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Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Representation at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 65th Plenary Session

12-16 October 2026
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Background:

The IPCC was established in 1988 with the mandate to collate and assess the best available peer-reviewed climate science worldwide and to inform governments of the latest climate science findings. Summaries of IPCC Reports, known as 'Summary for Policy Makers (SPM)', go through an approval process with Member States, establishing a clear line of accountability. As a result, IPCC Reports are widely utilized by both policy makers and the public and are increasingly used as legal evidence in court to challenge insufficient regional, national and global climate action. As human-caused greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) continue to increase alongside global temperatures, IPCC Reports carry growing influence. Consequently, IPCC Plenary and Bureau meetings are increasingly affected by international political divisions reflecting broader, challenging dynamics within multilateral peace and justice efforts.

The IPCC produces Assessment Reports and Special Reports. It is currently working on its 7th Assessment with a mandate to provide 'policy relevant but not policy prescriptive' information. In addition to approximately 15 staff at the IPCC Secretariat, three small Technical Units support the Working Groups on Physical Science (WG1), Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (WG2), Mitigation (WG3), and the Synthesis Report. The 600+ scientist authors assessing the latest available science perform their work on a voluntary basis.

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), accredited under the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), became an accredited observer of the IPCC in 2017. This status has been invaluable to our broader climate change work. As expert reviewers of IPCC report drafts, we track wording changes on scientific findings, enabling us to help protect the integrity of the science and scientists from political efforts by some Parties to weaken the scientific findings. Our advocacy focuses on protecting the language on scientific findings for healthy and equitable transformations that address the root causes driving human-induced and existential global warming. We also seek to protect IPCC risk language from being weakened by political efforts to promote harmful, unproven-to-scale and ineffective geo-engineering reliance, otherwise known as 'techno-fixes' or 'false solutions'.

QUNO has been described as the ethical voice in the room and remains one of the few observers to make formal interventions during Plenaries. We remain, to our knowledge, the only active independent faith-based organization at the IPCC.

For the IPCC 65th Plenary, QUNO Representative for the Human Impacts of Climate Change, Lindsey Fielder Cook, attended the meeting.

IPCC 65th Plenary – Summary of Major Issues Discussed:

The 65th Plenary Session focused on three main issues for decision:

1) Updating frameworks for Plenary Reporting to overcome political blockages delaying finalization of the last four IPCC Plenary Minutes;
2) Approving the 2026 Budget and the proposed budgets for 2027-2028;
3) Approving the AR7 delivery timeline.

The above issues had failed to reach decisions in the last four IPCC meetings.

Political Dynamics:

This was the 5th consecutive IPCC Plenary to engage on confirming the 7th Assessment Report delivery timeline. This unprecedented delay is closely linked to the upcoming 2nd Global Stocktake (GST) (see below). The increasingly political dynamics within the IPCC is also played out in the UNFCCC negotiations, where a small number of States are increasingly questioning the role and authority of the IPCC.

We are working in a difficult international environment. The USA no longer attends IPCC Plenaries and in addition to the removal of USA financial support, most countries are reducing funding for multilateral institutions while expanding national military budgets.

Many States across Small Islands, Least Developed Countries, progressive Latin American nations, and most developed countries, including those in the European Union, sought all three Working Groups to be approved before the GST. Conversely, a small group of States representing high populations, including Russia, the Arab Group, several Africa countries, India and China sought for only WG1 to be approved before the GST. Compromise proposals emerged, including an option from several African States to deliver WG1 and WG2 before the GST and WG3 after, as well as a proposal from a few European States to deliver WG1 and WG3 before the GST, challenging the customary order of IPCC Reporting. While some concerns delaying the delivery of the AR7 reports raised are genuine and remain unaddressed, others appear primarily strategic, carrying the risk of undermining the role of the IPCC. The difficulty in distinguishing between the two contributes to significant mistrust within the Plenary.

Challenges raised include:

- Timing for the expert reviews for the Working Group drafts was too compressed, making it difficult for States with less capacity.
    - However, many States supporting the tighter timeline were from States with the least capacity, including many SIDs and many LDCs. Leading States supporting the least ambitious timeline proposal were from high-capacity countries, including China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.
- Budget – reduced funding in recent years has resulted in a declining Trust Fund, which, on the current trajectory, could reach legally inoperable levels by 2028. The budget was used as a political football with those delaying agreement on the AR7 timeline, stating that without an agreed timeline, the budget cannot be approved.
- Climate modelling used by the IPCC engages insufficiently with equity and lacks engagement with alternative economic models beyond Western growth assumptions.
    - QUNO is one of the observers consistently raising concerns about unsustainable, dangerous and/or feasibly impossible levels of Carbon Dioxide Removal and Carbon Capture Storage in IPCC modelling.
- Use of Artificial Intelligence in reporting - this is a widespread concern and States found shared language on guidelines for use.

Progress during the IPCC 65th Plenary:

- Meeting Minutes/Reporting – With four IPCC Plenary Reports still in draft form, this issue found resolution and the past Plenary Reports will be finalized. Identification of individual delegations in official IPCC Reports will be reduced, addressing objections from a few countries which regularly raise negative concerns in the Plenary discussions and do not want their countries identified. However, transparency will continue through the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) which summarizes IPCC Plenaries for public reading and does align statements with speakers (country or observers).

