EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TO THE
INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE RESEARCH
Fifty-second meeting
Videoconference
18 November 2021
Agenda item 5

Feedback received from Parties responding to the
survey on the organization of CoP-29

1. This document has been prepared by the IAI Directorate.

<u>Introduction</u>

2. The previous two Conference of the Parties, CoP-28 (Videoconference, 2020) and CoP-29 (Videoconference, 2021) were held via videoconference due to the travel restrictions posed by the advent of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). At the time of writing, it is probable that CoP-30 (2022) may also be held via videoconference.

3. As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its third year, it may be opportune to reflect on the effectiveness of virtual meetings and to consider possible improvements on its organization.

4. In light of the above, two surveys were developed by the IAI Directorate to seek feedback from Party participants to CoP-29 and from Directorate staff directly involved in the organization of and support to the meeting. The first and second surveys are available as Annex I and Annex II, respectively, to this document.

<u>Findings</u>

Participation to CoP-28 and CoP-29

5. When compiling the results of the survey to participants at CoP-29, the first obvious consequence of virtual meetings is the increase in Party participation. CoP-28 and CoP-29 counted with the participation of 14 Parties, with some delegations including up to four officials.

6. These numbers compare favorably with the number of participants in previous physical meetings of the Conference of the Parties: CoP-27 (Brasilia, 2019) counted on the participation of 10 Parties; CoP-26 (Antigua, Guatemala, 2018) counted on the participation of 12 Parties; and, CoP-25 (Bogotá, 2017) counted on the participation of 12 Parties.

7. However, the difficulty in establishing comparisons on the effectiveness of virtual vs face-to-face meetings should be noted. On the one hand, the casual discussions and opportunities for networking are absent in the virtual world. On the other hand, videoconferencing provides opportunities for participation by early career officials who would not attend a physical meeting.

8. The Directorate will consider the need to improve interaction between and among participants to increase communication and facilitate informal discussions.

Response rate

9. A total of 12 out of 14 Parties participating in CoP-29 completed the survey for a response rate of almost 86%. Such a high response rate may provide sufficient information to reconsider assumptions and expectations related to virtual IAI meetings.

Introduction question: Which Party are you representing?

10. The Americas were well represented by the 12 Parties completing the survey. However, the historical under-representation of regions such as the Caribbean indicates the need for the Directorate, with the assistance of Parties, to engage with non-Party States with a view to encourage ratifications to the *Agreement*.

Analyses of responses

Question 1: *Was this is your first participation in an IAI Conference of Parties?*

11. With regard to the first question, seven Parties answered affirmatively. A high number of Parties attending their first CoP may point to the need for the Directorate to provide in advance more information materials on topics to be discussed. It may also indicate the need for a dedicated IAI staff member to communicate directly with Parties that may have questions regarding use of electronic videoconferencing systems.

Question 2: *How familiar were you with IAI's mandate and work before attending CoP-29?*

12. Four Parties indicated strong familiarity with the with IAI's mandate and work. However, seven Parties replied that they only possessed general familiarity while one Party indicated little knowledge of the IAI's mandate and work. These replies reinforce the need for the dissemination of more general information materials on topics to be discussed and on the organization of the meeting.

13. A pre-meeting providing information on the CoP targeted to Parties with general or no familiarity of the IAI's mandate and work may be welcomed by participants. This would provide participants with opportunities for more in-depth preparation and deeper understanding of the issues to be discussed.

Question 3: *Did the organization of CoP-29 meet your expectations? If not, please list possible improvements to the organization of the meeting*

14. Eleven Parties replied affirmatively while one Party replied that the organization only partially met its expectations. Given that the replies were received anonymously, it is difficult for the Directorate to communicate directly with the Party expressing some dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, outreach will be made prior to future meetings to ensure that all Parties are fully satisfied with the organization of the meeting. It may also be important to reiterate what could be expected at a CoP, especially for novel participants.

Question 4: *Did the format and presentation of the official CoP-29 documentation meet your expectations? If not, please list possible improvements.*

15. Again, a large majority of Parties, 11 in total, replied affirmatively to question 4 with one Party expressing only partial satisfaction. Outreach will be made to better understand how the presentation of official documents can be further improved.

Question 5: *What was the most useful information or new knowledge that you gained from the CoP?*
a. How could this be applied to current issues in your country or to potentially inform future decisions in your country?

