

## IPBES-2 HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 2012

The second session of the plenary meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) entered its fourth day in Panama City, Panama. In the morning, delegates met to discuss rules of procedure. At lunch, informal groups met to discuss regional groupings to be used for the bureau and the multi-disciplinary expert panel (MEP). In the afternoon, delegates continued to discuss proposed options regarding the structure and composition of subsidiary bodies of the plenary. During an evening session, plenary voted to decide what country will host the IPBES secretariat.

### RULES OF PROCEDURE

In the morning, delegates continued discussing rules of procedure regarding admission of observers. Noting the extensive debate on this section on Wednesday evening, Chair Watson introduced a proposal by AUSTRALIA, setting out that the UNEP GC rules of procedure, which have guided previous meetings on an IPBES, be used provisionally for the first plenary of IPBES but that rules would be developed in that plenary for future meetings. ARGENTINA, supported by CHINA, proposed that admission of observers be governed provisionally by the IPCC rules of procedure. NORWAY, CANADA, JAPAN, MEXICO, and SOUTH AFRICA supported the Australian proposal, with CANADA noting the IPCC's rules could be considered for the permanent negotiations. Delegates eventually agreed to Australia's proposal as an interim measure, and thus subsequent sections specifying rules on observers' notification and attendance were removed.

Under representation, credentials and accreditation, delegates agreed on text describing the structure of delegations. On credentialing authority, countries expressed concern for minimizing the bureaucratic processes faced by delegates, while still ensuring participants' legal authority within the IPBES plenary. BRAZIL, US, JAPAN, CANADA, the EU, CHILE, AUSTRALIA, CAMBODIA, and COLOMBIA preferred credentialing to be done by an "appropriate Government authority." CHILE and AUSTRALIA emphasized the importance of national sovereignty in this decision-making. MEXICO, supported by BOLIVIA, PAKISTAN, GUATEMALA, SAUDI ARABIA, INDONESIA, INDIA, and NEPAL preferred that

credentials be issued by a "head of State or Government or minister of foreign affairs. MEXICO, supported by ETHIOPIA and PERU, suggested that "as appropriate, a competent government authority," can enable credentialing. GHANA, with SOUTH AFRICA, emphasized ensuring empowered credentials for future IPBES decision-making. ARGENTINA proposed compromise text "on behalf of a head of State/Government" which was supported by the UN legal advisor, and CHILE. Chair Watson asked for agreement on compromise text including both the Mexican and Argentinian language. Delegates agreed to work from the new text, deleting previous options, but it was maintained in brackets to allow the US to consult with its capital. The US also requested adding "regional economic integration organizations" in brackets.

Delegates addressed two options on examination of credentials: a first option stating the bureau shall examine the credentials and submit a report to the plenary; and a second option stating that the plenary will establish a credentials' committee and that final decisions regarding credentials rest with the plenary. The US suggested leaving the name of the bureau in brackets pending decision on its name and replacing "shall" with "will." MEXICO, ETHIOPIA and NORWAY opposed the latter, and eventually both terms remained in brackets.

Draft text on participation and credentials stated that representatives of plenary members are entitled to participate pending a decision by the plenary to accept their credentials and these representatives shall not have the right to vote until their credentials are accepted, the US suggested replacing the right to "vote" by the right to "participate in decisions in the plenary, including casting votes and joining or blocking consensus." BOLIVIA opposed this replacement, and delegates eventually agreed to China's proposal to replace the right to "vote" with the right to "make decisions."

### SUBSIDIARY BODY FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES

Chair Watson introduced a proposal defining the two bodies to be established: a "bureau" and a "multidisciplinary scientific expert panel." The bureau would comprise the chair, four vice chairs and one additional participant per UN region primarily selected to perform administrative functions, giving a total of 10 participants. The participants of the multidisciplinary scientific expert panel would be selected to perform scientific and technical functions, either: from each UN region, giving a total of 25-35 selected participants; or from a specified set of

alternative regions, giving a total of 25-30 selected participants. On delineating regions, he listed possible alternatives, including IUCN's system; CITES' system; and Brazil's proposal on biogeographic regions. He suggested a modified CITES structure of regions could be useful.

On the title of the "multidisciplinary scientific expert panel," CHINA, ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA and others suggested, and CHILE, the EU, COLOMBIA and others opposed, deleting the word "scientific" to provide a broader approach. Delegates eventually agreed to "multidisciplinary expert panel" (MEP) and to define the terms in the relevant section of definitions under the rules of procedure.

On bureau composition, the US requested clarification on text on the additional participants per UN region. NORWAY stressed that they were unwilling to support additional participants, citing cost concerns. EGYPT and ARGENTINA proposed adopting the CBD's bureau composition, of two persons from each geographical region.

