

IPBES-1 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2011

The first session of the plenary meeting on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reconvened today in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates resumed discussions on the possible functions and structures of bodies that might be established under the platform, with the morning session being focused on issues of membership, the tasks of the chair and vice-chairs of IPBES and criteria for their selection. The afternoon's discussion considered the creation of subsidiary bodies of the plenary and their possible functions, structure and composition. Delegates also initiated discussions on the rules of procedure.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Yeon-chul Yoo (Republic of Korea) was elected as a vice-chair for Asia and the Pacific region.

MODALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN IPBES

FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF BODIES TO BE ESTABLISHED: Opening the second day of the plenary meeting on an IPBES, Chair Robert Watson reconvened plenary to resume the previous day's discussions.

Membership of the platform: The US and the EU questioned what the membership status of regional economic integration organizations will be. BRAZIL cautioned that the opportunity for open participation raises uncertainty as to whether parties will be bound by decisions taken in plenary or under other bodies. MEXICO and BOLIVIA for Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, suggested that parties should indicate their membership, but that the process should be as simple as possible and, together with BRAZIL, raised the issue of whether membership to UN agencies should be the basis for membership to the platform. MEXICO suggested distinguishing between membership of nation states and participation of other organizations. EGYPT asked for clarification on the differences between membership of the plenary and that of the platform. Noting that there is still a need for further clarification, Chair Watson established a Friends of the Chair group chaired by vice-chair Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias to reach consensus on text regarding membership.

In the afternoon, Dias reported back to plenary that the Friends of the Chair group had deliberated on the issue of membership to the platform over lunch but not on the issues of participation in the plenary. He noted that: there was an agreement that membership to IPBES will not be compulsory; there was a consensus for states are to signal their willingness to become members; that differing views on the rules determining

states' membership to the platform still remain and further consultations are needed. The group will resume deliberations on Wednesday during lunch.

Functions of the platform: Chair Watson explained that some functions presented in document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/4 were agreed to in Busan, while others are new. The US, supported by BRAZIL, proposed that priorities for action should be set only in response to the requests from governments. The US further suggested that plenary should only approve executive summaries. The Society on Conservation Biology, opposed by BRAZIL and International Council for Science (ICSU), noted that line-by-line approval of major reports may deter scientists' participation. The EU emphasized, *inter alia*, flexibility in designing the scope of assessments and that the plenary should define a broad scope for possible working groups' activities. CUBA stressed defining financial arrangements for undertaking the relevant activities. MEXICO asked for priority to be given to developing countries' needs and requests. INDONESIA, with SOUTH AFRICA, emphasized capacity building and transfer of technology. CHINA said the type of outputs and actions that plenary will take need to be clarified. BRAZIL and ARGENTINA argued that there should be a procedure for the acceptance of membership. The Secretariat will redraft the discussed paragraphs based on the comments received.

Officers of the plenary: GHANA, for the African Group, opposed by BRAZIL, felt that the platform could be better served by having two co-chairs, with a developed and developing country representative respectively, and three vice-chairs. MEXICO, supported by SWITZERLAND, called for the term length of officers to be clearly defined. COLOMBIA stressed the need for a high level of technical and scientific expertise. NORWAY, with the African Group and BRAZIL, favored appointing the chair and vice-chairs on a rotational basis.

Chair Watson introduced the functions of the key officers of the platform, noting that these would have to be specified in the rules of procedure to avoid ambiguity. SWITZERLAND noted that the tasks set out should be divided among the chair and vice-chairs and, with GHANA, that the task of presiding over subsidiary bodies should be assigned to the vice-chairs. The US requested that the text on the functions of the chair, which include presiding over subsidiary bodies; acting as representative at international meetings; and carrying outreach activities remain bracketed until the work programme has been determined. CHINA questioned these roles for the chair and suggested that the secretariat implement these functions. JAPAN noted that a chair with suitable scientific qualifications should represent the platform. BRAZIL cautioned against duplication of roles and tasks in the bureau and the secretariat.

On the criteria for selecting chairs and vice-chairs, delegates suggested several amendments and deletions to the text. Supported by many parties, BRAZIL urged that IPBES, as an intergovernmental body, should guide governments in nominating candidates rather than devising selection criteria. INDONESIA and many others highlighted the importance of the chair understanding the dynamics, leading and gaining consensus. The US suggested including reference to experience with assessments along with the criterion on scientific experience. BOLIVIA urged referencing ecosystem functions, resilience and adaptation, and to understanding the role and knowledge of indigenous groups. Chair Watson asked the Secretariat to restructure the text for revision in plenary.

Functions of subsidiary bodies: COLOMBIA, supported by the EU and EGYPT, suggested including only a short list of functions that are characterized by the type of function. The EU noted that the governance structure should be able to address, *inter alia*, intersessional issues and the bureau's terms of reference should include both administrative and scientific requirements. MEXICO supported establishing two subsidiary bodies, one with administrative functions and the other with technical and scientific functions. EGYPT said that the functions of subsidiary bodies should be determined before defining the governance structure.

CHILE supported separating administrative, technical and scientific functions, and proposed establishing a communication body. ARGENTINA proposed minimizing the level of bureaucracy and establishing an executive body with full participation from developing countries. The African Group, SWITZERLAND and NORWAY supported establishing a bureau and an executive committee. THAILAND preferred establishing three subsidiary bodies with a science panel as an *ad-hoc* open-ended forum.

