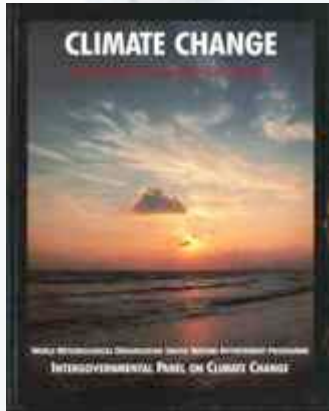


Already 43 years!

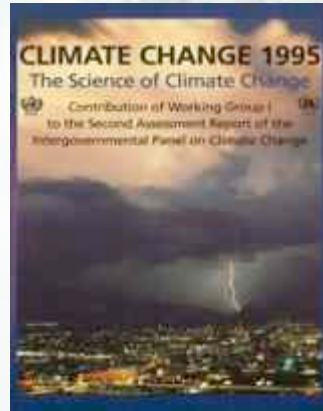


- It was well before the establishment of the IPCC, in 1988
- Didn't humanity lose some time ?
- Is it because communication was not done well enough?

IPCC Assessment Reports



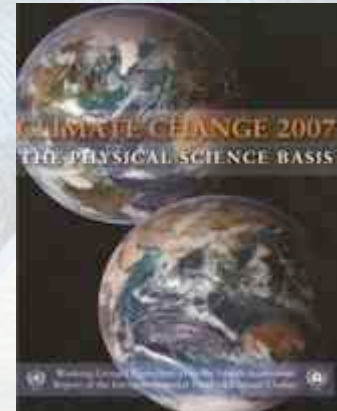
FAR 1990



SAR 1995



TAR 2001



AR4 2007



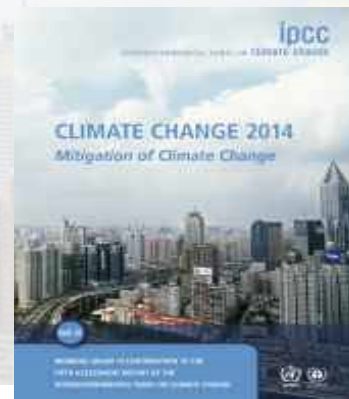
Nobel Peace Prize 2007



AR5 WGI 2013



AR5 WGII 2014



AR5 WGIII 2014



IPCC AR5 Synthesis Report

The IPCC assessments have influenced global action on an unprecedented scale

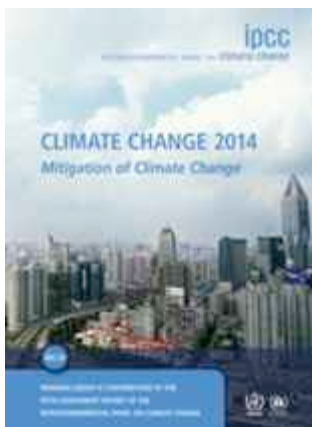
1. The First Assessment Report (FAR, 1990) had a major impact in defining the content of the **UNFCCC**
2. The Second Assessment Report (SAR, 1996) was largely influential in defining the provisions of the **Kyoto Protocol**
3. The Third Assessment Report (TAR, 2001) focused attention on the **impacts** of climate change and the need for **adaptation**
4. The Fourth Assessment Report (AR4, 2007) informed the decision on the ultimate objective (**2°C**) and is creating a strong basis for a **post Kyoto Protocol** agreement
5. The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5, 2013-14) is informing the **review of the 2°C objective**, and the **preparation of the Paris 2015 agreement**



What is happening in the climate system?



What are the risks?



What can be done?

Key messages from IPCC AR5

- **Human influence on the climate system is clear**
- **Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems**
- **While climate change is a threat to sustainable development, there are many opportunities to integrate mitigation, adaptation, and the pursuit of other societal objectives**
- **Humanity has the means to limit climate change and build a more sustainable and resilient future**

The IPCC and the media



« 'Cause we have to...
for IPCC neutrality's sake! »

IPCC Communication Strategy (June 2012)

IPCC 35th SESSION, 6-9 June 2012, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

DECISIONS TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO THE REVIEW
OF IPCC PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Decision

Recalling the recommendation of the InterAcademy Council on IPCC communications that the IPCC “should complete and implement a communications strategy that emphasizes transparency, rapid and thoughtful responses, and relevance to stakeholders, and which includes guidelines about who can speak on behalf of IPCC and how to represent the organization appropriately”;

IPCC Communication Goals

The IPCC has two main communications goals:

- to communicate its assessment findings and methodologies, by providing clear and balanced information on climate change², including scientific uncertainties, without compromising accuracy;
- to explain the way the IPCC works, selects its authors and reviewers and produces its reports and other products. This will promote the understanding of the reports and underpin its reputation as a credible, transparent, balanced and authoritative scientific body.

Principles guiding the IPCC's communication approach:

Objective and transparent

Policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive

Drawn from IPCC Reports

Recognizing IPCC as a unique organization

Timely and audience-appropriate

Consistent messages

A few words about my platform for the IPCC Chair position

See details at:

www.climate.be/vanyp (« IPCC » page)

Inclusiveness & Team Spirit

“But the IPCC must do so in a manner even **more inclusive** than in the past, involving more scientists from developing countries in particular. It must encourage all authors to **work better across disciplinary boundaries**. The next assessment by the IPCC must ensure the best **team spirit**, with a **sense of accountability and ownership** that is shared by all.”

@JPvanYpersele for The Guardian, 16 March 2015

Improve Communication

For the IPCC to be relevant, it must also continue to improve its **communication** with policymakers and with the public. The IPCC products need to be **more accessible, more readable,...**

... reach out to **different audiences**, seek greater **transparency** in how it works and show more responsiveness on **social media**.

@JPvanYpersele for The Guardian, 16 March 2015

Full Time IPCC Chair needed

“To make sure all of this happens during the next assessment cycle, the IPCC needs a strong **leader, a team builder**, who dedicates herself or himself **full time** as IPCC Chair.”

@JPvanYpersele for The Guardian, 16 March 2015

Useful links:



- www.ipcc.ch : IPCC (reports and videos)
- www.climate.be/vanyp : my slides and candidature to become IPCC Chair
- www.skepticalscience.com: excellent responses to contrarians arguments
- **On Twitter: @JPvanYpersele
and @IPCC_CH**