Issues Remaining Unresolved at the IPCC 65th Plenary:

- The IPCC Budget – This includes the IPCC operating budget for 2026 as well as projected budgets for 2027 and 2028. Additionally, States were informed that the reduction of their funding to the IPCC could lead to a drawdown of the IPCC Trust Fund to a level that would render it legally inoperable by 2028. This discussion led to the first QUNO intervention (see below). The IPCC needs at least an approval of the 2026 budget to meet upcoming costs, and for this reason the IPCC 65th was 'suspended' so that the budget can be addressed virtually before Christmas.

- AR7 Working Group delivery timelines – It is unprecedented for the IPCC to be at this stage of an Assessment Report with no agreed dates for approval sessions. This problem is exacerbated by the upcoming 2nd GST, scheduled to happen at the November Climate COP33 in 2028. The Paris Agreement did not specify a specific alignment between the IPCC and GST, as the former usually needs seven years and the latter happens every five years. However, the alignment of the AR6 with the 1st GST resulted in a more ambitious GST than was expected.

This is either a joy or a threat to a State depending on their relationship with addressing root causes driving global warming, 80% of which is connected to fossil fuel extraction and burning.

Closing on Friday Night:

In a highly unusual step, the IPCC Chair Professor Jim Skea dramatically announced the suspension of the IPCC 65th Plenary. He stated that too many countries had already left the venue due to flight schedules, and the UN Venue itself had overtime restrictions. Without an agreed timeline, several countries refused to engage on the IPCC budget, creating a catch-22 situation.

The suspension was met with shock and frustration, as reflected in QUNO/FWCC's closing intervention. However, there was not enough flexibility and too few sufficiently diverse huddles in the room to find a solution in time for the closing of the venue. While past IPCC Plenaries are normally tense and run over time, this marked the first instance of a session being formally suspended.

The suspension enables the Chair to call a virtual continuation of the IPCC 65th Plenary before 1 January 2027. Agreement on the budget is essential for the IPCC to support financial commitments for Secretary staff and IPCC author meetings.

As QUNO/FWCC stated in its final statement, '*8 billion people need access to this assessed science. This is not a game. This is real life and people are already dying.'*

QUNO/FWCC Interventions:

During the IPCC 65th Plenary, QUNO was one of only three observers (European Union, Inuit Circumpolar and QUNO/FWCC) to give interventions during the week-long meeting. Despite hundreds of state interventions, three of the four QUNO/FWCC interventions were featured in the ENB Bulletin, reflecting a respect for our input.

QUNO/FWCC Plenary interventions by Lindsey Fielder Cook:

1) Relating to the IPCC Budget Crisis:

Thank you, Chair. As Quakers, we are speaking for the first time, so we wish to thank the IPCC Secretariat including Ko for her additional work, the Chair and IPCC teams for their intensive efforts, we thank the government of Ethiopia for hosting us in this beautiful land, and we send our warm congratulations to Annette for her appointment.

Thank you for this clear and sobering financial summary. We are mindful of the trauma across the UN system to fund life-giving efforts worldwide. We thank countries which have increased their IPCC contributions, and we ask delegates in this room to stress the critical IPCC budget situation to their decision makers. With overall funding for the UN decreasing, and annual military spending worldwide increasing now to 2.9 trillion US dollars, we note - for example -

that the cost of one B1 bomber is 2.1 billion US dollars, and the cost of one B1 bomb is 12 million, more than the IPCC budget for next year.

Colleagues, IPCC reports include options to healthily and equitably avert an existential crisis already happening. We ask you bring home determination to prioritize funding for life-giving efforts as with the IPCC. Thank you.

2) On the Progress Report of Working Group 2: Adaptation, Vulnerability and Impact

Thank you for these very helpful updates. We are grateful to hear of greater engagement to climate and health. We would be thankful to hear if you are building on AR6 WG2 findings on the positive role of rights-based approaches, and also how you hope to engage on the Advisory Opinion from International Court of Justice on States obligations on climate action, to help strengthen policies to support those most vulnerable.

3) In Response to Some States Questioning Agreed Term 'Gender'.

Thank you, Chair. We thank the Vice Chair and Gender Action team for this report. We have witnessed improvements already made at the IPCC over the last decade since our first IPCC Plenary. However, as recorded in the report, we see the need for improvements.

Therefore, we look forward to the effective implementation of recommendations, including the informal complaints mechanism. Chair, as a faith-based – possibly the only faith-based organization observer present at this IPCC Plenary, we welcome the term gender and the recognition and openness it gives to our human family.

4.) **In Response to the IPCC Chair Suspending the 65th Session.**

I wish to thank my brother from the Democratic Republic of Congo for speaking truth to power. For reminding us why we are here. We in this room are in a remarkable and highly privileged position to help our brothers and sisters – 8 billion of them – to better understand and act in time to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all – to quote the AR6.

There is a compromise in this room and it needs our humbleness. 8 billion people need access to this assessed science. This is not a game. This is real life and people are already dying. So let us be courageous now, tonight, speak for humanity, put aside our convincement, our ego, find the middle ground and create a way forward to ensure this science reaches the world. For the human family. There is still time.

Lindsey Fielder Cook
20 October 2026