

IPBES-2 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 16 APRIL 2012

The second session of the plenary meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) opened today in Panama City, Panama. In the morning, delegates heard opening statements and addressed organizational matters. In the afternoon, delegates convened to consider: elements of a draft work programme; and functions and structures of bodies that might be established under IPBES.

OPENING SESSION

Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP, highlighted the relevance of science-based, credible, relevant and legitimate information for policy-making. Among issues to be agreed upon in Panama, he mentioned: elements of the platform's work programme, operationalization and budget; and geographical location and arrangements for hosting the IPBES secretariat.

Mayra Arosemena, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Panama, highlighting the relevance of the platform as a mechanism to support the results of Rio+20, urged for an agreement on key issues to enable the establishment of the platform in Panama, including on institutional, legal and budgetary matters.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

RULES OF PROCEDURE: Chair Robert Watson, UK, noted that the rules of procedure for the UNEP Governing Council (UNEP GC) would apply to IPBES. On the location of the platform, he said that if consensus is not reached the plenary would be called upon to make a vote. BRAZIL, supported by CHINA, opposed this procedure. CHILE and PERU supported the use of voting in the absence of consensus. Following a meeting with the Bureau, Chair Watson reported that since consensus had not been reached, a vote would take place on Thursday evening, and eventually plenary agreed to the voting procedure.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Chair Watson presented the officers elected during the first session of the plenary meeting on the IPBES that will serve as Bureau members during the second session: Robert Watson (UK) as Chair and Atsushi Suginaka (Japan), Ali Mohamed (Kenya), Senka Barudanovich (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Hesiquio Benitez (Mexico) as Vice-chairs.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: The agenda was adopted without amendment.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Chair Watson noted that all meetings would be in plenary with possibility of working groups or contact groups on specific issues.

CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES: Chair Watson said that the Bureau would examine representatives' credentials and report to plenary.

MODALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Chair Watson urged delegates to: seek balance on the four elements of the work programme (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2); make decisions on the options presented for the functions and structures of bodies established under the platform (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/3); and on the rules of procedures for the meetings of the platform's plenary (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/4). He also highlighted documents on: the location of the platform's secretariat (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/5); the full text of bids made (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/5/Add.1); budget options (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/7); and legal issues (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/8).

Many countries supported the prompt establishment of the platform and prioritizing sub-regional assessments. Ghana, for the AFRICAN GROUP, reiterated that IPBES should be considered an independent body, and supported the development of a roadmap for the way forward.

Republic of Korea, for ASIA-PACIFIC, reported on recommendations from the Asia-Pacific regional meeting on IPBES held in March 2012, including that IPBES have a small bureau with a separate science panel and a centralized secretariat with regional hubs. Bosnia and Herzegovina, for EASTERN EUROPE, supported an integrated paper on rules of procedure. Mexico, for GRULAC, said capacity building should be clearly defined in the work programme, and called for a related working group. Denmark, for the EU, said that IPBES should attract policy-relevant contributions from scientists on ecosystem services. South Africa, for the G-77/CHINA, said IPBES should maintain scientific independence, and collaborate with existing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). NORWAY urged delegates to prioritize elements required to establish and operationalize IPBES. The US said that they could contribute to IPBES via the Quadrennial Ecosystem Services Trends (QuEST).

INDONESIA called for finding balance between biodiversity conservation and efforts to pursue economic development. COLOMBIA said IPBES will allow for precautionary and timely monitoring, and emphasized recognizing biodiversity as integral to cultural identity.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA supported a bottom-up approach to the work programme. SWITZERLAND stated that the objective of this plenary is to fully operationalize IPBES, and supported Norway's proposal to clarify an outcome of the meeting through the report of the chair.

JAPAN supported: the establishment of rules of procedure with minimum components to operationalize IPBES during this meeting; and the setting of work programme priorities. INDIA suggested that IPBES could use a roadmap to develop into a proper UN body, and emphasized that IPBES can assist developing countries in finding a balance between conservation and development.

BOLIVIA urged a holistic approach that does not commercialize nature. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC supported the inclusion of major groups mentioned in Agenda 21.

GUATEMALA highlighted the need to ensure IPBES fully considers traditional and local knowledge, as well as decision-making at different scales, in particular at the local level. PALESTINE highlighted the need for IPBES to support biodiversity protection, particularly in developing countries that are occupied.

IUCN reported on a stakeholders meeting on modalities and institutional arrangements of IPBES held on April 15, underscoring recommendations, including on adopting a mechanism that ensures full and effective participation of all stakeholders, and on regional structures to integrate the four functions of the platform. UN University (UNU) highlighted the need to provide a platform for dialogue and the readiness of the scientific community to contribute to IPBES, providing useful knowledge for policy-makers.

The CBD said the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 is a globally recognized agenda and a possible useful framework for the IPBES work programme. DIVERSITAS, for the International Council for Science (ICSU) supported the establishment of an independent review process, both of the platform and the outputs.

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PLATFORM: The Secretariat presented the working document on possible elements of the IPBES work programme (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/3).

