



## Preparing for climate change

# Put shoulder to the wheel

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**T**HE Earth is warming and climate is changing. Scientific evidence in favour of these developments is overwhelming and the consequences of climate change are unfolding. Even a few years ago, it could not be foreseen that climate change would be taking place as fast as it is now. Of course climate variability occurs over time, even during a day and spatially in the process of natural climatic evolution, i.e. without human interventions. But, the kind of climate change that we are now witnessing is mostly anthropogenic. It is due to the increasing global warming over a long time caused by increasing emissions of greenhouse gases as a result of human activities such as burning of fossil fuel, productive activities, transportation, marketing, land use, deforestation and various other activities.

Climate change manifests itself in natural disasters of various types. These include devastating floods, droughts, cyclones, and hurricanes. Both the number and the intensity of

these natural disasters are now increasing around the world. In Arctic and Antarctic regions, highlands and elsewhere ice is melting fast. The sea level is rising. Biodiversity is eroding widely. These disasters are causing widespread adverse impact on both natural and socio-economic systems.

After Bangladesh has been hit by two major floods and a devastating cyclone Sider in 2007, a question has often been asked: have these natural disasters been caused by climate change? Both the floods and the cyclone have occurred at times of the year when such disasters can naturally occur in Bangladesh. From a scientific point of view it cannot, therefore, be said for sure that these have been directly caused by climate change. But, it can be said with a high degree of confidence that these are related to the evolving climate change. This is because one calendar year saw three major natural disasters in Bangladesh, of which there is no known past record. Also, in various regions of the world intense precipitation, floods, cyclones, hurricanes and other natural disasters have recently been occurring in increasing numbers. At the same time, ice is melting fast everywhere at resides. Considering all these developments, it can be said that climate change is clearly accelerating. The manner and numbers in which these natural disasters are occurring around the world are in tune with the likely pattern predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It is almost certain that in future devastating natural disasters will occur more frequently in various regions of the world and in various countries. Why, because the process of global warming is accelerating.

INTRODUCING IPCC: I shall often use here the findings of the IPCC, particularly its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) published in 2007. A brief introduction to the IPCC may, therefore, be in order. The IPCC was awarded Nobel Peace Prize for 2007, jointly with former US Vice President Al Gore. It was established in 1987 within the framework of the United Nations as an intergovernmental body to review the science and implications of climate change to provide a basis for policies and actions to be

designed and implemented to address the issues. It is jointly managed by UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The First Assessment Report was published in 1990, the Second in 1995 and the Third in 2001.

An assessment is divided into three broad aspects, each dealt with by what is known as a Working Group (WG). WG I deals with the science of climate change; WG II with climate change impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability; and WG III with mitigation of climate change. The outcome of the work of each WG is a major report, which includes a main report, a technical summary and a summary for policy-makers (SPM). A synthesis report is also prepared covering all the three WG reports. In addition, special reports are also prepared on certain key issues as deemed necessary.

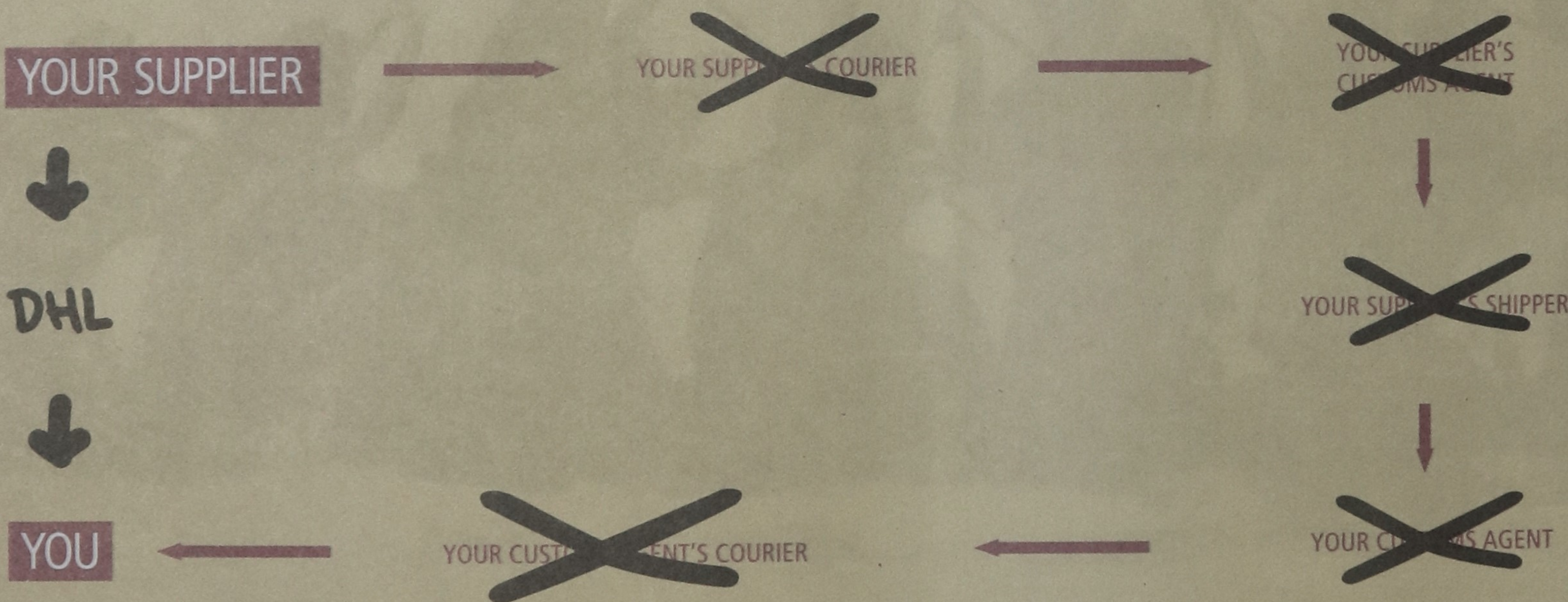
These reports are prepared by experts drawn from all around the world but it is the governments which finally have to accept them. Once a report is finalized, a meeting

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