16. Eleven Parties provided feedback to question 5. The responses follow below:

- *Sobre las nuevas asociaciones como el proyecto SISSA y las iniciativas con participación de IAI con el modelo EPIC;* [About new partnerships with associations such as from the Project SISSA and initiatives with participation from the IAI in the model EPIC]
- *Poder planificar futuras decisiones;* [Ability to plan future decisions]
- *Las posibles colaboraciones entre países y postulaciones a concursos que podrían mejorar la información sobre cambio climático en nuestros países;* [Possible collaboration among countries and submissions to calls which could improve information on climate change in our countries]
- *Acciones regionales, especialmente destaco las acciones presentadas por el SAC y SPAC (Capacity building);* [Regional activities, especially those activities highlighted and presented by the SAC and SPAC (Capacity building]
- *La información más útil fue la presentación de las iniciativas del IAI. Esto nos puede ayudar a entender cómo podemos participar activamente en las actividades del IAI;* [The most useful information was the presentation on the activities fo the IAI. This can assist us to understand how we are able to participate actively in the activities of the IAI,
- *Sobre formación / capacitación /Programa STeP;* [About training/capacity building/STeP Program]
- *Los distintos informes de las actividades;* [The separate reports on activities]
- *La propuesta de EEUU sobre formación y coordinación de agencias y/o gobiernos. Ayudará en las políticas públicas y su aplicación;* [The proposal by the United States on training and coordination of agencies and/or governments. Will assist public policies and their application.
- *The achievements made since the previous CoP and the focus in particular how partnerships can be forged with the co-designing and development of capacity for regional climate assessment data and modelling, which would be significant in planning mitigation or adaptation strategies; addressing both these issues would address some of the gaps locally;*
- *Info on the Belmont Forum;* and
- *SAC/SPAC presentations were insightful and gave a great overview of the activities of the IAI.*

16. The variety of needs and topics of interest may reflect the heterogeneity of priorities in our regions. It may also lend support to the ongoing work on Decision XXIX/16 which *Instructs the IAI Directorate, in collaboration with the Parties, the SAC and the SPAC, to map the domestic and international global change policy and decision-making landscape through a regional assessment, subject to the availability of external resources.*

Question 6: *What did you learn from another Party that you think could be applied in your country?*

17. Only eight Parties replied to question 6, perhaps reflecting the open-ended nature of the information requested. The replies follow below:

- *La participación más activa en las iniciativas;* [More active participation in activities]
- *Reducción de gases de efecto invernadero;* [Reduction in greehouse gas]
- *En realidad no recuerdo que se realizó ese intercambio de experiencias entre países;* [In fact, I don't recall this exchange of experiences among the countries]
- *Programa STEP;* [STeP program]
- *Ejemplos de participación de las otras partes con el IAI;* [Examples of participation by other Parties with the IAI]
- *Las posibilidades de trabajo conjunto con relación a cambio climático;* [The possibilities for joint work with regard to climate chante]
- *Los proyectos presentados y su aplicación en políticas públicas;* [The presentation of projects and their application in public policies] and
- *The development of capacity and placement of STeP fellows locally and the process of implementation.*

18. The heterogeneity of the replies once again reflects the different priorities voiced by Parties. Perhaps offering Parties time during the meeting to present best practices and lessons learned in its work with the IAI may offer new sights and possible partnerships among and between governments in the region.

    Question 7: *What further information would you like to receive regarding IAI's work?*

19. Seven Parties provided feedback to this question. The small number of replies indicates the need for the Directorate to dedicate time to conducting the survey before concluding the CoP..

20. Many of the replies are related to requests for additional information on science-related and capacity building activities in the region and opportunities for collaboration, participation and financial support. The replies follow below:

    - *Información sobre desarrollo de capacidades;* [Information on capacity building]
    - *Proyectos financiados y a financiar;* [Projects with funding and to be funded]
    - *Quizás como tener un network de todas las partes y las investigaciones de todas las partes que se están desarrollando. Quizás se podría enviar algún boletín breve mensual con la última evidencia científica de los países que IAI está aportando;* [Perhaps having a network of all Parties and of research that all Parties are developing. Perhaps the dissemination of a brief monthly bulletin with the latest science evidence by Parties that is supported by the IAI]
    - *Acciones colaborativas regionales y de acciones para fortalecer la toma de decisiones basada en evidencia (políticas públicas basadas en ciencia);* [Regional collaborative activities and actions for strengthen evidence-based decision making (public policies based on Science)]

- *Me gustaría saber cómo el IAI puede apoyar el financiamiento de algún proyecto nacional;* [I would like to undestand how the IAI can financially support a national Project]
- *Los planes, actividades colaborativas, formativas de intercambio, a tiempo para participar;* [the plans, collaborative activities, exchange training sessions in-time to allow for participation] and*,*
- *Sería bueno tener en las CoP más presentaciones de proyectos como forma de estimular a otros países a desarrollar similares.* [It would be useful to have more presentations on projects during the CoP to promote other Parties to develop similar activities]

Question 8: How would you like to receive information from the IAI? Select all that apply.

- *Monthly newsletter;*
- *Official notifications via email to the Parties;*
- *Social media;*
- *IAI website;*
- *Announcements sent via the IAI email listserv;*
- *Zoom update meeting with Parties during the intercessional period;* and,
- *Other: Specify.*

21. Twelve Parties replied to question 8 perhaps reflecting the quantitative nature of the question. The replies follow below:

- *Monthly newsletter: 7;*
- *Official notifications via email to the Parties: 7;*
- *Social media:4;*
- *IAI website: 3;*
- *Announcements sent via the IAI email listserv: 6;*
- *Zoom update meeting with Parties during the intercessional period: 7.*

22. While the suggestion to continue with the dissemination of information via electronic means (newsletter, notifications, emails via IAI distribution lists, the website) should not be surprising, the high number of Parities suggesting *Zoom update meetings with Parties during the intercessional period* was unexpected.

