

## Position Statement on Climate Change

The IRI advocates that “Climate Change” be included in the agendas of decision- and policy-makers as an **issue of the present**, directly linked to sustainable socioeconomic development. Scenarios of the climate state expected 50 to 100 years from now have raised awareness and motivated actions towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and in light of the potential risks associated with climate change these mitigation efforts must continue. However, the long time horizons involved lead many decision-makers to regard climate change as a problem of the distant future and to assign it a correspondingly low priority. Decision-makers working in both public and private sectors confront problems of greater immediacy, with strong incentives that actions taken be seen as effective during their tenure.

Many of the anticipated impacts of climate change relate to changes in climate variability, including more frequent and damaging extreme events. Our premise is that increasing resilience to short-term variability increases adaptive capacity to deal with longer-term climate change. We promote the establishment of **climate risk assessment and proactive risk management strategies** – as opposed to “reactive crisis management” actions – identifying policies and practices that help to reduce socioeconomic vulnerability to adverse climate conditions, while taking advantage of favorable climate conditions. Climate risk management strategies also include the transfer of risks associated with climate variability, for example, through the establishment of adequate insurance programs.

Year-to-year climate fluctuations and associated risks for many regions are large. Moreover, predictability of the climate system has been demonstrated for this time scale. Changes are occurring in the background climate as well, however, and these may have serious consequences for many sectors of society. We seek to improve the management of climate variability by explicitly taking into consideration this slowly changing background. Some decisions require climate information beyond the seasonal-to-interannual timescale, which implies the use of different tools and methodologies to supply that information. For example, planning decisions for transportation infrastructure projects or water reservoir design require information on both the mean climate and the likely characteristics of its variability over the next 10 to 30 years. Such “near-term climate change” can be addressed through the analysis of observed trends and variability, careful consideration of projected trends and variability, and assessment of the implications of the expected range of climate variations for the specific region and sector under consideration.

In its work, the IRI brings reliable climate information to bear on planning and risk management activities, through collaborative work with the appropriate local, national and/or regional decision-making institutions and individuals. Based on our experience and interactions with partners in climate risk management, we have adopted a three-pronged approach towards addressing climate change: First, build adaptive capacity through appropriate management of year-to-year climate variability. Second, recognize that year-to-year climate variability is superimposed on a slowly evolving background climate, and present observed and forecast information in such a way that longer-term trends can be disentangled from shorter-term variability. Third, provide appropriate information on near-term climate change associated with both ongoing trends and decadal-scale fluctuations.