

IPCC WGIII Interim Conflict of Interest Policy Implementation

1. Background

Recalling the recommendation of the InterAcademy Council (IAC) on IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy that the IPCC should “develop and adopt a rigorous conflict of interest policy that applies to all individuals directly involved in the preparation of IPCC reports, including senior IPCC leadership (IPCC Chair and Vice Chairs), authors with responsibilities for report content (i.e., Working Group Co-Chairs, Coordinating Lead Authors, and Lead Authors), Review Editors, and technical staff directly involved in report preparation (e.g., staff of the Technical Support Units and the IPCC Secretariat)” and recalling the decisions taken at the 32nd Session of the IPCC, this document provides an Interim Conflict of Interest Policy and implementation for IPCC WG III.

At its 33rd Session in Abu Dhabi, 10-13 May 2011, the Panel of the IPCC adopted a formal IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy¹. Details related to the implementation of this Policy are currently being developed with a view to adopt a decision at the 34th session of the IPCC in November 2011. The Panel decided to work towards early implementation of the Policy with a view to bringing all those covered by the Policy within its remit as early as possible during the Fifth Assessment cycle and no later than the IPCC 35th session in 2012. The Panel invited the Working Groups, in taking forward their activities under the Fifth Assessment cycle, to take note of the Conflict of Interest Policy and ensure, as far as possible, that their actions are consistent with the IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy.

In order to safeguard integrity of the AR5, WGIII is proactively implementing an interim conflict of interest policy. This interim policy is based on the approved IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy¹ and leads into its implementation. The implementation component takes into account the proposal of the Task Force of Conflict of Interest and the interim Conflict of Interests Policies undertaken by IPCC WGs I and II.

2. Reading this document

Sections 3 to 5 below contain the text of the IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy. Sections 6-8 contain details for its interim implementation by WGIII.

3. Purpose of Policy

„The role of the IPCC as stated in paragraph 2 of the Principles Governing IPCC Work is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies.

The role of the IPCC demands that it pay special attention to issues of independence and bias in order to maintain the integrity of, and public confidence in, its products and processes. It is essential that the work of IPCC is not compromised by any conflict of interest for those who execute it.

The overall purpose of this policy is to protect the legitimacy, integrity, trust, and credibility of the IPCC and of those directly involved in the preparation of reports, and its activities. This policy is principles-based and does not provide an exhaustive list of criteria for the identification of such conflicts. The Panel recognizes the commitment and dedication of those who participate in IPCC activities. The policy should maintain the balance between the need to minimise the reporting burden, and to ensure the integrity of the IPCC process. In this way, it seeks to encourage participation and to ensure that the representativeness and geographic balance of the Panel is not impaired whilst continuing to build and maintain public trust.

¹ http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/ipcc_p33_decisions_taken_conflict_of_interest.pdf

The IPCC Conflict of Interest Policy is designed to ensure that conflicts of interest are identified, communicated to the relevant parties, and managed to avoid any adverse impact on IPCC balance, products and processes, thereby protecting the individual, the IPCC, and the public interest. The individual and the IPCC should not be placed in a situation that could lead a reasonable person to question, and perhaps discount or dismiss, the work of the IPCC simply because of the existence of a conflict of interest.

Identifying a potential conflict of interest does not automatically mean that a conflict of interest exists – the purpose of the policy is to enable individuals to provide the relevant information necessary for each particular situation to be evaluated.“¹

4. Scope

„This policy applies to senior IPCC leadership (the IPCC Chair, Vice Chairs, Working Group and Task Force Co-Chairs), other members of the IPCC Bureau and members of the Task Force Bureau, authors with responsibilities for report content (Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors), Review Editors and the professional staff of the Technical Support Units (TSUs).

The policy applies to the development of all IPCC products including but not limited to: assessment reports; special reports; methodology reports and technical papers.

The professional staff members of the IPCC Secretariat are employees of WMO and/or UNEP and are subject to their disclosure and ethics policies, which include conflict of interest.

The policy will be executed to reflect the various roles, responsibilities and levels of authority, of participants in the IPCC process. In particular, consideration should be given to whether responsibility is held at an individual level or shared within a team; to the level of influence held over the content of IPCC products.

The application of the conflict of interest policy to those elected to positions within the IPCC should reflect their specific responsibilities.“¹

5. Conflict of Interest

„A “conflict of interest” refers to any current professional, financial or other interest which could: i) significantly impair the individual’s objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the IPCC, or ii) create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. For the purposes of this policy, circumstances that could lead a reasonable person to question an individual’s objectivity, or whether an unfair advantage has been created, constitute a potential conflict of interest. These potential conflicts are subject to disclosure.