23. The Directorate has implemented some of the recommendations, including the publication of a newsletter and a brief news item to Parties. The response to these initiatives has been positive. The Directorate will also discuss the possibility of update meetings with Parties, including participation by Parties in joint meetings of the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) and Science-Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC).

Question 9: *Would you like to make recommendations for improvement*?

24. Nine Parties provided information under this question. Some of the recommendations are related to the need to increase dissemination of information, per question 8 above. Other suggestions touch on the need to develop new categories of web-based services and information such as a calendar of activities and a catalog of past and ongoing projects. It is assumed that such a catalog would be database driven offering the ability to search, locate and retrieve needed project information. The replies follow below:

- *Creo que todo está bien estructurado;* [I believe everything is well organized]
- *Creo que la comunicación y difusión de las actividades de IAI que tienen un impacto a través de la newsletter sería muy bueno y un network que permita consultar sobre esas actividades. Calendario de eventos actualizado semestralmente;* [I believe that communication and dissemination on the activities of the IAI that have an impact would be beneficial and a network that would allow to perform queries on these activities. A calendar of events updated semi-annually]
- *Catálogo de acciones que permitan una estrategia para sumar más actores de cada país; 2. promocionar estas acciones desde las diferentes Oncyts de la región (para dar mayor visibilidad);* [A catalog of activities that would allow for a strategy to increase participation from each country; 2. Promote these actions from the different national organizations on science and technology in the region (to increase visibility);*Considero que deberían mostrar más y mejores cuadros en el tema financiero, agregando los aportes adicionales como gastos indirectos entre otros;* [I believe they should show more and improved charts on the financial issue, adding additional contributions such as in-kind contributions, among others]
- *Socializar las actividades del comité científico más regularmente;* [Socialize the activities of the scientific committee more regularly] and,
- *Fomentar los foros de capacitación y estimulación en el campo de la coordinación de programas y proyectos.* [Promote fora on capacity building and enhance the field of program and project coordination]
- *Considering the pandemic, I would like to congratulate the IAI and their translator on an excellent and useful meeting;* and,
- *Very well done. Thank you so much for organizing.*

25. The questionnaire to staff of the Directorate focused primarily on the preparation and challenges faced in the organization of a meeting via videoconferencing.

26. Some staff welcomed the organization of administrative meetings prior to the CoP, particularly those focusing on protocol and on how to address the Parties.

27. Other staff regretted not having sufficient time to prepare better presentation materials and other documentation.

28. Other questions focused on whether staff felt sufficient time was provided to Parties to discuss agenda items, such as the Core budget and the science and capacity building

programs. Given the challenges in keeping participant interest in electronic discussions, most staff felt that the time provided was adequate.

Conclusion

29. The organization of IAI meetings, especially meetings of the Conference of the Parties and also Executive Council, via video conferencing provides many new opportunities but also challenges. Increased participation and lower costs, for example, were informally mentioned by several Parties. However, the difficulties in establishing closer personal relations and organizing discussions in venues other than the meeting space are many and may impact on how quickly collaboration may be established by members of the IAI community.

30. At the time of writing, it is unknown when if ever, Parties will be able to resume their traditional physical meetings. It is imperative, therefore, that the Directorate takes into account feedback provided by Parties to create the most receptive meeting spaces possible, physical or virtual.

Recommendation

31. The Executive Council is invited to take note of this report.

Annex I

Introduction question: Which Party are you representing?

1. Was this your first participation in an IAI Conference of Parties?
Yes
No

2. How familiar were you with IAI's mandate and work before attending CoP-29?
Not familiar
Somewhat familiar
Very familiar

3. Did the organization of CoP-29 meet your expectations?
Yes
Partially
No
If not, please list possible improvements

4. Did the format and presentation of the official CoP-29 documentation meet your expectations?
Yes
Partially
No
If not, please list possible improvements.

5. What was the most useful information or new knowledge that you gained from the CoP? How could this be applied to current issues in your country or to potentially inform future decisions in your country?

6. What did you learn from another Party that you think could be applied in your country?

7. What further information would you like to receive regarding IAI's work?

8. How would you like to receive information from the IAI? Mark as many as apply
Monthly newsletter
 Official notifications via email to the Parties
Social media
IAI website
Announcements sent via the IAI email listserv
Zoom update meeting with Parties during the intercessional period
Other
If other, please specify:

9. Would you like to make recommendations for improvement?

Annex II

1. What were your expectations for the CoP-29 regarding your role in planning, organizing and carrying off?

2. Did you feel sufficiently prepared for the CoP? If not, what could have been improved?

3. What would you have done differently or would like to have been different (apart from the event being virtual as opposed to in person)?

4. Is there a skill you would like to gain for next time or tool you think would be useful for organizing or carrying of the CoP?

5. What can be done to improve discussion with participants in a virtual CoP?

6. Do you believe the time for discussions on budget and finances was:
Adequate
Insufficient
Excessive

7. Do you believe the time for discussions on science programs was:
Adequate
Insufficient
Excessive

8. Do you believe the time for discussions on capacity building was:
Adequate
Insufficient
Excessive