CHINA called for precision on the administrative function of the bureau within the text, and SWITZERLAND suggested cross-referencing paragraphs on the functions of the bureau and the MEP. MEXICO, supported by NORWAY, proposed five permanent representatives of the bureau with an alternate for each. CHINA suggested returning to the bureau composition proposed in the first session of a chair and four vice chairs.

In the afternoon session, Chair Watson reported on the lunchtime friends of the chair meeting, which discussed possible options for regional representation and number of members of the MEP, as well as the number of representatives per region.

BRAZIL, supported by the US, preferred biogeographical regions saying the MEP required independence from national interests to maintain its role, whereas the interests of countries will be preserved in the plenary where formal decision-making will be made. SWITZERLAND and FIJI supported a modification of the CITES structure with an amendment of the region of Asia and Oceania to read Asia and Pacific. MEXICO favored a non-UN regionalization, including the modified CITES structure.

CHINA said that the MEP should have its own chair. SWITZERLAND said having the same chair for the MEP and the bureau would ensure consistency within IPBES and, supported by PAKISTAN, suggested rotation of chairmanship among the vice chairs. JAPAN said without precision of the MEP it would not be possible to operationalize the IPBES.

The AFRICAN GROUP, NORWAY, ETHIOPIA, THAILAND, INDIA, SOUTH AFRICA and others, preferred using UN regions as an interim option in order to allow the operationalization of the platform until the IPBES plenary proposes alternative arrangements. The EU and BRAZIL supported the biogeographical approach, but said they could go along with the UN regions on an interim basis. The US and JAPAN said they could support the approach of UN regions on an interim basis, with the US urging the adoption of the MEP.

On numbers of representatives per region, AFRICA, SWITZERLAND, BRAZIL, FIJI and others preferred equal number of representatives while the US, PAKISTAN and others called for varied numbers of representatives.

CHINA, supported by BOLIVIA, requested more time and intersessional work to consider regionalization and number of members. BOLIVIA said intersessional work should include workshops, while CHINA suggested all the options be reflected

in the meeting's report so they could be considered again in the first IPBES plenary session, after the intersessional work. Chair Watson suggested the UN regions be adopted as an interim approach, including defining a maximum period within which a decision must be made, as well as defining details on the intersessional work. CHINA opposed, saying the interim arrangement should remain another "option on the table."

SOUTH AFRICA countered that the chair's summary does not exclude future options, and CHILE emphasized the underlying need for IPBES is to protect against ever increasing biodiversity loss, suggesting delegates should let this motivate their work.

CHINA proposed stopping discussion on this topic. Chair Watson prompted China for an alternative way forward, noting that all negotiations are contingent upon this issue. CHINA cautioned against making a "hasty" decision and expressed preference to make decisions at the first IPBES plenary.

Chair Watson stated he would prepare a new non-paper outlining the three options and possible ways forward, noting that this issue must be decided before other issues can be discussed. On the three options, he said the plenary could establish a MEP; establish a MEP with an interim arrangement, for example based on the UN regions; or not establish the MEP, noting, however, that the majority of countries supported the interim arrangement. The US, with CHILE, agreed with the Chair and supported ending the discussion. JAPAN asked the chair to outline the different time frames implied by the options in his non-paper given that China's suggestion would require waiting until the first plenary to re-open the rules of procedure, while the Chair's proposal would allow the election of officers at the first plenary.

### **SELECTION OF HOST COUNTRY FOR IPBES SECRETARIAT**

Chair Watson shared the report of the bureau on credentials noting that out of the 103 states present, 92 states had valid credentials, five had credentials that were not in order, while six had not submitted credentials and were thus ineligible to vote. After the first round of voting, there was no clear majority winner and India was removed from the ballot as the country receiving the fewest votes. After the second round there was still no majority, and France was removed from the ballot. Following the third round, there was no majority, and Kenya was removed from the ballot. In the fourth and final round, Germany won with 47 votes while Republic of Korea had 43. The plenary gave a round of applause to all five countries involved in the competition.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

As the meeting nears the end of its allotted time, there remains several key outstanding issues, including the status of the EU's membership, regional representation, and elements of the work programme and of the rules of procedure. Some have expressed concern about the pace of the meeting. As one delegate quipped, "if we don't get this done in time, we could end up with the awkward situation of having a home for a non-existent secretariat!" Another pointed out that "although there was talk of intersessional work today, there is as yet no 'next session' in sight." At the end of an intense night of voting, some speculated that the selection of a host country might provide a "champion" needed to push things forward. We will see if the selection of Germany can add the necessary energy and focus that will be needed to turn IPBES "from paper to platform."