MEXICO highlighted his country's national and subnational ecosystem assessments and offered to share this with interested countries. Ghana, for AFRICA, discouraged duplicating the work of MEAs, calling for clarification on core and additional funding sources.

The US suggested establishing terms of reference and a conceptual framework including a scoping of assessments, adding that clarifying the nature of on-going guidance for the work programme and IPBES' functions should be prioritized. JAPAN supported undertaking assessment activities as first priority with the aim to address needs of end-users. SWITZERLAND suggested establishing an informal working group on the work programme, and reporting at the first formal assembly of IPBES and discouraged choosing amongst package options.

NORWAY stated this meeting should: agree on guidance for an intersessional consultative process; address communication; and enable IPBES to respond to emerging issues. The EU and NORWAY supported identifying short, medium and long-term goals, with the EU emphasizing engagement with existing networks and institutions. He further supported a bottom-up approach on assessments. INDIA said that short, medium and long-term goals should be based on local resource capacities and emphasized, *inter alia*: communication to engage all communities, using the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a model for selecting authors, and evaluation of the impact of assessments.

THAILAND drew attention to CBD Decision X/4 on Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 3), suggesting IPBES could provide concrete contributions for GBO 4. CHINA supported a work programme based on the Busan Outcome and carrying out an assessment of assessments to avoid duplication of work. ETHIOPIA said it should contribute to achieve the CBD objectives and data collection should be done through a participatory and transparent process. ARGENTINA suggested the work programme focus on simple tasks that could provide for concrete results, such as assessments on methodologies and tools. PERU supported focusing on regional and subregional assessments. CHILE suggested communication be an ongoing activity and PAKISTAN, with UGANDA, suggested adopting a communication strategy. NEW ZEALAND supported a standing committee to work on guidance, including for global and regional assessments, as well as facilitating accountability and integration across assessments. BOLIVIA supported the adoption of principles to guide the work programme, including on: avoiding perverse market-mechanisms of services provided by nature; recognizing indigenous and local communities' (ILCs) efforts in biodiversity conservation; and respecting national

sovereignty. URUGUAY said the work programme should support the achievement of MEAs, including the Aichi targets and the Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2011-2020.

On capacity building, ETHIOPIA stated it should be demand-driven and consider national needs. ARGENTINA underscored the need to consider developing countries' needs and avoid prescribed models. PERU supported strengthening regional and sub-regional centres of excellence and scientific panels. UGANDA highlighted the need of a bottom-up approach to ensure ownership by local communities.

UNU, for ICSU, recommended: integrating capacity building; drawing upon existing frameworks; identifying knowledge gaps; enhancing engagement with observers, and linking with human well-being indicators. World Business Council on Sustainable Development urged engagement with the private sector. IUCN urged further refinement of communication, capacity building and thematic assessment. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) noted the relevance of a UNCCD COP10 decision calling for the establishment of an *ad hoc* working group to provide global expertise on desertification. FIJI highlighted outcomes from a workshop on connecting diverse knowledge systems held in Kuna Yala prior to the meeting, and supported a proposed work programme element on developing effective mechanisms for integration of indigenous knowledge.

FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF BODIES THAT MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED UNDER AN IPBES:

The Secretariat presented the document on the outcomes of deliberation from the first session (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/3).

Membership: Ghana, for the AFRICAN GROUP, INDIA, BRAZIL and others, said membership should be restricted to member states of the UN, as per the Busan Outcome. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC urged the inclusion of UN observers.

The EU with the US noted the ambiguity regarding membership of Regional Economic Organizations (REOs). SWITZERLAND, supported by CHILE, called for text enabling participation of the EU as an REO. MEXICO noted the participation of REOs can follow the model provided by CBD.

COLOMBIA said the need to maintain scientific and technical relevance in the platform should be upheld through the membership. TURKEY, supported by the US, emphasized that UN geographical representation does not align to bio-geographical distribution in regards to species richness. BRAZIL suggested that the Bureau follow regional groupings of the UN but that a scientific panel be open to a diverse membership with bio-geographical considerations. The US said membership in CBD was not appropriate for IPBES and that they would provide text co-drafted with the EU tabling their eligibility. The EU declined association with this text saying it had not been concluded. Chair Watson invited the US and EU to submit separate texts.

Participation of UN bodies and other inter and non-governmental organizations: BRAZIL, EU, US, IUCN, and ICSU supported stakeholders having observer status. CITES suggested using the IPCC's participation model. The EU urged enabling the proportionate participation of observers to avoid singular interest groups and the INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY called for classifying observers to enable organized participation. INDONESIA said NGO participation must be subject to government approval.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As delegates emerged from the first day of discussions in warm Panama City, some expressed optimism regarding the progress achieved. One enthusiastic delegate said: "we have gone through all the expected agenda items for today, and there is a collaborative atmosphere that could help us deliver on the ambitious objective of setting the ground for the establishment of an IPBES in this meeting." However, others expressed concern regarding the formidable amount of substantive decisions that need to be made. "The decision to go to a vote over the location of the secretariat has certainly changed the tone of the meeting", according to one participant.