

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In order to develop an authoritative review of expert opinions on the potential for climate change, including a possible trend toward global warming, the World Meteorological Organization and UNEP have jointly sponsored since 1988 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The IPCC assesses the most up-to-date scientific and technical research on all aspects of climate change.

The IPCC process, which includes climatologists, scientists and other technical experts, and government officials from more than 100 nations, is divided into three working groups: Working Group I assesses the scientific aspects of the climate system and climate change; Working Group II assesses the vulnerability of socio-economic and natural systems to climate change; and Working Group III assesses options for limiting greenhouse gas emissions and otherwise mitigating climate change.

The IPCC produces assessment reports on climate change which are drafted by a small group of lead authors and submitted for peer review to as many as 2,000 scientists; they are then approved by the entire panel. The assessment reports present a synthesis of the most recent scientific findings on the phenomenon of global warming. The First IPCC Assessment Report was completed in 1990, and played an important role in establishing the scientific basis for beginning negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Since then, the IPCC has continued to provide scientific, technical and socio-economic advice to the world community, and in particular to the parties to the UNFCCC, of which the United States is one. Its most recent assessment report, completed in 2001, was submitted to the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, and Parties agreed that it should be used routinely as a useful reference for providing information on the science of climate change. The IPCC is currently preparing the Fourth Assessment Report, due out in 2007.

The United States is the largest contributor to the IPCC, with a contribution of 1,520,715 Swiss francs to the General Trust Fund in 2002, and an addition contribution of 1,986,285 Swiss francs for translation and publication of the IPCC Good Practice Guidance.

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