Climate Action Network

Position Paper: IPCC AR7 Timeline, Equity and Alignment with Second Global Stocktake (GST-2)[1]

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Climate Action Network (CAN) is a global network of more than 2500 civil society organisations in over 130 countries driving collective and sustainable action to fight the climate crisis and to achieve social and racial justice.

Introduction

The IPCC's Seventh Assessment Report (AR7) cycle began in July 2023, when the AR7 Bureau was elected at the 59th session of the IPCC, following the full publication of Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) in March 2023. The heightened geopolitical context as we approach an overshoot of the critical scientific and legally binding threshold of 1.5ºC warming has contributed to a particularly contested and charged process over the last two years. Among the most persistent issues has been the question of the AR7 timeline, around which longstanding tensions are playing out, including through the specific question of how the report timeline aligns with the Second Global Stocktake (GST-2) which concludes in 2028. This connects to the role of the IPCC in creating momentum not just for mitigation but also for adaptation, loss & damage and finance conversations in the UNFCCC.

The underlying issues centre on structural inequity in the capacity for production and review of science, and, in particular, how this manifests in grossly unequal futures projected by scenarios selected by and presented in Working Group 3 (WG3) of the IPCC, as demonstrated in AR6. Additionally, there are valid concerns about the need for agreement on the timeline in order to provide certainty to authors and governments and for the purpose of budgeting.

The inability to agree on a timeline for the AR7 among member states of the IPCC has created an untenable and destructive impasse that is also unprecedented in the IPCC's Assessment Report planning process. Climate Action Network is concerned about the severe potential implications this impasse could hold on the budget for the remainder of the AR7 cycle, due to be decided and agreed during the 65th session of the IPCC in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) from 12-16 October 2026. More generally, CAN is concerned about how this impasse could be weaponised against ambitious and equitable action.

Although CAN recognises the critical importance of agreeing on a timeline for the reports in the AR7 cycle, it is also extremely concerned about the narrative that pits science against equity, which has unfortunately become tangled with this dispute, with the net effect of

[1]Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN), Aotearoa Climate Action Network (AoCAN), and Climate Action Network Australia (CAN-A) byline this policy position on the IPCC AR7 Timeline, Equity and Alignment with Second Global Stocktake.

conflating the IPCC's objectivity and credibility – and the legitimacy of climate science itself – with the issue of the AR7 timeline and its alignment with the GST process. These are separate issues, and must be treated as such. The IPCC's credibility rests on the rigour of its assessment and review procedures, including conflict of interest principles. Governments must protect those procedures as they resolve the timeline.

The seriousness of these developments should not be underestimated. Science and equity are both essential to the climate transition, and are not by any means incompatible. On the contrary, they can and must go hand in hand. Equity is a core principle of the Convention and the Paris Agreement. Rigorous science must assess its dimensions. Both have been misappropriated in this impasse. Some Parties invoke equity to delay the science that frontline communities need. Others invoke scientific credibility to dismiss legitimate equity concerns. It is therefore crucial that the timeline dispute be resolved in a manner that helps end the political manipulation of these fundamental concepts.

Climate Action Network supports the IPCC and believes in and understands the imperative of using the best available science, inclusive of Indigenous Knowledge and traditional knowledge, in addressing the climate crisis. CAN sees itself as a friend of the IPCC, critiquing it and
holding it to account when it falls short – practices which are essential to the integrity and robustness of science. CAN is also conscious of how critical this assessment cycle is to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and of the importance of safeguarding the integrity and relevance of the IPCC, especially in a complex and dangerous geopolitical context in which mis- and disinformation abound.

Position and demands

Firstly, CAN reaffirms its commitment to the warming limit of 1.5°C as the legal and moral baseline for countries' obligations towards addressing climate change and climate justice. Efforts to meet these legal obligations must be informed by equity between and within countries, including the proper consideration of historic responsibilities and respective capabilities. These have been established by the Paris Agreement and affirmed by the International Court of Justice and UNGA resolution.

