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IPCC starts meeting to finalize Working Group II report

YOKOHAMA, Japan, 25 March – Government representatives and scientists on Tuesday opened a five-day meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to finalize a report assessing the impacts of climate change on human and natural systems, options for adaptation, and the interactions among climate changes, other stresses on societies, and opportunities for the future.

The meeting, the culmination of four years' work by hundreds of experts who have volunteered their time and expertise to produce a comprehensive assessment, will approve the Summary for Policymakers of the second part of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report, checking the text line by line. The meeting will also accept the full report, which besides the Summary for Policymakers consists of a Technical Summary and 30 chapters in two volumes.

This report, produced by the IPCC's Working Group II, deals with impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability. It is part two of a four-part assessment. The first part, by Working Group I, dealing with the physical science basis of climate change, was finalized in September 2013. The Working Group III contribution, assessing mitigation of climate change, will be finalized in April. The Fifth Assessment Report will be completed by a Synthesis Report in October.

"The Working Group II author team assessed thousands of papers to produce a definitive report of the state of knowledge concerning climate-change impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability. Many hundreds of volunteers, in and beyond the author team, approached this work with dedication and deep expertise," said Vicente Barros, Co-Chair of Working Group II.

The meeting, hosted by the Government of Japan, runs from 25 to 29 March 2014. The Summary for Policymakers is due to be released on Monday 31 March. The draft full report will also be released at the same time, with final publication online and as a two-book series a few months later. Volume I will cover issues sector by sector. Volume II will consider continental-scale regions.

"This report considers consequences of climate changes that have already occurred and the risks across a range of possible futures. It considers every region and many sectors, ranging from oceans to human security. The focus is as much on identifying effective responses as on understanding challenges," said Chris Field, the other Co-Chair of Working Group II.

The report builds on the four previous assessment reports produced by the IPCC since it was established in 1988. Compared to past Working Group II reports, the Working Group II contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report assesses a substantially larger knowledge base of relevant scientific, technical and socio-economic literature, facilitating a comprehensive assessment across a broader set of topics and sectors.

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Notes for editors

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Working Group II, which assesses impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, is co-chaired by Vicente Barros of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Chris Field of the Carnegie Institution for Science, USA. The Technical Support Unit of Working Group II is hosted by the Carnegie Institution for Science and funded by the government of the United States of America.

At the 28th Session of the IPCC held in April 2008, the members of the IPCC decided to prepare a Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). A Scoping Meeting was convened in July 2009 to develop the scope and outline of the AR5. The resulting outlines for the three Working Group contributions to the AR5 were approved at the 31st Session of the IPCC in October 2009.

A total of 309 coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and review editors, from 70 countries, were selected to produce the Working Group II report. They enlisted the help of 436 contributing authors, and a total of 1,729 expert and government reviewers provided comments on drafts of the report. A total of 837 coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and review editors worked on the Fifth Assessment Report as a whole.

The Working Group II report consists of two volumes. The first contains a Summary for Policymakers, Technical Summary, and 20 chapters assessing risks by sector and opportunities for response. The sectors include freshwater resources, terrestrial and ocean ecosystems, coasts, food, urban and rural areas, energy and industry, human health and security, and livelihoods and poverty. A second volume of 10 chapters assesses risks and opportunities for response by region. These regions include Africa, Europe, Asia, Australasia, North America, Central and South America, Polar Regions, Small Islands, and the Ocean.