Conflict of interest policies in scientific assessment bodies typically make a distinction between “conflict of interest” and “bias”, which refers to a point of view or perspective that is strongly held regarding a particular issue or set of issues. In the case of author and review teams, bias can and should be managed through the selection of a balance of perspectives. For example, it is expected that IPCC author teams will include individuals with different perspectives and affiliations. Those involved in selecting authors will need to strive for an author team composition that reflects a balance of expertise and perspectives, such that IPCC products are comprehensive, objective, and neutral with respect to policy. In selecting these individuals, care must be taken to ensure that biases can be balanced where they exist. In contrast, conflict of interest exists where an individual could secure a direct and material gain through outcomes in an IPCC product. Holding a view that one believes to be correct, but that one does not stand to gain from personally is not a conflict of interest.

The conflict of interest requirements in this policy are not designed to include an assessment of one’s behaviour or character or one’s ability to act objectively despite the conflict of interest.

This policy applies only to current conflicts of interest. It does not apply to past interests that have expired, no longer exist, and cannot reasonably affect current behaviour. Nor does it apply to possible interests that may arise in the future but that do not currently exist, as such interests are inherently speculative and uncertain. For example, a pending application for a particular job is a current interest, but the mere possibility that one might apply for such a job in the future is not a current interest.

Professional and other non-financial interests need to be disclosed only if they are significant and relevant. If in doubt about whether an interest should be disclosed, individuals are encouraged to seek advice from the appropriate IPCC body as defined in Annex A. Significant and relevant interests may include, but are not limited to, senior editorial roles, advisory committees associated with private sector organizations, and memberships on boards of non-profit or advocacy groups. However, not all such associations necessarily constitute a conflict of interest.

Financial interests need to be disclosed only if they are significant and relevant. These may include, but are not limited to, the following kinds of financial interests: employment relationships; consulting relationships; financial investments; intellectual property interests; and commercial interests and sources of private-sector research support. Individuals should also disclose significant and relevant financial interests of any person with whom the

individual has a substantial business or relevant shared interest. If in doubt about whether an interest should be disclosed, individuals are encouraged to seek advice from the appropriate IPCC body.

To prevent situations in which a conflict of interest may arise, individuals directly involved in or leading the preparation of IPCC reports should avoid being in a position to approve, adopt, or accept on behalf of any government the text in which he/she was directly involved.”¹

6. Implementation

All Co-Chairs, Working Group III Bureau members, TSU staff, CLAs, LAs, and REs of WG III will be required to fill out a simple disclosure form revealing potential conflict of interests. For CLAs, LAs and RE the forms will be reviewed by the Co-Chairs and the TSU. Potential conflict of interests will be discussed by the Working Group III Co-Chairs and management of conflict of interests will be jointly decided by the Working Group III Co-Chairs and the Working Group III Bureau. Working Group III Co-Chairs, Working Group III Bureau members and TSU staff will submit their forms to the IPCC Secretariat for review. In general, biases can be tolerated, as long as the author teams are balanced. Serious Conflicts of interest cannot be tolerated, and any serious conflicts that arise, either at the start or during the course of the assessment, will be addressed by recusing the individual from the relevant chapter section(s) or, if necessary, removing the individual from the chapter team. In addition to the disclosure forms private group discussions on possible biases and conflict of interest will be encouraged within chapter teams, the TSU and among Working Group III Bureau members including the Co-Chairs. Discussions within chapter author teams are of particular importance, since they need to have an awareness of bias and potential conflicts of interest within their group.

In these discussions, each author will make a brief oral statement disclosing the information described in Section 7 “Background Information”. These are consistent with the proposed information disclosure recommended by the IPCC Task Group on Conflict of Interest.²

7. Background Information

In the group discussions, each author will make a brief oral statement disclosing the information in four areas:

- I. ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS. Report your relevant business relationships (as an employee, owner, officer, director, consultant, etc.) and your relevant remunerated or volunteer non-business relationships (e.g., professional organizations, trade associations, public interest or civic groups, advocacy groups aiming at influencing public opinion and/or policy). Please comment on the extent to which your participation will entail reviewing your own work, or that of your immediate employer.
- II. RESEARCH SUPPORT. Report relevant information regarding both public and private sources of research support in which you are currently directly involved (other than your present employer), including sources of funding, equipment, facilities, etc.
- III. POSITIONS. Provide a brief description of relevant positions of any organizations or groups with which you are closely identified or associated.
- IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. If there are relevant aspects of your background or present circumstances not addressed above that might reasonably be construed by others as affecting your judgment in matters within the assigned task of the IPCC, and therefore might constitute an actual or potential source of bias, please describe them briefly.

