

IPBES-2 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 17 APRIL 2012

The second session of the plenary meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) entered its second day in Panama City, Panama. In the morning, delegates continued to consider the modalities and institutional arrangements for an IPBES, including functions and structures of bodies that might be established, and the structure and composition of subsidiary bodies of the plenary. In the afternoon, delegates continued to deliberate on two proposed options for the structure and composition of subsidiary bodies of the plenary, and later discussed rules of procedure for the meetings of the platform's plenary. The Chair adjourned the session early to allow delegates to read the Chair's draft text on rules of procedure for the plenary of the platform. In the evening, the Government of Kenya hosted a dinner reception to promote Nairobi as a candidate for hosting the platform's secretariat.

MODALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF BODIES: On the plenary function of taking into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as, *inter alia*, indigenous peoples and local communities and the private sector, INDIA, supported by CANADA, suggested deletion of references to specific stakeholders. The US supported retaining references to specific actors, including indigenous peoples, highlighting that some of them are not stakeholders but rights-holders. ETHIOPIA, BOLIVIA, VENEZUELA, NORWAY, MEXICO, GUATEMALA and others supported, and delegates eventually agreed to, retain reference to indigenous "peoples" and local communities.

On the plenary function of establishing a mechanism to ensure the active and efficient participation of civil society in the plenary, the EU opposed a new mechanism, saying that effective use of existing arrangements should be fostered. INDONESIA suggested deleting the text, highlighting that all relevant stakeholders should participate in the plenary and not only civil society. SWITZERLAND, supported by NORWAY, the EU, MEXICO and COLOMBIA, suggested, and delegates eventually agreed, to delete reference to a mechanism and keep reference to a plenary function of ensuring active and efficient participation of civil society.

On the plenary approving a budget and overseeing the allocation of the trust fund or funds, BRAZIL said both options are acceptable as long as it is understood that funds would not be earmarked. The US and the EU suggested focusing on a fund, rather than multiple funds. Delegates eventually agreed to refer to a single fund.

Administrative functions: INDIA and the US suggested deleting reference to reviewing the platform's rules and procedures, noting overlap with language already agreed on reviewing progress in the implementation of the plenary decisions. ETHIOPIA, MEXICO and the PHILIPPINES opposed, and delegates eventually agreed to retain it.

Delegates removed brackets and adopted outstanding text on reviewing the management of resources and observance of financial rules and reporting to plenary.

Scientific and technical functions: Delegates debated language regarding a section on who to engage in the work programme. PAKISTAN, the US, BRAZIL, and AUSTRALIA initially expressed opposition to the section, saying further discussion on IPBES' entities involved should precede the decision on engagement. A number of countries opined that the functions would apply to any subsidiary body decided upon. Ultimately, plenary agreed to accept an amended text engaging the "scientific community and other knowledge holders." AUSTRALIA noted the platform had a responsibility to engage both science and policy communities and emphasized addressing engagement with policy makers elsewhere in the work of the platform. On technology transfer, some delegates felt this was beyond the scope of IPBES, or otherwise duplicative of other MEAs, stating its focus is on assessments and improving understanding, while others emphasized the importance of technology transfer in capacity building. After a number of proposals and edits to language, delegates agreed on IPBES' function to "explore approaches to facilitating technology transfer and sharing in the context of assessment, knowledge generation and capacity building according to the work programme." The text remained bracketed, pending consultation by the US with their capital.

Structure and composition of subsidiary bodies of the plenary: Delegates discussed two options for the structure of subsidiary bodies that may be established by the plenary. The first would consist of a single subsidiary body with an expanded Bureau which would include a Chair, four Vice-Chairs and additional members, respecting geographical, gender and

disciplinary balance and other stakeholders. The second option would involve two subsidiary bodies: a small Bureau composed of a Chair and Vice-Chairs to oversee administrative functions, and a larger science panel that would carry out the scientific and technical functions.

Chair Watson said that the subsidiary bodies would be responsible for carrying out the administrative and scientific functions of the workshop as defined in the document on functions and structures of bodies that might be established under an IPBES (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/3).

TURKEY, the EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina, for EASTERN EUROPE, NORWAY, MEXICO, CUBA, EGYPT, SWITZERLAND, NORWAY and others, supported the first option, citing that this would allow coherence in work, be less cumbersome. EGYPT said discussions of additional options would be time consuming. The EU, with NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, recommended an executive committee to support the single subsidiary body.

