

IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report – The Key Messages

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Abstract: IPCC's latest assessment provides a new, risk-based framework for organizing decision-making by governmental as well as private actors. While previous reports have underscored the dynamic nature of climate hazards (e.g., probability of heat waves, drought, and sea level rise increasing over time), this report points to the importance to risk assessment of the evolving behavior of social and ecological vulnerability and exposure to climate hazards. An evaluation of the "headroom" remaining between the amount of carbon already in the atmosphere and the amount which precludes likely attaining the so-called two-degree objective reveals a narrow window of opportunity for implementation of emissions reducing policies and other actions to attain this goal. This reality in turn focuses attention on the need for a panoply of options for reducing risk, including development of low-carbon, zero-carbon, and net-negative emission technologies as well as an enhanced focus on adaptation. A key issue not assessed, but on the agenda for governments, is the design and role of future IPCC assessments.