By extension, CAN would like to reaffirm its belief that the 'best available science' must embed these equity considerations. In practice, this means upholding the guiding principles of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement in a manner that addresses not only the equitable distribution of climate action and its costs, but also the unequal distribution of climate impacts, vulnerabilities and capacities to respond.

CAN acknowledges the incremental progress made by the IPCC, especially in recent assessment cycles, in expanding inclusivity and representation in authorship, process and content including through changes in selection criteria for assessed literature and targeted support for authorship from underrepresented communities and regions. However, CAN would also like to note the worrying persistence of gaps and inconsistencies in representation of perspectives from developing countries and frontline communities.

Keeping this in consideration, CAN demands:

- Member states to respect and adhere to the principles and procedures of the IPCC and its mandate towards the UNFCCC and to uphold the value of the IPCC and science for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and its processes such as the Global Stocktake. In this spirit, member states must negotiate in good faith and stop the damaging weaponisation of core concepts and fundamental principles.
- Acknowledging the importance of IPCC reports in informing policymakers on mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, reparations, finance, as well as in contributing to public attention on the risks and solutions towards the climate crisis, member states should seek to prepare the three WG reports of the AR7 and their Summaries for Policy Makers (SPMs) which would cover the physical science basis and current state of the climate, the impacts of climate change and adaptation, and mitigation aspects respectively, before the conclusion of the Second Global Stocktake, at COP33 in 2028, in a manner that adequately addresses concerns of inclusivity and equity in process and content.
- The decision on the timeline/s for publishing the AR7 reports must

    - Adequately address concerns of capacity constraints, lack of inclusivity and entrenched inequities in process and content across all working group reports. To this end, we encourage the inclusion of experts in equity and distributional justice in the review process of the reports through self-nominations and nominations by member states.
    - In selecting and presenting possible climate pathways, foreground a range of scenarios that project more equitable futures, and highlight where projections would entrench inequality and fail to meet wider ambitions including sustainable development goals.
    - Acknowledge and seek to rectify existing flaws and gaps, in particular with regards to the collections of Integrated Assessment Models assessed in AR6. AR7 Scenarios must not be drawn exclusively from IAMs but from a wider base of models and research. IAMs in particular are dominated by modelling efforts from developed countries and assume an entrenchment of baseline disparities between countries in projected pathways, as well as deep cost-optimisation biases, the normalization of unfair sharing of the global carbon budget, and blind spots towards human rights. Furthermore these scenarios project pathways dependent on highly speculative, planetary scale carbon capture and carbon dioxide removal technologies which remain hypothetical outside of models. Reliance upon such technologies creates serious equity and distributive justice issues, shifting the burden of action intra- and inter-generationally, encouraging mitigation delays and discouraging reductions in fossil fuels while introducing novel risks for humans and ecosystems.
    - Ensure the AR7 WG3 assessment covers published models and pathways that improve on the AR6 by correcting these disparities, which negatively and severely affect the feasibility and implementability of aligned policies. The AR7 WG3 report must include adequate and appropriate literature that captures the distributional impacts, implications and costs (and benefits) of climate action, in a manner that does not lead to disproportionate burdens on

countries and communities least responsible for the climate crisis. Models and pathways must be based on proven technologies - where assumptions around new technologies are made, they need to be aligned with current scientific assessments and transparently indicate uncertainties and risks.
Further, CAN supports a full AR7 assessment of the fair shares literature on the distribution of mitigation effort and costs. Developed countries must take the lead, as per their obligation under the Convention. The assessment must also cover financing architectures that account for global equity, including developmental disparities between countries and structural income and wealth inequalities.

- Developed countries must enhance the provision of finance and support to increase capacity for authorship and participation from developing countries, in particular to support the creation of new models that capture and describe equity and distributional justice, through clear, transparent and standardised channels.