JAPAN, BRAZIL, the US, CHINA, THAILAND, INDONESIA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, MEXICO, NEW ZEALAND and others, supported the second option consisting of two subsidiary bodies, suggesting this would facilitate efficiency in administration and foster the independence of the scientific functions. NEW ZEALAND emphasized the need for the scientific body to be inclusive of interdisciplinary expertise, such as economists. PERU said that there was a need to define the roles of each of the two subsidiary bodies. AUSTRALIA, supported by CANADA, recommended that the science panel be renamed to ensure that it is indeed multi-disciplinary and can include political sciences. BRAZIL, with the US, said the two subsidiary bodies can meet regularly as is common with other MEAs where such meetings coincide with COP meetings, and inferred this option could be as cost efficient as a single subsidiary body. The US said that having two subsidiary bodies would ensure a good level of participation of observer organizations.

Ghana, for the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by INDIA, questioned the ability of a larger bureau to perform the policy and science functions in addition to administration and noted the second option's lack of emphasis on the science-policy interface. He proposed a third "hybrid" option, with emphasis on the science-policy interface. AUSTRALIA suggested the African proposal could be a way forward and urged giving greater consideration to whether the bureau chair and vice-chairs would automatically be part of the panel. She highlighted the plenary should provide policy-relevant information but not deliver policy-prescriptive. Chair Watson confirmed that this is consistent with the Busan Outcome.

CHILE suggested having a secretariat and a scientific committee but requested more time to consider the options. BOLIVIA concurred though inclined to a single subsidiary body, and offered to provide a chapeau on the roles of the subsidiary bodies. SAUDI ARABIA said IPBES could begin with one subsidiary body and be flexible to include others within the course of its tenure. SWITZERLAND drew attention to the interconnection between the structure and the deliverables.

The CBD Secretariat suggested that regardless of the option selected it is necessary that the structure is capable of attracting the best scientists to participate in IPBES.

Chair Watson said he will prepare a document integrating views expressed by countries thus far.

Function of the secretariat: Delegates worked to clean text in this section, but postponed discussion on issues linked to the decisions on potential subsidiary bodies. Countries agreed the secretariat would manage the trust "fund" rather than "funds." On the secretariat's institutional arrangements, delegates emphasized their preference for a single central secretariat for administrative functions, citing cost savings, bureaucratic simplicity, and an ability for administrative support to be readily available, as practical reasons for this option. However, JAPAN, INDONESIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, the US, BOLIVIA, MEXICO, CHINA, and SWITZERLAND also underlined the need for regional structures to support the secretariat and attract collaboration from other entities. BRAZIL requested the concept for regional hubs to address substantive issues, such as capacity building and assessments, be reflected in the proceedings. SWITZERLAND suggested that the secretariat have the responsibility for liaising and/or coordinating with networked hubs. Delegates agreed to structure the secretariat as a single central entity, and accepted that the secretariat would "explore networking with regional and thematic technical structures."

Financial and other contributions: Delegates agreed to text on encouraging in kind contributions from Governments, the scientific community, other knowledge-holders and stakeholders, and accepted Canada's proposal for additional language stating the contributions would come without conditionalities.

RULES OF PROCEDURE: Chair Watson briefly opened the issue to introduce the Chair's draft text on the rules of procedure for the plenary of the platform (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/CRP.2) compiled per plenary's request. Delegates requested time to reflect on the document and agreed to adjourn plenary early to allow extra time for deliberation on the issue.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The second day of the Panama meeting was productive as delegates in plenary began to address some of the key outstanding issues for establishing an IPBES. However, the prolific exchange of diverse views may signal that significant work will be required to craft the necessary decisions in time for Saturday evening.

Meanwhile, the competition amongst countries to host the IPBES secretariat has reached a high level of intensity. The method by which the selection will take place, announced on Monday, was conjured up due to the impasse in finding consensus following bids from Republic of Korea, Kenya, Germany, France and India. It will follow a format familiar to fans of reality television, whereby the winner will be chosen via a contest involving sequential eliminations of the least popular presenter – as deemed by their peer delegates. Facing stiff competition, and no sign of anyone withdrawing, the competitors will appear on "stage" in plenary on Wednesday morning, making their final pitch for delegates' vote. "Is this the UN's take on American Idol?" posed one cheerful young participant. The anticipation is building!

Potential host countries have been attempting to woo delegates with sophisticated dinner receptions and handing out promotional materials. As one delegate mused, "it feels like a car show" and joked "I need to decide if I want a Renault, Hyundai, Matatu, Volkswagen or a Tata? But when actually asked upon what criteria a delegation might make their votes, some turned serious. "The host country must be geographically biodiverse," said one, while others said that "what really matters is the country's commitment to biodiversity protection policies." Audiences are asked to tune in on Thursday evening when the final vote will be cast!