BRAZIL said that the bureau is not a subsidiary body of the plenary and added that the plenary will decide which subsidiary bodies will be necessary to undertake its duties. The US noted that much of these determinations will depend on the programme of work. Chair Watson and the IPCC representative explained the institutional structure of IPCC and its evolution highlighting, *inter alia*, that the executive committee has been established as a subset of the IPCC Bureau to undertake intersessional activities.

CUBA for the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), supported the creation of only one subsidiary body and, with JAPAN and BRAZIL, stressed the need for flexibility when establishing subsidiary bodies. JAPAN cautioned against having a bureau and a plenary with overlapping tasks. COLOMBIA called for a scientific body as a subsidiary body. The EU favored creating one subsidiary body with scientific involvement.

BRAZIL stressed that IPBES is not only concerned with assessments. He highlighted that the platform could benefit from a regional structure as biodiversity is specific to each region.

With MEXICO and INDONESIA, he further noted that considerations on capacity building and technology transfer should be included. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, on behalf of the Central and Eastern European Group, said that the subsidiary body should have administrative and technical functions and that scientific issues could be dealt with by working groups. IUCN asked delegates to consider the role of relevant NGOs. ICSU, with the United Nations University, suggested creating three subsidiary bodies: a bureau; a scientific panel; and a review panel. REPUBLIC OF KOREA, supported Japan and Brazil, highlighted the importance of a science panel along either one or two subsidiary bodies. Chair Watson asked the Secretariat to redraft text linking possible functions, structures and individual bodies.

Secretariat: The EU, the US, with others emphasized that the secretariat should not be an implementing body but carry out administrative functions for plenary and other bodies. NORWAY and SWITZERLAND called for a "lean" secretariat. BRAZIL proposed distributing the secretariat's functions to various international organizations, opposed by COLOMBIA and AUSTRALIA. NORWAY, INDONESIA and the US emphasized

the need to ensure the secretariat's independence. Chair Watson asked the secretariat to redraft text, noting a tendency towards supporting one central hub and a lean secretariat.

Trust fund: Chair Watson noted the need to define "a whole series of rules" for its operation. COLOMBIA, MEXICO, ARGENTINA and CHILE said it is important that the plenary can decide on the use of resources and, with NORWAY, welcomed contributions from the private sector and other stakeholders as long as these resources are not earmarked. NORWAY also highlighted the role of in-kind contributions. The African Group supported the Busan outcome, recommending the need to ensure large financial support to IPBES. VENEZUELA urged that contributions to the fund be voluntary and rejected private sector contributions. BOLIVIA, for ALBA, asked to postpone the decision on the role of the private sector.

On the evaluation of the operation of the platform, MEXICO asked for a more specific understanding of the evaluation process and INDONESIA noted the relation with legal issues. Chair Watson suggested broadening the scope and modalities of evaluation when considering the rules of procedures.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE PLATFORM'S PLENARY:

The UNEP Secretariat introduced document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/5 on the rules of procedure for the platform's plenary. ARGENTINA, supported by the US, BRAZIL and several others, highlighted that the platform needs to adopt its own rules of procedure. The EU stressed having rules on: representation; expertise; adoption of decisions; and intersessional activities. The US said that the programme of work should be considered first. MEXICO stated that the draft rules of procedure are a useful starting point and suggested taking inspiration from CITES' rules of procedure.

BRAZIL suggested refraining from taking rules of procedure adopted in other processes as the starting point, and only to use these as examples. AUSTRALIA noted that the work programme will have some bearing on the rules of procedure. CHILE and COLOMBIA emphasized ensuring scientific excellence.

Chair Watson proposed forming a Friends of the Chair group to undertake a first reading of the draft rules. BRAZIL noted having back-to-back meeting with the Friends of the Chair group on membership may not be useful. Chair Watson proposed avoiding discussion on issues related to membership, participation and observers, which are already addressed in the Friends of the Chair group on membership. The US suggested proceeding in a structured debate, line by line, in the Friends of the Chair discussions. COLOMBIA argued that decisions need to be taken by consensus and not by voting and that the rules of procedure should envisage the participation of observers. Chair Watson noted that once IPBES is established, it may not always be possible to take decisions by consensus and invited considering as a backstop what a voting system may look like in the rules of procedure.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The mood was positive when Chair Watson welcomed delegates for the second day of the IPBES plenary meeting with discussions remaining focused on advancing the structures and modalities of the platform. Many delegates welcomed the constructive contributions, with one delegate supposing that nobody wants to risk putting progress on IPBES in danger, having engaged in a lengthy preparatory process. Others, however, cautioned that everybody is sticking to the Busan outcomes to avoid reopening a Pandora's Box and that the most important and potentially controversial questions are yet to be discussed. One developing country representative expressed, to the contrary, surprise regarding the different substantive issues raised during the discussion on institutional arrangements, admitting that these issues are highly relevant and still need to be considered fully as they will have a bearing on the direction IPBES will take. Nevertheless, he seemed convinced that it is possible to make advancements in operationalizing the platform in the remaining days of the first session of the plenary. "If we can achieve this", he added, "We would have been quicker than many other processes."