This is consistent with the proposed information disclosure recommended by the IPCC Task Group on Conflict of Interest.³ The individual statements should focus on relevant financial and other interests, including organizational affiliations, positions, research support, and additional information (if any). Information is „relevant“ if it is related to - and might reasonably be of interest to others concerning - personal knowledge, experience, and personal perspectives related to the author’s role in the WGIII contribution to the AR5. If in doubt about the relevance of a particular matter, authors are encouraged to discuss the issue in the group rather than not to. At the conclusion of each oral statement, the entire author team and the facilitating member of the WG III Bureau will have the opportunity to discuss the contents of the statement and explore whether any biases can be managed and whether serious conflicts of interest exist or appear to exist.

² http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/doc11_p33_review_tg_proposal_conflict_interest_policy.pdf

³ http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/doc11_p33_review_tg_proposal_conflict_interest_policy.pdf

8. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

All Co-Chairs, TSU staff, CLAs, LAs, and REs of WG III will be required to fill in a disclosure form. The information collected will be safely stored at the WGIII TSU in Potsdam. Personal information will not be released unless there is written consent by the individual concerned. The disclosure form is shown below.

IPCC WGIII Disclosure of Relevant Interest Form for WGIII Interim Conflict of Interest Policy

NOTE: You have been invited to serve on the IPCC because of your professional standing and expertise. As outlined in the Working Group III Interim Conflict of Interest policy, disclosure of certain circumstances is necessary to ensure that the work of IPCC is not compromised by conflicts of interest. In filling out this form, we rely on your professionalism, common sense, and honesty.

The IPCC is not asking for comprehensive lists of activities under each heading below, only current interests that are significant and relevant to your role within the IPCC. You should disclose interests that could: i) significantly impair your objectivity in carrying out your duties and responsibilities for the IPCC, or ii) create an unfair advantage for you or any person or organization you are associated with. For the purposes of this policy, circumstances that could lead a reasonable person to question your objectivity, or whether an unfair advantage has been created, constitute a potential conflict of interest. Disclosure of an interest on this form does not automatically mean that a conflict is present or that you will be unable to perform your designated role with the IPCC, but is regarded in the first place to contribute to transparency of the IPCC process and will be assessed in accordance to your role within the preparation of the IPCC products.

I. Personal Information

Surname / Family Name			
First Name / Given Name		Salutation	
Institution			
Address			
Country of Residence			
Phone			
Email Address			
Role		Chapter	

II. Disclosure of Relevant Interests

1. Do you have any significant and relevant professional activities relating to the work on the AR5 in which you are involved, which may be considered as constituting real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest? ___ Yes ___ No (if yes, give details below)

(Please list current, significant, and relevant professional and other non-financial interests, which may include, but are not limited to advisory committees, senior editorial positions, elected positions, posts in professional organizations, and memberships on boards of non-profits or advocacy groups)

Type of interest, e.g., senior journal editorship, employment, consulting, or membership of board of advocacy group or commercial entity	Name of journal, advocacy group, commercial entity, etc.	Your role, e.g., editor, board member	Current interest (or year ceased)

2. Are you, or are likely to be, a member of your government’s delegation at Sessions of the IPCC Panel including WGIII approval sessions of the AR5? ___ Yes ___ No (if yes, give details below)

3. Do you have any significant and relevant financial interests in the subject matter of the work on the AR5 in which you will be involved, which may be considered as constituting a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest? ___ Yes ___ No (if yes, give details below)

(Please list current, significant, and relevant financial interests, which may include employment relationships; consulting relationships; financial investments; intellectual property interests; commercial interests and sources of private-sector research support.

Nota bene: typically, financial interests under \$10,000 would not be considered significant).

4. Is there anything else that could affect your objectivity or independence in the work on the AR5, or the perception by others of your objectivity and independence? ___ Yes ___ No (if yes give details below)

III. Statement of Compliance with IPCC Principles and Procedures

I am aware that Article 2 of the Principles Governing IPCC Work states that "The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies."

I hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that the disclosed information is correct and that no other situation of real, perceived, or potential Conflict of Interest is known to me. During the course of work on the AR5, I will inform the WGIII TSU immediately of any change in my circumstances. Furthermore I declare that for the course of my work on the AR5, I will adhere to the IPCC Principles and Procedures to the best of my ability.

Signature

Date